

POLICY AND GUIDELINES FOR SCREENING OF COMMUNITY PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS (PSWs)

POLICY: Agencies that receive Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care funding must have written policies on the screening of personal support workers at the time of hiring and throughout employment.

The following guidelines are to assist agencies in developing or updating their screening policies:

GUIDELINES FOR THE SCREENING OF COMMUNITY PSWs: AT THE TIME OF HIRING AND ON AN ONGOING BASIS

A. AT THE TIME OF HIRING

There is no formula to guarantee that the wrong person will never be hired. However, there are practices that, in their entirety, will provide the employer with information and a comfort level with hiring. If that comfort level is not there, the employer must discover the source of the discomfort and come to some resolution about the applicant's suitability.

Organizations must be able to show that they have a hiring process in place that promotes hiring of the most appropriate staff for service delivery.

Guidelines for the screening of community PSWs include, but are not limited to:

Application Information

- Submission of an application and/or resume which requests information on previous experience, education and other qualifications; applications are scored using a rating system

Some agencies require the applications to be filled out in the office to ensure that the applicant has a certain degree of literacy

- Submission of documents, at the time of a formal interview, to confirm completion of training, e.g., certificates from PSW, CPR

- Proof of eligibility to work in Canada

Some agencies ask the applicant if they are eligible to work in Canada but may not ask for a SIN number until ready to give a conditional job offer (Human Rights Code)

Interviewing Applicants

- Formal standard interview with scoring; interview may be conducted by a team

Interviews are important to identify any concerns around:

- *confidentiality*
- *personal reactions to cultural differences*
- *organizational skills (housekeeping)*
- *how the applicant would handle an emergency situation*
- *how the applicant would handle being accused of stealing*
- *experience in providing personal care for both sexes*
- *experience in providing palliative care*
- *knowledge of activation and independence for a client*
- *availability for work, e.g., roster system for weekend work*

- Employment gaps are checked

Follow up on Work References

- References are checked

Some agencies require that at least one reference be from a former employer, volunteer experience or from an instructor

Some agencies ensure that the applicant signs a disclaimer (i.e., I, _____, authorize my previous employer to release any and all information regarding my employment with them and agree no liability or damage shall accrue to my previous employers as a consequence of releasing such information)

Criminal Reference Checks

- When an offer of employment is made, a Canada-wide criminal record check is carried out; this is a condition of employment. Policy is required for how to handle the results of a criminal record check – process that would help in the judgement call; for example, how long since the offense, what was the offense, what is the risk exposure – for the client? for the agency? Employers need to understand the pardon process because some applicants may not be aware that they are eligible for a pardon

*It varies in cost (sometimes no charge) and in who pays for the criminal check
- some agencies require the applicant to pay*

In some jurisdictions the check is completed quickly, in other jurisdictions it may take 6 weeks to get the results of a police check

Employee Health Status

- Health assessment by a physician of the applicant's choice

*Health assessment usually includes a two-step Mantoux test for tuberculosis
An immunization record and/or a physical abilities test may also be required
Health assessment costs may or may not be paid by the agency
Some agencies ask the applicant to complete a personal health history, an immunization record, and a medical self-assessment (a job task analysis and their ability to do the job tasks). A physical abilities test is done by a physiotherapist during the orientation period*

Probationary Period

- Probationary period which may have a performance appraisal at the end

*Usually from 3 – 6 months, or based on the number of hours worked (e.g., 240 hours); some agencies have an informal performance appraisal after 3 months
The collective agreement may define the probationary period
Ideally the supervisor visits the worker on the job several times during the probationary period
Ideally clients provide feedback about the worker during the probationary period*

Confidentiality

- Confidentiality

New employees must sign a statement about confidentiality and conflict of interest.

B. ONGOING SCREENING OF COMMUNITY PSWs

Ongoing screening practices may already be in place, however they may occur as part of other processes, e.g., performance management, risk management.

Guidelines for the ongoing screening of community PSWs include, but are not limited to:

Role of Board

- Strong message from the board is required; for example, "We are committed to caring, to providing high quality care, to promoting client safety." The board has

the power and the responsibility to influence staff awareness, staff attitude, and a positive working environment

General Agency Values and Policies

- Policies about how the organization will fulfill its duty of care in regards to vulnerable clients, e.g., cognitively impaired.
 - How to identify vulnerable clients
 - Increased supervision of staff providing service to vulnerable clients
 - Rotate staff if there is only one service provider going in to the home
- Policies about managing risk, e.g., a process in place if a client calls with an allegation about theft or abuse. What are the steps that should occur; staff must be aware of the process
- Distinguish between performance management and ongoing screening. There is an interface in the disciplinary process. Policies are required for the disciplinary process and staff must be aware of that process

Specific Ongoing Screening and Monitoring of Staff

- Ongoing screening begins on the new staff person's first day:
 - Confidentiality agreement
 - Code of Conduct information
 - Conditions of continued employment
 - Orientation process (includes a written outline)
 - Employment checklist to document employee's induction

*** Documentation of all of the above occurring, including a statement that the worker has read and understood the organization's field manual

- Guidelines to determine frequency of supervision visits:
 - Degree of cognitive impairment
 - Degree of risk
 - How many other workers go in to the home
 - How many caregivers are involved with the client
 - How many caregivers are in the home
 - Competency of caregivers
 - Presence of prescription narcotics in the home
 - Staff probationary period
 - Special Functions (when a worker is doing a task for the first time, e.g., eye drops)
 - Contractual agreement with funder re supervisory visits
- Guidelines about methods for off-site supervision:
 - Home visit – scheduled and unscheduled

- Telephone contacts with client, CCAC case manager, other service providers
 - Client surveys
 - Review worker documentation, e.g., monthly reports, time sheets, authorization for banking
 - Review attendance at in-service sessions
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- Guidelines about the supervisor's key tasks when visiting a client's home.

July 2003
Community Care Access Centres Branch
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

