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## Guidelines for Support Personnel

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Support personnel are a valuable adjunct in the physiotherapy setting, enabling the physiotherapist to more effectively utilize their knowledge and skills in assessment, treatment, and education. In this document, the term “physiotherapy support worker” is intended to refer to support personnel whose employment activities involve the delivery of physiotherapy interventions under the supervision of a physiotherapist registered with the Prince Edward College of Physiotherapists.

### General Principles

- Support workers **must** work under the supervision of a physiotherapist.
- Physiotherapists are responsible and accountable for the quality of the supervision they provide.
- Physiotherapists are required to make professional judgements regarding the knowledge, skills and abilities of the support worker prior to assigning tasks.
- The key determinants for use of support workers include education, training, professional competence, and the complexity of the environment and the patient/client needs.

Support workers vary in their level of preparation, in the amount and type of education and/or training they have and in the titles they use. The Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators with partnership of the Canadian Physiotherapy Association have described two groups of Support Workers:

#### **Group 1 Physiotherapist Support Worker**

The educational background of *all* group 1 physiotherapist support workers includes *all* of the following::

1. A curriculum that prepares students for physiotherapy practice models in Canada.
2. A broadly ranging curriculum to match the variety of physiotherapy environments and client populations.
3. A college diploma/certificate from a recognized post-secondary program that includes a minimum of three terms full time equivalent study of which:
  - One term’s equivalent must be in physiotherapy-specific course work (eg., use of ambulatory aids, electrotherapy modality instruction, the principles of therapeutic exercise) that includes classroom and laboratory work; and
  - One term’s equivalent in physiotherapist-supervised training/field work; and
  - One term’s equivalent of generic, program related coursework (eg., anatomy, physiology)
4. Educational program faculty includes registered physiotherapist(s).

## **Group 2 Physiotherapist Support Worker**

The educational background of *all* Group 2 Physiotherapist support workers includes *all* of the following:

- . Completion of “on-the-job” training that:
  - is physiotherapy - specific
  - is variable in length and content
  - is dependant on the background of the support worker
  - is dependant on the needs of the client.
  - is directed by a licensed/registered physiotherapist,

## **Physiotherapist Responsibilities**

As per section 20 of the Physiotherapy Act...certain functions that are deemed by the Council to be non-professional aspects of physiotherapy may be performed by an aide or technician, as may be acceptable to the Council, under the superintendence of a physiotherapist and subject to such regulations as may be made regarding such assistants and their work.

The physiotherapist maintains responsibility for the physiotherapy treatment delivered to all clients under his/her care. It is, therefore **always** the responsibility of the physiotherapist to:

- interpret referrals
- obtain informed consent
- initially assess the client
- interpret the findings
- formulate the treatment plan, with goals, in consultation with the client
- decide what, if any, components or modifications of the treatment plan can be safely delegated to a physiotherapist support worker