



# Standard of Practice:

Collaboration Between Personal Support Workers (PSWs) and Regulated Health Care Professionals (RHPs)\*\*

**Effective: January 2026**

## Issued by:

Ontario Personal Support Workers Association (OPSWA)

Canadian Support Workers Association (CANSWA)

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## 1. Purpose

This Standard of Practice establishes clear expectations for **safe, respectful, and effective collaboration** between Personal Support Workers (PSWs) and Regulated Health Care Professionals (RHPs). It supports high-quality, coordinated care while clarifying roles, responsibilities, delegation, communication, and accountability within interdisciplinary care teams.

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## 2. Scope

This standard applies to PSWs working in:

- Long-term care homes
- Hospitals
- Retirement homes
- Community and home care
- Congregate living settings
- Adult day programs
- Private and family-directed care environments

It applies whenever a PSW works **alongside, under the direction of, or in collaboration with** an RHP.

### 3. Definitions

**Personal Support Worker (PSW):**

An unregulated health care provider who delivers personal care and support services within their education, training, employer policies, and plan of care.

**Regulated Health Care Professional (RHP):**

A health professional regulated under provincial/territorial legislation (e.g., RN, RPN/LPN, Physician, OT, PT, SLP, Dietitian, Social Worker).

**Delegation:**

The formal transfer of authority by an RHP to a PSW to perform a specific task that is otherwise outside the PSW's usual role, with appropriate training, supervision, and documentation.

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### 4. Core Principles

PSWs must:

- Work **collaboratively and respectfully** with all RHPs
  - Practice **within scope**, training, and competence
  - Prioritize **client safety, dignity, and rights**
  - Maintain **clear communication and documentation**
  - Accept and follow **lawful and appropriate direction**
  - Escalate concerns when care is unsafe or unclear
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### 5. Roles and Responsibilities

#### 5.1 Personal Support Worker (PSW)

The PSW is responsible for:

- Following the **Plan of Care** and employer policies
- Carrying out assigned and delegated tasks **only when competent and authorized**
- Reporting observations, changes, or concerns promptly to the appropriate RHP
- Seeking clarification when instructions are unclear or outside scope
- Documenting care accurately and objectively
- Maintaining professional boundaries and accountability

PSWs **must not**:

- Perform controlled acts without proper delegation
  - Make clinical assessments or diagnoses
  - Alter care plans independently
  - Accept delegation without appropriate training or support
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## 5.2 Regulated Health Care Professional (RHP)

The RHP is responsible for:

- Assessing the client and establishing the Plan of Care
  - Determining which tasks may be assigned or delegated
  - Ensuring the PSW has the **education, skill, and competence** required
  - Providing supervision, guidance, and evaluation
  - Remaining accountable for delegated acts
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## 6. Communication Standards

PSWs must:

- Use **clear, respectful, and timely communication**
- Report:
  - Changes in condition
  - Pain, distress, or unusual behaviour
  - Safety concerns or incidents
  - Refusals of care
- Participate in team meetings when appropriate
- Use proper channels (nurse, supervisor, care coordinator)

Poor communication that compromises safety must be escalated immediately.

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## 7. Delegation and Assignment

PSWs may:

- Perform **assigned tasks** within their education and job description
- Perform **delegated tasks** only when:
  - Delegation is clearly communicated
  - Training has been provided
  - Competency is validated
  - Documentation requirements are met

PSWs must **decline** delegation when:

- They are not trained or competent
- The task places the client or PSW at risk
- The delegation is unclear or undocumented

Declining delegation must be done **professionally and without fear of retaliation**.

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## 8. Professional Conduct & Accountability

PSWs must:

- Demonstrate respect for the expertise and authority of RHPs
- Maintain confidentiality and privacy at all times
- Follow ethical and legal standards
- Report unsafe, unethical, or abusive practices
- Accept feedback and supervision appropriately

Failure to collaborate safely may result in:

- Employer discipline
  - Removal from delegated tasks
  - Professional review under association standards
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## 9. Conflict Resolution

When conflict arises between a PSW and an RHP:

1. Address concerns respectfully and promptly
2. Seek clarification or mediation through a supervisor
3. Document unresolved concerns factually



4. Escalate when client safety is at risk

PSWs must **never** be penalized for raising legitimate safety concerns.

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## 10. Education & Competency

PSWs are responsible for:

- Maintaining required certifications
- Participating in ongoing education
- Staying current with scope, delegation, and employer policies

Employers and RHPs must support:

- Orientation and role clarity
  - Ongoing competency evaluation
  - Safe staffing and supervision
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## 11. Legal and Ethical Alignment

This standard aligns with:

- Provincial health legislation
  - Occupational health and safety requirements
  - Employer policies and procedures
  - OPSWA and CANSWA Codes of Conduct
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## 12. Review & Compliance

This Standard of Practice:

- Is effective January 2026
- Applies to all OPSWA and CANSWA members
- Will be reviewed every 3 years or as legislation changes



## Key Resources – PSW Collaboration with Regulated Health Care Professionals (2026)

- Ontario Personal Support Workers Association (OPSWA)  
*PSW Standards of Practice, Code of Conduct, Scope & Accountability*  
[www.opswa.ca](http://www.opswa.ca)
- Canadian Support Workers Association (CANSWA)  
*National PSW Professional Practice & Ethics*  
[www.canswa.ca](http://www.canswa.ca)
- College of Nurses of Ontario  
*Delegation, supervision, and nurse–PSW collaboration*  
[www.cno.org](http://www.cno.org)
- **Regulated Health Professions Act (Ontario)**  
*Controlled acts and delegation authority*  
[www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/91r18](http://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/91r18)
- **Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021**  
*Team-based care and PSW roles in LTC*  
[www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/21f39](http://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/21f39)
- **Mosby’s Canadian Textbook for the Support Worker (5th ed.)**  
*Roles, delegation, teamwork, and accountability*