The Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) is a professional nurse involved in the assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation, and evaluation of nursing care. LPNs provide health care services in direct clinical care as well as in education, research, and administration. Practicing in Alberta since 1947, the LPN role has evolved significantly over the years to meet the changing health needs of Albertans. LPNs now require diploma level education as entry-to-practice; with increased continuing education available for the profession. Opportunities for LPNs have emerged in clinical and non-clinical environments, with new roles in areas LPNs have not traditionally worked (i.e., intensive care, corrections, leadership roles, self-employed nursing).

### Scope of Practice Framework

LPNs are self-regulating professionals whose scope of practice is directed by a framework that includes legislation (Health Professions Act [HPA]), regulation (HPA, LPN Regulation), Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics of the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta (CLPNA), Entry-to-Practice Competencies, and Competency Profile. The framework defines the LPN scope of practice from novice to expert practitioner.

The HPA includes three professional nursing groups:
- Licensed Practical Nurse – LPN
- Registered Nurse – RN
- Registered Psychiatric Nurse – RPN

There is overlap in scope of practice across the three nursing professions, with common sharing of nursing knowledge, skill set, and role performance. There are also competencies that set the nursing professions apart.

### Role & Responsibilities

LPNs serve individuals, families, and groups, assessing their needs and providing care and treatment as appropriate. With well-developed assessment and critical thinking skills, LPNs formulate nursing diagnoses, plan interventions, provide health education, and evaluate response to treatment in collaboration with clients and other health professionals, including physicians, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, and registered nurses.

LPNs assume independent, interdependent, and overlapping roles on the health care team. The level of independence for the LPN in practice depends upon several factors including:
- client needs, complexity, predictability,
- competencies of the individual nurse (LPN) and the other nurses (LPNs, RNs, RPNs) on the team, and
- support available in the environment.

Employer policy, job description, and role utilization influence the LPN scope of practice in any practice setting. In Alberta, most practice environments expect LPNs to fully utilize their LPN competencies.

### Being a Professional Nurse

LPNs usually work in teams; however, in Alberta LPNs do not work ‘under-the-direction’ of another care provider. LPNs practice autonomously, make independent nursing judgments, and are professionally responsible and accountable (answerable) for the decisions and actions they make.

### Competencies

There are two documents to outline LPN competencies:

**Entry-to-Practice Competencies (ETPC) for Licensed Practical Nurses**: The ETPC outlines the knowledge, skills, judgments, and personal attributes required upon entry into the LPN profession. New graduates and internationally trained nurses are required to meet the ETPC in Alberta. The ETPC also guides practical nurse
education programs and defines novice practice of the LPN to ensure safe, competent care.

**Competency Profile for Licensed Practical Nurses**\(^6\): The Competency Profile defines the competencies within the LPN scope of practice. Competencies are detailed statements that define the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes required by an individual to practise within the profession. The Profile contains three areas of competencies:

- Basic competencies guide curriculum for all practical nurse programs in Alberta and define the depth and breadth of knowledge and skill for those entering into the LPN profession
- Additional competencies are acquired through on-the-job education and certification that is provided by the employer for the practice setting
- Specialty competencies are authorized once a LPN completes advanced education approved by the CLPNA. There are four areas of practice that require approved specialty education:
  - Advanced Orthopedics
  - Perioperative Nursing
  - Dialysis
  - Immunization

**Conclusion**

LPNs have a broad scope of practice, guided by a comprehensive framework that includes legislation, regulation, standards, education, competencies, continuing competence, and employer policy. The LPN profession provides a vital role in health service delivery. LPNs provide quality care to Albertans within a system experiencing an aging population, increasing complexity of care, and continuing demands for adequate resource utilization.

**PUBLISHED SUPPORTIVE DOCUMENTS**

This FACT SHEET is linked to other supportive documents:

Interpretive Documents:
- Understanding LPN Practice & Restricted Activity Authorizations
- Professional Responsibility & Accountability
- Specialized Practice

**REFERENCES**


Office of Accountability
Registrar or designate

Office of Administrative Responsibility
Professional Practice

Scope and Applicability
This FACT Sheet extends to all LPNs.
The FACT Sheet impacts all practice settings where nurses work.

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