



**THE CANADIAN PSW NETWORK**

*The Professional Voice For PSWs*

[www.canadianpswnetwork.org](http://www.canadianpswnetwork.org)

## **PSW Code of Ethical Conduct**

The focus of The Canadian PSW Network is to protect the public: a way we do this is by setting standards of practice for Personal Support Workers (PSWs).

This Code of Ethical Conduct is a standard of practice, and has been adapted from the CNO's Code of Conduct, describing the accountability all Ontario nurses have to the public.

It expresses what can also be expected from the PSW profession, and members of our Network.

The Code of Ethical Conduct puts patients at the centre of healthcare. It is important that the public has confidence in the care PSWs provide. Public safety is our top priority. This Code of Ethical Conduct supports PSWs to provide patients with the care they expect and deserve. We hope this Code is meaningful to you. We welcome comments from the public and any questions you have about what you can expect when receiving care from a PSW.

In developing our Code, we utilized feedback from our colleagues, peers, and the public in regards to what they wanted to see with respect to PSW professional conduct & ethics.

It was unanimous: they want PSWs to always be professional, compassionate and conduct themselves in a manner that was conducive to the respect they want, and deserve; to treat each patient as a member of their own family and provide them with safe, dignified and respectful care at all times.

*Lynn Steele, PSW|CDCP, Founder & CEO*

*Practice Standard: Code of Ethical Conduct*

## **What is the Code of Ethical Conduct?**

The Canadian PSW Network upholds safe healthcare for the people of Ontario, and across Canada.

This is to help clarify the behaviour that you, the public, can expect from PSWs when receiving care, no matter the setting in which you are receiving the care, and for PSWs to have a clear understanding of what is required of them.

All Healthcare workers and PSWs including members of The Network are accountable to this Code. During development of the Code, we reviewed PSWs feedback, current patient responses including from their families as to what they each expect of Healthcare workers as their caregivers, and as their colleagues/peers. We also took into account other documents such as the Ontario Human Rights Code. In addition, we have also consulted with PSW educators, employers, nursing associations, unions and government.

Our Code of Ethical Conduct is founded on Five Fundamentals to provide a framework to PSWs for maintaining their professionalism & ethics at all times. These fundamentals are what determines acceptable conduct professionally, and maintaining standards of practice, knowledge, accountability and ethics for not only our members, but PSWs across all provinces.

Each principle is supported by a set of statements. These principles and statements define what values PSWs use to fulfil their professional obligations.

## 1. Maintaining Public Confidence

### PSWs/Members must:

- not allow personal bias/judgements to impede their decision making and cause them to act in an unprofessional manner
- treat patients with care & compassion free of discrimination & judgement
- refrain from using “pet names” for their patients by always addressing them by their appropriate and preferred name.
- show respect to patients’ culture, identity, beliefs, values and goals; respect the dignity of patients and treat them as individuals. Do not impose personal beliefs/biases on patients. Including, but not limited to: political, religious and cultural beliefs
- work together to promote patient well-being & autonomy using competence, knowledge, skill and best judgment when assessing the needs of patients
- communicate clearly and effectively providing information and instructions to patients and invite their feedback including acknowledge patients’ right to express concerns
- ask for consent/direction from substitute decision-makers/POA when patients are unable
- advocate for patients and help them access appropriate care, services & resources
- maintain patients’ privacy and dignity in the physical space where they are receiving care
- listen & collaborate with patients and persons the patients wants involved in their care.
- should a PSW’s own personal beliefs conflict with a patient’s, the worker will continue to provide safe & compassionate care to those patients until other arrangements can be made
- follow all guidelines as outlined in PIPEDA / PHIPA Bill: Bill 31, Schedule A as introduced by the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services and the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care

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## 2. Committing to D.I.P.P.S.

### PSWs/Members must ensure the following:

- ★ Dignity: “the quality of being worthy of honour or respect”.
  - Encourage the patient to make their own decisions.
  - Be sensitive when giving care to the patient
  - Let the patient take give direction
- ★ Independence: “freedom from outside control or support”.
  - Provide choices and allow the person to choose
  - Make suggestions to make surroundings more safe
  - Encourage social interaction
  - Encourage movement
- ★ Preference: “the power or opportunity of choosing”.
  - Give the patient the information to make their own choices
  - Ask the patient for their direction when giving care
  - Put the patient first.
- ★ Privacy: “freedom from unauthorized intrusion”.
  - Encourage the patient to do for themselves what they can do
  - Allow them their privacy
  - Never share their personal information
- ★ Safety: “freedom from harm or danger”.
  - Do a safety scan at each visit

- Be vigilant about the patient's health, mental health, and well-being
- Report any existing or new hazards

PSWs & members must respect the rights and dignity of all individuals for whom they provide care and support. They also must, as far as they are able, protect the physical and mental health of all individuals for whom they provide care and support.

- ★ Under no circumstances should a PSW or member, during the course of their work, engage in or condone any of the following acts directed against the individuals for whom they provide care and support:
  - Any acts of physical or psychological violence,
  - Any acts of harassment or intimidation,
  - Any acts of abuse including, but not limited to financial, mental, emotional or physical,
  - Any acts of discrimination on the grounds of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, gender, sexual orientation, age, record of offences, marital status, family status or disability;
  - Any sexual impropriety,
  - Any acts that demean, disparage or mock individuals
- ★ Under no circumstances should a PSW or member engage in, or condone any of those same acts against their profession, colleagues, peers, and/or fellow PSWs and/or other health care workers during the course of their work including time "off the clock".

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### 3. Working Under Policies, Procedures and Legislation

#### PSWs/Members must:

- work with integrity, in a manner that supports and advances the PSW profession,
- provide services in an honest and diligent manner,
- not knowingly assist in or encourage dishonesty or illegal conduct,
- any member or PSW who discovers dishonesty or illegal activity which has been occurring in an organization or workplace should take every appropriate and reasonable step to stop the activity. Where stopping it raises safety concerns to themselves, or patients, it is to be immediately reported to supervisor/management.
- hold in strict confidence all confidential information acquired in the course of the performance of their duties, unless required by law and/or where serious harm is imminent,
- follow all guidelines as outlined in PIPEDA / PHIPA Bill: Bill 31, Schedule A as introduced by the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services and the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care
- must refrain from using such information with a view to obtaining a direct or indirect benefit for themselves or for another person.

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### 4. Working With Ability, Competence & Standards

#### PSWs/Members must:

- provide the highest level quality services to the persons in their care,
- practice and employ all appropriate health and safety measures in their workplaces,
- ensure their work practices are within the limits of their knowledge, experience, skill level, and have aligned with the defined/determined responsibilities of a PSW,
- maintain trust by providing safe and competent care,
- maintain and respect personal and professional boundaries at all times,
- work diligently towards fulfilling the needs of the individuals under their care and keeping the interests of the individuals' families/guardians and/or the employer, at all times remembering to always act in good faith towards all parties,
- ensuring that they are confident in the training and expectations that come with a delegated task. Where they are not, it is their responsibility to ask for additional explanation/training.

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## **5. Committing to Personal Professional Growth and Supporting Other PSWs And The PSW Industry.**

### **PSWs/Members must:**

- make every effort to keep their knowledge, education and skills up to date.
- take part in educational and training sessions as offered by workplaces, and employers
- take part in activities and professional development and/or educational sessions organized for PSWs and the members of the Network whenever possible,
- contribute to the development of PSWs by sharing their knowledge, education, experience and expertise with other PSWs and members of the Network including students whenever possible.

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## **Code of Ethical Conduct Glossary**

**Boundaries:** The points at which a relationship changes from professional and therapeutic to unprofessional and personal. Crossing a boundary means a Healthcare worker is misusing their power and trust in the relationship to meet personal needs, or behaving in an unprofessional manner with the patient. Crossing a boundary can be intentional or unintentional

**Collaborate:** Work cooperatively together

**Colleague:** Health care providers, PSWs, nurses and students who are involved in the patient's care

**Competence:** A Healthcare worker's ability to consistently apply the required knowledge, skill and judgment for safe, ethical and effective healthcare practice

**Continuing education:** A way for Healthcare workers to demonstrate their commitment to continuing competence and quality improvement of their knowledge, skill and judgment through self-assessment, practice assessment, and peer assessment.

**Culture:** Learned values, beliefs, "norms" & way of life that influence a person's thinking, decisions & actions

**Delegated task / delegation:** the shifting of authority and responsibility for particular functions, tasks or decisions from one person (usually a leader or manager) to another

**D.I.P.P.S:** This acronym refers to Dignity – Independence – Preference – Privacy – Safety

**Health Care Worker:** Any regulated health professionals and any staff member, contract worker, student/trainee, registered volunteer, or other essential caregiver including PSWs currently working in a

healthcare organization, including workers that are not providing direct patient care and are frequently in the patient environment.

Patient: An individual, family, group, community or population receiving care, including, but is not limited to, “clients” or “residents”

Personal gain: Advantage or benefit, financial or otherwise, that a Healthcare worker receives. A personal gain can be monetary (cash, gifts and rewards) or provide the Healthcare worker with other personal advantages. A personal gain includes interests of the Healthcare workers family, charitable causes or organizations the Healthcare workers supports. It does not include a Healthcare workers salary or benefits

Personal health information: Any identifying information about patients’ physical or mental health, including information about the health history of their family

PSW: Personal Support Worker - a currently unregulated health care provider with no title protection on the use of the name/acronym. As a result, the skills, accreditation and supervision can vary widely in Canada. The National Occupational Classification (NOC) allows PSWs to also use the following titles: Health Care Aide, Patient Care Aide, Resident Care Aide, Nursing Attendant or a Hospital Attendant. The titles vary depending upon the healthcare facility or home care the personal support worker is providing.

Social media: Community-based online communication tools (websites and applications) used for interaction, content sharing and collaboration. Types of social media include blogs or microblogs (personal, professional or anonymous), discussion forums, message boards, social networking sites and content sharing websites

Standards of Practice: The Canadian PSW Network’s expectations for how a competent PSW should perform. Standards of practice contribute to public protection

Substitute decision-maker: Person, identified by the Health Care Consent Act, 1996 who makes a treatment decision for someone who cannot make their own decision

***Note: Our professional code covers the term “professional conduct” as a blanket; encompassing conduct and behaviours equally in person, and in an “online presence” covering all facets of online social media and/or gaming platforms and anywhere a member of the public can view any/all content submitted within that platform.***

***PSWs and healthcare workers who are members of The Canadian PSW Network are expected to follow this Code as well as our Standards of Practice explicitly, as well as follow and adhere to Ministry and Employer standards of practice, which provide more detailed guidance. If a PSW member (including those in Board, Director, and Advisory roles) fails to meet our standards, we will move forward to take appropriate action which can include, but is not limited to: revocation of membership, internal disciplinary action, mandatory public statement/apology for infractions that become public matter, involvement of authorities (if applicable as deemed by board vote).***

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