



June 3, 2009

Via Courier and Email

Ms. Colleen Sonnenberg
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
LTCHA Regulation Project
56 Wellesley Street West, 9th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2J9

Dear Ms. Sonnenberg,

On behalf of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (the "OCSWSSW"), I thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the first set of proposed initial draft regulations under the *Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007, (LTCHA)*.

The OCSWSSW applauds the Minister's strategy to improve and strengthen care for residents in Ontario's long-term care homes by safeguarding resident rights, improving accountability of long-term care homes for residents' care and establishing clear and enforceable standards of care that will be consistently applied.

The College would like to make two recommendations respecting the draft regulations, for the Minister's consideration:

- (1) That the Comprehensive plan of care include assessment and care of residents' psychosocial needs (ref. Section 7);
- (2) That the draft regulations include the requirement for a Psychosocial Program to optimize residents' emotional, spiritual, cognitive and social functioning, (ref. Section 9).

As you are aware, the OCSWSSW is a professional regulatory body that was established under the *Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998, (SWSSWA)*. The College was created to protect the public interest, regulate the professions of social work and social service work and promote excellence in social work and social service work practice. To date, the College has more than 12,500 members. Unlike many of the other regulated professions that work in healthcare, the OCSWSSW is accountable to the Minister of Community and Social Services, rather than the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The College estimates that approximately 50% of its members are employed in settings that provide health care and the regulatory framework of the SWSSWA is very similar to the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991*.



As mentioned, the OCSWSSW regulates two professions, social work and social service work. To be registered as a social worker, an individual must have attained a degree in social work from an accredited or approved social work program. A Bachelor of Social Work degree is a four year university degree. A Master of Social Work degree is a further one to two years of study. To be registered as a social service worker, an applicant must have attained a diploma in social service work from a social service work program at a College of Applied Arts and Technology in Ontario. A social service worker program is two years in duration.

The College would like to comment on Part II, Residents: Rights, Care and Services of the initial draft regulation, specifically the Comprehensive plan of care, section 7 (3). The College notes that assessment of psychosocial needs is not included as part of the Comprehensive plan of care. The College believes that psychosocial well-being is an integral part of a comprehensive plan of care for all residents of long-term care homes. The scope of practice for social work includes achieving "optimum psychosocial functioning". The essential thrust of this concept is that to fully understand and effectively intervene in the lives of clients, it is imperative that the range of social systems that are part of their realities, as well as the persons themselves, are taken into account in the diagnostic and intervention processes. Implied in this term is the ability by the practitioner to assess the nature and functioning of the personality of the client(s) as well as to assess how such a unique profile interfaces with the broad spectrum of complex and interfacing societal systems with which a client interacts. A client's psychosocial issues may create barriers to their making use of services or treatment, and in these more complex situations, resolution of these issues and hence the change in psychosocial functioning may be critical. Thus, one of the outcomes of social work interventions and strategies is to achieve optimum functioning at both the emotional, interpersonal and social systemic level. Although achieving "optimum psychosocial functioning" is not contained within the scope of practice for social service workers, social service workers will understand that the social and psyche of the person are interrelated and within their scope of practice, will work with clients to achieve optimum social functioning.

The OCSWSSW would also like to bring to your attention that among the assessments included in the Comprehensive plan of care is "psychological well-being". Under section 8 (3) of the *Psychology Act, 1991*, "psychological" is a term that only members of the College of Psychologists of Ontario may use to describe the services they offer or provide. The OCSWSSW believes that the use of the restricted term "psychological" may be too limiting and would recommend replacing that term with the broader term of psychosocial assessment and care in a comprehensive plan of care for all long-term care home residents.



With respect to Section 9, Required Programs, the College notes that when the *LTCHA* is proclaimed into force, it would replace the *Nursing Home Act*, the *Homes for the Aged and Rest Homes Act*, the *Charitable Institutions Act* and that the Long-Term Care Homes Program Manual would cease to exist. It is the College's understanding that the current Long-Term Care Homes Program Manual stipulates that there shall be "an organized program of social work services.... to meet residents' psychosocial needs". It appears that neither the *LTCHA* nor the initial draft regulation includes a program of social work services or a program that must address residents' psychosocial needs. The draft regulations do set out four key interdisciplinary programs that every long-term care home must provide. These programs, while critically important, are focussed primarily on the physical needs of long-term care residents. The College believes that addressing residents' psychosocial needs is equally important in order to maximize the quality of life for the residents of long-term care facilities. Thus the College recommends that the regulations include the requirement for a Psychosocial Program that identifies psychosocial issues and promotes optimal emotional, spiritual, cognitive, and social functioning.

To conclude, I wish to thank you again on behalf of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers for the opportunity to provide feedback on the first set of proposed initial draft regulations under the *LTCHA*. Please feel free to contact me if you would like any additional information concerning this matter. I would be pleased to meet with you at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Glenda McDonald M.S.W., RSW
Registrar and Chief Executive Officer

cc: Alison Paprica, Acting Director
Long-Term Care Homes Act Regulation Project