



Professional Practice Guideline: Client-Centered Care for Personal Support Workers (PSWs)

1. Purpose

This Professional Practice Guideline establishes the expectations for Client-Centered Care provided by Personal Support Workers (PSWs). It ensures care is delivered in a manner that respects each client's individuality, dignity, autonomy, values, cultural identity, and lived experience. Client-Centered Care recognizes the client as an active partner in their care and supports informed choice, independence, and meaningful participation in daily life.

2. Definition of Client-Centered Care

Client-Centered Care is an approach in which PSWs:

- Respect and prioritize the client's preferences, values, beliefs, and goals
- Promote choice, independence, and self-determination
- Adapt care to the client's physical, emotional, social, cultural, spiritual, and cognitive needs
- Recognize family, caregivers, and substitute decision-makers as part of the care team (when appropriate)

3. Scope

This guideline applies to PSWs working in all care settings, including but not limited to:

- Home and community care
- Long-term care homes
- Retirement homes
- Hospitals
- Group homes
- Adult day programs
- Developmental, mental health, and palliative care settings



4. Core Principles of Client-Centered Care

PSWs must provide care that is:

a) Respectful and Dignified

- Treat every client with courtesy, compassion, and respect
- Protect privacy and confidentiality at all times
- Acknowledge personal boundaries, modesty, and dignity during care

b) Individualized

- Deliver care based on the client's unique needs, abilities, routines, and preferences
- Avoid assumptions based on age, diagnosis, culture, or disability

c) Choice-Driven

- Encourage clients to make decisions about their care whenever possible
- Respect the client's right to refuse care and report refusals appropriately
- Offer alternatives when preferences cannot be immediately met

d) Collaborative

- Work in partnership with the client, family, caregivers, and interdisciplinary care team
- Follow the Plan of Care while advocating for client-identified needs or changes

e) Strength-Based

- Promote independence by encouraging clients to do as much for themselves as safely possible
- Focus on abilities rather than limitations

5. Responsibilities of the Personal Support Worker

a) Communication

PSWs must:

- Use clear, respectful, and age-appropriate language
- Listen actively and validate client concerns and preferences
- Adapt communication methods to meet sensory, cognitive, or language needs

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b) Care Delivery

PSWs must:

- Follow the client's individualized Plan of Care
- Adjust routines to align with client preferences where possible
- Provide care in a manner that minimizes distress and promotes comfort

c) Cultural Safety and Inclusion

PSWs must:

- Respect cultural, spiritual, religious, and personal beliefs
- Provide culturally sensitive care without judgment or bias
- Seek guidance when unsure how to meet cultural or spiritual needs

d) Advocacy

PSWs must:

- Advocate for the client's expressed wishes and best interests
- Report unmet needs, changes in condition, or concerns to the appropriate supervisor
- Support client autonomy while maintaining safety

6. Ethical and Professional Conduct

PSWs must:

- Maintain professional boundaries at all times
- Obtain consent before providing care
- Respect substitute decision-makers when a client lacks capacity
- Practice honesty, integrity, and accountability in all interactions

7. Documentation and Reporting

PSWs are responsible for:

- Documenting care accurately, objectively, and promptly
- Recording client preferences, refusals, and expressed concerns
- Reporting changes in physical, emotional, or cognitive status according to workplace policy

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Documentation must reflect that care was delivered in a client-centered manner.

8. Limitations and Safety

Client-Centered Care must always be balanced with:

- Workplace policies and procedures
- Legal and ethical obligations
- Health and safety requirements

When a client's choice may pose a risk, PSWs must:

- Communicate concerns respectfully
- Report to the appropriate supervisor
- Follow established risk-management protocols

9. Accountability

PSWs are accountable for practicing Client-Centered Care in accordance with:

- This Professional Practice Guideline
- Employer policies
- Applicable legislation and professional guidelines
- Direction from regulated health professionals

Failure to uphold this guideline may result in corrective action according to organizational policy.

10. Alignment with Professional Expectations

This Professional Practice Guideline supports the professional values and expectations promoted by:

- Ontario Personal Support Workers Association
- Canadian Support Workers Association



Resources

- Ontario Personal Support Workers Association — Standards of Practice and Code of Conduct
- Canadian Support Workers Association — National best-practice guidance for support workers
- Mosby’s Canadian Textbook for the Support Worker — Client-centred care principles and PSW scope
- World Health Organization — People-Centred and Integrated Health Services Framework
- Health Quality Ontario — Person-centred care quality standards
- Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee — Consent and substitute decision-making guidance