



# Professional Practice Guidelines for Personal Support Workers (PSWs): Delegation – 2026

## Purpose

These Professional Practice Guidelines establish expectations and safeguards for the delegation of tasks to Personal Support Workers (PSWs) to ensure safe, ethical, and competent care while protecting clients, PSWs, and Regulated Health Professionals (RHPs).

Delegation is a formal process in which an RHP authorizes a PSW to perform a specific task that is outside the PSW's core role, under defined conditions.

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## Scope

These guidelines apply to:

- PSWs working in community care, long-term care, retirement homes, hospitals, adult day programs, and private settings
  - Employers, supervisors, and Regulated Health Professionals who delegate tasks to PSWs
  - Delegated tasks involving clinical, technical, or health-related activities
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## Definitions

### Delegation

A formal transfer of authority from a Regulated Health Professional to a PSW to perform a specific task for a specific client under defined conditions.

### Regulated Health Professional (RHP)

A health professional regulated under the Regulated Health Professions Act (e.g., RN, RPN, physician, therapist).

### Controlled Act

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An activity defined under provincial legislation that may only be performed by authorized regulated professionals unless appropriately delegated.

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## Principles of Delegation

Delegation must always be:

- Client-centred
- Task-specific
- Time-limited
- Clearly documented
- Based on demonstrated PSW competence
- Reassessed regularly

Delegation does not transfer accountability away from the delegating RHP.

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## Delegation Requirements

### 1. Appropriate Task Selection

Only tasks that:

- Are predictable and routine
- Have low risk of harm
- Have clear outcomes
- Can be safely performed by a trained PSW

may be delegated.

Tasks requiring independent clinical judgment, diagnosis, or initial assessment must not be delegated.

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### 2. PSW Competency

Before delegation, the PSW must:

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- Have completed relevant education or training
- Demonstrate competence through observation or assessment
- Understand risks, limitations, and expected outcomes
- Be willing to accept or decline the task

A PSW has the right and responsibility to decline delegated tasks they are not competent to perform.

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### **3. Client Consent**

- Clients (or substitute decision-makers) must be informed that a delegated task will be performed by a PSW
  - Consent must be documented in the Plan of Care
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### **4. Clear Instructions**

The delegating RHP must provide:

- Written or documented delegation
  - Step-by-step task instructions
  - Expected outcomes
  - Signs of complications
  - Clear direction on when to stop and report
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### **5. Supervision and Monitoring**

The delegating RHP must:

- Remain available for consultation
  - Monitor outcomes
  - Reassess delegation if client condition changes
  - Withdraw delegation if safety is compromised
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## **PSW Responsibilities in Delegated Tasks**

PSWs must:

- Perform only the task as delegated
  - Follow the Plan of Care
  - Report changes, concerns, or adverse events immediately
  - Document care according to organizational policy
  - Never exceed their scope or alter delegated instructions
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## **Documentation Standards**

Delegation must be documented and include:

- Name and designation of delegating RHP
  - Task delegated
  - Client name
  - PSW name
  - Training/competency verification
  - Date of delegation
  - Review or expiry date
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## **Limitations**

PSWs must not:

- Perform delegated tasks for clients not specified
  - Teach or delegate tasks to others
  - Perform tasks once delegation has expired or been withdrawn
  - Perform tasks if client status has changed without reassessment
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## **Ethical and Legal Accountability**



- The RHP retains accountability for the decision to delegate
  - The PSW is accountable for performing the task safely and as instructed
  - Employers must ensure policies, training, and documentation systems support safe delegation
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## Professional Boundaries

Delegation does not:

- Expand the PSW's general scope of practice
  - Replace regulated care
  - Eliminate the need for supervision
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## References and Resources

- Regulated Health Professions Act
- College of Nurses of Ontario – Practice Guideline: Delegation
- Ontario Personal Support Workers Association (OPSWA)
- Canadian Support Workers Association (CANSWA)
- Employer Delegation and Supervision Policies