

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Academic Year:	2026-2027
Credential:	College Certificate
Program Delivery:	Full-Time
Duration:	1 Year
Length:	2 Semesters
Program Code(s)	H136 - (PC) Timmins Campus H138 - (KL) Kirkland Lake Campus H139 - (HL) Haileybury Campus

DESCRIPTION

In just one year, Northern's Personal Support Worker (PSW) program will have you out in the workforce, providing vital care and support that forms the backbone of community health and wellbeing. In a program that promotes awareness, sensitivity, and respect for clients' unique needs, you'll develop a therapeutic and helpful approach in assisting your clients.

Personal support workers are unregulated healthcare providers who work under supervision. As a vital member of the healthcare team, they follow clearly identified care plans and the established policies and procedures of their work agencies.

Personal support workers provide personal care and assist with routine activities of daily living and household management. They are responsible for practicing professionally by creating, promoting, and maintaining safe and comfortable environments for clients, families, and others. They often have the most contact with clients and develop therapeutic relationships through trust, respect, and understanding. The attitude and approach of personal support workers, along with their practical skills, is beneficial to the health, comfort, and safety of their clients.

Recognizing the importance and value of the personal support worker role, Northern's program prepares students to develop a broad range of abilities and skills. In the classroom and our state-of-the-art practice labs, students learn and practice personal care skills, develop a solid code of ethics, refine their communication skills, and master the medical terminology needed on the job. This program was developed as part of Ontario's plan to support residents and connect them with the care needed at home and in their communities.

After two semesters of classroom learning Laboratory activities and clinical practice, students complete a placement in a long-term care facility or home care agency. Students will graduate with an Ontario College Certificate – their gateway to a rewarding career.

Program Delivery: Northern's Personal Support Worker program requires most courses to be taken in-person and on campus due to the nature of laboratory and clinical learning. Some part-time options are available and there are a number of courses that can be taken online, but students are required to attend in-person classes and placements to graduate from the program. Contact the program coordinator to help choose your best options and to plan your courses. Note that online courses are not part of our full-time program but may provide transfer credits for course equivalencies.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Following successful completion of their program, graduates may be employed in a variety of community and institutional agencies. Personal support workers care for clients who are stable and who have clearly identified needs that are not expected to change significantly. They work under supervision and as valuable members of care/service teams; provide personal care and home management services to clients who are experiencing physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioural challenges. They can provide organized competent care for individual clients and for their assigned multi-client groups. Personal support workers may also work under the direction of the client.

VOCATIONAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Work within the personal support worker role in various care settings in accordance with all applicable legislation, standards, employer job descriptions, policies, procedures and guidelines.
2. Practice professionally and be accountable for one's own actions by applying problem-solving, self-awareness, time management and critical thinking to the provision of care as a personal support worker, whether working independently or as a member of a team.
3. Practice as an engaged member of the interprofessional team to maintain collaborative working relationships for the provision of supportive, safe, and responsive client-centered care within care settings.
4. Provide person-centered care, based on ethical principles, sensitive to diverse personal and family values, beliefs, cultural practices and other needs, which follows the plan of care.
5. Establish and maintain therapeutic relationships with clients and their families using effective communication skills to build a trusting, and respectful partnership, in accordance with professional boundaries, employer policies, confidentiality, and privacy legislation.
6. Identify information related to the client's health using observation, critical thinking and communication skills to record, report and document all relevant findings, within the roles and responsibilities of the personal support worker.
7. Create, promote and maintain a safe and comfortable environment for clients, their families, self and others by including the implementation of current infection prevention and control measures, preparedness and best practices in pandemic planning, emergency and first aid procedures that are in alignment with the plan of care, employer policies, procedures, and all applicable legislation.
8. Assist clients across the lifespan with activities of daily living by applying fundamental knowledge of growth and development, psychological concepts, common alterations in functioning, health promotion, disease prevention, rehabilitation and restorative care, and holistic health care.
9. Assist the client with medication following the client's plan of care and if a delegated act, under the supervision of a regulated health professional or done by exception under the most accountable person and in accordance with all applicable legislation and employer policies.
10. Assist with household management services and instrumental activities of daily living in accordance with the plan of care and considering the preferences, comfort, safety and autonomy of clients, families and significant others.
11. Assist and support clients who are caregivers for dependent individuals, considering individual and family choices, professional boundaries and the direction of the plan of care.
12. Identify, respond to and report potential, alleged, suspected or witnessed situations of abuse, and/or neglect, as required within the personal support workers' role and responsibilities, and as required by all applicable legislation, including the Retirement Homes Act, 2010 and the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007.

13. Assist with the provision of holistic health care and advocacy for culturally and spiritually sensitive palliative and end-of-life care to clients and to their families and significant others from diagnosis through to death and bereavement, and in accordance with clients' choices and the plan of care.
14. Provide client-centered care to individuals experiencing mental health challenges and illness(es), cognitive and intellectual impairments, and/or responsive behaviours by using supportive approaches and evidence-based practices to promote positive and safe behaviours in clients.

PROGRAM COURSES

The following reflects the planned course sequence for full-time offerings of the program. Programs at Northern College are delivered using a variety of instruction modes. Courses may be offered in the classroom or lab, entirely online, or in a hybrid mode which combines classroom sessions with virtual learning activities.

Semester 1		Hours
CM1323	Professional Communications	42
GN1443	Indigenous Culture and Awareness	42
PN1033	Human Relationships	42
PW1024	PSW Practice I	56
PW1113	Common Health Challenges	42
PW1123	PSW Roles and Responsibilities	42
PW1133	Human Body: Structure and Function	42
Semester 2		
PS1032	Mental Health and Cognitive Challenges	27
PW2011	PSW Clinical Practice	120
PW2012	End of Life Care and Support	27
PW2017	Preceptorship	263
PW2022	PSW Practice II	27

PROGRAM PROGRESSION

The following reflects the planned progression for full-time offerings of the program.

Fall Intake

Sem 1: Fall 2026

Sem 2: Winter 2027

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD)
- Grade 12 English (C, M, U)
- Or equivalent

For more details, please contact the Admissions Office at 705-235-7222 or admissions@northern.on.ca.

Additional Requirements for International Students

In addition to the admission requirements, international students must have proof of [English Proficiency](#) and meet the requirements below.

1. Proof of Senior High School Diploma/Certificate
2. English Proficiency (we will require one of the following):
 - IELTS Academic (International English Language Testing System: a minimum overall score of 6.0 must be achieved with no individual band score under 5.5
 - TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) – Internet Based Test (iBT) overall minimum score of 88+
 - PTE (Pearson Test of English) Academic 60+

If your country of citizenship has English as its official language, we may accept alternate proof of English Proficiency. All educational documents must be submitted in English and will be dependent on the country of citizenship. For more information, please contact admissions@northern.on.ca.

PROGRAM SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Refer to the program page for [Personal Support Worker Clinical Requirements](#) documentation.

COVID-19 vaccinations are now required for all students in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Practical Nursing and Personal Support Worker programs, in order to be permitted to attend clinical hours.

Students who do not comply with the immunization requirements will not be allowed into the practice settings and as such may not be able to complete the Practicum required to graduate from the program. CPR re-certification, criminal reference checks and immunization updates are required annually. Any costs for these tests/certifications will be the responsibility of the applicant.

Students are responsible for the cost of appropriate uniforms and equipment (e.g. watch, pen, etc.) required for the clinical area as well as transportation to practicum placements. Mask fit testing will be provided by the College prior to clinical practice.

As of January 1, 2005, the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) requires all applicants for registration or reinstatement from within Canada to provide a recent Canadian Police Information Centre Criminal Record Synopsis (CPIC check) and Vulnerable Sector check as part of the registration process.

The CPIC check registration requirement enhances public protection by allowing CNO to identify those who have criminal records that could affect their suitability to practice nursing.

Mask Fit Testing: This program requires that students wear a full-face self-contained breathing air (SCBA) mask and an approved N95 particulate respirator during certain learning situations reflective of safe workplace practice and standards. To successfully complete Mask Fit Testing to wear an SCBA mask and N95 mask, students shall present themselves for fit testing free from interference of hair where the respirator seals to the skin or neck. Students are required to be clean-shaven or have no hair where the mask seals to the skin.

Work Integrated Learning Opportunities

This program includes a clinical placement.

Articulation / Transfer Agreements

A number of articulation agreements have been negotiated with universities and other institutions across Canada, North America and internationally. These agreements are assessed, revised and updated on a regular basis. Please contact the program coordinator for specific details if you are interested in pursuing such an option. Additional information can be found at [Articulation Agreements](#).

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

- 10 Program Courses
- 1 Communication Course
- 1 General Education Course

Graduation Eligibility

To graduate from this program, a student must attain a minimum of 60% or a letter grade of CR (Credit) in each course in each semester unless otherwise stated on the course outline. Students should consult departmental policies and manuals for additional detail and exceptions.

Graduation Window

Students unable to adhere to the program duration of one year (as stated above) may take a maximum of two years to complete their credential. After this time, students must be re-admitted into the program, and follow the curriculum in place at the time of re-admission.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions about being admitted into the program, please contact Northern College Admissions at admissions@northern.on.ca or by phone at 705-235-3211 ext. 7222. For questions about the content of the program, contact the Program Coordinator.

Timmins Campus

Tracy Bayley
Program Coordinator
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Kirkland Lake Campus

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Haileybury Campus

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COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Semester 1

CM1323 Professional Communications

In this course, students will learn essential skills for success in college and the workplace. This course focuses on developing and strengthening oral and written communication skills, and critical thinking ability. During this course, students will engage in a variety of forms of communication with a focus on upholding the principles of academic integrity. Students will develop the skills necessary to create discipline-specific documents, practice business etiquette and professionalism, and apply critical thinking strategies to practical scenarios. Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to plan and draft concise, coherent and well-organized writing assignments that are tailored to specific audiences and purposes.

GN1443 Indigenous Culture and Awareness

This general education course will provide students with an introduction to Canadian Indigenous Nations' history, sovereignty, land titles, cultural history and current critical issues. Topics addressed include the content of Indigenous rights, economic and social development, community and political processes, and business law and policies, justice & social services. Canadian Indigenous History and Relations is a general education course that has been incorporated into all programs at Northern College.

PN1033 Human Relationships

In this course, students will engage in effective professional relationships with clients and colleagues. With a focus on communication skills, students will learn to: build therapeutic relationships, provide person-centered care, work within an interprofessional team, and manage conflict within the workplace. These skills will be taught with a sensitivity to diversity, values, beliefs, and cultural practices. Stress management techniques will be reviewed to highlight the importance of self-care when working in healthcare.

PW1024 PSW Practice I

In this course, students will learn various healthcare skills required by clients in selected age groups. Students will identify relevant client information, assist with activities of living, and promote safe, client-centered care. Healthcare skills will be taught and practiced in classroom and laboratory settings. Students will have the opportunity to demonstrate safe and competent care within the practice environment with standardized clients. With a focus on infection prevention, hygiene and grooming, elimination, nutrition and mobility support, and basic assessments, this course will prepare students to enter clinical practice in their second semester.

PW1113 Common Health Challenges

This course introduces students to the aging process and its impact on the client and normal body functions. Students will identify common diseases and disorders, and their impact on activities of daily living. Students will select appropriate care and support required by clients with these conditions, as directed by the plan of care. The importance of observing and reporting signs and symptoms associated with these conditions will be reviewed. Students will learn the basic classifications of medications used for these common diseases and disorders. The concepts of disease prevention, health promotion and maintenance, rehabilitation, and restorative care will be reviewed with the goal of supporting client comfort and independence.

PW1123 PSW Roles and Responsibilities

This course introduces the roles and responsibilities of the PSW within a variety of workplace settings to students. Students will review the Canadian healthcare system and learn about the legislation and standards

that pertain to the role of the PSW and other healthcare workers. Students will learn the professional responsibilities of unregulated and regulated health professionals in order to work as an effective member of the interdisciplinary team. Ethical and moral principles will be reviewed, with a focus on providing safe, client-centered care. Students will learn the importance of confidentiality, documentation, and reporting within the role of the PSW.

PW1133 Human Body: Structure and Function

In this course, students will be introduced to the normal structures and functions of the human body throughout the lifespan with an emphasis on maintaining homeostasis and health promotion. Students will use correct medical terminology to describe the components of normal cells, tissues, organs, and body systems as they relate to activities of daily living, and to identify alterations that are beyond the scope of a PSW and require further assistance to promote comfort and safety.

Semester 2**PS1032 Mental Health and Cognitive Challenges**

In this course, students will be introduced to various mental health and cognitive challenges that may be experienced by clients. With a focus on responsive behaviours, students will explore supportive approaches to assist and care for clients with these conditions. The concepts of disorientation, delirium, and dementia will be emphasized with the goal of providing client-centered care. Developmental disorders, and their effect on holistic functioning, will also be reviewed.

PW2011 PSW Clinical Practice

This course provides students with the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills in the clinical practice setting. Students will complete 110-120 hours of clinical placement (which may vary by campus) in a long-term care facility under the direct supervision of a clinical instructor. Students will demonstrate their ability to: work within the PSW role as a member of the interprofessional team; provide safe, client-centered care; maintain professionalism while establishing therapeutic relationships with clients and families; identify, document and report relevant client information; and assist clients with their activities of daily living. The clinical experience of PW 2011 provides students with a preparatory experience prior to entering PW2017 Preceptorship.

PW2012 End of Life Care and Support

This course introduces students to palliative and end of life care. Students will identify appropriate methods of supporting clients and their families with the process of dying, as directed by the plan of care. The role of the PSW within the interprofessional team will be reviewed. A focus on personal beliefs and cultural sensitivity will be examined to assist in providing client-centered support and care. Students will also examine legal issues and client rights surrounding death and dying.

PW2017 Preceptorship

This course provides students with the opportunity to perform all the duties and responsibilities of a PSW under the guidance and supervision of a PSW preceptor. Students will work independently with their preceptor in the PSW role to demonstrate safe, competent, and client-centered care. Students will complete 240 hours of preceptorship in preparation for graduation workplace entry.

PW 2022 PSW Practice II

In this course, students will practice advanced PSW skills to support clients in a variety of settings. Skills will be taught and practiced in classroom and laboratory settings. Students will follow the plan of care and assist clients with medications, provide continence and nutrition support, and complete household management tasks. With a focus on community-based settings, students will demonstrate the importance of their observations through documenting and reporting to a supervisor while working within an interprofessional team. This course will support students in their clinical practice and throughout their preceptorship experience.