



## HOMES AND SENIORS SERVICES

**POLICY & PROCEDURE NUMBER: 1.31**

**DEPARTMENT:** *Administration*

**SUBJECT:** *Social Worker Role*

**APPROVAL DATE:** April 2017

**REVISION DATE:** Oct. 2019

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### **PHILOSOPHY:**

The fundamental principle of the Long-Term Care Homes Act (LTCHA), 2007, is that a long-term care home is primarily the home of its residents and is to be operated so that it is a place where residents may live with dignity and in security, safety and comfort and have their physical, psychological, social, spiritual and cultural needs adequately met. LTCHA, 2007, c. 8, s. 1.

### **POLICY:**

Facility staff (including nursing, food service director, activities, rehabilitation therapies, etc.) may recommend referral of residents who are experiencing unmet psychological, social, spiritual and cultural needs to the Social Worker.

### **PREAMBLE:**

Social Work in Long-Term Care has a long history of playing a significant role in the provision of care for persons in long-term care. Social workers practice collaboratively with various professionals within a health care setting.

The primary mandate of social workers within long-term care is to advocate on behalf of residents and their families. Their focus is on the social and emotional impact of physical and mental impairment, preservation and enhancement of physical and social functioning, and promotion of physical and mental health towards an optimal quality of life. Emphasis is on building upon existing strengths, enhancing adaptations, and modifying risks that interfere with optimal quality of life.

### **Social workers play a key role by:**

- Responding to enquiries and providing education to persons in the community regarding the current health care system as well as assisting clients in navigating services;
- Providing psychosocial expertise in aspects of care (for example, in helping staff and resident alike to deal with the difficult issues of dying and death as well as emotions such as guilt, anger, and fear);
- Supporting, developing, or implementing innovative programs;
- Enhancing residents' care, including promoting holistic approaches, maintaining therapeutic relationships with residents and families and providing specialized individual and family counseling, engaging in resident advocacy, family support groups, family councils, and resident councils, and co-coordinating with other community services;



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- Promoting a positive atmosphere and attitudes and playing a leadership role in counteracting stereotyping, stigmatization, and discrimination;
  - Sharing responsibility for educating residents, families, and staff colleagues and for challenging the status quo when advocating on behalf of residents.

Social work services provided during the various phases of residency – pre-admission, admission, residency, and discharge, transfer, or death – are essential to the well-being of residents in long-term care and their families.

### **Pre-Admission Phase**

The prospective resident and family members are beginning the difficult task of dealing with their feelings about long-term care placement. If a referral to the social worker is required at this stage, he/she assesses the resident's needs, and begins to establish relationships with the resident and family members that will evolve over the course of admission through to discharge.

### **Admission Phase**

Helping the resident and family members become familiar with the facility and its resources is essential to their future adjustment and well-being. During the post-admission period, some residents and family members need adjustment counseling. Social work intervention may be required at this stage:

- Providing support (counseling, mediation, advocacy) to a resident and family members who are struggling with placement;
- Helping families redefine their role and relationship;
- Completing social history and psychosocial assessment;
- Providing education to residents and family members regarding advance care directives and health care decision making;
- Assisting in mediation and conflict resolution as issues arise;
- Facilitating and ensuring participation of the resident and the family in the initial care conference and in care planning.

### **Residency Phase (ongoing care)**

If required, the social worker's role in working with residents and their families during this phase is to facilitate the resident's comfort within the new environment as he or she strives to retain identity and maintain autonomy:

- Advocating planning centered on residents and their families;
- Working with the client and the team proactively to solve interpersonal or behavioural issues a resident may be experiencing;



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- Locating and arranging resources, utilizing the social worker's ability to understand how systems interact and what resources are available for the resident;
  - Mediating concerns that may arise between the resident and family or team;
  - As a multidisciplinary team member, participating in ongoing care planning, involving the resident and family as much as possible.

### **Discharge/Transfer/Death**

The social worker may be contacted to assist in facilitating the resident's return to the community or transfer to another facility where applicable. The resident and family members may also require grief counseling during the final stages of life or at death. (Source: Manitoba Association of Personal Care Home Social Workers)

### **PROCEDURE:**

1. As problems arise, the facility staff (including nursing, food service director, activities, rehabilitation therapies, etc.) may recommend referral to a Social Worker. The Manager of Resident Care/Administrator/designate will contact the social worker to inform of the referral and confirm date/time of appointment. As per contractual agreement (if contracted services available), the Social Worker will respond within a predetermined timeframe.
2. The Social Worker will meet with the Manager of Resident Care/Administrator/Director as required to discuss on-going case files and strategies. The Social Worker will maintain documentation records utilizing the Homes' Point Click Care documentation system.