

An explainer on **Staffing Qualifications**

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When the Government of Ontario released its staffing plan for the Long-Term Care (LTC) sector in 2020, titled “A better place to live, a better place to work: Ontario’s long-term care staffing plan”, it was billed as a blueprint to help recruit and retain workers while improving the standard of care.

But with the plan now law under the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021, and following the significant amendments that, as of April 11, 2023, have come into effect, we are concerned that it will have an overwhelmingly negative impact on workers and on the ill and elderly who rely on their services.

We believe **the amendments to the staffing qualifications will lower standards of care and make recruiting and retaining skilled workers even more difficult.**

Classification Overlap

- PSWs are now permitted to administer non-controlled drugs to residents under certain conditions, including receiving necessary training.
- PSWs in other congregate settings, like retirement homes, were already permitted to administer non-controlled drugs. This change is specifically for PSWs in LTC.
- While PSWs are now permitted to do this, homes are not required to permit PSWs to administer medication.
- The Ministry of Long-Term Care has prepared a Guideline document to support homes wishing to permit PSWs to administer drugs. It clarifies that PSWs should not feel pressured to administer drugs; and that they should be able to raise whatever concerns they may have about their new responsibilities.

Why this is a problem

- PSWs are already overworked and stretched thin. Burdening them with even more tasks, without a pay increase or a commitment to hire more staff, is a recipe for even more burnout, and greater difficulty in recruiting and retaining PSWs.
- The amendment will lead to PSWs doing the bargaining unit work of RPNs. Not only will PSWs not be earning more to do that work – it will lead to issues when it comes to lay-offs and it will pit people who work shoulder to shoulder against one another.
- With more tasks to take on, and potentially with insufficient training, PSWs are at risk of making mistakes. The risk of injury, for either the worker or the resident, is high.

CUPE is currently in the process of continuing to strategize on ways to move forward. In the meantime, if you have any questions about these changes, please contact your National Representative or local executive.

We will follow up with more on this.

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Reduced educational and work experience requirements

- The educational/training requirements for Designated Leads for Restorative Care; Leads for Recreational and Social Activities Programs; Cooks and Food Service Workers; and Leads for Housekeeping, Laundry, and Maintenance have been significantly reduced.
- Work experience in a relevant and specific field has been entirely eliminated.

Why this is a problem

- Many of these jobs were already undervalued, as well as underpaid. By lowering the education and experience requirements, the Ministry is potentially lowering their value even further, which could lead to employers attempting to justify further lowering their pay.
- Even where a local has wage protection language, this only protects current workers – not ones who might one day be hired. This will only worsen the prospects of recruiting people.

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