FAQ's

What is the training for a Certified Caregiver/Personal Support Worker?

The training for NACC/PSW is for 1000 hours, 800 academic and 200 in placement. The training involves 300 hours of Anatomy and Physiology, Communications and Human Resource Training.

- What is the CPSW program?
- What is the PSW program?
- Where is the PSW program taught?
- How long is the PSW program?
- How do PSWs get “certified” or “registered” as CPSWs?
- What is Certification? What is a registry?
- What is the National Exam? Is there a “Provincial Certification Examination”? Is it necessary?
- How do I know if a training organization provides good training?
- How much do PSWs earn?
- What are the most frequently performed job duties?
- Can individuals trained outside the province or outside the country work as a PSW in Ontario?
- What are the admission requirements for the PSW program?
- What is the NACC/PSW opinion on regulation of the personal support profession?
- Does the NACC/PSW share personal information with anyone?

Where is the PSW program taught?

PSW training is offered by:

- Boards of Education (through their adult education divisions)
- Ontario Community Colleges;
- Registered Private Career Colleges; and
- Not-for-Profit Organizations

All training bodies teaching PSWs base their programs on the curriculum, developed by Gail A Acton, for original delivery of Community Eldercare Worker in 1995 through the federal government for employment training in Front Line Health Care Work.

How long is the PSW program?

The PSW course was shared with the private career colleges with a minimum of 510 hours in length. The training included practical work experience. It was evident from the increasing demands for a more educated worker in the community that anatomy and physiology (A&P) needed to be taught in this program. The A&P is the cornerstone of the PSW work. Increasing
the training to include A&P and Human Relations made the academic part of the program 800 hours. For many that are training the PSW the hours vary from 400 to 700 for the complete program of academic and placement. Currently, some PSW programs recruit individuals that are not qualified to do this work, and the PSW remains unprofessional and without standards in training and without a code of conduct. For the marketplace it is consumer beware, unless you hire a PSW that is Certified through the National Association of Certified Caregivers/Personal Support Workers, whereby the CPSW must train yearly to keep certification, and renew yearly their membership to stay current in the workplace. The foundation of these workers in academic performance is superior knowledge of A&P.

**The PSW training program includes a minimum of:**

- 225 hours of theory (classroom)
- 10 hours of Evaluation
- 265 hours of practicum (work placement)(unpaid work placement)

**The CPSW training program includes a minimum of:**

- 800 hours of theory inclusive of A&P (home study, distance education model)
- 200 hours of practicum (work placement) where the consumer can have paid placement with a Skills Passbook signed off by the RN or RPN of any workplace.

**How do PSWs get “certified” or “registered”?**

The PSW is an unregulated health care worker in the province of Ontario. The only regulating body is the National Association of Certifies Caregivers/Personal Support Workers, and this is a self-regulating body for standards and a registry, both national and international, for all front line health care workers. The NACC/PSW is a non-profit community organization that advocates and provides benefits and care to the Certified Caregiver/Personal Support Worker.

In Canada we follow the UK model of who regulates, that is a Professional body such as the Doctors’ and Nurses’ Association. In the US self-regulation is by the Association or body of subscribers. In Ontario, HPRAC, a Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council, reviewed the PSW and other unregulated professions.

HPRAC advises the Minister on whether unregulated health professions should be regulated, whether regulated professions should no longer be regulated, amendments to the *Regulated Health Professions Act*, a health profession act or a regulation under those acts, quality assurance and patient relations programs of Ontario’s health regulatory Colleges, and on other matters referred to it by the Minister.

Members of the Council are appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council. In formulating its advice, HPRAC seeks knowledgeable information and comment from members of the public, community organizations, interest groups, health professional regulatory colleges and associations, and conducts extensive research. The Council aims to be accessible and open, and its consultative processes may include written submissions, public hearings, focus groups, research projects and community meetings in order to capture the experience and expertise of those with an interest in the matter.
NACC/PSW submitted and attended many public hearings about the certification and registry of PSWs.

Latest News

Change in HPRAC’s project timelines

The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, Hon. Deb Matthews, has written a letter indicating that timelines for work on outstanding projects have been revised, and that further work on regulation of personal support workers will be considered internally by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

In her letter of March 26, 2010, the Minister indicated that she was aware of the "tremendous burden on the health regulatory bodies and ministry staff of implementing the legislative changes that resulted from the HPRAC’s two reports New Directions, 2006 and Critical Links, 2009. There remain numerous regulation changes that span a number of pieces of legislation that require development."

The Minister will now require advice on the regulation of diagnostic sonographers, dental assistants and paramedics and emergency medical attendants by December 31, 2013. Work on chiropody and podiatry will not begin until after the advice on the regulation of these professionals is completed.

NACC/PSW offers certification, not to be confused with a certificate of training. This is a process of measuring academic and internship success, with ongoing education and workplace training to stay registered and certified.

Many community colleges can only offer a certificate because all programs through a community college must be registered for two years to give a diploma. A certificate is not certification but a paper issued by a non-registered program at the community college level.

Private colleges are managed by the MTCU, Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, and all PSW programs, unless they are bridging or assisting a person towards career enhancement, must be registered as a campus, and the course must be registered to receive a diploma based on 600 hours, with no anatomy or physiology. This standard is not acceptable to the NACC/PSW. Therefore, all graduates of a PSW program approved by MTCU will have to be bridged to be able to hold certification with NACC/PSWs. The main program is anatomy and physiology to enhance the knowledge of the PSW towards a CPSW.

A CPSW can be “certified” and “registered” by NACC/PSW. The terms “certified”, “certification”, “registered” and “registration” are sometimes used by Private Career Colleges or Community Colleges as part of their advertising and marketing strategy to attract students or employers for their graduates.

What is the National Association Certification Exam? Is there a “Provincial Certification Examination”? Is it necessary?

“Personal Support Worker” and “PSW” are provincial designations. The program was developed as a joint project of the Ministry of Health and Ministry Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) and Creative Career Systems Inc.
The requirements of programs for unregulated health workers in other provinces vary considerably from the PSW, and may be known as Resident Care Workers to Personal Health Workers, and Health Care Aides. Creative Career Systems, CCS/Gail Acton, wrote the program for delivery in Ontario for the MTCU. At the time the program was written all community colleges were offering a program called Health Care Aides (HCA) that amounted to six months-to one year of training through the Community Colleges. What the HCA did not offer was the community model of caregiving. The training was for delivery in an institution and not into the community. Gail Acton, a Social Worker, was proficient in the delivery of employment training programs for the federal government, and as a Social Worker with the Alzheimer Association she put together training for all the private career colleges to share as a common curriculum. Through Creative Career Systems, Gail Acton delivered a successful pilot project of this program called PSWs.

Private Career Colleges registered with the MTCU do not have to write a third party exam. The National Association of Career Colleges, in order to fund their private career college association, is offering a “National Exam” or a “provincial Certification Exam”. These exams are not official, recognized or required. They are an advertising and marketing strategy to make the training seem to have greater quality than programs without a final examination. A PSW Diploma from a Private College, or a PSW certificate from a Community College is all that is needed to work as a PSW in Ontario. The “end of program” exam offered by NACC does not demonstrate, measure, or ensure standards and advocacy to the PSW.

The NACC/PSW provides certification with third party exam services, ongoing training with continuous learning credits, benefits and advocacy for the CPSW membership.

How do I get workplace training that provides quality and ensures employment?

- Ask employers who they consider hiring and why for Front Line Health Care Workers. Private care nursing homes prefer students that can work and learn at the same time. Often they pay a little less money than the nursing homes that receive government funding, but they give fuller employment to the individual. All employers want someone who is eager to learn and is self-motivated.
- Qualifications alone do not make you a good employee, PSW. You must have the right attitude and perseverance, as well as truly love your work and the people you serve.

How do I enroll in a program of study for PSW?

If you are considering enrolling in a PSW program, ask the school how many hours of training they offer, time frames of the training, are you allowed to work while you pursue your new career, do you get credit for previous work experience and knowledge, and if so is this reflected in the dollars charged for the training. What do you get for the tuition you pay? Do the costs seem reasonable?
Community Colleges, costs benefits analysis, demonstrate on average that the cost is $4,000.00 plus books and uniforms. No allowance for previous learning and experience is recognized. You may qualify for OSAP, but you pay 1.5 per cent more than traditional banks, and you must be in school full time. This may eliminate your time for paid work experience. Community Colleges offer only a certificate because the training hours are 700 spread over a year time frame. Time is dollars.

Private career colleges are privately owned and operated. They must be registered and have their programs approved under the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005, administered by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Registration of a college under the Act means that it has met the requirements set out in Regulation 415/06, regarding program quality, instructor qualifications, advertising, and refund policies. The price range of these private colleges is between $3,500.00 and $5,000.00. You receive a diploma and the average training is 600 hours.

You must take the same care and precautions when choosing a program offered and approved by the MTCU, as you would take when making any other major purchase. It is consumers beware when selecting training and education programs in Ontario. The main purpose of education and training is for employment, and it is wise to investigate all schools and programs that have been approved through MTCU with the Ombudsman’s office. Training and Education at all levels can be an expensive ticket to nowhere land.

In academia — or in government — we see that an entitlement mentality has permeated institutions of education. In the workplace, we must maintain a service mentality as we have become a service economy, meaning that we are in business because we are serving someone.

No one enjoys it when resources are mismanaged, time and money are wasted, and an organization must face tough decisions on how to clean up after its past mistakes. Sometimes these corrections include firing staff members, some of whom may have been hard-working and dedicated employees. However, while personnel changes caused by financial problems are often tragic, the alternatives — pretending that no such problems exist, for example — are much worse.

Unsustainable activities cannot continue forever, for the simple reason that they are wasteful by definition, and must eventually either collapse or become a drag on the rest of society (e.g., through tax- or inflation-funded transfers of wealth). Those companies and institutions, not on the public dole, do not have the second option: profit and loss mechanisms ensure that all organizations which weigh down the rest of society are dissolved, reformed, sold to more capable owners, reorganized, etc.

However, this is not the case with universities and colleges, most of which receive sizeable benefits supplied by the public. Administrators at these institutions enjoy the privilege of negotiating political solutions for their financial problems, which amounts to bypassing the need to please consumers first and foremost.

In Ontario we have the McGuinty government offering scholarship funding to students in other countries, while some of our own ‘brightest and best’ are being held back by the costs associated
in the delivery of higher education. Yet this comes at a cost: if you earn your living not by voluntary exchange but through entitlement, it is impossible to run an organization on sound financial principles.

This is also evident in our health care system of deliverables of service to the public. The PSW, and the client needing care in the funding process, receives about 20% of the dollar supplied for home care while government administration and mismanagement spends 80% of the dollars allotted in home care services. The CPSW in this system, and the person needing the care, receive the least, while administrators are choking the flow of dollars for the intended purpose of caregiving.

**How much do CPSWs earn?**
The salary for PSWs depends on the employer and setting. It ranges from approximately $13.00 to $25.00 per hour. Many PSW positions are casual or part-time, dependent on the place of work. Government sponsored care in nursing homes were mandated in July to hire only PSWs. The pay scale is $18.00 an hour, but nursing homes and hospitals in some areas hire part time so they do not need to pay benefits. In this model of operation, the government contributes $1,500 a month per client, and the client contributes $1,500 a month to stay in one room of a multi-room facility. These facilities are often the least consumer friendly and many CPSWs report the lack of consideration for the client in time allotment for service.

In privately run homes, the clients may pay from $3,000 to $5,000 for a room and caregiving service. Many of these private homes pay “greenhorns”, a term used to describe untrained workers, $13.00 an hour to start, but they also give full time employment and encourage the training while working for the potential student.

CPSWs often go into business for themselves in providing home care and they earn approximately $20.00 an hour. The NACC/PSW offers benefits such as professional liability insurance for these self-employed workers. The CPSW is more likely to be supplied full time employment as they take two or three clients and manage their workload without the supervision of many agencies that would otherwise charge the client $40.00-50.00 an hour, while paying the PSW $12.00/$13.00 an hour.

**What are the most frequently performed job duties?**
Job duties will vary depending on work setting. The three most frequent duties for CPSW working in Long Term Care in a nursing home are dressing, toileting and lifting/transferring/repositioning. CPSWs report least job satisfaction but satisfaction with rate of pay.

In the Community, PSWs are more likely to be tasked with bathing, house cleaning, meal prep, laundry, baking and medication reminders. The challenges of working in the community are funding to the agencies, lack of available dollars to spend little time with the clients, and thus little work satisfaction is reported by the CPSW. Funding and management of these programs, with the exception of the Veterans and Self-directed programs, is poor.
Self-employed, knowledgeable and trained CPSWs often receive full time employment at $20.00/25.00 an hour. The job duties are based on the direction of their clients. Most self-employed workers report good job satisfaction.

**Can individuals trained outside the province or outside the country work as a CPSW in Ontario?**

People with training from another jurisdiction may apply to a school to have their training assessed. Some schools charge a fee for this. Others may do an assessment for free. Both community colleges and private colleges are supposed to give credits through a prior learning assessment and review process. Few offer this, and some offer a short course in health sciences as introduction to any programs related in the health care field. It is best to shop around for a good PLAR.

NACC/PSW offers Prior Learning Assessment and Review (PLAR) for $150.00, and credits for learning and work experience.

PLAR involves providing a transcript to determine if you qualify to be exempt from courses in their program, and a detailed work experience, police check, and CPR/First Aid certificate.

If you have received your training outside of Canada, you can email info@nacpsw.org or call the office of the NACC/PSW at 1-519-376-7396 for consultation or information.

**What are the admission requirements for the CPSW program?**

The applicant must be at least 19 years of age, OR have an Ontario Secondary School Diploma, or equivalent. You will have to pass a language proficiency test: In English, for programs taught in English and you must provide a police check, driver’s license or health card, or SIN.

**What is NACC/PSW opinion on regulation of the personal support profession?**

CCS and NACC/PSW took part and contributed towards having a decision made for standards and registry of PSWs to **HPRAC** (Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council). The costs of regulating were too great, and we did not support regulation for PSWs, but we did provide the government with solutions that will support the advancement of the profession and provide accountability through certification and registration, which will be a more cost effective solution for all parties involved, including PSWs and CPSWs.

NACC/PSW offers an association and certification process as well as a registry that will offer members a solution towards increased employment opportunities, and affordable insurance benefits for members that participate in standards and our registry. We do not share your information with anyone.

**If you wish to become a member of NACC/PSW you may do a PLAR Prior Learning Assessment and Review at a cost of $150.00**

If you have written the NACC/PSW exam in the last five years you will be grandfathered into membership, and exempted from the NACC EXAM PROCESS by paying your yearly fees of $75.00, and demonstrating for your 3 years the appropriate number of Continuous Learning Units (CLU). (40 hours a year x 3 years equals 140 CLU)
If you have written the exam but let your membership lapse we charge back two years @ $75.00 a year x 2 = $150.00

To qualify for NACC/PSW benefits program, you must have been a member in good standing for three consecutive years.

Membership files require your resume, work and training history, police check, related training hours, verified CLUs, and transcript of marks, as well as a copy of your diploma or certificate.

For all who have qualified with a third party exam registered under a 600 hour program, there are benefits to membership and upgrading if you fill in and email the following information to NACC/PSW, PO Box 175, Owen Sound, ON N4K 5P2, Please print the following information.