



# Fact Sheet

## What Can a PSW Do? Role of Personal Support Workers and Areas of Ability

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Personal support workers have a unique role in Ontario. It is different from that of any other health care or support provider. Simply put, *PSWs do for a person the things that the person would do for herself, if she were physically and/or cognitively able.*

Chances are if you compare what you do with what your co-workers do, you'll find that there are differences in both what you do and how you do it. Support work is highly individualized. It's not just using techniques and procedures; it's all about supporting the person in the ways she needs to be supported.

In 1994, the province of Ontario and the Ontario Community Support Association led a provincial working group to determine the role and scope of a PSWs work. This is a part of what they said:

*The range of services provided by persons trained as ...Personal Support Workers depends upon the individual needs and preferences of each person they support. These services may include assistance with:*

- 1. home management (including shopping, house cleaning and meal preparation);*
- 2. personal care (including dressing, personal hygiene, mobility, and other routine activities of living in accordance with the Regulated Health Professions Act);*
- 3. family responsibilities (including routine care giving to children)*
- 4. social and recreational activities*

There are three limits on this: legislation, employer policies and training. The *Regulated Health Professions Act* sets out certain acts that may only be done by specific health professionals. There are only a few circumstances where a PSW may perform some of these acts. There are also specific guidelines to follow if you are asked to do one of these acts.

Although it's not "law", many employers also limit the activities that a PSW may do. For example, a PSW may legally give a client who lives in her own home a pill. However, the PSW's employer may not allow this. As a PSW, you must always work within your employer's guidelines. For more detailed information please see our Fact Sheet on PSWs Role in Medication.



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Finally, you must know how to do what you are asked to do. Nothing is safe (or proper to do) if you are not trained to do it, or have not recently practised the skill.

As a PSW, you have a professional obligation to work to the best of your ability and to not put the client at risk. If you're not certain what you're doing is permitted, or uncertain that you have the skill and knowledge, you have the obligation to raise your concerns with your supervisor.

For more information on personal support workers and PSNO, visit our website:  
[www.psno.ca](http://www.psno.ca)