

OCSCA

Ontario Community
Support Association

United in our commitment to care

Role of Persons Trained as Personal Attendants or Personal Support Workers

Role of Persons Trained as Personal Attendants or Personal Support Workers

This document refers to persons trained as Personal Attendants or Personal Support Workers. The training programme that prepares these workers is built upon this role statement.

The role statement that follows is organized to first highlight what is common to these two types of workers, second to describe what is distinct to each, and third to describe selected values and knowledge common to both.

Purpose

Persons trained as Personal Attendants or Personal Support Workers respect and support people's desire to be healthy and independent according to their own choices and capabilities.

They contribute to the quality of life of individuals who live in facilities and at home by promoting their independence; dignity; social, emotional and physical well-being; mobility; personal appearance; comfort and safety.

They support individuals and their families and may work as a member of a team. In some cases, they observe and report changes in conditions to the most appropriate person.

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

- **home management (including shopping, house cleaning and meal preparation);**
- **personal care (including dressing, personal hygiene, mobility, and other routine activities of living in**

accordance with the Regulated Health Professions Act);

- **family responsibilities (including routine care giving to children)**
- **social and recreational activities**

Services are provided in homes and apartments in the community, in long term care facilities, congregate housing settings, in the workplace and in educational facilities. Persons trained as Personal Attendants or Personal Support Workers must be able to adapt to varying degrees of supervision, in keeping with the consumer/client's setting. Persons trained as Personal Attendants or Personal Support Workers must also be able to adapt to the variety of consumer/client settings, and at times, to the varying needs of the consumer/client in a particular setting.

The purpose of the support is to assist persons with the tasks of daily living so that they may participate in their community.

Distinct Roles

Personal Attendant

Personal Attendants support adults with physical disabilities who request and direct services to assist them in everyday activities. The person who requests the services is generally referred to as the consumer, reflecting her/his understanding and undertaking of the responsibility to participate in and direct the services s/he receives.

Personal Support Workers

Personal Support Workers assist persons of any age who require support to carry out their everyday activities. Persons who make use of the services of the personal support worker are often referred to as clients (in community settings) or residents (in facility settings).

Consumers/Clients

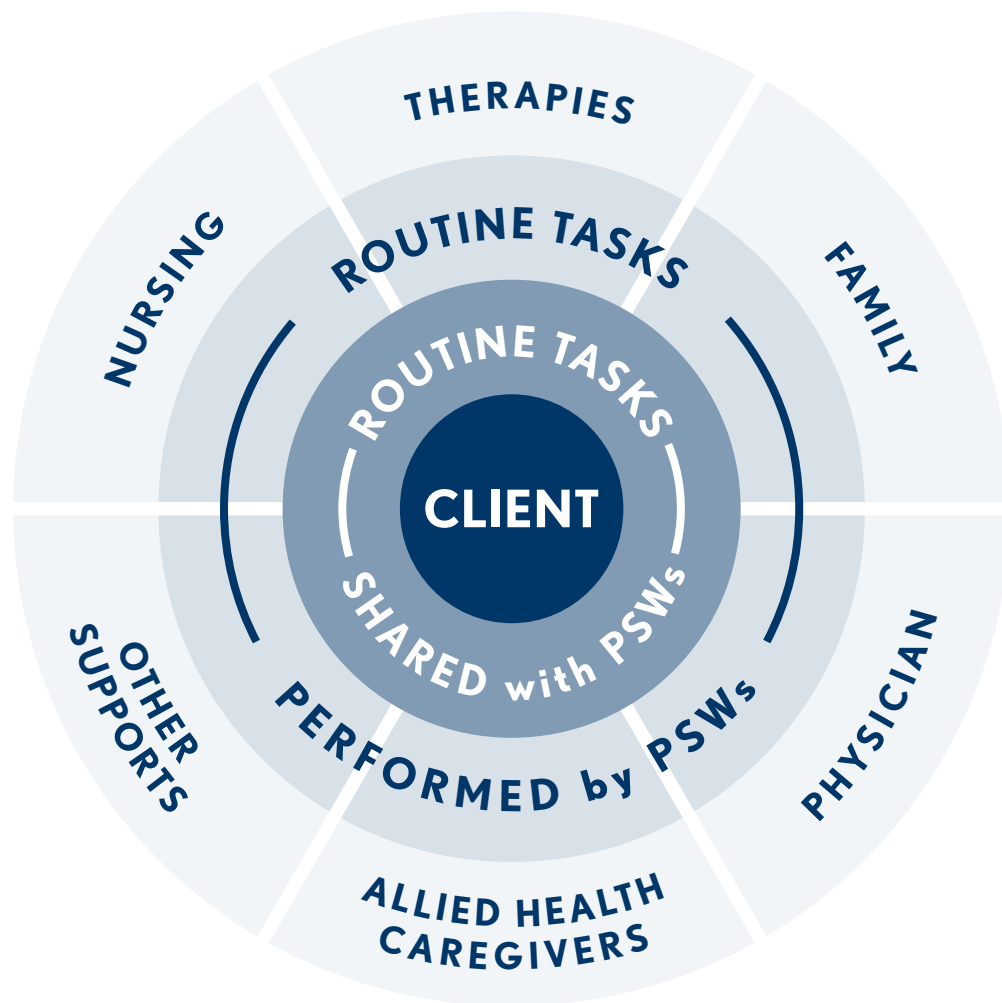
Persons trained as Personal Attendants or Personal Support Workers provide services to persons who require assistance to carry out their routine living activities. Other family members may also benefit from the workers' services. Although the terms consumer or client are often used to describe a person these workers assist, it is understood that the consumer or client is a person, first and foremost.

Consumers/clients will have varying interest in and/or ability to direct workers. In some cases the consumer or client will provide all direction; in others, a family caregiver will assist in giving direction; in yet others that responsibility will rest with an agency or facility. Persons trained as Personal Attendants or Personal Support Workers must value their consumer's/clients'

right to self-determination and control of their environment. Workers must support and follow as much as possible their consumer's/client's direction and preferences about the services to be provided. They must show initiative and sound judgment when serving persons who have a limited ability to direct their own services. The workers' goal must be to optimize their consumer's/client's independence, expression of preferences and participation in daily activities. (see Figure 1)

While Persons trained as Personal Attendants or Personal Support Workers is expected to use judgement in responding to the needs of persons within the boundaries of their role, they are not expected to diagnose, assess, or to respond to acute or unexpected situations (beyond any emergency assistance which might be required). These responsibilities are left to the persons (consumer, professional, or caregiver in any combination) whose role is to organize and monitor the services provided.

Figure 1



Accountability

Although the specifics vary, persons trained as Personal Attendants or Personal Support Workers are accountable to:

- **consumer/client and/or family caregivers**

The Personal Attendant is accountable to the consumer to respond to her/his preferences and directions. The personal attendant is responsible for delivering services in such a way as to support the objectives of a service contract negotiated between the consumer and an agency, if s/he is employed by an agency.

The Personal Support Worker responds to her/his consumer's/client's preferences within the service contract or support plan (as described below).

- **employing agency or facility**

Persons trained as Personal Attendants or Personal Support Workers honour the mission, mandate, philosophy, values of their employer and standards as set out in this document. The employer is responsible for providing sufficient administrative, training and supervisory support to create a healthy, high-quality working relationship between the consumer/client, family caregiver and the worker. Personal Attendants and Personal Support Workers are responsible to perform only those activities for which they have received the necessary training and support, and for which they are competent.

- **legislation**

Persons trained as Personal Attendants or Personal Support Workers are responsible to be aware of legislation and regulations which affect their work.

In addition, Personal Support Workers are accountable to:

- **professionals with whom they work on particular aspects of a support plan**

The contract or plan is negotiated with the person (or their substitute decision-maker) and often a case manager. In many cases, the worker may contribute to a plan when it is being developed and reviewed. In all cases, they provide services in support of the plan.

Personal Support Workers are responsible for following the instructions given by health professionals, as a part of the plan of support or care. They observe and report conditions as instructed, after consultation with their supervisor.

With appropriate assistance, Personal Support Workers must try to resolve conflicting directions from consumer/client, family, employer and health professionals. They must also recognize when a conflict must be referred to another member of the team.

The focus of training is to provide persons trained as Personal Attendants or Personal Support Workers with abilities that they will be able to use in a consumer/client setting. As any training, it does not guarantee that Persons trained as Personal Attendants or Personal Support Workers will be able to use all their abilities in every work setting. While most employers would make use of many of the abilities the worker may possess, they may establish boundaries which exclude the performance of some abilities, or establish criteria under which certain abilities may be performed. As well, they may provide specific training beyond that described in the training standards and in compliance with any legislated or regulated requirements. They may also set policies and procedures with regard to the way in which an ability is carried out.

Common Values That Guide the Approach of Persons Trained as Personal Attendants or Personal Support Workers

Certain values form the basis of all actions of persons trained as Personal Attendants or Personal Support Workers and are incorporated in each of the training standards the graduate must attain. These values are as follows:

1. Consumer/Client rights to confidentiality, privacy, independence, well-being, choice and self-determination are both supported and promoted by the worker.
2. Services are individualized to suit the preferences and directions of the consumer/client.
3. The consumer/client is accorded the respect and dignity that is her/his right.
4. Service is provided in a manner sensitive to the various unique differences of consumers/clients (including culture, religious values and beliefs).
5. The importance of family, friends and other caregivers roles in the overall provision of service is to be respected and supported.
6. The worker values the collaboration and works as a member of a team which includes the client, family caregivers and other service providers.

Selected Knowledge and Skills of Persons Trained as Personal Attendants or Personal Support Workers

The following lists selected knowledge and skills important for persons trained as Personal Attendants or Personal Support Workers. They are highlighted for their importance to the role of persons trained as Personal Attendants or Personal Support Workers to support people with dignity, respect, and in a way that promotes their health and independence. It is not a complete list of skills and knowledge. The breadth of the skills and knowledge must be appropriate to this level of support worker.

1. Interpersonal skills (e.g. sensitivity, understanding the concept of self)
2. Communication skills (e.g. verbal and non verbal skills, effective listening)
3. Sensitivity to the intimate nature of personal care routines.
4. Observation and judgement skills.
5. Knowledge of the dynamics of human growth, development and aging.
6. Knowledge of age-related changes, disabilities, diseases and their implications for personal care.
7. Understanding of the dynamics of power, authority, and vulnerability.
8. Knowledge of supportive aids and devices (e.g. communication aids and wheelchairs).
9. Ability to adapt approach to a consumer's/client's preferences and directions.
10. Ability to react appropriately within the role and capacity of a worker trained as a Personal Attendant or Personal Support Worker in emergencies and in potentially distressing situations (e.g. epileptic seizures, abusive environments, difficult behaviours of persons with dementia).