



COLLEGE OF  
**LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSES**  
OF ALBERTA

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# Policy

## Expectations and Obligations during Emergencies

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Revised: February 28, 2020



**This document is linked to legislation:**

[Health Professions Act](#)  
[Licensed Practical Nurses Profession Regulation](#)  
[Emergency Management Act](#)  
[Public Health Act](#)

**This document is linked to other documents that direct expectations of professional behaviour or requirements for practice:**

[Standards of Practice](#)  
[Code of Ethics](#)  
[Competency Profile](#)  
[Personal Declaration for Registration Requirements](#)  
[Professional Responsibility and Accountability](#)

**This document is linked to related supportive documents:**

[Duty to Report](#)  
[Pandemic Characteristics and Response Measures](#)

**REVISIONS and UPDATES**

Editorial Update December 2019  
Editorial Update February 2020

*The legislative mandate of the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta (CLPNA) is to serve and protect the public by ensuring its members deliver safe, competent and ethical nursing care. A CLPNA Policy outlines requirements and expected behaviours that will be monitored and enforced.*

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**INTRODUCTION** The College of Licensed Practical Nurses (CLPNA) is mandated to regulate the profession in the public interest. In accordance with the *Standards of Practice* and *Code of Ethics*, the CLPNA expects regulated members to continue and assume their role in practical nursing as health care professionals in times of emergencies, such that of pandemics.<sup>1</sup> Emergency preparedness can help minimize societal disruption and increase protection for the public during times of emergencies.<sup>2</sup> This policy focuses on the obligations of Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) and describes the CLPNA's registration practices during emergencies to help LPNs understand their responsibility and accountability in these challenging situations.

**PURPOSE** The purpose of this policy is to provide clarity to regulated members about their nursing responsibility during emergencies. Non-practicing members or nurses from another jurisdiction can find information about registration practices in this document if they want to contribute as a practicing LPN in times of emergencies (the definition of emergency for the purpose of this document is from the *Emergency Management Act*, see below).

**POLICY** All members are expected to fulfill their commitments to clients, the profession, and the public during emergencies by providing safe, competent, compassionate, and ethical care. Demands for services in some healthcare settings may increase dramatically due to absenteeism of staff. LPNs may be trained and asked to perform unfamiliar job tasks.

LPNs are reminded that they must continue to practice within their scope of practice as outlined in the *Licensed Practical Nurses Profession Regulation* (LPN Regulation), the *Standards of Practice for Licensed Practical Nurses in Canada*, and the *Standards of Practice for Licensed Practical Nurses on Restricted Activities and Advanced Practice*.<sup>3</sup> LPNs must also practice within their own personal competencies.<sup>4</sup> This ensures that LPNs are not only providing care, but they are also delivering quality care.<sup>5</sup> Please refer to section "Special Note on Performance of Restricted Activities" for information

on ministerial orders and when LPNs may practice in an expanded scope of practice.<sup>6</sup>

A **duty to care** obligation is balanced against an LPN's professional obligation and their family. The LPN is expected to use professional judgment when balancing these obligations. An LPN can refer to the *Standard of Practice* and *Code of Ethics* to help them consider the underlying ethical principles as they balance these competing obligations. All LPNs should be mindful of their responsibilities when they have accepted a client assignment(s); abandonment of care may result in a disciplinary action. Complaints will be managed on a case-by-case basis during times of emergencies.

LPNs also have a **duty to report** obligation.<sup>7</sup> As health professionals, if an LPN becomes aware 1) that a client under their care or supervision is infected with a communicable disease; or 2) that a health condition may become dangerous to public health they are obligated to report the information to the Medical Officer of Health.

LPNs can expect support from the government, the CLPNA, and the healthcare system in public health emergencies or any other emergencies. The *Alberta's Pandemic Influenza Plan (2014)* outlines a provincial strategy to guide emergency response and recovery through a collaborative effort from stakeholders in the government and the health sector.<sup>8</sup>

### Defining Disaster and Emergency

The *Emergency Management Act* defines disaster as "an event that results in serious harm to the safety, health or welfare of people or in widespread damage to property."<sup>9</sup> Examples of disasters include fire, floods, and earthquakes. Emergency is defined as

an event that requires prompt co-ordination of action or special regulation of persons or property to protect the safety, health or welfare of people or to limit damage to property.<sup>10</sup>



### Defining Public Health Emergency

The *Public Health Act* defines public health emergency as

an occurrence or threat of an illness, a health condition, an epidemic or pandemic disease, a novel or highly infectious agent or biological toxin, or the presence of a chemical agent or radioactive material that poses a significant risk to the public health.<sup>11</sup>

### Defining Pandemic

Where epidemic is defined as an outbreak of an infectious disease in a given area or population, the Public Health Agency of Canada defines pandemic as “a worldwide outbreak of a specific disease which affects a large proportion of the population.”<sup>12</sup> The number of infected cases is in excess of what is typically expected in a given area or population for both situations (an epidemic or a pandemic).

The definition of pandemic does *not* specify a particular type of disease; however, influenza is the most common type of communicable disease that can lead to pandemics based on historical evidence.<sup>13</sup> Pandemic influenza occurs when humans become susceptible to a new influenza A virus, in which they have little or no immunity against, and progresses to a worldwide spread.

A pandemic influenza differs from seasonal influenza in potential lethal impact.<sup>14</sup> Although seasonal influenza virus strains do change, vaccines are available ahead of time to help people develop antibodies and protect them from anticipated influenza virus strains contained in the vaccines. Virus strains arising from pandemic influenza cannot be predicted ahead of time to produce vaccines.<sup>15</sup> Depending on the severity of the pandemic influenza, significant hospitalization and deaths can occur worldwide.

During emergencies, LPNs may be more involved with exposure prone procedures. LPNs should apply nursing principles to nursing practice, as they are accountable to practicing in a manner that protects clients, colleagues and themselves from communicable diseases. Adherence to routine

practices and additional precautions will decrease the risk of communicable disease transmission.<sup>16</sup>

### Registration Practices during Emergencies

The CLPNA recognizes the importance of emergency preparedness. Necessary internal and external services will be maintained directly or indirectly to support LPNs during emergencies. This includes, but is not limited to, helping LPNs and relevant stakeholders understand legislative directives on LPN professional practice (e.g. the collection, use, and disclosure of personal information during declared public health emergencies for LPNs working in the public or private sector) via practice consultations and maintaining registration and renewal practices. The CLPNA will respond to emergencies in a manner that protects and serves the public.

According to Schedule 10 of the *Health Professions Act*, only regulated members of the CLPNA may apply licensed practical nursing knowledge, skills and judgment to assess patients’ needs, and nursing care for patients and family.<sup>17</sup> This condition remains for LPNs wishing to practice practical nursing in times of emergencies. LPNs must be registered under one of the registration categories listed in the LPN Regulation. Provisions outlined under each registration category must continue to be followed.

Qualified graduates of practical nursing who are not registered or practicing in Alberta and wish to provide nursing care as an LPN during an emergency can apply for general, provisional, or courtesy registration under the conditions outlined in the LPN Regulation. This includes individuals who want to volunteer. While the purpose behind courtesy registration is more aligned with emergency response situations, the CLPNA does not impose any restrictions on applications for other registration categories as long as appropriate supporting documents are provided. For example, applicants applying for initial registration are required to complete a personal declaration on good character, reputation, and fitness to practice.<sup>18</sup> The CLPNA will assess and process the applications as quickly as possible.



Immunization is especially relevant in times of pandemic influenza emergencies, as vaccines are being developed to manage the outbreak. LPNs are reminded that unless there is a ministerial order (please see the section below for more information) that otherwise authorizes vaccine administration, only those who have completed training or education in immunizations may perform this activity in accordance with the conditions outlined in the LPN Regulation and the *Standards of Practice on Restricted Activities and Advanced Practice*.

#### ***Special Note on Performance of Restricted Activities***

In the case of a public health emergency, the Minister of Health has the authority to use a ministerial order that changes the above-mentioned registration requirements. The order can authorize a person, or category of persons, to perform a restricted activity subject to any conditions that the Minister establishes.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, if a ministerial order authorizes LPNs to administer immunizations beyond what the current LPN Regulation allows, LPNs could do so as long as they follow the conditions established

in the order, which would supersede conditions outlined in the LPN Regulation for the duration of the ministerial order.

However, a ministerial order is not automatic; LPNs must practice within their scope and in accordance with the LPN Regulation during emergencies unless there is notice of a ministerial order in the change of practice. During times of emergency and disaster management, the CLPNA will assist in relaying Government updates to its members.

LPNs are reminded that they are held to the same standards and accountabilities regardless of whether nursing care is provided in an employment or a volunteer situation during an emergency/disaster. Members can find useful resources related to pandemic influenza, communicable diseases, and infection prevention and control on the CLPNA website.



## REFERENCE

- <sup>1</sup> Canadian Council for Practical Nurse Regulators (CCPNR), *Standards of Practice for Licensed Practical Nurses in Canada* (2013), [http://www.clpna.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/doc\\_CCPNR\\_CLPNA\\_Standards\\_of\\_Practice.pdf](http://www.clpna.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/doc_CCPNR_CLPNA_Standards_of_Practice.pdf); Canadian Council for Practical Nurse Regulators, *Code of Ethics* (2013), [http://www.clpna.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/doc\\_CCPNR\\_CLPNA\\_Code\\_of\\_Ethics.pdf](http://www.clpna.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/doc_CCPNR_CLPNA_Code_of_Ethics.pdf).
- <sup>2</sup> Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), Pan-Canadian Public Health Network, *Canadian Pandemic Preparedness: Planning Guide for the Health Sector* (2015), <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cpip-pclpci/assets/pdf/report-rapport-2015-eng.pdf>.
- <sup>3</sup> *Licensed Practical Nurses Profession Regulation*, Alta Reg 81/2003; CCPNR, *Standards of Practice for Licensed Practical Nurses in Canada*; College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta (CLPNA), *Standards of Practice for Licensed Practical Nurses on Restricted Activities and Advanced Practice* (2020), <https://www.clpna.com/governance/standards-code/>.
- <sup>4</sup> CLPNA, *Competency Profile for Licensed Practical Nurses*, <https://www.clpna.com/members/continuing-competency-program/competency-profile-for-lpns/>.
- <sup>5</sup> College of Nurses of Ontario, *Practice Guideline Preparing for an Influenza Pandemic* (February, 2017), [http://www.cno.org/globalassets/docs/prac/41072\\_fsandemic.pdf](http://www.cno.org/globalassets/docs/prac/41072_fsandemic.pdf).
- <sup>6</sup> *Government Organization Act*, RSA 2000, c G-10, schedule 7.1, s 3.1.
- <sup>7</sup> *Public Health Act*, RSA 2000, c P-37; CLPNA, *Interpretive Document: Duty to Report* (2015), [https://www.clpna.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/doc\\_interpretive\\_doc\\_Duty\\_to\\_Report.pdf](https://www.clpna.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/doc_interpretive_doc_Duty_to_Report.pdf)
- <sup>8</sup> "Pandemic influenza," Government of Alberta, accessed February 28, 2020, <https://www.alberta.ca/pandemic-influenza.aspx>.
- <sup>9</sup> *Emergency Management Act*, s 1(e).
- <sup>10</sup> *Emergency Management Act*, RSA 2000, c.E-6.8, s 1(f).
- <sup>11</sup> *Public Health Act*, s 1(hh.1).
- <sup>12</sup> "Pandemic Preparedness," Public Health Agency of Canada, accessed July 19, 2017, <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/influenza/pandemic-eng.php>.
- <sup>13</sup> *Canadian Pandemic Preparedness*, 9-10; *Alberta's Pandemic Influenza Plan*, 14.
- <sup>14</sup> *Canadian Pandemic Preparedness*, 11.
- <sup>15</sup> *Canadian Pandemic Preparedness*, 11-12; Alberta Health, *Alberta's Pandemic Influenza Plan*, 37.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup> *Health Professions Act*, RSA 2000, c.H-7.
- <sup>18</sup> CLPNA, *Practice Policy Personal Declaration for Registration Requirements* (2015 [https://www.clpna.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/doc\\_Policy\\_Personal\\_Declaration\\_Reg\\_Req.pdf](https://www.clpna.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/doc_Policy_Personal_Declaration_Reg_Req.pdf)
- <sup>19</sup> *Government Organization Act*, schedule 7.1, s 3.1.