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B.C.'S MINISTRY OF HEALTH



Hiring Health Care Assistants in B.C. Gets Easier

Health care assistants (HCAs) (also known as care aides and community health workers) are direct care staff who provide personal care assistance and services in a variety of health care settings including hospitals, assisted living, group homes, long-term care and community care.

For many years, the registration pathway for Canadian trained HCAs was a contributing factor that was slowing down the number of trained and qualified HCAs coming to the province.

HCAs are in high demand, and there are many job opportunities for these professionals across the province, particularly as we work to strengthen the supports available to seniors. B.C. – like many Canadian jurisdictions– is finding it challenging to fill all the HCA positions needed for this fast-growing sector. Employers report they have been struggling to hire Canadian trained out-of-province HCAs, as B.C.'s HCA assessment process was sometimes months long.

The Ministry has heard regularly from employers about their hiring challenges – some have had willing and able HCA candidates who they considered to be qualified, but these HCAs were unable to secure work in B.C., as the HCA assessment process created access and cost barriers.

What is being done to address these challenges?

In September 2019, the Ministry worked with the BC Care Aide and Community Health Worker Registry to remove the requirement that Canadian trained HCA applicants to be residents of B.C. prior to



applying for the registry. This was a significant change in Registry policy, as Canadian trained HCAs can now apply to the Registry from their home province or territory. In addition, in November 2019, Government announced a faster and easier registration pathway, which no longer requires Canadian trained HCAs to complete the [Nursing Community Assessment Service \(NCAS\)](#), assuming they received their training from a pre-qualified educational institution and met other Registry requirements.

Some of the other changes introduced to support HCA registration (Ministry of Health's HCA Strategy and Expedited Policy) include:

- Participating employers will deliver a standardized orientation program to HCA employees, and then provide verification of their completion to the Registry. The Registry will then register the HCA. Once the HCA is registered, they can provide care (Previously some HCAs who did not pass the NCAS competency assessment process would have to complete additional post-secondary requirements at their cost to address any NCAS identified competency gaps – the standardized orientation program replaces the NCAS competency assessment for those Canadian HCA applicants that qualify).
- Establishment of a \$2.26 million provincial HCA recruitment strategy and a bursary program (helping those Canadian HCAs and internationally educated health care professionals who do not qualify for the new pathway to become registered in B.C.). The bursary will help these applicants pay for NCAS and/or the remedial education they are required to take to qualify for BC HCA registration.

What do the new changes mean for employers and HCAs who apply?

The new registration pathway will make it faster and easier for employers to hire and recruit Canadian trained out-of-province HCAs. The new pathway also reduces the time, costs, and hiring process of these Canadian-trained qualified HCAs, which means they will get to work/employed much faster than before.

For individual HCAs, the new changes mean fewer barriers to qualifying for work in the province, leading to a much faster process. The new pathway translates to a significant financial savings for HCAs applying, as an applicant who is approved by the Registry for the pathway will receive a letter, and then can be hired by a participating employer, complete the standardized orientation program, and following employer confirmation, the HCA will be registered. The new process has much fewer steps and is more efficient than the previous pathway.

“Employers have been very receptive to the policy and the changes it will make in BC,” highlights Joanne Maclaren, executive director of the Nursing Policy Secretariat. “We have been meeting with partners and the health authorities and getting nothing but positive feedback...people are very excited and grateful for these changes.”

If you are an HCAs or are interested in becoming a HCA, visit [Choose 2 Care](#) <https://www.choose2care.ca/> for more information or visit [BC Gov News](#) to learn more about these changes.