Chapter 1

The Role of the Support Worker

Role of the Support Worker

- To assist clients to accomplish the tasks of everyday living so that they can get on with their lives
- A variety of assistance may be required for some, and very little for others
- Includes personal care, home management, family responsibilities, and social and recreational activities

Role of the Support Worker (Cont’d)

- Ultimate goal of support work: to improve the client’s quality of life
  - Provide care in a kind, sensitive and understanding manner.
  - Use discretion (responsible judgement).
  - Honour the client’s right to confidentiality.
  - Display empathy (having an understanding of another person’s emotions).
Support Work Across Canada

- The client is always the focus of care.
- There are differences in educational programs, work settings, job responsibilities, and terms used to describe support workers across Canada.
  - All work to meet the client’s needs.

Settings for Support Work

- Facility-based setting – Hospitals
- Rehabilitation and subacute care agencies
- Complex, chronic or long-term care centres (nursing homes, nursing facilities, nursing centres, 24-hour care)
- Community-based setting
- Mental health centres
- Home care agencies
- Hospices
- Health care systems

PSW Responsibilities

- Personal care – assisting with ADL (activities of daily living)
  - Eating, bathing, grooming, dressing, toileting, moving and positioning, ambulating
- Provide for the client’s safety and physical comfort
- Not responsible for deciding what should or should not be done; must observe and report changes in client’s behaviour
Responsibilities

- Support nurses and other health care professionals by following the established care plan and implementing the care.
- Consult with other health care professionals in order to provide care.
- Variety of housekeeping tasks

People You Support

- Patient – person receiving care in a hospital
- Resident – person living in a residential facility
- Client – general term for all people receiving health care or support services
- Remember – every person is unique

Caring for Individuals

- Older adults
- People with disabilities
- People with medical problems
- People having surgery
- People with mental health problems
- People needing rehabilitation
- Mothers, newborns, children
- People requiring special care
The Health Care Team

- Group of people working together to meet the client’s needs
- Includes professionals with a variety of skills and knowledge
- The support worker is an important member of the health care team.

Regulated Workers

- A regulated profession is self-governing.
- It has a professional organization called a college, which sets education and licence requirements. It establishes the scope of practice, codes of ethics, and standards of conduct for its members.

Unregulated Workers

- An unregulated profession does not have a professional college.
- There are no official requirements for educational programs.
- No code of ethics
- Support workers are unregulated workers.
Scope of Practice

- To protect the client from harm, you must know what you can do, what you cannot do, and the legal limits of your role.
- Never perform a function or task that you have not been trained to do or that is beyond legal limits.

Sources of Information about Scope of Practice

- Your educational program
- Your employer’s policies
- Your supervisor
  - An RN (registered nurse) is licensed and regulated by the province to maintain overall responsibility for planning and provision of care.

Scope of Practice

- RN (registered nurse):
  - Assesses, develops nursing plans, implements and evaluates care, and carries out physician’s orders
- An RN is usually a team leader of health care team consisting of the:
  - RPN (Registered Practical Nurse)/LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse)
  - Support worker
  - Assistive personnel – other health care professionals
Support Worker Supervisor

- Support workers may be supervised by RN or RPN/LPN
- Or may be hired directly by clients
- You must be aware of the tasks and procedures you can perform as a support worker.

Being a Professional

- Demonstrate respect for others, commitment, competence and appropriate behaviour, professional appearance.
- Be cheerful, friendly, work when scheduled, perform tasks competently, and help others.
- Show enthusiasm, consideration, honesty.
  - Box 1-1: Statements that Show Negative Attitude (p. 14)
  - Box 1-2: Practices for Professional Appearance (p. 14)

Confidentiality

- Respect and guard personal and private information about another person.
- Only share information to the health care team member involved in the client’s care.
- Never talk with a client about another client.
- Avoid talking about co-workers.
- Do not discuss work issues/client care outside the work area.
Compassionate Care

- Compassion – caring about another person’s misfortune/suffering
- Caring – having concern for the dignity, independence, preference, privacy and safety of client and their families
- Treating people with respect, kindness and understanding

DIPPS

- **Dignity** – state of feeling worthy or valued
- **Independence** – allow client to do what they want or can
- **Preference** – allow client to make choices
- **Privacy** – client’s body and affairs are private from viewing by others
- **Safe** – to be free from hazards and feel secure about care provided

Decision Making

- Support workers make many decisions during their day.
  - Consider priorities – DIPPS
  - Consider the client’s viewpoint
  - Consider your scope of practice – your limits
  - Consider your supervisor’s viewpoint and guidance