

Code of Ethics

What is a Code of Ethics?

A Code of Ethics is a collection of principles that provide direction and guidance for responsible conduct, ethical, and professional behaviour. In simple terms, ethics guide individuals when determining what is right and what is wrong, and what is good and what is bad.

Who does the Code of Ethics apply to?

The *Code of Ethics* applies to all registrants of the Personal Support Worker (PSW) Registry of Ontario (“Registry”), as well as all those seeking entry to the Registry (“applicants”).

What is the purpose of the *Code of Ethics*?

The *Code of Ethics* provides PSWs in Ontario with a framework for personal and professional conduct to guide them in their practice. It outlines the ethical and professional behaviours expected of each registrant or applicant when engaging with their clients, employers and the broader public. The *Code of Ethics* reflects each PSW’s commitment to promoting the highest level of care and acts as a benchmark for reviewing and addressing concerns related to their conduct.

In addition to informing PSWs of the behaviour expected of them when engaging in practice, the *Code of Ethics* helps to inform the public of what they can expect when receiving care from a registered PSW. It also instills confidence in the PSW workforce by recognizing the PSW’s commitment to providing safe and competent care through high standards of ethical conduct.

Who is required to comply with the *Code of Ethics*?

In conjunction with relevant bylaws, regulations, policies and legislation, the Registry holds its registrants and applicants accountable for adhering to the *Code of Ethics*. These documents should be read and applied collectively in client care as there is often duplication and overlap amongst a PSW’s ethical and legal responsibilities.

All applicants to the Registry are required to attest to their understanding of and commitment to the Registry’s *Code of Ethics* to gain entry to the Registry. The obligation to adhere to the *Code of Ethics* begins when the attestation is made. Once registered, registrants will be required to adhere to the *Code of Ethics* and will need to confirm their understanding of and commitment to the Registry’s *Code of Ethics* on an annual basis.

If there is an allegation of a breach of the *Code of Ethics* against a registrant or applicant, the Registry will launch an inquiry and take appropriate action proportionate to the severity of the breach as outlined in the *Complaints Policy*. If a registrant or applicant feels that they have breached the *Code of Ethics* in any way or believes another registered or applicant PSW has breached the *Code of Ethics*, they must report the breach to the Registry immediately.

How was the *Code of Ethics* formed?

The *Code of Ethics* was developed through a series of literature reviews and consultations with comparable professional registries, relevant regulated colleges, PSW employers and PSWs from various health sectors.

The *Code of Ethics* will be reviewed regularly and revised periodically as required to ensure accuracy and ongoing applicability to practice.

Guiding Principles for Ethical Professional Practice

As integral members of the healthcare system, PSWs work in complex environments to provide client care to members of the most vulnerable populations. PSWs work across various healthcare sectors that differ in client population, work culture and employment responsibilities. Regardless of sector of care, PSWs share a commitment to improving the health and quality of life for their clients, each other and the greater public. The Registry has identified eight (8) principles of ethical conduct that are considered to be most important in providing personal support care to clients in Ontario:

- Accountability
- Client Autonomy
- Client Well-being
- Honesty and Truthfulness
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Professionalism
- Professional Integrity
- Respect for Clients and Justice

For each of the eight (8) principles of ethical conduct, there is an accompanying list of indicators. These indicators are not exhaustive and should be treated as a guide for PSWs in their day-to-day practice to determine if a principle has been achieved or demonstrated. It is expected that all PSWs will strive to exemplify the principles outlined in the *Code of Ethics* and avoid engaging in behaviours that would violate the principles.

The principles listed in this document are in alphabetical order and do not reflect an order of importance. All principles are considered to be of equal importance and their numbering/order should not be misconstrued as ranking.

1. Accountability

Registrants and applicants are expected to practice safely and competently in conformity with this *Code of Ethics*, relevant bylaws, regulations, standards and policies as applicable to their practice and their registration with the Registry. Registered and applicant PSWs are expected to accept responsibility for all of their decisions and actions, which includes acts of omission.

Indicator	Description
Identifying the limits of practice and only practicing within the Roles and Responsibilities of Personal Support Workers outlined by the Registry	PSWs are expected to be knowledgeable of and practice in accordance with the Registry's <i>Roles and Responsibilities of Personal Support Workers, Code of Ethics</i> , relevant regulations and applicable policies.
Cooperating with inquiries from the Registry related to applicant/registrant information	PSWs are expected to cooperate with the Registry for inquiries about information submitted as part of a PSW's application and ongoing registration. This includes taking steps to ensure that any information provided to the Registry is complete and accurate, providing all relevant records and documentation, and providing written and oral responses to inquiries made by the Registry in a timely manner.
Cooperating with a Registry inquiry regarding conduct	PSWs are responsible for the care that they provide and are expected to be able to justify their decisions made when providing client care. During an inquiry by the Registry, a PSW must answer honestly and truthfully to the best of their knowledge and should not omit any information that is relevant to the inquiry. PSWs must not attempt to impede or obstruct an inquiry, nor should they engage in activities to intentionally deceive the Registry.
Engaging in thorough and proper note taking during client interactions	The recording of accurate, complete, and truthful notes during client interactions are essential to ensuring that the highest level of client care is being provided. The PSW is expected to take all necessary steps to ensure that records are not falsified or compromised. Examples of how this can be achieved include only documenting care that is provided, ensuring that all documentation is accurate and complete, and including all relevant encounters with the client.
Ensuring that client records are properly maintained upon each administration of client care activities	While it may not be possible to document all care provided to a client at the exact moment it is occurring, PSWs are expected to document their interactions and care provided to clients at the earliest time available to ensure the accuracy and applicability of the client's care plan.
Refraining from practice when the	PSWs are expected to practice only when they are both

ability to do is impaired	mentally and physically capable of providing care safely and competently. A PSW is not permitted to work while impaired on any substance, including but not limited to alcohol and drugs.
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2. Client Autonomy

Clients have the right to self-determination and freedom of choice to make decisions about their health-related quality of life and physical functioning. Clients should be respected as self-governing decision-makers capable of thinking, deciding and making choices related to their own health care. In certain circumstances, a client may not be capable of making decisions for themselves and may have a substitute decision maker (SDM) who is authorized to operate on the client's behalf. PSWs must always consult with their client or the SDM to obtain consent before engaging in activities related to client's care. PSWs are expected to provide their clients or their SDM with the necessary information needed to make an informed choice to consent to or refuse care from a PSW.

Indicator	Description
Respecting clients right to make decisions for themselves	PSWs must respect and recognize their client's autonomy to make decisions and choices for themselves. When determining how to meet a care request, a PSW must always try to advance the client's interests ahead of their own provided that it is in accordance with the <i>Code of Ethics</i> and <i>Roles and Responsibilities of Personal Support Workers</i> .
Obtaining informed consent before providing any form of care	<p>A client is capable of making their own care decisions where they can understand the nature of the care that is being provided, as well as the consequences of accepting or rejecting care. If the client is not capable of making their own care decisions, but has an authorized SDM, the SDM should be consulted for consent. A PSW should ensure that the client (or their SDM) provides oral or written consent to any form of care prior to acting on the care. When obtaining consent from a client (or their SDM), the PSW must document the consent as part of their care notes.</p> <p>Where consent was obtained from the client (or their SDM) during the development of a care plan, the PSW should ensure that consent to the plan has not been withdrawn prior to the implementation of the care plan.</p>
Identifying one's own personal beliefs and ensuring they do not conflict with practice obligations	If a client makes a request for care or withdrawal of care that goes against the moral, ethical, and/or conscience of the PSW, the PSW must address the conflict immediately. In these circumstances, it is not appropriate to withdraw

	services until appropriate arrangements have been made to ensure that the client's care needs are met and that there is no gap in care. In circumstances where it is not possible to find alternative care, the PSW must provide the immediate care required to the client until alternative arrangements have been made.
Identifying requests for care that may be in contradiction to the legal or ethical practice requirements of a PSW	If a PSW is asked by any party to perform an act of care that would violate the laws of Ontario or Canada, is beyond their scope and/or training, or that could be considered harmful to the health of the client, they must inform the client or the requesting party that they are not permitted to perform the act in a manner that is respectful and free of judgment.

3. Client Well-being

As trusted healthcare workers, PSWs are expected to use their knowledge, judgment and skills to provide routine care and assistance to facilitate their client's health and welfare. PSWs must consider the best interest of their client at all times and are expected to be diligent in their efforts to do no harm and, whenever reasonably possible, prevent harm from occurring to their client.

Indicator	Description
Ensuring continuing care is met	<p>The PSW is responsible for ensuring that the needs of their clients are met; they are not permitted to abandon or neglect their client at any time. A PSW should only discontinue the provision of services if one of the following three situations occurs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The client requests the discontinuation; 2) Alternative or replacement services have been arranged; or 3) The client is given a reasonable opportunity to make alternative or replacement services and has chosen not to do so. <p>If care cannot be provided due to discontinuation or the PSW has chosen to resign from their position, the PSW should take the appropriate steps to notify the employer and client. The PSW cannot inappropriately withdraw their services to their client.</p>
Engaging with the client in a manner that is free of any form of abuse	A PSW must not engage in any form of verbal, physical, or emotional abuse towards their client. Abuse can include an assortment of actions or omissions including, but not limited to:



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neglect (e.g. failing to meet the client's basic needs such as withholding care, food, medication or other aid).• Conduct that may be perceived as sexual, demeaning, exploitative, derogatory, and/or humiliating to the client (e.g. inappropriate language or remarks about the client's race, ethnicity, sexual identity, family status, or socioeconomic status).
Maintaining appropriate PSW-client relationships and boundaries	PSWs are expected to establish and maintain professional boundaries when engaging in client care. Any action exceeding the scope of professional care (e.g. intimate relationships or the borrowing of money) is forbidden. All actions and decisions should be related to the provision of care.
Recognizing when one's ability to practice safely and competently is compromised and refraining from client care	In an effort to do no harm and act in the best interest of the client, the PSW must ensure that they are physically and mentally capable of providing high quality services. It is expected that a PSW will maintain their own health at all times and will not engage in acts of client care if they are not capable of performing those acts.

4. Honesty and Truthfulness

Honesty and truthfulness are fundamental to fostering a relationship of trust between the PSW and client. PSWs are expected to communicate with clients in a manner that is transparent and truthful. PSWs must not withhold information that impacts care from their client as this is considered equivalent to falsifying information.

Indicator	Description
Properly documenting care provided	Falsification of client records violates the fundamental trust that underpins the relationship between clients and PSWs. A PSW should only document care that has been provided to the client.
Maintaining commitments to clients	PSWs have an obligation to fulfill the standards of care expected by the client and the field of personal support work. PSWs are trusted healthcare workers and are expected to engage in client care that reaffirms their commitment to their client's well-being.
Refraining from theft, misuse or abuse of clients' personal property	There may be instances where a PSW gains access to personal property or financial information about their clients. PSWs are not permitted to misuse the trust, property or funds of their clients; this may constitute a criminal offence.

5. Privacy and Confidentiality

PSWs must respect the privacy of their clients and should only collect, use, access, disclose and store the minimum amount of information required to provide safe and competent care. When providing care, PSWs should assure that the dignity and privacy of their client is maintained and should refrain from unnecessarily intruding on a client's privacy. A PSW must respect the client's right to confidentiality at all times. Information disclosed to a PSW by a client should be held in confidence unless consent is received with respect to any subsequent disclosure. If the PSW needs to share relevant information with members of the health care team, the PSW must clearly explain to the client what information will be shared with the team.

Indicator	Description
Protecting their client's privacy	All personal information that PSWs become aware of through the course of their practice must be treated with the strictest confidence. In addition, PSWs should refrain from the collection of information regarding a client that is not being used for client care.
Refraining from disclosing personal or personal health information without consent	A PSW must not share information about a client's identity care, treatment, condition or any other personal information that is obtained through the PSW's practice without proper consent. While it is common for family members and/or friends to be concerned about the client's well-being, PSWs must not disclose any information about their client without receiving consent from the client to do so.
Maintaining privacy in electronic communications (Email, social media, etc.)	A PSW must not share information electronically in any public forum and should maintain the client's electronic privacy. This includes all images, words, and character descriptions made about the client regardless of the intent of the communication.

6. Professionalism

PSWs must practice within the parameters defined by this *Code of Ethics*, their verified education/training, terms of employment, [Roles and Responsibilities of Personal Support Workers](#) and legal authority. PSWs are expected to maintain ongoing competence in their current area of practice and must continuously improve their competence to respond to evolving and emerging health care needs.

Indicator	Description
Engaging in activities that demonstrate one's commitment to maintaining ongoing competence	PSWs are expected to stay current with best practices of providing care. This may include attending workshops, seminars, conferences, or taking continuing education/professional development courses as needed to improve their competencies and respond to the needs of their clients.

<p>Recognizing and refraining from inappropriate transfers of authority</p>	<p>When a PSW is asked to do any task that is beyond the <i>Roles and Responsibilities of Personal Support Workers</i>, they should refuse the task, document the incident, and report it to the appropriate manager(s) in their work place. It is important to stay current on what is within the <i>Roles and Responsibilities of Personal Support Workers’</i> practice and not accept assignments that go beyond the role and standards.</p>
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7. Professional Integrity

PSWs must consistently adopt and practice within an ethical manner detailed in this *Code of Ethics, Roles and Responsibilities of Personal Support Workers* and policies relevant to the personal support care workforce. All PSWs are expected to willingly uphold the beliefs, values, knowledge and principles associated with personal support care regardless of practice setting.

Indicator	Description
<p>Maintaining fair and transparent business practices</p>	<p>Where a PSW is independently employed, it is expected that they will conduct their business in a clear and transparent manner, which includes billing for their services in a clear and transparent manner, tracking time spent with clients, tracking services rendered to clients, and ensuring that the client is aware of the services they are paying for. It is expected that if a PSW does not fulfill their contractual obligations they will not accept payment for services not rendered.</p>
<p>Avoiding real or perceived conflicts of interest</p>	<p>A PSW must avoid situations where their personal interests may influence their professional judgement or interfere with their obligation to act in the best interest of the client.</p> <p>Examples of conflicts of interest include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepting cash or gifts of monetary value from clients • Accepting large gifts (valued above 50 dollars) from clients • Borrowing money from clients or lending money to clients • Displaying favouritism to one client for non-care related reasons, which may impact the care provided to another client • Advertising one’s commercial services to clients or their relatives/friends for whom they are providing care • Attempting to persuade clients to alter their will or estate
<p>Intervening where inappropriate care is being provided</p>	<p>A PSW must prevent their client from harm by intervening when they see or suspect inappropriate care is being provided by another PSW or health professional.</p>



	<p>Depending on the seriousness of the behaviour, a PSW may have different reporting duties, which may include one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussing concerns with the individual who is acting inappropriately• Reporting the situation to the employer• Reporting the incident to the Registry, the police, or other appropriate organization(s) responsible for the protection of individuals <p>The PSW should use their discretion and judgment when deciding what the most appropriate reporting method is to minimize harm to the client.</p>
Acting in a manner that is respectful of the profession and the Registry and one that upholds the principles outlined in this <i>Code of Ethics</i>	<p>PSWs must act in a manner that is respectful of the occupation in terms of, both, actions taken as well as acts of omission.</p> <p>Examples of behaviour or omissions that would violate this <i>Code of Ethics</i> and reflect poorly on the profession as a whole, includes but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wrongfully claiming workplace insurance benefits or sick pay• Forging time records• Inappropriately engaging with clients beyond acceptable boundaries for client care• Neglecting client (e.g. using phone for recreation purposes, sleeping while on duty, etc.)• Altering or falsifying credentials or training; or• Discriminating or displaying prejudice behaviour towards a client or a group of clients
Reporting criminal convictions	<p>To maintain a PSW's integrity, a PSW must report any criminal convictions to the Registry as soon as possible. The treatment of convictions will be assessed on a case-by-case basis in accordance to the Registry's processes; however, failure to report a conviction constitutes a serious breach of this <i>Code of Ethics</i> and the <i>PSW Registry Membership Agreement</i>. Failure to report criminal convictions could result in penalties up to and including removal from the Registry.</p>
Working within capacity	<p>Capacity is defined as the possession of the knowledge, skills, good character and ability to practice as a PSW and within the <i>Roles and Responsibilities of Personal Support Workers</i>. A PSW is expected to facilitate personal support care or services to clients only if they have</p>

	the required capacity to do so. If a PSW does not have the capacity or competence to provide particular acts of care, they must not perform or attempt to perform those acts of care.
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8. Respect for Clients and Justice

PSWs must respect, promote and uphold the rights and dignity of their clients at all times. A PSW must treat all clients in a manner that is respectful and just regardless of the client’s ability, age, culture, gender, sexual identity, socioeconomic status, status of health, or any other characteristic.

Indicator	Description
Respecting a client’s values and beliefs	PSWs should be respectful of the client’s choice to make decisions based on their cultural, religious, and/or other beliefs.
Treating all clients equally with respect and dignity	<p>PSWs are expected to provide the same level of care to all clients regardless of the client’s ability, age, culture, gender, sexual identity, religion, or any other characteristic.</p> <p>It is a violation of a client’s rights for a PSW to treat them differently based on any personal identifying characteristics. Discriminatory treatment could include not providing the same level of care amongst clients because of personal identifying characteristics, making demeaning or negative remarks about the characteristic, or attempting to change the individual’s identity in any manner.</p>
Maintaining appropriate boundaries and relationships with clients	<p>Respect for the dignity of clients includes not sexually abusing, harassing, touching, or engaging in any other conduct of a sexual nature and/or inappropriate nature. This includes, but is not limited to the following type of conduct:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual intercourse or other forms of physical • Relations between the member and client • Touching, of a sexual nature, of the client by the registrant • Behaviour or remarks of a sexual nature by the member toward the client