



Health Career Directory

Health Care Assistant

The term HCA is used to describe a variety of workers including, but not limited to, the following job titles: Community Health Workers, Resident Care Attendants, Care Aides, Home Support Workers, Nurse Aides, and Personal Support Workers.

Health Care Assistants (HCAs) are front-line care providers who provide personal care assistance and services in a variety of health care settings (acute care hospitals, assisted living, group homes, residential care and community care).

They follow established care plans to provide personal care such as bathing, grooming, dressing, assisting with meals, and oral hygiene. They also help in the delivery of nursing care, such as taking temperature, pulse and respiration. They document information on a patient's chart and respond to call bells/alarms in hospital settings. Health Care Assistants also observe and monitor clients' progress, symptoms and behavioural changes and report significant observations. They utilize mechanical aides (such as specialty beds, lifts, wheelchairs, and stretchers) to transport clients. They also provide assistance with positioning, lifting and/or transferring clients utilizing established lifting/safety techniques. They help maintain a clean and safe environment for clients and staff.

The HCA Core Competency Profile is an important resource and outlines the role, expectations and competencies of the HCA in BC. It can be downloaded from the BC Ministry of Health website at www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2014/HCA-Core-Competency-Profile_March2014.pdf

Who is suited to become a health care assistant?

Health Care Assistants are most effective when they have the following skills and characteristics:

- ability to deal with others effectively
- highly organized and resourceful
- ability to operate related equipment
- ability to organize work
- patient, kind, and compassionate
- physically fit
- the ability to lift up to 20 kilograms is required in some clinical settings
- a clean record, no prior criminal background

They should enjoy:

- working in a fast paced health care environment where they have a genuine interest in caring for people
- assisting people who are sick and recovering from trauma
- assisting others in a fast pace and stressful environment
- working cooperatively with others in a team environment

Who employs health care assistants?

Health Care Assistants work in rural and urban centers, in the following settings:

- home or residential care
- hospital/acute care settings
- privately run care homes

The primary employer for a Health Care Assistant in BC is the health authorities in rural and urban centers. Their hours of work are rotating. This includes weekend, evenings, and night shift work. They may be exposed to diseases and must wear protective clothing, such as rubber gloves and masks, in some work environments.

Salary

Average hourly salary range is from \$16.00 - \$22.83.

Training and education required to become a Health Care Assistant

Most HCA Programs are six to nine months full-time. The HCA Provincial Curriculum (2008) includes 475 hours of course theory / lab skills coursework and 270 hours of applied practice experiences, for a total of 745 program hours.

Upon completion of the program, the student receives a Health Care Assistant certificate.

The education needed to become a Health Care Assistant is:

- Grade 10
- Graduation from a recognized Health Care Assistant Program

Bridging Programs: In some institutions, if applicants have achieved a certificate in the following programs: (Health Care Assistant (HCA) or Resident Care Attendant (RCA) or a combined Home Support/Resident Care Attendant (HS/RCA) they may be given credits towards the Practical Nursing program or Degree in Psychiatric nursing. Please check the institution of your choice for this option.

Education Programs

HCAs trained in BC must provide evidence of graduation from a HCA program recognized by the Registry as meeting provincial training standards. Recognized BC HCA programs are listed on the BC Care Aide & Community Health Worker website at <http://www.cachwr.bc.ca/About-the-Registry/List-of-HCA-programs-in-BC.aspx>

Financial assistance and Bursaries:

For information about Canada student loans and grants, please visit:
http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/learning/canada_student_loan/index.shtml

Association

BC Care Aide and Community Health Worker Registry

BC Care Aide and Community Health Worker Registry (the Registry) is a province wide database of credentialed (registered) Health Care Assistant (CA/CHW) who are eligible for employment in publicly funded organizations and settings. Publicly funded employers only hire CA/CHWs who are registered with the Registry. The Registry was established in January of 2010.

There are different categories and eligibility requirements for registration. Registration information is available on the Registry website at <http://www.cachwr.bc.ca>