



# STANDARD OF PRACTICE: PERSONAL CARE

## Personal Support Workers (PSWs)

Effective: January 1, 2026

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### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this Standard of Practice is to support Personal Support Workers (PSWs) in providing **safe, respectful, ethical, and person-centred personal care** to individuals across all care settings. This standard outlines expectations for professional conduct, accountability, scope of practice, and quality of care delivery related to personal care tasks.

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### 2. Scope

This standard applies to all Personal Support Workers providing personal care services in:

- Home and community care
- Long-Term Care Homes
- Retirement homes
- Group homes and congregate living
- Adult day programs
- Developmental and disability support services
- Private and family-directed care environments

This standard applies regardless of employment status (agency, employer, self-employed, or private hire).

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### 3. Definition of Personal Care

**Personal Care** refers to assistance or support provided to a person with activities of daily living (ADLs) and personal hygiene tasks that promote comfort, dignity, health, and quality of life.

Personal care may include, but is not limited to:

- Bathing and hygiene
- Dressing and grooming
- Oral care
- Skin care
- Toileting, bladder and bowel care
- Incontinence care
- Mobility assistance related to personal care
- Feeding assistance (non-medical)
- Application of non-medicated products as outlined in the care plan

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### 4. Core Principles of Personal Care

PSWs must provide personal care guided by the following principles:

- **Dignity and Respect** – Honour privacy, modesty, cultural identity, and personal preferences
- **Person-Centred Care** – Support individual choice, autonomy, and independence
- **Safety** – Follow infection prevention, body mechanics, and environmental safety practices
- **Professional Boundaries** – Maintain appropriate therapeutic relationships
- **Compassion and Empathy** – Provide care with kindness, patience, and sensitivity
- **Accountability** – Act within scope, training, and delegation

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### 5. Professional Responsibilities of the PSW

PSWs are responsible for:

- Providing personal care in accordance with the **Plan of Care**
- Promoting independence by encouraging participation where possible
- Obtaining consent prior to providing care
- Respecting cultural, religious, spiritual, and gender considerations



- Maintaining privacy (use of doors, curtains, draping, and verbal reassurance)
- Using proper infection prevention and control practices
- Using safe body mechanics and assistive devices
- Reporting changes in condition promptly
- Documenting care accurately and objectively
- Recognizing limits of scope and seeking direction when required

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## 6. Personal Care Activities

### 6.1 Bathing and Hygiene

- Bed bath, tub bath, shower, partial wash
- Respect personal routines and preferences
- Maintain warmth, comfort, and modesty
- Observe skin condition and report concerns

### 6.2 Dressing and Grooming

- Assistance with clothing selection and application
- Application of prescribed or care-plan-approved devices
- Grooming such as hair care, shaving (electric only unless otherwise directed)

### 6.3 Oral Care

- Assistance with brushing teeth, dentures, and mouth care
- Use of gloves and proper hygiene practices
- Report sores, bleeding, or oral discomfort

### 6.4 Toileting, Bladder, and Bowel Care

- Assistance with toileting and continence products
- Use of bedpans, commodes, and urinals
- Support dignity during intimate care
- Delegated bowel procedures only when authorized and trained

### 6.5 Skin Care

- Cleansing, drying, and moisturizing skin
- Application of non-medicated products as per care plan
- Monitoring for redness, breakdown, pressure areas



## 6.6 Feeding Assistance (Non-Medical)

- Meal setup and feeding assistance
- Encouraging independence
- Observing for choking, swallowing difficulties, or appetite changes

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## 7. Infection Prevention and Control

PSWs must:

- Perform hand hygiene before and after all care
- Use gloves and PPE as required
- Follow routine and additional precautions
- Properly clean and store equipment
- Dispose of waste according to policy

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## 8. Consent and Capacity

- Consent must be obtained prior to providing care
- If a person lacks capacity, consent must come from a substitute decision-maker
- Care must stop if consent is withdrawn, unless otherwise directed by law or care plan

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## 9. Documentation and Reporting

PSWs must:

- Document care provided according to organizational policy
- Report and document:
  - Changes in physical or emotional condition
  - Skin issues, injuries, or pain
  - Refusals of care
  - Safety concerns or incidents

Documentation must be **accurate, timely, factual, and professional.**

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## 10. Scope of Practice and Delegation

- PSWs must only perform tasks within their training, competency, and authorization
- Delegated tasks must be:
  - Clearly assigned
  - Documented
  - Supported with training and supervision
- PSWs must refuse tasks outside scope and report appropriately

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## 11. Ethical and Legal Considerations

PSWs must:

- Maintain confidentiality and privacy
- Uphold professional conduct at all times
- Follow employer, association, and legislative requirements
- Avoid abuse, neglect, or exploitation
- Report suspected abuse according to policy and law

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## 12. Continuous Competency

PSWs are expected to:

- Maintain ongoing education and skill development
- Participate in training related to personal care best practices
- Seek clarification or refresher training when needed

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## 13. Accountability

Failure to comply with this Standard of Practice may result in:

- Corrective education
- Employer discipline



- Loss of association standing
- Reporting to appropriate oversight bodies where required

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## Effective Date

January 1, 2026

## 14. References

- **Mosby's Canadian Textbook for the Support Worker**  
Sorrentino, S. A., & Remmert, L. N. (2021). *Mosby's Canadian Textbook for the Support Worker* (5th ed.). Elsevier Canada.  
*Used as a foundational educational reference for personal care principles, activities of daily living, infection prevention, safety, ethics, and person-centred support.*
- **Ontario Personal Support Workers Association (OPSWA).**  
*Standards of Practice and Professional Guidance for Personal Support Workers.*  
Ontario, Canada.
- **Canadian Support Workers Association (CANSWA).**  
*National Practice Expectations and Professional Conduct Framework for Support Workers.*  
Canada.

This Standard of Practice has been developed using recognized Canadian educational resources, professional association guidance, and best-practice frameworks to support safe, ethical, and person-centred personal care delivery by Personal Support Workers across Ontario and Canada.