

COLLEGE OF PHYSICAL THERAPISTS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

PRACTICE STANDARD

Number 3

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ASSIGNMENT OF TASK TO A PHYSICAL THERAPIST SUPPORT WORKER

Assignment of Task: Transfer of a component of a physical therapy treatment plan to a physical therapist support worker (PTSW).

Physical Therapist Support Worker: an individual who works under the direction and supervision of a physical therapist.

Supervision: the means by which the physical therapist monitors the performance of the PTSW.

An individual who does not work under the direction and supervision of a physical therapist is not considered a PTSW.

1. The physical therapist must obtain informed consent from each patient for the involvement of a PTSW in the delivery of their physical therapy treatment plan. PTSW must be made aware that patient consent can be revoked at any time.
2. The physical therapist must explain to each patient the relationship between the physical therapist and the PTSW for the purpose of clarifying the difference in roles and responsibilities as they relate to patient assessment and treatment.
3. The physical therapist must ensure the PTSW is competent (has the knowledge, skills and abilities) to carry out the assigned tasks.
4. The physical therapist is responsible for the physical therapy task(s) assigned to the PTSW.
5. The assigned task must be recorded in the clinical record in accordance with the Practice Standard on Clinical Records.
6. To determine the appropriate level of supervision the physical therapist must exercise clinical judgment. The following factors should be considered:
 - Patient preference, practice setting, complexity of the assigned task and environment, competencies of the PTSW, acuity of the patient's condition, degree of judgment and decision making required to carry out the task, level of risk associated with the task, and patient's cognitive status.
7. Assigned tasks must be within the physical therapist's level of competence and be within the physical therapy scope of practice.
8. The physical therapist must ensure that the PTSW has been instructed in standard infection control measures (www.bccdc.org/content.php?item=194).

9. The physical therapist must ensure that the P.T.S.W. is aware of patient confidentiality standards ([www.oipc.bc.org/legislation/PIPA/PIPA\(2006\).pdf](http://www.oipc.bc.org/legislation/PIPA/PIPA(2006).pdf) and [http://www.oipc.bc.org/legislation/FIPPA/FIPPA-ACT\(21June2007\).pdf](http://www.oipc.bc.org/legislation/FIPPA/FIPPA-ACT(21June2007).pdf) and College Bylaws on Registrant Records).
10. The physical therapist must be available for consultation. If unavailable, the physical therapist must arrange for transfer of supervision to another physical therapist.
11. The physical therapist must instruct the P.T.S.W. to recognize any adverse treatment reactions, cease treatment and immediately report to the supervising physical therapist.
12. The physical therapist must reassess the patient at timely intervals.
13. The physical therapist must make any changes to the treatment plan and record the changes in the clinical record.
14. Physical therapists must not assign any physical therapy task which has an evaluation component that immediately influences the treatment program. A physical therapist must not assign the following tasks to P.T.S.W.:
 - Interpretation of referrals, diagnosis, or prognosis
 - Performance of assessment/evaluative procedures
 - Interpretation of assessment findings
 - Discussion of physical therapy diagnosis or treatment rationale with anyone other than the physical therapist
 - Planning or initiating physical therapy treatment goals or programs
 - Tasks requiring a physical therapist's clinical judgment
 - Modification of treatment beyond established limits
 - Completion of documentation that is the physical therapist's responsibility
 - Electro-physical agents (except neuromuscular stimulation or TENS)
 - Teaching of the assigned task to another person
 - Discharge planning

Additional Resources:

Competency Profile Essential Competencies of Physiotherapist Support Workers in Canada.
Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators and Canadian Physiotherapy Association, July 2002.

For information on informed consent see the *Health Care (Consent) and Care Facility (Admission) Act* at www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/H/96181_01.htm and the *Infant's Act* at www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/I/96223_01.htm.

For more information on confidentiality and disclosure see the *Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)* at [www.oipc.bc.org/legislation/PIPA/PIPA\(2006\).pdf](http://www.oipc.bc.org/legislation/PIPA/PIPA(2006).pdf) and the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA)* at [http://www.oipc.bc.org/legislation/FIPPA/FIPPA-ACT\(21June2007\).pdf](http://www.oipc.bc.org/legislation/FIPPA/FIPPA-ACT(21June2007).pdf) on the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for BC website at www.oipc.bc.org. PIPA Hotline: 250 356 1851.

For information on Standard Precautions see the World Health Organization website at www.wpro.who.int/sars/docs/practicalguidelines/dec2004/chapter3.pdf.

For information on infection control visit the BC Centre for Disease Control website at www.bccdc.org/content.php?item=194 or the Public Health Agency of Canada website at www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dpg_e.html#infection.

National Guidelines for Support Workers in Physiotherapy Practice in Canada, Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators, 2000.