Focus on Licensed Practical Nurses in Alberta
What is a Licensed Practical Nurse?

The Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) is a professional nurse involved in the assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation, and evaluation of nursing care. LPNs work in direct nursing care, with some pursuing opportunities in education, research, leadership and administration.

LPNs have been practicing in Alberta since 1947, with the LPN role changing over the years from assistant to professional nurse. The LPN profession has experienced many changes over the last few decades. These changes have occurred in education, scope of practice, and roles. The LPN knowledge and skill has grown, with diploma as entry-to-practice and increased education prospects available after graduation. Opportunities for LPNs have emerged in clinical and non-clinical environments, with new roles in non-traditional areas.

LPN Role & Responsibilities

LPNs in Alberta are responsible and accountable to work within the scope of practice of the LPN profession as defined by the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta. 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. There are many roles within Alberta for LPNs in areas such as: acute care, long term care, community, primary care clinics, education, occupational health and safety, public health, and leadership.

LPNs assume independent, interdependent, and often overlapping roles on the health care team. The level of independence for a LPN in practice may differ depending upon the needs and complexity of the client, skills of the LPN and the team around them, and supports available in the setting.

Although most LPNs work in teams, Alberta LPNs do not work ‘under-the-direction’ of another care provider. LPNs are expected to be autonomous and make decisions and take action while providing nursing care for clients, with responsibility and accountability for the decisions they make.

Education

LPNs in Alberta graduate from a two-year diploma program, and the education is available on a full-time or part-time basis and in a variety of formats including evening courses, regular classroom study, online learning and a blended approach combining classroom study with online learning.

Alberta practical nurse programs are usually 68 weeks in length and provide a minimum of 750 hours of theoretical instruction and 900 hours of laboratory/clinical practice. Options for program completion range from 18-36 months. Most commonly, the practical nurse program is completed over four semesters within two years.

Continuing Education

LPNs are committed to life-long learning and participate annually in the CLPNA’s Continuing Competency Program (CCP). LPNs may complete additional education in recognized specialties such as immunization, advanced foot care, dialysis, operating room, and orthopedics. Other education is available including wound care, mental health, occupational health and safety, and oncology. Increasingly LPNs pursue a variety of education at a Bachelor and Master’s Degree level.

Regulated Professional Nurses

As a self-regulating profession, LPNs must meet registration requirements set out by the College of LPNs of Alberta under the Health Professions Act and the LPN Regulation. This includes initial registration upon completion of an approved practical nurse program or equivalency. It also includes annual renewal of registration, participation in continuing competence activities, and being actively engaged in the practice of the profession.
Outline of Competency Profile for LPNs, 3rd Ed.

The following outlines the competencies of the Licensed Practical Nurse in Alberta, including basic, additional, and specialized. Competency is defined as the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes of a professional. No individual LPN is required to possess all competencies of the profession; each will possess a set specific to their own expertise, based on their work experience and practice setting. The Competency Profile for LPNs, 3rd Edition (2015), is a detailed account of these competencies and is available from the CLPNA or at www.clpna.com or by contacting info@clpna.com or 780.484.8886.
CLPNA Mandate

To lead and regulate the profession in a manner that protects and serves the public through excellence in Practical Nursing.

CLPNA’s Vision

Transforming the licensed practical nurse profession and influencing a quality person-centred system.

Mission for the Profession

Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) of Alberta are progressive nursing professionals who provide quality, safe, competent, and ethical care in collaboration with clients, families and other providers.

• LPNs provide holistic person-centred care including physical, psychosocial and spiritual health.
• LPNs advocate for and respect client choice and dignity.
• LPNs are accountable for the care they provide.