

THE ROAD TO RECOGNITION

How do PSW's acquire recognition? What is the difference between Regulation and Registration? What exactly do these terms mean? Why aren't we moving forward?

These questions are directed to OPSWA on a daily basis from PSW's across the province. To answer these questions, everyone must have a clear understanding of the process involved.

To become a "Regulated" body, a professional group must meet government and professional criteria. They then establish a "College" that is the governing body for that group. Registered Nurses and Practical Nurses are governed by the College of Nurses of Ontario. Doctors are governed by the College of Physicians and Surgeons. This "College" is responsible for ensuring the licensing, professional behaviour, discipline and standards of practice for that particular profession. Membership fees are paid to support the operation and administration of this governing body.

Registration is a system of collecting and maintaining within a structured record, information on specific persons from a defined population, in our case PSW's, This Registration process must show that it is reflective of a majority of the population it represents. For most health care professions in the province the establishment of a Professional Association was the first step to provide protection, privileges and verification of the intent of the membership to be recognized. It also provides reliable data and numbers for the Ministry.

With these definitions in mind, we must now look at the hurdles facing PSW's in relation to moving forward.

Before any group can be considered for Regulation there are several criteria that must be met. Until these criteria are attained by PSW's, as a body, Regulation is **not** an option.

The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care has indicated to us that one of it's foremost considerations and concerns in relation to PSW's is **standardization of training and credentials**. There exists, in the Province, great variations in curriculum, preparation and clinical experience from one trainer to another. Even though each PSW is granted the same certificate upon completion of their training, it is obvious to PSW's, to employers and the Ministry that every PSW does not have the same preparation for their job. This discrepancy must be addressed by all stakeholders, including us, before we can proceed.

There must also be a **verifiable and demonstrated consensus** from all members of a group, in this case PSW's in Ontario, that they have a desire to work toward the goal of recognition. This initiative must come from within the group itself. Many of you have stated that you feel like a single "voice in the wilderness" with your concerns about job situations, accountability and scope of responsibility. We must speak with one voice! Registration is that voice!

It is time to stop complaining to ourselves and agree that in order to be heard by government and work toward change and recognition, we must demonstrate our collective commitment to doing so. The Ministry wants to see data. Numbers and statistics drive decisions in government funding and regulation, covering issues like salary guidelines in LTC and the community, job parameters, and providing care in homes or hospitals. We must be able to provide this data.

OPSWA is the professional Association created in response to this need, but OPSWA cannot be influential without a strong volume of memberships that speak in one voice and show that collective commitment. This can only be done by PSWs contributing time, effort and money. This can only be done by memberships...the membership of each and every PSW who wants to drive change and improve his/her status and working environment.