



## Long-Term Care Teamwork

### The importance of teamwork in LTC

Teamwork in healthcare is essential for working together to improve care experiences and outcomes. In LTC, teamwork makes it possible to meet the complex care needs of residents, including people living with dementia or other health conditions. Nurses, personal support workers, other care providers and students must bring their strengths, skills and experiences together to provide quality care. If you are new to the LTC setting, here are some ways you can help build an effective team:

- Learn about your specific role on the team.
- Learn the language specific to your role.
- Learn about the roles of other people on the team.
- Learn more about how roles work together on an LTC team. Some examples include:
  - sharing information.
  - giving and receiving feedback.
  - being mindful of being inclusive.
- Learn about how to involve residents and family members in care.

### Who is on the LTC team?

In addition to residents and families themselves, LTC team members come from several healthcare disciplines. The most common team members in LTC are personal support workers (PSWs), and the second most common team members are nurses: registered nurses (RNs), registered practical nurses (RPNs) and nurse practitioners (NPs).

Personal support workers provide most of the daily care to residents. They are the care team's eyes and ears, and often the resident's voice. Personal support workers hold central knowledge about a resident's baseline (the comparison between the resident's present condition and their normal condition).

In LTC, nurses are often in leadership roles such as Charge Nurse, Clinical Lead or Director of Care. Nurses may delegate controlled acts to personal support workers (not including personal support worker students), using the practice guidelines of the College of Nurses of Ontario.

In addition to residents and family members, other members of the team may include:

- Nursing Home Administrators
- Recreationists, Physiotherapists, Dietitians, Speech-Language Pathologists, Physicians, Social Workers and Chaplains
- Meal Assistants, Resident Aides and Environmental Services personnel

# Preceptors and students as team members

Students have a lot to offer as members of the LTC care team but may lack the confidence to contribute. Preceptors can encourage students to apply their knowledge to the practice setting. This helps students gain the confidence and skills needed to successfully transition into becoming LTC practitioners. For example, a preceptor can invite a student to report on a resident at team rounds or to share their knowledge about a resident during a care planning discussion.

Another part of being a preceptor or student on the LTC team is to give and receive feedback appropriately. The LTC clinical student placement is a great opportunity to practise these skills since both preceptors and students are responsible for communicating feedback to each other. This should start from the very first day of the clinical student placement.

At that time, the preceptor and student should come to a mutual understanding of when, where, and how often they will meet. When the student knows they will have the preceptor's dedicated time, it creates an environment of belonging and psychological safety. The student has the opportunity to share questions, thoughts, feelings or concerns. In turn, that sharing can help reduce or prevent misunderstandings and potential conflicts.

## Power dynamics in LTC teams

Power dynamics exist in all team and work environments. In LTC, power dynamics can exist among members of the care team such as students, preceptors, residents, families and other healthcare team members. It is important to consider the impact of power dynamics on people when there is an imbalance of power. For example, in relationships between preceptors and students, or between regulated and unregulated team members.

Power dynamics can make team members feel uncomfortable sharing honest feedback with each other. This, in turn, can negatively impact resident care. It is therefore important that members of the care team work together to create a space where everyone feels seen, heard and valued for their opinions and perspectives.

## How you can apply knowledge of LTC teamwork in your practice

Effective teamwork is essential in the fast-paced LTC environment. Two ways to improve teamwork are building trust and communicating openly. Building trust is especially important within the preceptor-student experience since the preceptor largely directs the student's learning activities during their clinical student placement (using school guidelines). Within the greater LTC team, effective teamwork requires a psychologically safe environment where team members can share openly with each other. This promotes the well-being of team members, a positive work environment and better care for residents.

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