

Community Connections Support Services - Policies and Procedures

Section	Health and Safety Policy and Procedures
Subject	Personal Care Guidelines (ip045)
Applies To	Employees and Subcontractors
Effective Date	November 1995
Revised Date	January 2018

Policy: Employees and subcontractors who provide direct support are often in close proximity to those we serve and can be asked to be in private places performing intimate services such as bathing, toileting and dressing. It is imperative that employees and subcontractors follow guidelines to provide these services while maintaining professional boundaries and preserving the safety, privacy and dignity of those supported.

Procedures:

One of most important parts of maintaining good health is having good personal hygiene. Personal hygiene is keeping the body clean and preventing the spread of germs. How much assistance a person needs to attend to personal care needs is very individualized and will vary from person to person.

Definition

The Canadian Mental Health Association defines personal care as “any physical touching which includes but is not limited to assistance with bathing, toileting, incontinent care and intimate hygiene” (2016).

Boundaries and Privacy

People living with disabilities have a right to physical and emotional boundaries that protect their privacy. Often times however, “individuals with developmental disabilities have difficulty discriminating between who can and cannot touch them” (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2016).

The fact that people with disabilities do not mind caregivers taking care of their personal needs without even knowing them is an issue. As a result of having so many workers they are used to having their privacy and personal space invaded regularly by “strangers.” This can make them prime targets for abuse. [Support workers and home share providers] need to teach discrimination in terms of what the person(s) should say to them and what [support workers or home share providers] should be allowed to do with them. [Support workers or home share providers] must do all they can to teach people healthy personal boundaries and to model the same for them. (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2016)

Community Connections Support Services - Policies and Procedures

A person's privacy is to be honoured at all times and boundaries can be taught using the following support practices provided by the Canadian Mental Health Association (2016):

- **Teach privacy by modeling privacy**
- Make sure the person supported dresses, bathes and uses the toilet in private.
- Knock before entering a room.
- Close doors and blinds.
- Use proper draping procedures when assisting with personal routines where the person's body may be exposed. Add barriers between the person and yourself (and any others in the vicinity). This can be accomplished by taking off and putting on one piece of clothing at a time, and covering parts of the person's body with a towel or a sheet.
- **Ask permission to do or assist.** Always ask to see and always ask to touch. Do not proceed if the person declines assistance.
- **Wait for consent.** (Even if the person you are supporting is non-verbal, allow them time to indicate with body language if this touch is okay.)
- **Explain each step of any procedure** – what you are doing and why. As you pair your words with your actions you will teach respectful touch.
- Remember to bring appropriate clothing when moving from location to location (e.g. bedroom to bathroom).
- Position yourself to give as much privacy as possible, if you must remain in private rooms (bedroom, bathroom).
- **Keep private subjects private.** Do not discuss a person's bodily functions, sexual habits or personal hygiene publicly; defer questions about private subjects to a private time and place; teach where and when certain subjects can be discussed, and follow those rules yourself. Even personal care skills like hair care and tooth brushing are personal routines which need to occur in private areas.

Create an addiction to respectful touch. A person who has learned to expect respectful touch will react to violation. Support workers or home share providers must not teach over-compliance. People with disabilities say "yes" even when they mean "no". It is important to give people with disabilities permission not to hug a person and to say "NO." By empowering the person you support to say "NO", this creates a hostile environment for a possible abuser and a safe place for people with disabilities to live (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2016).

Teaching and Assisting

In every area of personal care, the focus of a support worker or home share provider should be on assisting rather than 'doing for' and teaching skills for a person to learn to maintain their own personal care needs. This applies to all areas of personal care and includes grooming. Identifying and documenting individual personal care needs and grooming preferences are a necessary and required part of each person's ISP and health care plan. Plans should also include identifying effective protocols to support and assist the person to have these needs met.

Community Connections Support Services - Policies and Procedures

Balancing Privacy and Potential Risk

Employees and subcontractors are also “expected to be proactive and address any potential risks associated with bathing or provision of personal care” (CLBC, 2007). Based on a person’s individual risk assessment, safety concerns may arise when addressing personal care needs. For instance, a person with significant mobility issues or a person without awareness of safe practices in water should not be left alone when bathing. Similarly, a person with hand coordination difficulties should not be left to tend to shaving needs alone. It is necessary to balance privacy rights with ensuring safety and minimal risk exposure for the person supported. When a person supported requires full, hands-on support from their support worker or home share provider, it is essential to deliver this support in a manner which preserves the person’s dignity, honours their right to privacy and choice and teaches appropriate boundaries.

Bathing

All employees and subcontractors must follow protocols established in CLBC Bathing Guidelines (see policy ip045.1). In addition, the following practices are recommended:

When possible, this activity is to be completed by a female support worker or home share provider for women and by male support workers or home share providers for men. The employee or subcontractor needs to know what bathing skills an individual has before beginning to provide assistance and support. It is important that the employee or subcontractor provide whatever assistance and support is needed to ensure a person is clean. Occasionally checking a person’s personal care skills and assisting when needed will help prevent body odour, discomfort, and infection.

The following procedures should be adapted to the specific needs and preferences of each person supported. It is the job of the employee or subcontractor to continue to teach, assist, and support each person in learning good personal care habits.

- Remember to check water temperature. It should be warm to the touch.
- Wash, rinse, and dry each body part to prevent chilling, exposure, and chapping.
- Inspect skin for signs of injury or changes in condition.
- Use soap sparingly and do not leave in water.
- Provide privacy and warmth for the person.
- Talk about things of interest to the person.
- Encourage the person to do as much as he or she can for him/herself.
- Demonstrate and explain correct bathing or showering procedures.
- Be prepared with all supplies.
- Be sure your hands are washed and clean.

Community Connections Support Services - Policies and Procedures

Safety Reminders:

- Never leave a person unattended in the shower or tub unless it is written that way in the person's ISP or health care plan.
- The choice between tub bathing and showering is a matter of personal preference unless it is specified in the person's ISP or health care plan or a medical condition dictates which method to use (e.g., open infectious wounds, plaster casts, individual mobility and stability, etc.).
- Unplug all electrical appliances in the bathroom (curling irons, electric razors, hair dryers, radio, etc.)
- If a person has a seizure while bathing, follow this procedure:
 1. Immediately support and protect the head.
 2. Start the water draining from the tub.
 3. Call for assistance.
 4. Follow the first aid steps for a seizure.
- People who have a history of seizures should use a shower chair while showering unless their ISP or health care plan specifies otherwise.
- If a person has a seizure while showering in a chair, turn off the water and lower the person to the floor and follow the steps for first aid for a seizure.

Hair Grooming

Having clean, well groomed hair is important to everyone, and is no less so for the person you support. The person you support may like different brands of shampoo or conditioner and may have a preferred style. They may also change their minds about how they style their hair. All of these choices should be respected and supported.

- Remember, hairstyle is an individual choice.
- Use only the person's personal comb and brush.
- Clean comb and brush regularly.
- Combs with sharp teeth can injure sensitive scalps.
- Use comb and brush with a gentle touch.
- Encourage the person you support to do as much as he or she can for him/herself.

Fingernail and Toenail Care

Cleaned and trimmed fingernails and toenails are important for overall health. Germs often collect underneath the nails. Frequent and thorough hand washing and foot care is a good way to prevent germ or fungus buildup. Nails that become too long and/or are rough and torn can scratch and cut an individual's skin and may result in a local infection.

Some people (those with diabetes) should have their nail care completed by a health care professional. Athlete's foot, a fungus that causes an inflammation, cracking, and peeling of the skin between the toes and can also infect the toenails is of particular concern, and must be treated as soon as it is noted.

Community Connections Support Services - Policies and Procedures

- Special care should be practised when assisting with nail care.
- Individuals with diabetes require professional assistance with nail care.
- Toenails and fingernails should be kept clean, neatly trimmed, and smooth to prevent injury to skin.
- Trimming the nail too short may cause ingrown nails that can be painful and cause infection.
- Encourage the person you support to do as much as they can for themselves.

Shaving

Shaving one's legs, underarms, or face is a very personal matter. Cultural differences may be a key to whether a person shaves or does not shave. For example, in some cultures, women do not shave their legs or underarms. In some cultures, men do not shave their facial hair. It is important to assist and support the person to shave safely and to avoid nicks and cuts that can lead to infection. Some people may learn to use an electric razor. Other people may be assisted and supported in using a blade razor.

- An electric razor should not be used in same room where oxygen is used.
- Electric razors should not be used around water.
- Check all types of razors for chips or rust on the blades.
- Always dispose of used razor blades.
- Use only a person's personal razor.
- Supervise the use of razors closely for safe and correct handling before the person you support shaves independently.
- Encourage the person you support to do as much for him or herself as possible.

Community Connections Support Services - Policies and Procedures

References:

Canadian Mental Health Association. (2016). Personal Care Guidelines. Retrieved January 16, 2018, from <https://cmhaww.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Personal-Care-Guidelines-SSAH.pdf>

CLBC. (2007). Bathing Guidelines Policy. Retrieved January 19, 2018, from <http://www.communitylivingbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Bathing-Guidelines-Policy.pdf>

Nursing Assistant Care. (2009). Personal Care, Hygiene, and Grooming. Retrieved January 19, 2018, from [http://www.cmhcm.org/provider/centrain/TrainingUnits/Personal Care Hygiene Grooming.pdf](http://www.cmhcm.org/provider/centrain/TrainingUnits/Personal%20Care%20Hygiene%20Grooming.pdf)

For further information on this policy or permission to reprint, please contact:

Jacqueline Burnham, BA
Director - Strategic Management
Community Connections Support Services
275 Rutland Road North
Kelowna, BC V1X 3B1
ph. (250) 491-2907 fx.(250) 491-2920
jacqueline@commconn.ca
www.commconn.ca