

Understanding the Evolving Role of the Personal Support Worker: Task Shifting in Home-Based Care

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Introduction

As the complexity of home-based patient care grows, the roles of home care nurses and personal support services (PSS) workers have changed. The role of the PSS worker has shifted from primarily housekeeping and personal care to include more complex tasks. The shifting of tasks traditionally performed by nurses and allied health professionals to PSS workers is also referred to as delegation, transfer of skills, transfer of authority, and special functions.

Purpose

- ✓ To describe the range of tasks currently being performed by PSS workers in home-based care.
- ✓ To describe how PSS workers are being trained and supported in the provision of these tasks.
- ✓ To describe PSS workers perceptions of support for the provision of these tasks.

Methods

A series of 13 focus groups were conducted at two CCACs and five home care service provider organizations (SPOs) across Ontario with:

- ✓ 23 PSS workers
- ✓ 18 Personal Support Services (PSS) Supervisors
- ✓ 17 Home care nurses
- ✓ 12 Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) Care Coordinators

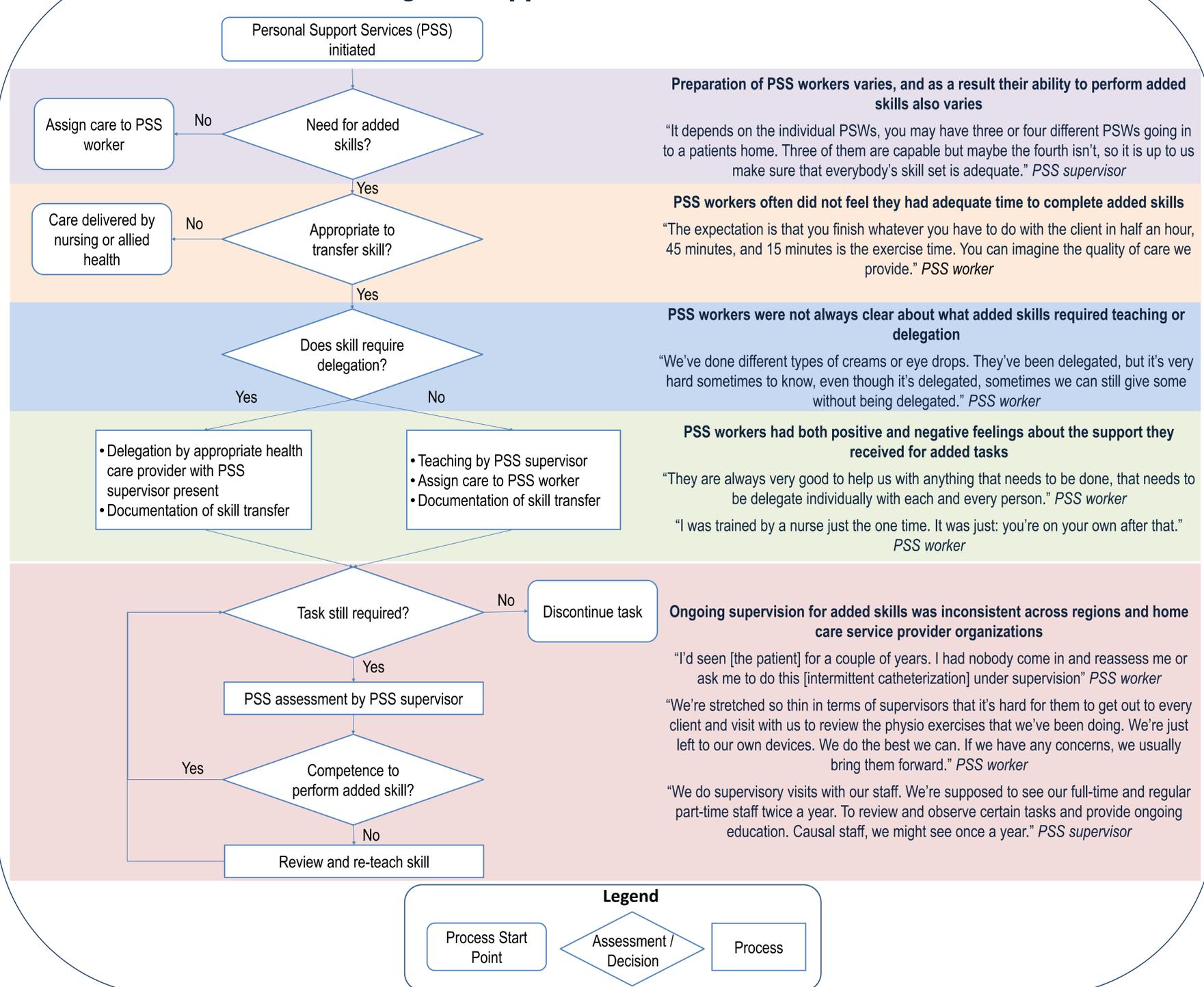
What Tasks are Being Shifted to PSS workers?

Task Category	Examples
Compression therapy	Compression stockings and wraps
Transfers	Mechanical lifts, two person transfers and transfers with special equipment
Physiotherapy	Range of motion exercises
Medications	Cuing and administration of oral medications eye drops, ear drops, medicated creams
Urinary catheters	Emptying bag, bag changes and intermittent catheterization
Diabetes care	Blood glucose monitoring and insulin administration
Ostomy care	Bag and appliance change
Assessment and monitoring	Skin assessment, blood pressure monitoring
Bowel management	Digital disimpaction and suppositories
Other	Enteral nutrition, oral suctioning

Ethics Approval / Acknowledgements

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Training and Support for Added Skills: Process



Conclusions

- ✓ To maintain a high level of care quality, home care SPOs should ensure standard and consistent practices exist with regards to training and monitoring tasks shifted from nursing and allied health care providers to PSS workers.
- ✓ PSS workers should be adequately compensated for performing added tasks.
- ✓ To ensure ongoing provision of quality care, PSS workers should be provided with additional time to perform the added tasks.
- ✓ To ensure PSS workers feel supported in the performance of these added tasks supervisors should make certain they are available to answer questions and provide direction either in person or over the phone whenever care is being provided.