

# Canadian Social Prescribing Link Worker Competency Domains

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Anchored by

**Canadian  
Red Cross**

Individual Support  
Competency Domain

# Effective Communication

Link workers employ a range of communication and interpersonal skills that build and maintain strong relationships with stakeholders and facilitate person-centred care.



Rapport and trust building between Link Workers and their stakeholders is essential for safe and high-quality social prescribing. Link Workers must employ a range of communication strategies to ensure effective collaboration with clients, caregivers, healthcare providers, and community stakeholders.

Rapport and relationship building competencies and strategies include active listening, empathy, clarifying information, and demonstrating cultural competency. These ensure a deep understanding of the needs and circumstances of individuals.

These approaches support client advocacy, co-production of care, enable informed decision-making, and enhance positive outcomes in the care process.

Individual Support

Competency Domain

# Cultural Safety and Competence

Link Workers build their understanding of cultural contexts to promote health equity and provide support that reflects the needs of the communities they serve.



Link Workers must have a deep understanding and appreciation for cultural diversity and the implications of cultural context for co-designing effective support for various populations across Canada.

This involves more than cultural competence; it requires cultural humility and safety, ensuring respect and inclusivity. Ongoing, comprehensive training, mentorship, and supervision are necessary to develop and maintain proficiency in cultural safety and competence.

By understanding cultural contexts and needs, Link Workers build rapport and trust with their clients, fostering collaboration in processes such as needs assessments, care planning, and referrals and leading to improved health and wellbeing outcomes.

Individual Support  
Competency Domain

# Person-Centred Care Planning

Link Workers practice person-centred care planning to tailor their support to the individual needs, strengths, values, and desires of their clients, ensuring they are empowered and actively involved in making decisions about their own care.



Link Workers engage their clients in a collaborative co-creation process to build care plans that reflect their individual needs and desires, empowering clients to play an active role in their health and wellbeing.

Link Workers must be well-equipped with the tools, skills, and competencies necessary to support care planning that reflects their clients' desires and social circumstances.

This allows Link Workers to connect clients to services that meet their unique access needs and health and wellbeing goals. When following up, Link Workers collaborate with clients to ensure the referred services are appropriate and adjust or update the care plan accordingly.

Individual Support  
Competency Domain

# Support Behaviour Change

Link Workers engage with clients in ways that empower behaviour change to improve identified health and wellbeing priorities and outcomes.



Link Workers may encounter clients who need additional support to adopt healthy behaviours and attend services.

Accordingly, Link Workers must be equipped with strategies such as coaching and motivational interviewing to understand clients' readiness for change and encourage behaviour change. Link Workers should be prepared to offer hands-on navigation support for clients with more complex care access needs.

These skills and competencies enable Link Workers to guide individuals towards utilizing community resources and services that align with their unique needs and health and wellbeing goals.

Community Engagement  
Competency Domain

# Partnership Building

Link Workers build relationships with the social prescribing workforce ecosystem to ensure inclusivity and collaboration.



Link Workers must establish relationships with all key stakeholders, including community organizations, caregivers, and healthcare providers.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration requires consistent language and precise communication to ensure coordinated and comprehensive support.

Building these connections creates a cohesive support network, facilitates resource sharing, and fosters mutual trust and understanding. These community and health partnerships ensure that social prescribing is delivered collaboratively and sustainably, leading to a more integrated and holistic approach to care.

Community Engagement  
Competency Domain

# Local Resource Knowledge

Link Workers stay informed and updated on evolving community assets, emerging services, and changes in resource access.



Link Workers must have a deep understanding of local communities, including proficiency in navigating government benefits, healthcare systems, and other resources to connect clients to appropriate supports.

Link Workers must be equipped with the tools and skills to gather information and report on any changes to service access, while adhering to policies and procedures that ensure client and staff confidentiality and safety.

This enables Link Workers to offer relevant, person-centred, and timely connections to services, ensuring efficient navigation that reduces barriers and delays for those seeking support services.

Community Engagement  
Competency Domain

# Community Development

Link Workers identify and leverage local community assets to support community ownership, empowerment, active participation and collaboration in social prescribing.



Link Workers must understand and appreciate the roles of community organizations, healthcare providers, and volunteers in social prescribing.

Link Workers should build capacity in Asset-Based Community Development to identify and mobilize community assets, skills, and resources. This approach supports the strengthening of community bonds and capacity, facilitating the integration of health and community care.

Engaging community assets and stakeholders ensures social prescribing initiatives are adaptable, sustainable, locally relevant, and resilient, ultimately leading to better health outcomes and enhanced community well-being.



Program Administration

Competency Domain

# Population Health Monitoring

Link Workers stay informed on population health trends to ensure that supports and interventions are tailored to meet community needs effectively.



Link Workers must understand the diverse health outcomes across various populations and apply this knowledge to develop accessible support and champion social justice.

Link Workers must build their knowledge of the impacts of wider social determinants of health experienced by different populations, including age, race, ethnicity, nationality, and other social positionalities.

By building this capacity, Link Workers are enabled to identify and better address underlying issues contributing to health inequities. This holistic approach enables more targeted, inclusive, and impactful support, ultimately improving health outcomes for various communities in Canada.

Program Administration

Competency Domain

# Data Collection and Monitoring

Link Workers participate in the gathering and sharing of relevant data pertaining to client health outcomes and community service experiences to support the advancement of social prescribing.



Link Workers focus on monitoring and data collection, playing a crucial role in gathering and sharing relevant information with team members, external stakeholders, and partners who evaluate data and analyse outcomes.

Link Workers must foster meaningful and consensual participation from clients in this aspect of the role and should have a solid foundation in data literacy and quantitative and qualitative data collection to fulfil these responsibilities effectively.

Supporting this flow of information supports care experience and service provision by allowing health and community service providers and programs to be accountable, identify best practices, demonstrate impact and make informed decisions that enhance program effectiveness.

Program Administration

Competency Domain

# Quality and Safety Compliance

Link Workers are best able to offer support when trained and supported through organizational procedures and policies that ensure the delivery of safe and high-quality services.



Organizations employing Link Workers must incorporate training in organizational procedures and policies, as well as performance evaluation within their frameworks, to ensure that Link Workers are equipped to deliver safe and high-quality social prescribing.

For Link Workers, compassionate supervision, ongoing professional development, and access to peer support are crucial for continued growth in the role. Additionally, a commitment to self-development and reflective practice is essential due to the dynamic nature of communities.

Organizations delivering social prescribing should strategically plan for and allocate resources to establish reflective practice models, so that feedback from supervision and peer support informs future improvements to the Link Worker role and the overall delivery of social prescribing.