

A Guide to the Professional Responsibility Workload Reporting Process for Community Care Access Centres

ONA members indicate it is important and worth the work to complete Professional Responsibility Workload (PRW) Report forms.

Case managers (CM) who use the professional responsibility process are taking steps to correct excessive workload situations and meet their professional responsibility requirements as client advocates, ensuring the provision of safe quality client care.

ONA collective agreement language on professional responsibility varies, as does the process used to report and address workload issues. It is important members recognize this fact and be aware of the process required in their particular circumstance(s).

Why Complete and Submit a PRW Report Form?

1. The form is a mechanism to identify and address quality client care issues, thereby fulfilling the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) and other regulatory colleges' professional standards.
2. The form serves as documentation and protection for the individual case manager(s) advocating on behalf of the client for safe, quality client care.
3. The form is a mechanism to address staff safety, equipment failures or lack of supplies, identifying and improving unsatisfactory working environments/conditions.
4. The form puts the onus on the employer to address the issues.
5. The form serves as a mechanism for improving communication and cooperation between the case manager(s) and the employer.

The use of the PRW reporting process and form has proven that positive change can happen, and is demonstrated by results such as: an increase in case managers and support workers; change in policy and procedures; additional equipment; and improved communication in the workplace.

Ever changing demands on the case manager's workload has been creating an environment where the case manager finds herself/himself wondering how it is possible to meet the CNO standards of care required.

Case managers are taking on more of the workload and client acuity is increasing. There is a lack of staff, adequate equipment and/or supplies and other resources. There is increased sick leave usage and workplace accidents are on the rise.

Regulatory colleges require health professionals to identify, report and work with the employer to resolve issues to provide safe, quality client care.

There are five aspects of practice for which case managers are most frequently reported to their regulatory college:

1. Failure to assess the client.
2. Failure to intervene/take appropriate action.
3. Medication administration/documentation errors.
4. Failure to ensure client safety.
5. Poor interpersonal/communication skills.

Employers are also utilizing these practice examples to discipline case managers.

PRW Reporting Process

The process and form are useful for issues of:

- Workload.
- Competency.
- Procedures.
- Documentation: protection for the case manager/evidence to support change.

An example of when a **workload** issue must be reported: A member in her/his professional judgment is concerned that insufficient staffing will prevent her/him from adequately performing all the assigned tasks within the hours of the shift, resulting in compromised client care. The case manager must advocate for safe, quality client care.

A **competency** issue may occur when an employer hires an unregulated care provider to assist with activities of daily living (ADL). The concern would be that the unregulated care provider does not have adequate training or level of competency to determine the client is able to perform the ADL. The case manager must intervene to ensure client safety. Failing to report such a situation to the employer could constitute professional misconduct on the part of the case manager.

A **procedure** issue may occur when the employer announces that the case manager must only increase services with the approval of a manager or wait list a client. This may compromise client care; it is the responsibility of the case manager to advocate for the improvement of client care.

The following process can and should be used in all workplace locations:

At the time the workload issue occurs, using established lines of communication, seek immediate assistance from your manager/supervisor, discuss the matter and develop strategies to meet client care needs using current resources. If you achieve a resolution at the early stage, complete the form to Section 5 of the document. If no satisfactory resolution is reached, submit the PRW Report form completed in its entirety as per your collective agreement. (A sample form is attached.)

Note: When you asked for assistance: Was the outcome satisfactory to allow you to give safe, quality client care, were you able to take your breaks, complete the assigned work, and is this a recurring issue that needs to be addressed? If the answer to any of these questions is NO, you should complete a PRW Report form and follow the steps of the process.

Tip: If the issue of workload is resolved, but you feel this may become a recurring issue, complete the form and follow the process, making suggestions to prevent the issue from recurring or becoming a problem. This also allows a tracking tool for the Union to use in addressing future problems.

How to Use the PRW Report Forms

Many case managers find it difficult speaking on issues of workload with their managers, however, it is a step in the process and employers will insist that the process be followed. This is one area that seems to dissuade members from filing workload forms. Many members insist their managers get “defensive” and retaliate.

There is no doubt that some managers are taking the filing of workload forms personally and discourage staff from filing by retaliation, threats and suggestions that “well, perhaps it’s your

lack of organization; perhaps we should review your performance.” It is important to remind your managers that it is your professional responsibility to report and address issues to provide safe, quality client care. If your manager is a nurse or other regulated health professional, it is her/his professional responsibility to respond and address issues to provide safe, quality client care.

Try this:

- Approach the manager and explain the importance and benefits to the employer and to the clients if case managers file the forms. Explain this process is not a grievance, is not personal and the process is quite different. Explain that it will assist the manager in meeting her/his professional responsibility under her/his regulatory college standards.
- The goal of any meeting on issues of workload is to resolve the issues quickly and satisfactorily for all parties so that safe, quality client care is provided.
- When completing a PRW Report form, the information required in the documentation includes the following: those duties that would have been performed had time permitted and those duties that were delayed; an identification of unsafe situations; the amount of overtime worked; whether proper assessments were completed; whether deadlines were met; and finally, whether or not quality client care was provided. Ensure where you have filled out a workload form to keep your daily assignment sheet for future use.

Contact your Labour Relations Officer (LRO) at any stage of the process.

You may want to involve the LRO for support at your meetings, especially if your employer is not cooperating. ONA has Professional Practice Specialists who are valuable resources and can lend support and suggestions on strategies to resolve your issues.

Be familiar with the CNO *Standard* publication or other publications from other regulatory colleges for direction on issues related to workload, such as:

- *Tips for Avoiding Complaints* (March 2002).
- *Working Overtime and Fatigue* (September 2001).
- *Refusing a Shift and Abandoning Clients* (September 2001).

Members should still fill out the form when a situation is resolved, but they only have to fill it out to the end of Section 5.

Be a client advocate. File PRW Report forms and meet your professional responsibility requirements to provide quality client care.

A Success Story – it's Worth the Effort!

Following the merger of three community care access centres (CCACs) into a single employer, the CCAC case managers (CMs), met over a period of several months to attempt to resolve issues of workload concerns documented on the Professional Responsibility Workload Reporting Forms (PRWRF). At the time, the new employer was not familiar with the PRWRF and found the process to be negative. This issue was compounded by the lack of a single collective agreement and three different processes/collective agreement language for the use of the PRWRF. This ultimately compounded an already very poor labour relations environment.

The employer and the members worked together to resolve the issues in the following fashion:

- The employer, Labour Relations Officer and the Bargaining Unit leadership team utilized a mediator to begin the process of improving the labour relations relationship.
- A new single collective agreement was negotiated.
- The employer was informally educated through the mediation and negotiation process of the use of the forms and the benefits of the process for all parties.

The Bargaining Unit President now reports that,

We are having many successes with PRCs. The employer is now seeing them as positive, not adversarial. This has promoted a greater understanding of the finer details of our case management role. We have a manager that has requested that a case manager file a PRWRF because he knows that the statistics and documentation brought to the table at the PRC meeting helps him with his accountabilities to senior management.

There is always a meeting between the employer and union to discuss the PRWRF with all parties. The meeting is followed by a written response from the employer to address all concerns and a follow-up meeting to evaluate if the issues are resolved and/or to fine tune as required. The brainstorming done at these meetings has resulted in the hiring of more staff and a collaborative change of processes in Intake, Oncology, Acute and several district caseloads.

The collaboration of all levels of this CCAC with the PRC process has made the ONA/management relationship much stronger and has increased the mutual appreciation of each other's workplace dilemmas.

The process opened communication and showed a positive approach by both parties to find solutions that would improve conditions for everyone.

Follow up is an important part of the process and it is easy to fall victim to complacency. There will always be problems, and sometimes our recommendations don't work no matter how hard we try. Or we fall back into the old habits. When that happens, it's back to the drawing board. When workload gets to be too onerous and unsafe and you cannot provide safe client resident care, you have a professional responsibility and a choice. Filing Professional Workload Reporting Forms can bring about positive change.