

# The Ontario Workforce Reserve for Senior Support (OWRSS) Program: Stakeholder and Applicant Guide

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## Background

As part of a strategy to increase capacity in the health care and long-term care (LTC) sectors during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Ontario has launched the Ontario Workforce Reserve for Senior Support (OWRSS) program.

The program is targeted at individuals interested in new opportunities – specifically those who are unemployed or have been displaced from the retail and hospitality industries or administrative roles as well as students in education programs – to re-enter the workforce and make a difference by helping seniors living in long-term care homes. The program is open to:

- Regulated and unregulated health professionals,
- Students,
- Internationally trained professionals, and
- Other underemployed Ontarians who do not have a background in health.

The program will prepare individuals as Resident Support Aides (RSAs), who will help residents with daily living activities, allowing more experienced LTC workers to focus on the care of residents. These activities would include, for example:

- Distributing food,
- Coordinating visits, and
- Helping residents with technology or recreation activities.

## Required Experience to Enter the Program

Applicants do not need prior experience in health care to be hired as an RSA in the OWRSS program, but the following education and skills are required:

- Successful completion of two years of secondary school (minimum of grade 10),
- Good judgement and interpersonal skills,
- Ability to observe residents and any behavioural changes which may require a call for care assistance,
- Must be sensitive and empathetic to the needs of the residents, and
- Ability to communicate effectively with residents, visitors and others.

## How Applicants May Apply to the Program

Applicants will complete the registration form on the Ontario Matching Portal (OMP) to set up a profile, upload a resume and supporting documents, and add availability. Once this step is completed, applicants will be screened to be part of the OWRSS program.

As part of the screening process, applicants will need to complete a Vulnerable Sector Check. A Vulnerable Sector Check provides screening for people who intend on working with vulnerable people, including seniors. This process may involve getting fingerprinted and following-up with local police forces. More information about this will be provided to applicants by the screener.

Applicants that qualify for the next step in the hiring process will be directed to complete mandatory 15-hour online learning that will prepare them to work in a long-term care home. Once the online learning is completed, the applicant will then have access to job postings at Partner Agencies (such as hospitals – more information is available below) that require RSAs in their part of the province.

## Onboarding

The Partner Agency will deploy RSAs to LTC homes and work with the LTC home to arrange site-specific onboarding and orientation support.

The Partner Agency will ensure that RSAs receive training to provide appropriate services in a LTC home, including the RSA online training program which includes modules on infection prevention and control, personal protective equipment, seniors care, and an overview of long-term care.

The onboarding will cover the relevant hospital or LTC home policies and procedures, as well as on-site training to integrate RSAs into the existing workforce.

RSAs are hired as casual, non-union employees, and the compensation is \$17 per hour. RSAs will be reimbursed for their online learning hours at the same hourly wage.

**The LTC home can an RSA directly subject to the agreement of the RSA concerned. (PLEASE SEE BELOW)**

## Role of the Resident Support Aide

RSAs report to the Director of Nursing or such designate and Personal Care Registered Staff in charge of the shift and are responsible for providing non-care related support to residents and to the long-term Care (LTC) Home's Care team. They assist in maintaining a safe and secure environment for residents, visitors, and other staff members by providing comfort and companionship to promote well-being of each resident. All duties are performed in the best interest of the residents and their families, and in accordance with LTC home's vision, mission and values statements.

RSA duties may include:

- Assisting at meal times and during nutritional breaks by helping with set up, delivery and service to residents in the dining room, in their rooms or in activity areas,
- Guiding residents to and from their rooms and throughout the home to activities and to promote a positive resident experience,
- Supporting residents in managing their personal belongings and organizing their personal laundry, choosing clothing and assisting the resident as requested,
- Assisting residents with devices (cell phones/tablets) to enable residents to communicate with their families and friends,
- Greeting residents, families and visitors in a positive and supportive manner requesting if they need assistance of any kind,
- Assisting the care team in facilitating and monitoring visitors,
- Providing companionship to residents while reflecting the preferences of the resident,
- Helping residents to keep their personal belongings and environment safe and tidy, and making beds,
- Checking equipment and restocking unit supplies, and reporting issues to the supervisor
- Assisting, as appropriate, with team members who are transferring or positioning residents,
- Completing assigned clerical tasks,
- Assisting in set up of resident activities and programs,
- Participating in care team meetings as appropriate,
- Communicating and interacting with residents, family members, visitors, staff and volunteers in a courteous and professional manner,
- Conducting duties in accordance with policies and procedures of host LTC Home and employer, and government regulations, laws, and policies.
- Understanding and following all health and safety policies and procedures,
- Working safely to reduce the risk of injury to self, other staff members, and residents,
- Reporting all actual or potential hazardous situations or injuries to immediate supervisor,
- Participating in health and safety, and Infection Prevention and Control training as required,
- Maintaining confidentiality of residents' personal information,
- Participating in care team conferences,
- Attending in-service education sessions, staff meetings and workshops as directed,
- Identifying and documenting building/equipment breakdowns in maintenance log,
- Following all requirements in the *Long-Term Care Homes Act* and regulations under the Act,
- Communicating with supervisor any problems related to resident care and safety, and/or
- Performing other related duties as required.

## Partner Agency

At this time, there are four Partner Agencies serving the areas of focus for the program, which include the Greater Toronto Area, as well as the regions of Peel, York, and Ottawa. They support and oversee the hiring and deployment of RSAs to LTC homes experiencing staffing shortages that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The role of the Partner Agency is to:

- Hire and rapidly deploy RSAs to LTC homes in regions where they are most needed
- Work with LTC homes to ensure proper onboarding
- Facilitate consistent and high-quality support, mentorship and onboarding of RSAs to promote their longer-term retention in LTC homes
- Relieve the administrative burden of LTC homes with staffing shortages.

## Ontario Health Regions

Ontario Health Regions will work as a partner in the OWRSS program by optimizing their existing relationships with partner organizations across the system. Ontario Health Regions will act as a designated contact to support the identification of, and application process for, long-term care homes that would like to participate in the OWRSS program. They will work with long-term care homes and partners to ensure that the necessary conditions are in place for the long-term care home to receive RSA staff.

Ontario Health Regions will refer the long-term care homes that meet the necessary conditions in their respective geographies to the Partner Agencies.

## How LTC Homes May Apply to the Program

The following steps are required for LTC homes to apply for the OWRSS program:

- 1) Review the eligibility criteria below and ensure your home meets these criteria.
- 2) Complete the application, which includes the Resident Support Aide Request Form and Long-Term Care Home Attestation.
- 3) Submit the completed application to the regional contact hub for your LTC home's OH Region.

LTC homes seeking RSA support will be assessed and must meet the following eligibility criteria to participate in the OWRSS program:

- 33% or more of the LTC home staffing is in place;
- LTC home has sufficient administrative capacity, including onsite supervision, adequate personal protective equipment, and infection prevention and control policies and procedures; and
- LTC home can, to the best of its ability, confirm that RSAs will not be working with any COVID-19 positive residents or staff.

After the Ontario Health (OH) Region assesses a LTC home's readiness to accept non-health care professional staff, the OH Region will collaborate with a local Partner Agency to deploy (a) pre-screened and trained RSA(s) to the eligible LTC home.

Currently OWRSS is open to LTC homes in the Greater Toronto Area, including York and Peel Regions, and Ottawa. As the program evolves, there may be opportunities for LTC homes in other areas to seek RSA support.

Once applications have been reviewed, regional contacts will follow-up with LTC homes about next steps.

**PLEASE NOTE: Should the LTC home wish to hire the staff directly (subject to the agreement of an RSA), they can work with the partner agency once the application has been approved by the Ontario Health region.**

**LTCs homes can advise the Ontario Health Region of their intent to hire immediately as early as their submission of their application.**

**As the Ontario Workforce Reserve for Seniors evolves, we will be working with partner agencies and other partners to streamline this process to make it easier for LTC to hire these resources.**

## Regional Contact Information

To apply for OWRSS, LTC homes must submit completed applications to regional contact hubs for their OH Region. If your LTC home's OH Region is not listed below, you can still learn more about how OWRSS could support you by contacting your OH Region directly.

OH Region	Contact Information
East Region (includes Ottawa/Champlain)	ch-OWRSS-Intake@lhins.on.ca
Toronto Region	trtestingintake@tc.lhins.on.ca
Central Region (includes Peel, York, Mississauga Halton, Central West, and Central)	hhrcentralregion@lhins.on.ca

## Frequently Asked Questions

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24. How much are Resident Support Aides paid?
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27. What does it mean to be hired as a casual employee?
28. How long can I work as a Resident Support Aide?

**1. What is the Ontario Workforce Reserve for Senior Support Program?**

The Ontario Workforce Reserve for Senior Support is a new program focused on recruiting, training and deploying individuals as Resident Support Aides (RSA) to support long-term care homes during the COVID-19 pandemic. The program is targeted at individuals interested in new opportunities – specifically those who are unemployed or have been displaced from the retail and hospitality industries or administrative roles as well as students in education programs – to re-enter the workforce and make a difference by helping seniors living in long-term care homes.

**2. Who can apply?**

The OWRSS program focuses on preparing all types of people to provide services in long-term care homes with staffing gaps. The program is open to:

- Regulated and unregulated health professionals
- Students
- Internationally trained professionals (must be legally authorized to work in Canada)
- Other underemployed Ontarians who do not have a background in health care

**3. I am an internationally educated healthcare professional. Do I qualify for this program?**

You qualify for this program if you are legally authorised to work in Canada.

**4. What is a Resident Support Aide?**

RSAs report to the Director of Nursing or such designate and Personal Care Registered Staff in charge of the shift and are responsible for providing non-care related support to residents and to the long-term Care (LTC) Home's Care team. They assist in maintaining a safe and secure environment for residents, visitors, and other staff members by providing comfort and companionship to promote well-being of each resident. All duties are performed in the best interest of the residents and their families, and in accordance with LTC home's vision, mission and values statements.

**5. What tasks do Resident Support Aides perform?**

The Resident Support Aide acts under the direction of the care team to complete routine tasks that support residents with their daily activities, provide residents with comfort and sense of purpose, and communicate with and support the care team. Daily activities could include, for example:

- setting-up at meal times and distributing food,
- helping visitors,
- helping residents with technology or recreation activities, and
- checking equipment and restocking supplies.

Please see the Resident Support Aide job description for details about RSA duties.

**6. What experience is required to apply to be a Resident Support Aide?**

No prior experience in health care is required. However, the following education and skills are required:

Education:

- Successful completion of two years of secondary school (minimum grade 10)
- Must complete the RSA online training program
- Must complete online health system and LTC sector orientation modules
- Must complete in-house training before commencing duties

Skills & Abilities:

- Must have good judgement and interpersonal skills
- Must be able to observe residents and any behavioural changes that may require to call for care assistance
- Must be sensitive and empathetic to the needs of the residents
- Must be able to communicate effectively with residents, visitors, and others

**7. What else is required of a Resident Support Aide?**

The role includes special requirements and environmental considerations such as:

- Work requires constant standing and walking, some bending, twisting and lifting
- Work is performed indoors in well-lit ventilated rooms
- May be exposed to communicable disease
- Must be prepared to respond to emergency situations
- Vulnerable Sector Check required
- Ability / availability to work evenings/ weekends

**8. Will I be expected to perform specialty care or medical duties?**

No, as a Resident Support Aide you will be responsible for providing non-care related support to long-term care home residents and to the long-term care home's care team. You will assist in maintaining a safe and secure environment for residents, visitors, and other staff members by providing comfort and companionship to promote well-being of each resident.

**9. What can I expect entering this role in the current pandemic situation?**

This initiative has been designed to ensure you are prepared with the most up-to-date and relevant Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) knowledge to protect yourself, other long-term care staff, and long-term care residents against COVID-19. In order to begin work at a long-term care home, it is mandatory that every Resident Support Aide undergo the online learning program, provided by the Michener Institute, and on-site orientation, provided by the long-term care home in which you will be working. Please see [What is involved in the mandatory online learning modules?](#) And [How will I be placed at a long-term care home?](#) for more information.

**10. As a Resident Support Aide, who will be my direct supervisor?**

You will report to a manager assigned by the Partner Agency (see [What is a Partner Agency and what is their role?](#)).

**11. Can a LTC home hire an RSA directly?**

Yes. If the LTC home wishes to hire an RSA staff directly, they can work with the partner agency to do just that as soon the application has been approved by the Ontario Health region. The RSA will of course need to agree to this arrangement as well.

This means that instead of being an employee of the partner agency, the RSA, if they agree, would then be subject to any terms and conditions of employment as set out by the LTC and agreed to be the RSA.



LTCs homes can advise the Ontario Health Region of their intent to hire immediately as early as their submission of their application if they wish to do so.

It should also be noted that as the Ontario Workforce Reserve for Seniors evolves, we will be working with partner agencies and other partners to streamline this process to make it easier for LTC to hire these resources.

**12. If I have a concern or complaint while working as a Resident Support Aide, who can I report my complaint/concern to?**

While in the long-term care home, you can direct concerns to your direct supervisor (see immediately above), Director of Nursing and Personal Care, or registered staff in charge of your shift.

**13. How do I apply?**

The first step of the application process is to register an account through the [Ontario Matching Portal](#), which you can access through any mobile or desktop device. After you register, head to the account information page and click the box stating your interest in the Ontario Workforce Reserve for Senior Support program, then upload your resume.

If you qualify to move on to the second step of the application process, you will be contacted by a company called Wilson HCG who will ask you to provide a Vulnerable Sector Check and to update your immunizations (or provide records that you have received all mandatory immunizations). If you don't currently have a Vulnerable Sector Check, you will be able to apply for one during the application process. We will also ask you to provide contact information for three professional references.

Additionally, during the second step of the application process, you will be asked to complete mandatory online learning modules with the Michener Institute of Education at the University Health Network. The modules take about 15 hours to complete and can be accessed at any time for the duration of one week. The modules include:

- Infection Prevention and Control
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Long-Term Care overview
- Seniors care

**14. How will I be contacted after I apply through the Ontario Matching Portal?**

After registering on the Ontario Matching Portal, if you qualify for the program, you will be contacted by a company called Wilson HCG for a short, phone-based interview. Following the phone interview, you will receive an email from Wilson HCG with instructions to begin your online learning modules, update your immunizations, and submit your Vulnerable Sector Check.

**15. What is a Vulnerable Sector Check?**

A Vulnerable Sector Check provides screening for people who intend on working with vulnerable people, including seniors. This process may involve getting fingerprinted and following-up with local police forces. More information about this process will be provided to applicants by the screener.

**16. What is involved in the mandatory online learning modules?**

You will be prompted to the Michener Institute of Education at University Health Network website to complete various online learning modules. The modules take about 15 hours to complete and can be accessed at anytime for the duration of one week. The modules include:

- Infection Prevention and Control
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Long-Term Care overview
- Seniors care

**17. How will I be placed at a long-term care home?**

After you've completed the online learning modules, provided your Vulnerable Sector Check, and updated your immunizations, you will be hired as part of a reserve of eligible candidates that could be matched to a long-term care home to work as a Resident Support Aide.

A Partner Agency (see below [What is a Partner Agency and what is their role?](#)) will act as your employer (unless the LTC home chooses to employ you and you agree to this see **question 11**). When you are placed, the Partner Agency will coordinate on-site orientation at the long-term care home you have been matched with. The on-site orientation includes hands-on training about Infection Prevention and Control and Personal Protective Equipment procedures. You will begin working only once all online and on-site learning is complete.

**18. Do I need a negative COVID-19 test in order to be placed at a long-term care home?**

Yes, you will need a negative COVID-19 test before beginning work at a long-term care home. More details will be provided during the hiring process. Depending on local public health guidance, you will also need a COVID-19 test every week to two weeks while in the long-term care home setting.

**19. What is a Partner Agency and what is their role?**

Partner Agencies are public hospitals that act as your employer. The role of the Partner Agency is to:

- Hire, onboard, and rapidly deploy Resident Support Aides to long-term care homes in regions where they are most needed.
- Facilitate consistent and high-quality support, mentorship, and onboarding of Resident Support Aides to promote their longer-term retention in long-term care homes.

**20. I registered in the Ontario Matching Portal during Wave 1 and I wasn't matched, should I register again?**

Thank you for your interest in supporting the government's efforts to battle COVID-19. If you are interested in working as a Resident Support Aide, we encourage you to update your profile in [Ontario Matching Portal](#). A new feature has been added to the portal to allow those currently registered to flag they would like to be part of the Ontario Workforce Reserve for Senior Support. Please see the attached user guide on how to update your profile.

**21. I registered in the Ontario Matching Portal during Wave 1, how can I express my interest in the Ontario Workforce Reserve for Senior Support?**

A new feature has been added to the Ontario Matching Portal to allow those currently registered to flag they would like to be part of the Ontario Workforce Reserve for Senior Support. Please see the attached user guide on how to update your profile.

**22. How will the Partner Agencies know which homes are in need of Resident Support Aide staff?**

Partner Agencies will be referred to long-term care homes in need of Resident Support Aide staff through a designated contact in the Ontario Health Region.

**23. How will long-term care homes come forward if they would like to participate in the OWRSS program?**

Long-term care homes who would like to participate in the Ontario Workforce Reserve for Senior Support program will work with a designated contact from their respective Ontario Health Regions to submit an application for the program. The application process will help ensure the necessary conditions are in place for a home to receive Resident Support Aide staff.

**24. How much are Resident Support Aides paid?**

The Resident Support Aide position is paid an hourly wage of \$17/hour. Your employment begins once you are formally hired by a Partner Agency. You will be compensated for your online training at the same rate, then you will receive compensation only once you begin working at a long-term care home. You will not receive compensation for any time spent waiting after getting hired and before being placed in a long-term care home.

**25. Will I be compensated for the online learning, and how much will I be paid?**

If you complete all 15 hours of the online learning modules within the one-week time period, you will be compensated retroactively when you are hired by a Partner Agency at the \$17/hour Resident Support Aide wage.

**26. Will Resident Support Aides be part of a union?**

Resident Support Aides are hired as casual, non-union employees.

**27. What does it mean to be hired as a casual employee?**

Casual employees are defined as being available for call-ins as circumstances demand. This means that you are paid only for the completed online learning modules and the shifts that you work. You will not be paid for any time spent waiting between being hired by the partner agency and being placed in a long-term care home.

**28. How long can I work as a Resident Support Aide?**

The Ontario Workforce Reserve for Senior Support Program is a short-term initiative in response to system pressures in long-term care homes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please note that the offer and the hours required of the position are both contingent on the needs of the long-term care homes. Therefore, Resident Support Aides will be deployed on an as-needed-basis to an identified long-term care home to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the Resident Support Aide position. Resident Support Aides can be hired at any time directly by the long-term care home as a longer-term employee.