

The Role of Personal Support Workers in Collaborating with Physiotherapists in the Community

Introduction

Mission: "Community Care helps people live at home with a network of support in caring communities."

The **In-Home Respite Program** is a service providing temporary relief to caregivers of frail elderly, disabled adults and those with a cognitive impairment. This support service is provided in a client's home to enable family or friends to have relief from their caregiver role and to help relieve the stress placed on family relationships. The services provided may include supervision, personal care, client-centered light housekeeping and meal preparation.

Personal Support Workers (PSW) are an integral component of the In-Home Respite Team. Their role within our program is to provide the respite services and support to caregivers by providing the necessary assistance to the client/consumer to assist them to carry out their routine living activities.

The premise of this project was to establish a formal link between the "prescribed" services of the Physiotherapist and the in-home support of a Personal Support Worker. This link would be created in an atmosphere of collaboration; whereby the PSW could be trained to assist with the implementation of the recommended course of action of the Physiotherapist for clients participating in exercises at home.

Using the "train-the-trainer" model, we would coordinate the opportunity for the Physiotherapist, Client, PSW, and PSW Supervisor to learn at the client's bedside the proper techniques to assist the client with their exercises. This information would in turn be shared with the rest of the team, as required.

Potential Benefits of the Service:

- ✓ Improved continuity of care for client & family
- ✓ Improved "bedside" care
- ✓ Improved communication and collaboration between service providers
- ✓ Improved Health and Safety for PSW's
- ✓ Decreased costs of health human resources (i.e. PT time vs. PSW time)

Actions

- ✓ Identified key stakeholders including, but not limited to Personal Support Workers, In-Home Respite (office) Team, Physiotherapists, Clients, and their Families
- ✓ A literature review concluded that in November 2006, the Canadian Physiotherapy Association issued a policy statement entitled "Interprofessional Collaboration and Practice", which stated "physiotherapists should continue to seize opportunities to enter into professional collaborative partnerships, sharing their experiences and serving as mentors to others."

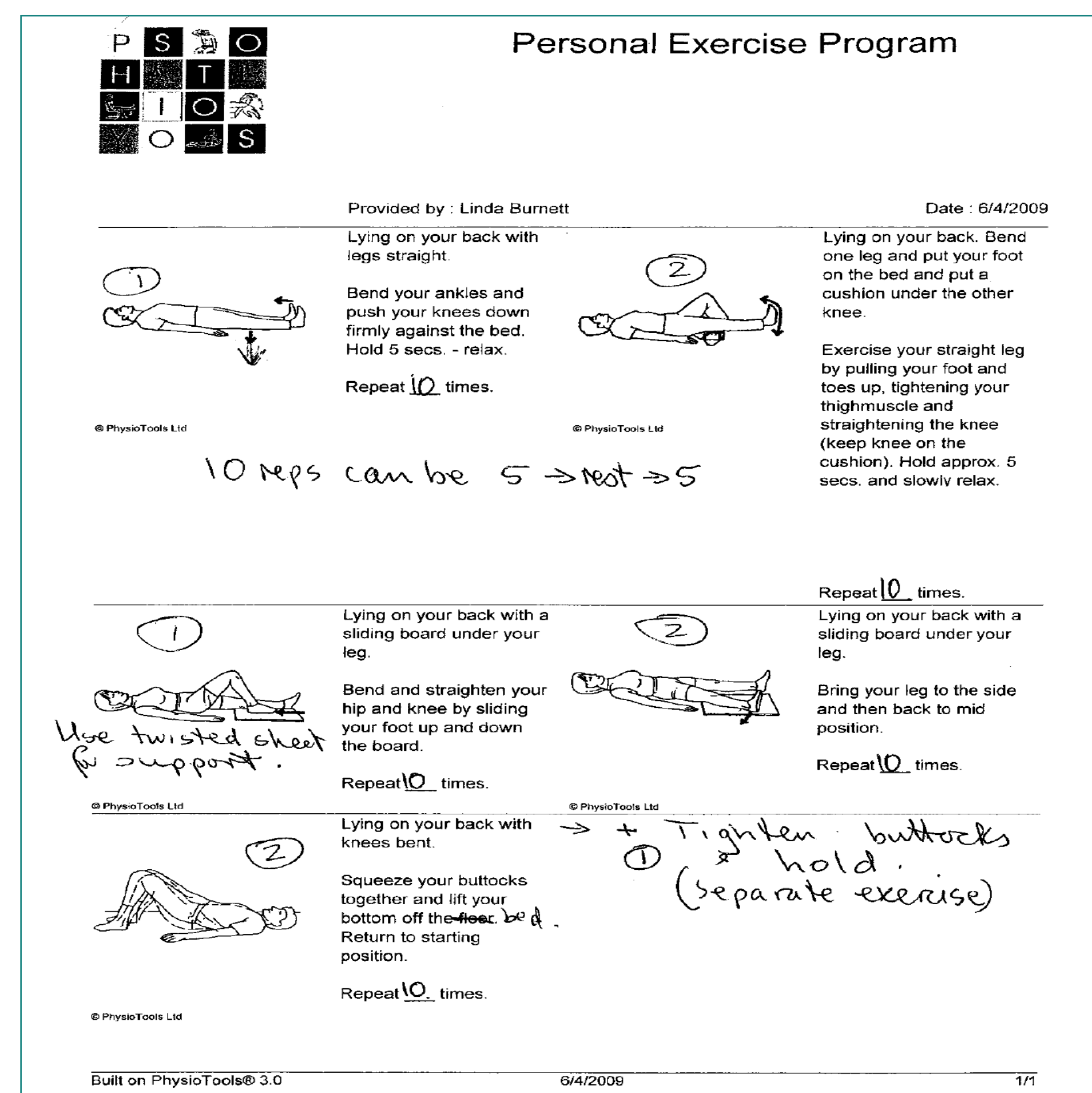
Recommended Key Steps:

- ✓ Establish partnerships with physiotherapist service providers
- ✓ Assess client need for support in routine exercises
- ✓ Generate interest from team of Personal Support Workers and ensure comfort of PSW team with proposed piece of service provision
- ✓ Determine if there is a need amongst current service recipients, as well as new potential clients to the In-Home Respite Program
- ✓ Adapt the current assessment process to screen for the need of assistance with the personal exercise program, as recommended by the allied health professional; namely the physiotherapist
- ✓ Transfer of knowledge from Physiotherapist to PSW
- ✓ Ensure safety in the implementation of the exercise routine
- ✓ Documentation and Follow-Up

Results

The In-Home Respite Program of Community Care Durham can draw on previous experience for the foundation of the evidence. We have had two distinct experiences with situations that required our clients complete their physiotherapy exercises at home.

In the first, and very positive experience, we were contacted directly by the CE CCAC contracted Physiotherapist and she requested for a home-visit to coincide between the scheduled PSW from CCD, the Physiotherapist, the client and the PSW supervisor. Using a "train the trainer" model at this visit, the Physiotherapist demonstrated the exercises for the benefit of both the PSW and the Supervisor and also demonstrated the role of the PSW in assisting the client to complete the exercises. In addition, the Physiotherapist provided a letter and additional documents that demonstrated using drawings with descriptions, the Personal Exercise Program. This way we were able to implement a regular routine of exercise with the client and team of PSW's that visited the home. By sharing the documents and the experience of the "trained" PSW, we were also able as well as ensure effective health and safety of both the staff and the client.



In the second experience, we were not able to connect with the Physiotherapist and did not have any documentation of the required exercises and relied on the client to provide direction with regards to the personal exercise routine. This proved to be difficult as the expectations of the client and the ability of the PSW to conduct the exercises without the guidelines was beyond the scope of our practice and we were forced to withdraw that element of the service, until the proper equipment was installed and the proper documentation was put into place. The risk to staff injury was extremely high given the nature of the situation.

Challenges

Anticipated Challenges with Implementation:

- ❖ Time
- ❖ Financial Resources
- ❖ Human Resources

Lessons Learned

This project idea is very adaptable to other organizations in that it reinforces the collaboration between service providers and makes every effort to streamline the process for clients. It is the foundation for "teamwork."

Some tips may include:

- ✓ Allowing for more time to "formalize" the project (focus groups, staff awareness, bridge building with other service providers, client awareness of service).
- ✓ Engage other agencies to determine best practices and other models of physiotherapy partnership.
- ✓ Ensure that the scope of service does not compromise the health and safety of frontline staff.
- ✓ Ensure that scope of program does not compromise or require additional financial resources or health human resources. (Or source additional funding?)



New Evidence/Best Practices

This idea supports the client in their navigation of the system by linking the services to ensure seamless provision of care, as well as continuity of care. By improving communication and collaboration between community service providers, it will have an overall positive impact on client/consumer satisfaction.

Next Steps

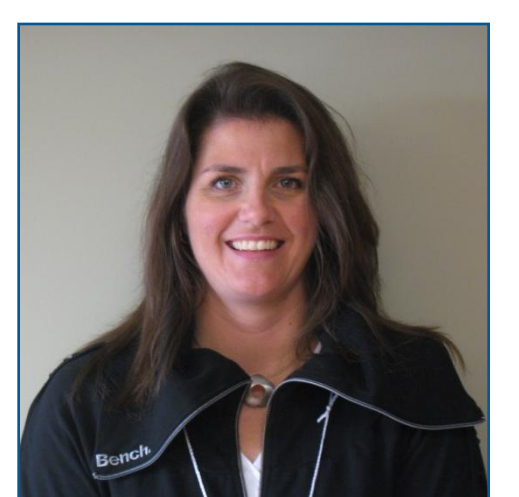


Implementation & Evaluation Phase

Contact Information

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