

Definition of Terms

Nurse Practitioner

Nurse practitioners (NPs) are health professionals who have achieved the advanced nursing practice competencies by completing clinically focused graduate level education. to practice in BC a nurse practitioner must register with the British Columbia College of Nurses and Midwives (BCCNM). NPs are autonomous health care professionals who act as “Most Responsible Providers” and work with physicians and other health professionals to provide comprehensive care across the spectrum of practice from primary care to acute or specialized care. NPs focus on a holistic approach to care and offer preventive health education and planning that encourages clients to be as healthy as possible and take an active role in health care decisions.

The legal authority for nurse practitioners’ scope of practice is set out in the [Nurses \(Registered\) and Nurse Practitioner Regulation](#) under the Health Professions Act. The Regulation describes the restricted activities that can be carried out by nurse practitioners, such as making a diagnosis of a disorder or condition; ordering diagnostic and laboratory services; and prescribing and dispensing drugs. As specified in the Regulation, these activities are provided in accordance with standards, limits and conditions established by BCCNM. To learn more about the regulation and registration of nurse practitioners, visit the BCCNM website [here](#).

The BCCNM requires all registered nurse practitioners to participate in an ongoing [Quality Assurance Program](#). The goals of the Quality Assurance Program are to promote high practice standards and to ensure that clients continually receive safe, competent and ethical care.

Encounter Records

The record of a service(s) a nurse practitioner provides to a patient/client is called an encounter record. Nurse practitioners (like other health care professionals) are required to submit encounter records to the Medical Services Plan (MSP)/Health Insurance BC (HIBC). The information included in a nurse practitioner’s encounter record serves the similar purpose as a medical claim submitted by a physician or other health care practitioner. Therefore, for administrative purposes, an encounter record is considered by MSP/HIBC to be equivalent to a medical claim. For more information on Encounter Records [click here](#).

Encounter Codes

Nurse practitioner encounter codes are part of the encounter record. Encounter codes are used to capture the type of visit and practice activities. While similar to physician fee codes, encounter codes are not used for billing purposes and are assessed at zero dollars. Click [here](#) for a list of Encounter Codes and [here](#) for Diagnostic Code Descriptions (ICD9).

Medical Services Plan/Health Insurance BC

The [Medical Service Plan \(MSP\)](#) is BC’s publicly funded health insurance program. It provides coverage for medically necessary services provided by nurse practitioners and other health care practitioners to eligible beneficiaries.

Health Insurance BC (HIBC) administers medical coverage through the MSP and drug coverage through the PharmaCare and Fair PharmaCare programs on behalf of the BC government. HIBC is responsible for:

- enrolling beneficiaries;
- administering premium assistance programs for low-income beneficiaries;
- registering all health care practitioners, including nurse practitioners, in MSP; and
- adjudicating and processing health care practitioners' fee-for-service billings.

Medicare Protection Act and Medical and Health Care Services Regulation

The MSP is administered under the Medicare Protection Act (1995) and Regulations. The Medicare Protection Act and The Medical and Health Care Services Regulation establishes the rights and duties of the Medical Services Commission to set policies and conduct audits for the MSP, and governs eligibility and enrolment of beneficiaries, establishment of premiums for medical coverage, enrolment and responsibilities of medical and health care practitioners, and approval of diagnostic facilities.

Practitioner Number

The MSP practitioner number (also known as “MSP number” or “billing number”) is a unique number given to each healthcare practitioner. It allows nurse practitioners to submit encounter records through the HIBC/MSP claims processing system for services provided to eligible beneficiaries. All encounter records require a practitioner number. A nurse practitioner's practitioner number is used for billing purposes by specialists and diagnostic facilities when nurse practitioners make referrals for those services.

Payment/Payee Number

The payment number (also known as the payee number) is the number HIBC/MSP associates with nurse practitioner encounter records. All nurse practitioners will have a payment/payee number for encounter record submissions. For nurse practitioners the payment number used for encounter record submission may identify the clinic, facility or health authority where they are employed and allows claims submitted to HIBC for diagnostic tests and imaging ordered by nurse practitioners to be processed. Click [here](#) for more information about Payment/Payee Numbers.