



PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE GUIDELINES: PERSONAL CARE

Personal Support Workers (PSWs)
Effective: January 1, 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of these Professional Practice Guidelines is to support Personal Support Workers (PSWs) in providing safe, respectful, ethical, and person-centred personal care to individuals across all care settings. These guidelines outline expectations for professional conduct, accountability, scope of practice, and quality of care delivery related to personal care tasks.

2. Scope

These guidelines apply 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

These guidelines apply regardless of employment status (agency, employer, self-employed, or private hire).

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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Association**

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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

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

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

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.

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 these Professional Practice Guidelines may result in:

- Corrective education
- Employer discipline
- Loss of association standing
- Reporting to appropriate oversight bodies where required



Effective Date

January 1, 2026

14. References

- 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). *Professional Practice Guidelines and Guidance for Personal Support Workers*. Ontario, Canada.
- Canadian Support Workers Association (CANSWA). *National Professional Practice Expectations and Conduct Framework for Support Workers*. Canada.