



# Impact Report

PSW Career Navigator and PSW Engagement Strategy Projects



2024-  
2026

## Background

In response to the shortage of personal support workers (PSWs) in Ontario's long-term care (LTC) homes, CESBA received funding from the Ontario government in 2024 to implement two key initiatives: the PSW Career Navigator Project and the PSW Engagement Strategy Project.

These two projects were built upon CESBA's strong partnerships with school board PSW programs, leveraging their success to attract more students to the profession, increase interest and awareness in health-care careers, support recruitment and retention in LTC, and strengthen Ontario's workforce.

### About CESBA

[CESBA](#) (Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education School Board Administrators) is a provincial non-profit professional association that represents, advocates for and supports adult and continuing education (A&CE) program staff working in over 60 school boards across Ontario.



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## PSW Career Navigator Project

CESBA's PSW Career Navigator (CN) initiative (June 10, 2024–March 31, 2026) aimed to increase the number of school board PSW program graduates pursuing careers in long-term care, with the goal of improving recruitment and retention of PSWs working in LTC.

### Key Activities

#### SCHOOL BOARD PSW STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

PSW Champions connected with students enrolled in school board PSW programs in every region of the province, delivering presentations on careers in LTC. They shared information and resources about working in LTC and provided details about the province's recruitment incentives (such as paid clinical placements), career advancement, micro-credentials and bridging opportunities.

Through sharing their personal experiences and stories, the Champions helped destigmatize work in LTC and increased awareness of the many benefits and opportunities within the sector.

Results from the six-month post-graduation survey of school board PSW students showed that more than 40% of respondents were working in LTC, of which 57% indicated that the Career Navigator project strongly or somewhat influenced their decision to work in LTC.

Led by Erica D'Souza, Project Coordinator, seven regional PSW Champions delivered presentations in school board PSW classes throughout Ontario and partnered with LTC homes across the province to connect with LTC home staff.

“What really impacted me was the way they described the opportunity for growth within long-term care—both for the residents and the caregivers. It became clear to me that the work done in long-term care is vital for enhancing quality of life over the long term, and it's a place where I could truly make an impact, not only in the final stages of life but throughout a person's aging journey.”

– **SCHOOL BOARD PSW STUDENT**

“Students appreciated hearing directly from someone working in the field. It helped bring the role of a PSW to life.”

– **HAMILTON-WENTWORTH CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD PSW PROGRAM INSTRUCTOR**



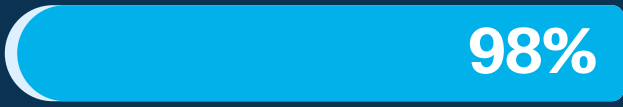
21

school boards



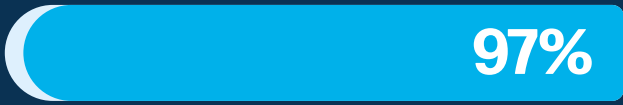
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sites



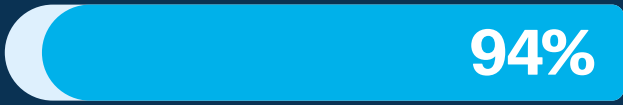
98%

agreed the information provided in the presentation was relevant and useful for their career goals as a PSW



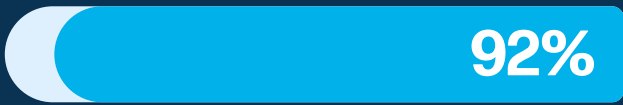
97%

agreed the presentation increased their understanding of the role of PSWs in LTC



94%

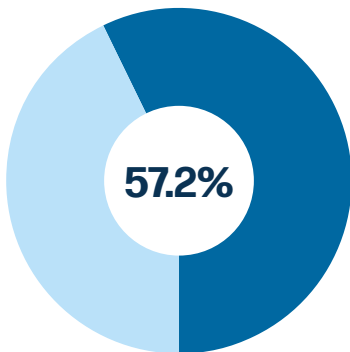
agreed the presentation encouraged them to consider pursuing a career in LTC



92%

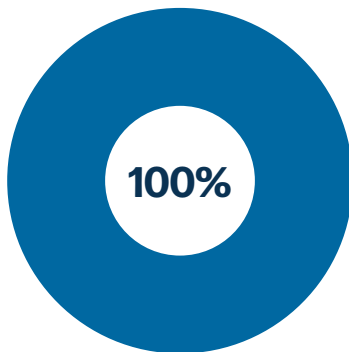
agreed the presentation addressed misconceptions they had about working as a PSW in LTC

### PSW PROGRAM INSTRUCTOR FEEDBACK



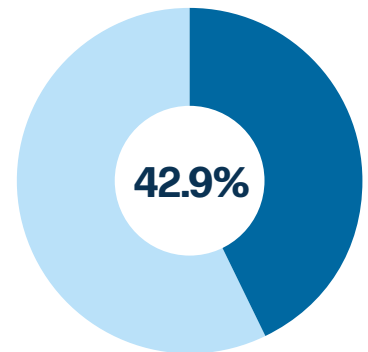
57.2%

observed an increase in interest in LTC careers following the presentation



100%

reported improved student understanding of the PSW role in LTC



42.9%

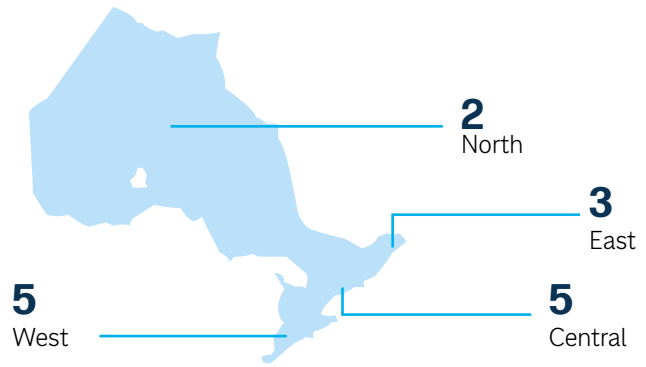
reported higher levels of work-readiness or professionalism among students compared to previous cohorts

## LONG-TERM CARE HOME PARTNERSHIPS

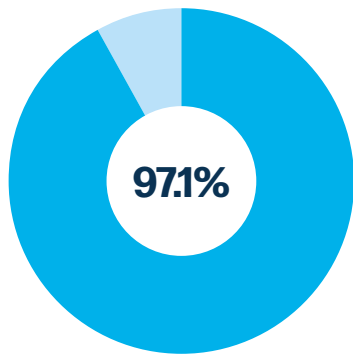
Outreach was done to LTC homes across the province to seek collaborative opportunities for the Champions to host monthly “Coffee Chats” -- informal booths set up with refreshments, marketing materials and information. Staffed by one to two PSW Champions, these sessions provided a welcoming, supportive space to connect with LTC home staff and promote a message of positivity and teamwork.

In addition to PSWs, interactions at the booth also included RNs/RPNs, housekeeping staff, recreation/activities staff, administrative staff and residents. The Coffee Chat initiative supported staff recognition and appreciation, career growth and development, networking, inclusion and self-care. While the program focused on PSWs, its inclusive approach ensured that all staff felt welcomed and valued.

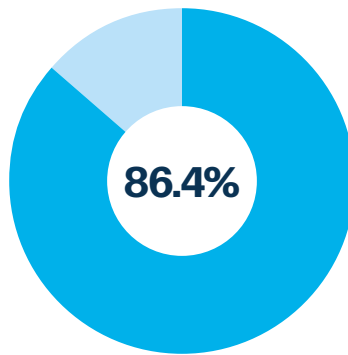
## 15 LTC homes participated in the monthly Coffee Chat program



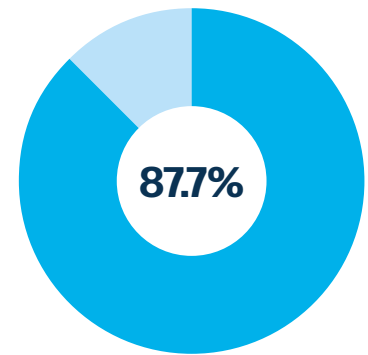
## STAFF FEEDBACK



of respondents indicated the booth helped them feel more recognized and valued in their role



of respondents indicated they made new connections or found support from attending the booth



of respondents indicated that the self-care checklist banner resonated with them

“Thanks to this instructor’s guidance, I’ve decided to pursue a career in long-term care, and I’m excited about the potential to contribute to such a meaningful field. Their perspective opened my eyes to a whole new world of possibilities, and I am grateful for the knowledge and encouragement they provided.”

– SCHOOL BOARD PSW STUDENT

“As a housekeeper, we are forgotten about, so it was nice to be able to attend this event even though it’s PSW-focused. [Champion] did not make me feel ‘lesser than.’”

– LTC HOME HOUSEKEEPING STAFF MEMBER



# 100%

## of LTC home administrator survey respondents:

- agreed that the Coffee Chats aligned with their organizational priorities
- agreed that the initiative supports PSW workforce development and engagement
- indicated they would recommend the initiative to other LTC homes
- agreed that the self-care checklist banner aligns with staff needs

## Resources and Marketing Materials

Several resources and branded promotional items were developed in both English and French to provide more information about careers in LTC, including:

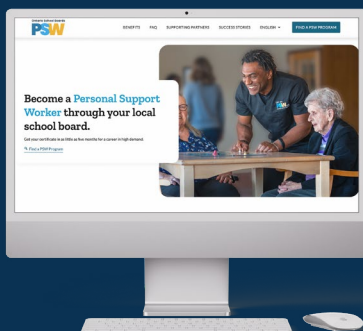
- Long-term care careers promo brochure and pop-up banner
- PSW self-care checklist pop-up banner, bookmark and digital phone background
- “I love working here” poster for long-term care homes (*10 ways to encourage your PSW students to join and stay in your workforce*)
- Branded **GetMyPSW.ca/DevenezPSSP.ca** pens, hoodies, lip balms, hand sanitizers, tissue packets, band-aid dispensers and notebooks



Visit [GetMyPSW.ca](https://www.getmypsw.ca)



Visit [DevenezPSSP.ca](https://www.devenezpssp.ca)



“So amazing! Wonderful to be recognized! Thank you [Champion], you were very informative and really understood the struggles of PSWs.”

– **LTC HOME PSW**

“The Coffee Chat program has been such a bright addition to our LTC home. Team members look forward to the monthly visits and feel recognized and celebrated.”

– **LTC HOME ADMINISTRATOR**

“CESBA created a sense of community and partnership and allowed PSWs to feel valued and seen.”

– **LTC HOME ADMINISTRATOR**





## The Impact

### PSW STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Survey data from both PSW students and instructors, along with feedback from the PSW Champions, indicates a significant increase in both interest and understanding of PSW work in LTC. The Champions successfully addressed common myths and misconceptions, using personal stories to highlight their meaningful relationships with residents, the medical complexities of care, career pathways and micro-credentials. Prior to the presentations, many students viewed LTC work as low-skilled and undesirable. Afterwards, Champions reported a significant increase in engagement and curiosity, with students seeking additional information.

One Champion noted that there was a large demand for information about bridging opportunities for RPN and other health-care programs. Another Champion mentioned the strong interest in micro-credentials and specializations.

Feedback also highlighted the impact of hearing directly from someone working in the field. The Champions' presence in classes allowed students to gain a clearer understanding of the compassion, responsibility and skill involved in the PSW role and helped to reduce stigma and prejudices while repositioning PSW work as meaningful and rewarding. Many students sought one-on-one conversations with Champions for further clarification on career paths, demonstrating deeper interest and consideration of the profession. One Champion emphasized the importance of creating a safe space for students to ask questions about sensitive topics, which further helped to build understanding about the work of a PSW.

### LTC COFFEE CHAT AND STAFF ENGAGEMENT

The monthly LTC Coffee Chats had a significant impact on staff morale, fostering a sense of inclusion, recognition and appreciation. Survey feedback consistently showed that staff felt valued, heard and supported, and that they appreciated the opportunity for meaningful conversations with PSW Champions. In one instance, a PSW who had planned to resign chose to stay after engaging with a Champion, recognizing the importance and value of their role.

The initiative also provided helpful information on career development, advancement and self-care, with one Champion noting that a housekeeping staff member was inspired to pursue school board PSW training.

Strong interest from LTC homes across the province that were unable to participate further highlights the program's value and popularity. Champions also observed broader impacts, including increased appreciation for the Government of Ontario's support of the sector and improved perceptions of efforts to recruit and retain PSWs.

### COMMUNITY INTEREST

Interest in the program extended beyond schools and LTC homes, with employment agencies and frontline service organizations for newcomers reaching out and expressing interest in information about the PSW profession and training.

This growing interest has resulted in the continued involvement of three of CESBA's PSW Champions, who are actively building and strengthening relationships with employment agencies, newcomer organizations and community partners. Through ongoing outreach, they are establishing sustainable referral pathways, increasing program visibility and connecting diverse communities to training and employment opportunities in the PSW field.



## Challenges

The project faced relatively minor challenges, one of which was administrative barriers in the initial outreach to LTC homes. However, once LTC home administrators better understood the purpose and goals of the project, the Champions were able to establish strong and positive connections with participating homes.

Other challenges were related to staff time constraints and communication gaps. These were addressed by simplifying feedback methods, improving promotion and scheduling of events and providing clear information about the program's purpose and benefits while building trust over time. Logistical issues, such as limited refreshments, were managed through better planning and follow-up to ensure all staff felt included.

## Looking Ahead

The Career Navigator project demonstrated that connecting PSW students with real voices and lived experiences is invaluable to demystifying the role of a PSW and work in LTC, while also helping students see LTC as a meaningful and rewarding career path. Continuing this engagement work would also help to further increase awareness of bridging pathways in health care, funding supports and provincial recruitment incentives, all of which are critical to ensuring a strong and steady PSW training-to-LTC employment pipeline.

Based on high demand for the Coffee Chat initiative, expanding outreach to include more LTC homes across the province, particularly those in rural and underserved areas, would ensure that more staff could benefit from engagement and recognition.





# PSW Engagement Strategy

CESBA's PSW Engagement Strategy (ES) project (September 24, 2024 – March 31, 2025) targeted English and French Ontario secondary school students enrolled in their school's Specialist High Skills Major-Health and Wellness program (SHSM-Health and Wellness). The initiative aimed to increase awareness of PSW careers among high school students and to encourage enrolment into PSW and other health-care pathways.

Led by Angie Lowry, PSW Engagement Coordinator, seven regional PSW Champions were employed to deliver engagement activities across Ontario.

## Key Activities

### SCHOOL OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

Targeted outreach to school board guidance counsellors and SHSM-Health and Wellness program contacts offered students learning activities led by the PSW Champions. The Champions delivered in-person presentations, workshops and information sessions on PSW and health-care careers, and they participated in school health fairs, open houses and information nights. These activities informed students and parents alike about course selection, training pathways, and how PSW can be used as a ladder to other health-care professions. The project's activities also helped to destigmatize the PSW profession and address myths and misconceptions.

“This was a wonderful experience for my students. It fit in perfectly with my Health Care Course curriculum and gave my students “real life” exposure to careers in the field of PSW and beyond.”

– **TERESE HANSEN-ASHTON, TEACHER**

“The presentation was very beneficial and had a lot of good info to obtain and learning about PSWs and ways to become one.”

– **EMMA D., STUDENT**



**38**

**total events**



**9**

**community events**  
(including two conferences)



**750**

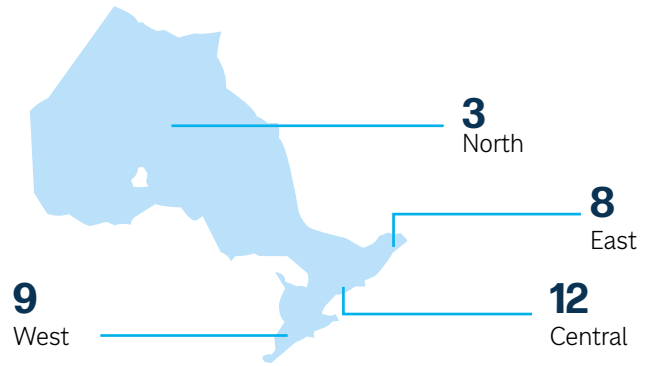
**attendees**  
(combined)

# 32 high school presentations

760 students reached



## PRESENTATIONS BY REGION



## EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

While all presentations delivered by the Champions had an experiential learning component to them, CESBA also developed a series of certification training workshops in Feeding, IPAC, and Medical Terminology. These certifications provided hands-on learning and allowed SHSM students to fulfill some of their program requirements.

## 25 classes completed a certificate training

Of those who completed a certification, the most common was Feeding (45%), followed by Medical Terminology (30%) and Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) (25%)

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

The PSW Champions attended community events such as conferences, job fairs and training expos to connect with teachers, adult education leaders and professionals in the wider education sector. The information booths allowed for conversation, distribution of resources, and helped equip professionals with the knowledge to accurately guide students towards PSW and other health-care careers.

“It was very interesting. I will definitely consider the PSW training in the future.”

– AIDEN F., STUDENT

“The feeding presentation was impactful, as it allowed students to engage in hands-on learning while earning their SHSM certification. This experience not only reinforced the importance of proper feeding techniques in patient care but also gave students a real-world perspective on the responsibilities of health-care professionals.”

– CHRISTINE M., HEALTH CARE TEACHER

“I really enjoyed the interactive experience; it was interesting to take on the role of resident and feeder to gain a sense of perspective of what their experience would be like. Thank you.”

– ARWEN M., STUDENT





## Promotional Kit

A key element of the initiative was the development of a bilingual promotional kit that was sent out to all schools with a SHSM–Health and Wellness program. CESBA hired a creative communications agency to help develop promotional and informational materials for the kit.

### KIT CONTENTS INCLUDED:

- Pop-up display banner
- Informational brochure
- Bookmark with QR code
- Branded [GetMyPSW.ca/DevenezPSSP.ca](https://www.getmypsw.ca/DevenezPSSP.ca) pens, lip balms, pop sockets, water bottles and fanny packs

All materials were produced in English and French and were distributed to schools with a welcome letter explaining how to participate. Centred on the message of *Health care is always in demand*, promotional items directed students to the [GetMyPSW.ca/DevenezPSSP.ca](https://www.getmypsw.ca/DevenezPSSP.ca) microsite for more information on school board PSW programs. The branded swag was hugely popular and helped to heighten interest and engagement among students, while prize draws for branded items like water bottles and hoodies were used to help maintain attention and encourage completion of post-presentation surveys.



**369**

**schools received  
promo kits**



**75**

**school boards  
represented**



**132,926**

**branded promotional &  
informational items distributed**



## Digital Assets

To further support the project, the communications agency assisted CESBA with the creation of a bilingual promotional video about school board PSW programs and heavily featured the PSW Champions in a real LTC home. Digital assets were created from a photoshoot with the Champions and made into digital templates, such as social media posts, that school boards could use for their own program marketing initiatives.

## The Impact

The ES project successfully raised awareness of the PSW profession and broader health-care careers. Overwhelming demand from schools highlights a clear need for in-person engagement and information, while survey and testimonial feedback show that the initiative helped challenge stigma and misconceptions. Promoting training pathways, career bridging and funding opportunities also increased student interest and engagement.

The PSW Champions reported that many students were surprised by the realities of PSW work and were especially interested in funding supports and career pathways. Awareness of alternative career routes such as starting as a PSW before advancing into nursing sparked significant curiosity, with some students seeking more information from their guidance counsellors.

**“There were more students interested in becoming PSWs than I initially thought there would be. They were also extremely interested in their future opportunities within the medical field.”**

**– PSW CHAMPIONS POST-PRESENTATION SURVEY**

Pre-presentation feedback revealed common misconceptions, including beliefs that the work was low-skilled or the environment was depressing. Through personal stories and real-world insights, Champions noted a marked shift in these perceptions, leading to greater respect for the profession and increased interest in pursuing it.



58%

**of respondents were very likely or likely to think about using PSW training as a gateway to other careers in health care**



86%

**strongly agreed or agreed that the careers in health care presentation encouraged them to think about a career in health care**



94%

**strongly agreed or agreed that the presentation increased their knowledge and understanding of the role and career opportunities of a PSW**



93%

**strongly agreed or agreed that they have a better understanding of the funding supports available for students interested in pursuing various careers in health care**



64%

**would consider working in the field of geriatrics**

## Challenges

The project's main challenge was its tight six-month timeline, which limited the ability of the Champions and project coordinator to meet the extremely high demand from schools for presentations and in-person events. This demonstrates that high school students are an important and largely untapped audience for promoting health-care careers while they are still making decisions about their futures. Schools continued to request visits from Champions even after the project had concluded. Even though the focus for this project was Grade 11 and 12 SHSM–Health & Wellness students, the interest extended to Grade 9 and 10 teachers and other SHSM programs looking to support their students with career planning.

Additionally, the short time period hindered the possibility of tracking long-term data and student trends.

**“The importance of engaging with high school students early in their educational journey is essential to shifting perceptions of long-term care and showcasing the rewarding careers our sector has to offer.”**

**– STEPHANIE MATOS, GREY COUNTY  
LONG-TERM CARE**

## Looking Ahead

This project demonstrated the importance of engaging youth early with personal interactions and real stories while they are still exploring education, training and career options, and empowering them to consider different pathways. Connecting with students in Grades 9 and 10, or even earlier in Grades 7 and 8, would go a long way in exposing youth to careers in health care and combatting misconceptions early on. These opportunities for in-person engagement would also help to keep youth engaged in high school and on the path to obtain their OSSD.

The initiative could expand from a pilot project to a permanent recruitment pipeline. Sustained engagement with schools across Ontario, supported by in-person events and digital tools such as short videos and social media, would help reach more students. Keeping health-care careers and front-line workers visible through sharing authentic experiences will help students better envision themselves in these roles.

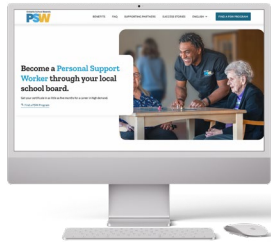


# Digital Metrics

## GETMYPWSW.CA MICROSITE

The bilingual [GetMyPSW.ca/DevenezPSSP.ca](https://www.getmypsw.ca/DevenezPSSP.ca) microsite saw a record number of visits between June 1, 2024 and March 31, 2026:

**89,000** new website visitors



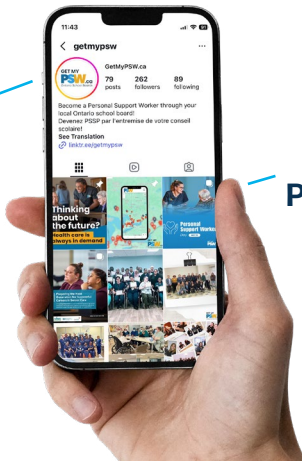
Visit [GetMyPSW.ca](https://www.getmypsw.ca)



## GETMYPWSW INSTAGRAM

The [@GetMyPSW](https://www.instagram.com/getmypsw) Instagram profile was launched in January 2025 with the intention of promoting school board PSW programs and providing more information about PSW careers, careers in LTC and Living Classroom. It also offered an inside glimpse into both the CN and ES projects and the realities of working as a PSW.

**250+**  
Followers



**73**  
Posts



Follow [@GetMyPSW](https://www.instagram.com/getmypsw) on Instagram

## PROMOTIONAL VIDEO

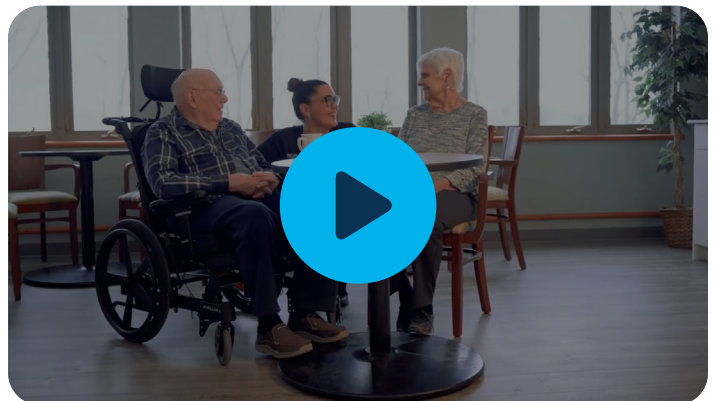
The bilingual GetMyPSW promotional video was launched in February 2025. As of March 31, 2026, the videos had nearly 3,500 combined views in [English](#) and [French](#).



Watch the GetMyPSW promotional video in **English**



Watch the GetMyPSW promotional video in **French**





## Media

The CN and ES projects were featured in an article in OLTCAs Spring/Summer 2025 issue of Long-Term Care Today Magazine. The article, [School board PSW training: Helping to fill gaps in long-term care](#) talks about the value of school board PSW programs and highlights CESBA-led projects supporting PSW training including Career Navigator, Engagement Strategy and Living Classroom.

Additionally, Northern PSW Champion Amanda visited with Sudbury's MPP Jamie West to talk about the CN and ES initiatives. They discussed CESBA's work in bringing awareness to school board PSW training, careers in the north, and how local government can further support these initiatives.

## Ripple Effect

Both the CN and ES projects have helped inform and strengthen other PSW-related initiatives, including the expansion of the Living Classroom model into Practical Nursing (PN) programs, by highlighting the value of early engagement and clear career pathways. Their impact continues to shape program development and funding priorities, supporting more integrated, sustainable approaches to PSW education and workforce development.



# PSW Champions

These projects would not have been possible without the dedication, commitment and enthusiasm of the seven regional PSW Champions. Their passion for health care and ability to connect with PSW students, high school students and LTC home staff on a personal level made them strong representatives and advocates for their profession, and a key to the projects' successes. CESBA is deeply grateful for their contributions and for the positive impact they have made on the future of health care and in strengthening Ontario's economy.

All the Champions highlighted the positive impact that these projects had on them as individuals, both personally and professionally. The experience not only reignited their passion for their work but also inspired many of them to pursue further training and education, such as RPN/RN and Social Service Worker programs, or to explore roles in teaching, mentorship and leadership.



**JENNIFER BARLOW**  
PSW Champion for Western Ontario



**JEAN BONNET**  
Francophone PSW Champion for Eastern Ontario

*"[This role] brought a new level of satisfaction and professional enrichment. My role is much more important than just providing care."*



**KIMBERLY WERE**  
PSW Champion for Western Ontario

*"This opportunity brought back my spark for health care, being out there and sharing and remembering why I do what I do, and going forward. It's been great connecting with the students and sharing our experiences."*



**TAMBUDZAI LOLO CHIWESHE**  
PSW Champion for Central Ontario

*"Being part of this work reminded me how important it is for frontline workers to share their experiences. This experience gave me the opportunity to advocate for the profession and reflect on how meaningful this work is. It also showed me how powerful real stories from the field can be in changing how people view health-care careers."*



**DANE 'DJ' JOHNSON**  
PSW Champion for Central Ontario

*"Having the opportunity to be in a leadership position is something you don't often find with PSWs. This was something that enabled me to be more of a leader when it comes to those that I work with. It was something for me that, as a professional, made me more confident and prouder to be a PSW."*



**AMANDA WHITE**  
PSW Champion for Northern Ontario

*"I feel more confident in myself as a PSW and a health-care worker. I feel that I've developed leadership skills which I will carry on through my work as a PSW. It's refreshed my work as a PSW in long-term care and a good refresher of why I'm here in the first place. I feel like this really reinvigorated my love for being a PSW in long-term care."*



**MELISSA WILLIAMSON**  
PSW Champion for Western Ontario

*"This experience reminded me why I chose this career. It made me reflect on the impact we have every day. Sharing my story helped build my confidence and made me proud to represent the profession. It also showed me how important it is for PSWs to have a voice and be part of these conversations."*

# CESBA CN and ES Project Staff

**TAMMY CANTIN**

Living Classroom Coordinator

**ERICA D'SOUZA**

Career Navigator Project  
Coordinator

**BRITTANY HOWLETT**

Communications Consultant

**ANGIE LOWRY**

Engagement Strategy Project  
Coordinator

**ANITA PLUNKETT**

PSW Program Lead, CESBA





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