

Personal Support Workers: Respect and Feeling Valued

The Ontario Centres for Learning, Research and Innovation in Long-Term Care at the Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging, in partnership with Overlap Associates, hosted digital workshops to better understand issues facing Personal Support Workers (PSWs).

These workshops directly engaged PSWs around three topics: Barriers to Resident Care, Safety and Well-Being at Work, and Respect and Feeling Valued. A human-centred design was used with PSWs to explore problems and solutions to recruitment and retention in the long-term care (LTC) sector through their lived and professional experience.

Workshop Findings

The third collaborative PSW session focused on Respect and Feeling Valued. Below are the main findings.

CHALLENGES TO RESPECT AND FEELING VALUED

- Disrespectful treatment of PSWs
- Families redirecting their frustration toward PSWs
- Frustration at the incongruence between training and the realities of the job
- Lack of trust from families
- Disrespected by co-workers
- Additional stress and frustration due to COVID-19
- Management not listening to PSW concerns
- Residents refusing care
- Part-time hours, double shifts, and being overworked
- Perception of PSW as 'less than' by the general public
- Not feeling appreciated
- Not enough team members

PSWS DESCRIBE AN IDEAL VISION OF RESPECT AND FEELING VALUED

- Better communication
- Recognition for a job well done
- Good teamwork
- Happy and appreciative families
- Respect and value given by all
- Enjoyment at work
- Reduced stress
- Co-workers who get along

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

PSWs were asked to develop solutions to some of the most pressing issues they face. They provided the following ideas based on their lived and professional experience.

- Time to provide quality care to residents
- Supportive team members
- Family engagement / education opportunities
- Small actions or tokens of appreciation (acknowledging existence, saying 'hello', thank you coffees)
- Accessible and visible management
- Relationship development time with residents and families
- More full-time positions and benefits
- Comment and complimentary cards from families
- Effective communication and conflict resolution training for staff
- Encouragement of compassionate and supportive behaviour
- Effective teamwork practices (buddy systems with new PSWs to learn the ropes and support)
- More PSWs hired
- Higher pay

While exploring potential solutions, we asked PSWs to prototype a few solutions. Here is an example of one potential solution: Management Shadow Program

1. Management spends a day working with PSWs and residents to gain experience and context of the PSW role
2. Management spends time with complex care patients to understand some of the limitations in care and support to residents and PSWs
3. Following the day shadowing session, management debriefs with PSWs to understand their experience more fully

PSWs felt that by spending time on the floor with team members, management can gain first-hand knowledge of the PSW role and the culture within their LTC home.

Read the full Report
clri-ltc.ca/PSW-Report

In an online survey, we asked PSWs...

I FEEL THAT
MANAGEMENT
AT MY LTC
HOME RESPECTS
ME AND MY
ROLE



50% disagree or
strongly disagree

I FEEL THAT
WORKING IN
LTC IS VIEWED
NEGATIVELY BY
THE GENERAL
PUBLIC



53% agree or
strongly agree

I FEEL THAT
THE FAMILIES
I WORK WITH
RESPECT ME



48% agree
22% disagree

OUR THREE FOCUS TOPICS

- 1 **Barriers to Resident Care**
Exploring how barriers impact the role and expectations placed on PSWs
- 2 **Safety and Well-Being at Work**
Exploring how workplace demands, abuse and discrimination impact PSWs
- 3 **Respect and Feeling Valued**
Exploring how not feeling respected, valued or respected affects the well-being of PSWs