



Perinatal Support Worker

www.pnsw.org

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Canada's ONLY perinatal training program for PSWs!

PRENATAL & FERTILITY

Fertility & Antepartum Support

Pregnancy, Labour & Birthing Coach

Develop & Facilitate Pre & Post-Natal Education Classes & Workshops



NEWBORN & POSTPARTUM CARE

In home day & night support
Breastfeeding & Newborn Education,
Maternal Care
Parental Education



PROVIDE SERVICES in

Birthing Clinics
Hospitals
In Home Care
Health Clinics
Breastfeeding Clinics
Parenting Education Facilities
Private Businesses



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www.pnsw.org
416.252.5649



info@pnsw.org
416.508.4406

We would like to introduce you to a truly unique education program focused on supporting women and their families throughout the reproductive years.

Based on the successful UK Maternity Support Worker program model, we have created Canada's Perinatal Support Worker (PNSW) program.

The PNSW program is an accredited, advanced program for personal support workers (PSW) which covers the period from fertility through the first year of a newborn's life. The program encompasses support for low and high risk women (social as well as medical) which includes working with the disabled community. No other program offers such a comprehensive approach to providing support.

“Support and services for disabled mothers are almost totally inaccessible or do not exist. Existing women's services are often inaccessible to women with disabilities.”
DAWN Ontario: Disabled Women's Network Ontario

Upon completion of the program, the PNSW will continue to function as a personal support worker both independently and under the supervision of a licensed health care professional such as a nurse or midwife depending upon the circumstance of their employment.

As an independent, ancillary member of the health care team the PNSW will be able to act as an advocate for the clients and families whom they support. Working in collaboration with other members of the health care team the PNSW can create the most appropriate and personalized emotional, educational, and physical support for clients and their families. The PNSW will also be able to deliver various pre-natal and post-natal education classes to new and expecting parents.

The PNSW program educational model is comprised of over 120 hours of in-class education, a 500 hour practicum and a written, proctored exam. A mark of 80% or more is required for graduation and awarding of the PNSW diploma.

It is expected that the employment opportunities for the PNSW will be similar to those currently available to the PSW, offering the opportunity for both self and gainful employment, depending upon the needs/desires of the individual PNSW.

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It is clear that we are at a time when the PSW requires a more comprehensive viable career opportunity. The PNSW program is a necessity within the perinatal industry and provides this perfect opportunity. The arrival of birthing centres in Ontario coupled with the provincial government's stated desire to increase support for all families has already created a demand for this type of trained support worker making the PNSW the most logical choice.

“Our plan is obsessively patient-centered. From patients to doctors, front-line nurses to hospital administrators, personal support workers to LHINs — everyone has a role to play in this health care transformation.”

Ontario's Action Plan For Health Care

There are currently established companies offering pre-natal and postpartum support who are excited about this new program as there is an increase in demand and not enough trained and educated professionals to fill these roles.

The PNSW program will offer a new and innovative career for PSWs whose passion is working with new and expecting families.



“You are a birth servant. Do good without show or fuss. If you must take the lead, lead so that the mother is helped but still free and in charge. When the baby is born they will rightly say: ‘We did it ourselves’ ”

Tao Te Ching

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What is a Perinatal Support Worker and how is that different from traditional service provider?

The Perinatal Support Worker training is comprised of a combination of over 120 in class programming, a structured independent learning program (approximately 300 hours) and 500 hours of practicum for a total of 920 hours. A traditional service provider program is usually offered as a two day weekend with 16-18 hours of in class training and 30-35 hours of independent work for a total of 56 academic hours. The PNSWs longer training time allows our students ample time for discussion and in-depth exploration of the various program topics. Providing students with more time to process the information they receive allows them to understand the benefit of their role within their scope of practice, provide the best support possible to their clients and to become respected members of the health care team.

The Perinatal Support Worker program differs from traditional programs in that the curriculum covers the whole reproductive cycle from infertility to postpartum as well as a range of topics from newborn care, feeding, sleep, postpartum mood disorders and more. The program faculty is comprised of multiple industry leaders who are active in the field and the education takes place within a college setting. Upon completion of the program, a Perinatal Support Worker will be able to provide clients with continuous, non-medical support from conception to birth and beyond.

Traditional service provider programs focus on a single aspect of the reproductive cycle such as labor or postpartum support. Students in these programs may have a level of understanding for the type of support needed in the area of focus for the training workshop such as labor and postpartum support but this may result in service providers having significant knowledge gaps in areas they chose not to be educated in. These education gaps can leave the clients with poor or little support when circumstances fall outside of their support workers selected area of education. With this situation in mind, the Perinatal Support Worker program ensures that all of its support providers understand the unique needs which can arise at each stage throughout a client's reproductive cycle to postpartum.

The Perinatal Support Worker program offers its student's continuous mentorship throughout the program until completion. Traditional service provider programs may not offer formal mentorship and students may not be provided with academic support throughout the independent learning portion of the program. This has led to an industry situation where students in the traditional stream complete the "in class" portion of their training but not the independent learning portion and are therefore unable to meet the requirements of certification.

Course completion is an essential component of the Perinatal Support Worker program which is why the mentorship and independent learning portion of the program have been incorporated into the program. An individual cannot be titled a PNSW unless they have received a graduating certificate from the PNSW program and the College and are active members of OPSWA.. **All PNSWs must have valid membership with OPSWA (Ontario Personal Support Workers Association) which will include CPR, background checks and Liability Insurance prior to working as a PNSW.**

Perinatal Support Workers will provide comprehensive support to new and expecting families within their home environment and alongside their health care team.

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What types of roles will the Perinatal Support Worker be able to support?

The PNSW may be able to work in many different roles both in the prenatal and postpartum period.

In the prenatal period, PNSW may be able to fill roles such as:

- Fertility Support
- Prenatal education classes
- Antepartum support
- Pregnancy Coach
- Labor & Birthing Coach

In the postpartum period, the PNSW may be able to fill roles such as:

- In home day support
- In home night support
- Breastfeeding education & hands on support
- Newborn care education & hands on support
- Maternal care
- Paternal education & support
- Education & support with multiples birth & special needs infants
- Parental Education Classes

Where would a Perinatal Support Worker be able to obtain employment?

- Birthing clinics
- Hospitals
- In Home
- Doctors Clinic
- Breastfeeding Clinics
- Parenting Education Facilities
- Private Businesses

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Role of the PNSW:

- The PNSW is trained to provide evidence based educational, emotional and physical support appropriate to the individual needs of the client/s.
- The PNSW may provide light housekeeping and light meal preparation during the course of providing support for their client/s.
- The PNSW provides supportive care for newborns and infants up to the age of 1 year
- The PNSW does not provide daycare services as part of their support
- The PNSW may accompany a client to a health care facility, or visit with a health care provider but only in a supportive roll.
- The PNSW may perform non-invasive, clinical tasks such as blood pressure and urinalysis while under the supervision of a licensed health care provider.
- The PNSW cannot act on behalf of their client/s.
- The PNSW does not provide transportation services to client/s.
- The PNSW cannot offer medical advice or provide medical services.
- The PNSW provides non-judgemental, unbiased support for their client/s
- The PNSW provides continuous support for their client/s



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Benefits of having the support of a PNSW during pregnancy, labor and birth:

- Increase in the likelihood of a spontaneous vaginal birth
- Decrease length of labour
- Decrease in the use of Pitocin
- Decrease in the risk of C-section
- Decrease in the use of any medications for pain relief
- Decrease in the risk of newborns being admitted to a special care nursery
- Decrease in the risk of being dissatisfied with the birth experience
- Increase breastfeeding success
- Decrease risk of postpartum depression

“Given the clear benefits and absence of adverse effects of continuous labour support, policy makers should consider including it as a covered service for all WOMEN.” : Hodnett ED, Gates S, Hofmeyr GJ, Sakala C. Continuous support for women during childbirth. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2012, Issue 10. Art. No.: CD003766. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD003766.pub4

Benefits of having the support of a PNSW after birth for the first few months:

- Increased likelihood of exclusive breastfeeding long term
- Increased confidence in newborn care, handling and parent bonding
- Decrease in postpartum mood disorders or need for medications
- Decrease in risk of SIDS
- Increased likelihood of developing proper sleep habits for baby and parents(s)
- Decreased frustration and anxiety from parents
- Increase in bonding as a family unit
- Decrease in medical treatments, medication and intervention in the long term



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Perinatal Support Worker Course Outline

The PNSW course is comprised of 8 modules, each with approximately 16-18 hours of in class participation as well as another 15-20 hours per month of guided independent study and 500 hours of a supervised practicum. The program can be completed in as little as 12 months however, students are expected to complete the program within 24 months of starting the classes. Students who successfully complete the academic portion of the program will be eligible to write the PNSW exam. Students with an overall average of 80% will be graduated from the program with a certificate of completion

The in-class sessions include theory and skills practice, important factors in developing and exercising the skills necessary for providing perinatal support. Students are provided with mentoring from the various faculty members. Opportunities for field work may arise throughout the program. Whenever possible these will be offered to students. Students who register early may be able to enter the Advanced Learning Programing which allows them to begin submitting academic work for marks prior to beginning the classes.

Program Objectives

Upon completion of this program the learner is expected to understand and/or demonstrate:

- The role of the PNSW and the scope of practice.
- The importance of working within the PSW & PNSW scope of practice.
- The importance of using evidence-based resources and practices to support clients throughout the reproductive cycle.
- The skills to work as a professional in an interdisciplinary health care setting.
- The skills necessary to provide non-judgemental support to a diverse population.
- The skills to individualize education and resources which reflect the needs of a client when supporting their right to practice informed decision making.
- An understanding of maternal/infant health and how to provide safe and professional support.
- The benefits of breastfeeding for mother and baby and how to facilitate best outcomes for breastfeeding success.
- The importance of facilitating partner's ability to support mother and baby.
- The impact of sleep on wellbeing and how to facilitate healthy sleeping habits for parents and babies.

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PNSW Curriculum

Module 1

History of Childbirth
Principles of Adult Education
Working with Diverse Populations
Issues Affecting Pregnancy & Birth
Research and Theory

Module 2

Anatomy and Physiology
Non-Invasive Clinical Skills
Infection Control
Informed Consent
Scope of Practice
Pregnancy

Module 3

Relaxation & Mindfulness
Fertility & Acupuncture
Labour & Delivery I

Module 4

Labour & Delivery II
Immediate Post-Partum
Bereavement

Module 5

Postpartum Newborn
Postpartum Maternal
Postpartum Partner

Module 6

Infant & Maternal Nutrition
Parenting

Module 7

Infant Health & Wellness
Ethics & Business Skills

Module 8

16 Hour Breastfeeding Certificate Training

Upon completion of the modules, assigned independent course work, the required practicum/apprenticeship hours and registration with OPSWA, the learner will be eligible to take the PNSW exam. A grade of 80% is required to be considered a pass.



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Commonly asked questions

- 1. What is a PNSW?** A Perinatal Support Worker or PNSW is a PSW who has graduated from a specialized program in perinatal care which allows them to provide non- medical, physical, emotional and educational support for women and their families from pregnancy through to the 1st year of infancy.
- 2. How is a PNSW different from a doula?** A PNSW is a graduate from an academic program who has been educated and trained to facilitate the educational, emotional and physical support requirements of their clients beginning in pregnancy, through the birth and extending into the 1st year of infancy. A traditional support person does not require any education or training.
- 3. Are there any prerequisites to enter into the PNSW program?** Yes, you must be a Personal Support Worker graduate from a recognized college/secondary institution.
- 4. Do I have to be a PNSW to do traditional support work?** No, but you would need to be a PNSW to do PNSW work.
- 5. What are the advantages to being a PNSW?** A PNSW is a PSW who has graduated from an advanced academic/practicum support program. A PNSW graduate receives a comprehensive education that will prepare them for working with a variety of families throughout the reproductive cycle and into the 1st year of infancy. This is the only program of this type available in Canada. In addition, the PNSW program will serve as preparation for the ICEA exam for those students who wish to become certified as a Childbirth Educator. The PNSW program also offers more training & opportunity to a PSW interested in working in the perinatal sector.
- 6. What are the disadvantages to being a PNSW?** There are no disadvantages to a graduated, academic/apprentice program.
- 7. How long does it take to become a PNSW?** The academic portion of the program is approximately 300 hours. 140 hours of this time is spent in class (16-18 hours per weekend). One weekend session every month over a period of 8 months. In addition the student is expected to complete approximately 300 hours of independent study. Following the academic portion of the program students are required to complete 500 hours of practicum comprised of labour support, post-partum support and breastfeeding support. Once the student has successfully completed the practicum they will be eligible to write the PNSW exam.
- 8. If I have already taken doula training does it count towards the PNSW course?** Due to the wide variances in doula trainings we are not able to apply previous trainings to the academic portion of the program. Students with previous work experience can petition to have a portion of this applied against their practicum hours.
- 9. How much of the time is spent on in class learning?** There are approximately 140 hours of classroom time.
- 10. How much of time is expected for independent learning?** On average a student should anticipate working at least 30-40 hours per month on their independent learning. Independent learning includes a variety of activities including: required readings, book reports, class projects, presentation preparation, research and writing for the required papers.

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11. **How much of the time is spent in the practicum?** The practicum portion of the program is 500 hours. These hours are broken into the following minimum requirements: 200 hours devoted to labour and delivery support, 200 hours devoted to postpartum support, 50 hours devoted to breastfeeding support and an addition 50 hours of other related support.
12. **Can I still work while taking the PNSW course?** The in class portion of the program is offered as weekend sessions. There are 8 weekend sessions (16-18 hours) over an 8 month period so that those currently employed can continue to work while taking the PNSW course.
13. **Can I still work while completing the practicum portion of the PNSW course?** The 500-practicum hours can be completed during off work time. However it is expected that you will have your practicum completed within a confirmed time frame.
14. **Do I need to have a college or university background to take the PNSW course?** You need to be a graduate from a recognized PSW program to apply for acceptance into the PNSW program.
15. **Will there be a final exam for the PNSW course?** Yes. Upon successful completion of the academic and practicum portion of the program the student will be eligible to write the PNSW exam. Students with a passing grade of 80% will receive a certificate from the College and the PNSW program. Graduates must also be in good standing with OPSWA.
16. **Are PNSWs regulated by the government?** At present, service workers are not regulated by the Ontario Government. The process of standardization for service workers has begun. The PNSW program was developed to meet regulatory requirements in anticipation of this change. Our partnership with OPSWA is the first step towards standardization and thus all PNSW students and Registered PNSWs **MUST** be active members with OPSWA in order to work as a PNSW. Please note that OPSWA is the association for all support workers.
17. **What is the tuition for the PNSW training?** The tuition for the training is \$3000.00 plus HST and the cost for course materials is approximately \$250 including HST. There may be additional costs associated with recommended books and educational materials which students may wish to purchase. **There are also several Early Bird discounts available for early registration.**
18. **How much can I expect to earn as a PNSW?** \$20-\$30 per hour is the recommended hourly rate for a PNSW graduate doing fieldwork. For the PNSW who is hired in a healthcare facility the fees may not be as much however the hours may be more regular. Fee structure will vary based on type of service being performed ie. labour support fees can range between \$800 and \$1200 which includes both pre and post-partum visits in addition to attendance at birth. For post-partum work shift premiums of up to 40% may be applied when working over night or with multiples. Childbirth Educators charge approximately \$35 per hour.
19. **Where can I expect to find work as a PNSW?** Depending on your own career choices you may find work as an independent service provider or with an existing agency. As the PNSW is a new type of service provider we are continually forging partnerships within the industry to bring attention to the program and create wider career options for the PNSW graduate.
20. **Do PNSWs have an association?** Yes!! We are excited to announce our partnership with OPSWA (Ontario Personal Support Workers of Ontario) who will support PNSWs on our journey to standardization.