

Understanding the Difference: Regulator, Association, Union, and Employer

The College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta (CLPNA) is mandated to regulate the Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) profession and practice in the public interest.

Regulatory colleges, associations, unions, and employers each perform a different function that works towards protecting the public and supporting the profession or the healthcare professional. The *Health Professions Act*ⁱ (HPA) requires a clear separation between the responsibility of the profession's regulatory functions that protect the public and those related to advocacy, hiring practices, salary negotiations, and the economic and social wellbeing of registrants. This info sheet is intended to support an understanding of the distinct functions of a regulator, association, union, and employer.

THE BASICS: What Do They Do?



REGULATOR

Protect the public.

- Ensures compliance with healthcare legislation.
- Sets registration, annual renewal, and continuing competence requirements.
- Approves practical nurse education programs.
- Establishes professional requirements through standards of practice, code of ethics, and other guidance documents.
- Investigates allegations of unprofessional conduct.



ASSOCIATION

Advocate on behalf of and **promote the interests** of members of the profession.

- Advocates for the interests of the profession to government, employers, and other healthcare organizations.
- May provide education, career, social, and award opportunities.
- May promote research interests of the profession.



UNION

Establish a bargaining relationship with intent to promote collaborative labour relations between employees and employers.

- Negotiates conditions of employment such as wages, benefits, working conditions, and job security.
- Processes employee grievances under collective agreements.
- Assists employees with labour issues and conduct matters.
- Advocates for employee rights.



EMPLOYER

Hires and compensates people for their work.

- Follows Alberta's employment laws to ensure employees are treated safely, fairly, and are free from discrimination.
- Defines the specific job duties of employees.
- Ensures employees understand their rights.
- Supports nursing practice through employer-specific requirements.

IN PRACTICE: Where Can You Find Support?

WAGES AND BENEFITS

Does my wage go up based on years of service?

Will I get a shift differential if I am working nights or weekends?

What is included in my health benefits?



UNION

Speak to your union (or employer if you do not have a union). Unions assist with labour issues and provide support on conditions of employment like wages and benefits. Regulators do not determine wages or health benefits.



EMPLOYER

In most cases, your employer will be the one that will compensate you for your work and can provide you information about your wages and any included health benefits.

NETWORKING AND EVENTS

How do I network with other Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs)?



ASSOCIATION

Events with the primary purpose of networking are usually organized by your association. As part of their work, associations promote cooperative relationships between members of the same profession.

EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

How do I find information on educational requirements needed to become an LPN?



REGULATOR - CLPNA

As the regulatory college for the profession, the CLPNA ensures that all applicants meet the education requirements outlined in the LPN Profession Regulationⁱⁱ. The Registration Department at the CLPNA can answer questions about the education requirements and the application process to become an LPN.

How do I stay current on professional competency requirements?



REGULATOR - CLPNA

LPNs are required to demonstrate a commitment to continuing competence by meeting the requirements established through the HPA and relevant policies, which are enforced by the CLPNA.

Where do I find additional education if I want to further my career or enhance my knowledge?



REGULATOR - CLPNA

The CLPNA has several self-study learning modules on a variety of topics that can help enhance a registrant's knowledge. It may be mandatory for LPNs to complete specified modules as a pre-condition for permit renewal. The Professional Development Department at the CLPNA can answer any questions about further education.



ASSOCIATION

Associations sometimes offer education programs and certification that enhance their members' knowledge in specific areas for the purpose of career development. Examples include wound care, geriatrics, or mentorship.

EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

If I have questions about the LPN scope of practice, professional expectations, legislation, or regulation, where can I find help?



REGULATOR - CLPNA

The CLPNA Practice Department provides guidance to LPNs, employers, and the public related to LPN scope of practice, professional expectations, and legislation. The CLPNA also provides webinars, learning modules, and hosts information sessions on regulatory topics.

What training do I need for my specific role in the workplace and how do I obtain these skills?



EMPLOYER

Each workplace will require specific skills and training for LPNs to fulfill their roles. Employers communicate what skills and training are needed to complete the job in which an LPN has been assigned.

ADVOCACY

Where do I go for support when I want to advocate for my profession?



ASSOCIATION

Associations may advocate for and advance the interests of the profession.

Who should I contact if I want to advocate for better work conditions?



UNION

Your union is responsible for labour relations between you and your employer. Concerns related to working conditions should be directed to your union, who provides assistance with labour relations concerns.



EMPLOYER

If your place of work is not unionized, concerns about working conditions should be directed to your employer.

PROTECTION

I have seen some questionable professional conduct by another LPN or professional healthcare worker. What should I do?



REGULATOR - CLPNA

The CLPNA exists to protect the public, which means we address complaints and professional conduct concerns. If you have concerns about an LPN's professional conduct or competence, file a complaint on the CLPNA website or email the Conduct Department at complaints@clpna.com.



OTHER REGULATORS

Questionable professional conduct by another professional healthcare worker can be reported to the appropriate regulatory body.

NOTE: If you have any questions, please contact the CLPNA's Professional Practice Department at [Ask CLPNA](#), or by phone at 780-484-8886 or 1-800-661-5877 (toll free in Alberta).

REFERENCES

¹Health Professions Act, RSA 2000, c H-7.

²Licensed Practical Nurses Profession Regulation, Alta Reg 81/2003.