



COLLEGE OF  
**LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSES**  
OF ALBERTA

# Establishment of a New Practical Nurse Program

## **CLPNA Operational Policy**

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# Establishment of a New Practical Nurse Program

## INTRODUCTION

The College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta (CLPNA) has the authority under the *Health Professions Act* (HPA) to carry out its activities in a manner that protects and serves the public interest. The HPA, section 3(1)(f), provides the legislative authority for the Council of the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta (CLPNA) to approve new practical nurse (PN) programs of study and education courses for the purposes of registration requirements. The HPA mandates that the CLPNA carries out its activities in a manner that serves and protects the public.

The CLPNA reviews and monitors PN diploma, refresher, and advanced practice programs. Review teams of up to three staff conduct reviews of new education programs and present their findings in a summary report to the Education Standards Advisory Committee (ESAC). ESAC reviews the findings from program review teams and makes recommendations for program approval to the CLPNA's Council via the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

## PURPOSE

This operational policy explains the process for establishing a new PN program and outlines the requirements, stages/phases, timelines, and outcomes.

## POLICY

### Overview of Program Approval Process

Any new PN program must be approved by the CLPNA's Council prior to program implementation. This includes but is not limited to:

- a new program from an institution or agency that has previously brokered an approved PN program,
- a new program offered by an institution or agency not previously offering a PN program in Alberta, or
- a new program arising from a new brokering arrangement or a new partnership arrangement.

An institution or agency that seeks to have a new PN program approved by the CLPNA Council must demonstrate adherence to the Practical Nurse Program Approval Standards and Indicators throughout the phases of the formal review process. It is advised that the institution or agency review the Practical Nurse Program Approval Standards and Indicators prior to the submission of a Notice of Intent.

Institutions or agencies requiring additional clarification or support should contact [programreview@clpna.com](mailto:programreview@clpna.com) with their inquiries.

Please note that programs are required to provide an accurate representation of their registered trade name to be eligible for approval.

## **Process of Establishing a New Practical Nurse Program**

### ***Establishing a New Practical Nurse Program***

It is recommended that post-secondary institutions (PSIs) or agencies that wish to establish a new PN program contact the CLPNA's PN Education Coordinator at [programreview@clpna.com](mailto:programreview@clpna.com) to discuss the steps in the process and expected timelines.

The process of establishing a new PN program occurs in two stages:

- a. Notice of Intent stage
- b. Review stage (consists of three phases)

### ***Notice of Intent Stage***

PSIs or agencies are required to submit a Notice of Intent a minimum of 24 months before the first planned intake of students.

The deadline to submit a Notice of Intent is the following dates each year:

- a. Advanced Practice and Refresher programs: February 1<sup>st</sup>
- b. Diploma programs: June 1<sup>st</sup>.

During the Notice of Intent stage, the PSI or agency is assessed on their capacity to support a new program in accordance with the seven critical elements outlined in the Notice of Intent application. Only a Notice of Intent that meets all seven critical elements will be referred to the Council for acknowledgement.

Notices of Intent are not program proposals. CLPNA Council's acknowledgement of the Notice of Intent is required to move them forward to the review stage. The Council's acknowledgement does not constitute approval by the Council of a new PN program.

The Council's acknowledgement initiates CLPNA contact with the institution or agency to:

- confirm the institution or agency's commitment to proceed forward.
- request payment from the institution or agency in alignment with the PN Programs Fee Schedule.

### **Review Stage**

The PN Education Coordinator is the main point of contact between the program and the CLPNA during the review stage. The program is required to identify a primary contact. This contact is responsible for collaborating with the PN Education Coordinator in planning for program review. Please see the Education Program Review policy for more information on review teams and site visits.

The review stage has three phases; each has distinct milestones and timeframes.

1. Initial Review
2. Interim Review
3. Cohort Review

### ***Initial Review Phase***

The initial program review phase typically takes nine months from when the program is engaged in initial planning until ESAC makes a recommendation. Initial program review phases longer than nine months are typically the result of a PSI or agency requiring more time to develop the curriculum for the proposed program of study. Please note that programs which do not progress to an initial program review within 12 months of Council's acknowledgement of their Notice of Intent risk forfeiting their fee. Programs which lapse this timeframe will be required to restart the process by submitting a new Notice of Intent, and regardless of such Notice of Intent meeting the critical elements and being acknowledged by CLPNA's Council, a new program fee will apply. The CEO or designate may consider a fee refund or an extension of the timeframe in extenuating circumstances.

CLPNA will not begin reviewing a program unless the PSI has prepared a draft curriculum for the program of study that includes, at a minimum:

- a) a curriculum map, and
- b) a developed curriculum for the first term of the program.

A developed curriculum must include, at a minimum:

- i. course outcomes,
- ii. specific learning objectives,
- iii. course content,
- iv. assignments, and
- v. examination blueprints.

Advanced practice programs that are 15 weeks or less are deemed to consist of only a single term for the purpose of an initial program review, and the PSI must have the entire curriculum for the advanced practice program of study completed prior to the CLPNA conducting the initial program review.

A PSI must be able to provide sufficient information to demonstrate how the proposed program of study will adhere to the CLPNA's education standards and indicators (i.e., the Practical Nurse Program Approval Standards and Indicators).

A review team will evaluate the submission and present its findings to ESAC. Following this assessment, ESAC will make a recommendation to the CLPNA Council regarding the approval of the program. ESAC may recommend that the Council grant the program "Approved to Implement" status, which is the only approval category available at this stage or may recommend that the Council deny this status to the program.

Section 132.1 of the *Health Professions Act* requires the Council of a provincial regulatory college to consult with the Ministers of Primary and Preventative Health Services and Advanced Education before any program approval decision is made. ESAC's recommendations are sent to the above-mentioned ministries prior to the Council's approval for their consultation. The CLPNA's Council will consider all feedback received from the ministers before making an approval decision.

### ***Approval Categories and Consideration***

***Approved to Implement:*** This is a probationary status, which indicates that the program met the minimum criteria for the implementation of a new program. The institution or agency has 12 months to implement the new program and, if unable to do so, may seek an extension from the CLPNA. A program with the Approved to Implement status is required to continue to move towards full compliance with all the Practical Nurse Program Approval Standards and Indicators, including completing an interim report to maintain this rating.

### ***Minimum Criteria for the Approved to Implement Status***

A new PN diploma, refresher, or advanced practice program must achieve a minimum compliance score of 75% on each of the six Practical Nurse Program Approval Standards (Program Leadership, Resources, Curriculum, Faculty, Student Support, and Collaborative Relationships) and an overall compliance score of 80% to be recommended for approval to implement.

The program will not be scored on items that require cohort data, and these indicators will not be included in the initial compliance score. Please see the Education Program Review policy for more information about compliance scores and operating with non-compliant program approval standards and indicators.

Approved to Implement is a probationary status that requires timelines for reporting that are specified by the CLPNA. Probationary statuses do not have an end date unless specified by ESAC and/or approved by the Council.

***Approved to Implement Denied:*** When a program is denied implementation, it will be required to recommence the new program approval process. The latter will require the payment of a new program application fee in accordance with the PN Programs Fee Schedule.

A program would be denied by Council for the following reasons:

- a program fails to meet the minimum compliance score upon the initial program review;
- a program meets the minimum compliance score upon the initial program review, but a significant concern impacting implementation has been identified; or
- a program meets the minimum compliance score upon the initial program review, but the program's non-compliance with a program approval indicator poses a significant risk to public safety.

### ***Interim Review Phase***

Once a program has been granted Approved to Implement status, the CLPNA will follow up with the program halfway through the first cohort or at the end of the first year of operations. During this follow-up, the program's progress toward meeting indicator requirements will be assessed as part of the interim review.

If the program has demonstrated continued progress and no concerns are identified, the CLPNA's Executive Officer, Registration & Education, will review this interim report, and the program will be notified that its Approved to Implement status will be extended until a cohort review can be conducted.

If the program has not made progress toward meeting the indicator requirements or significant concerns have been identified, the CLPNA may ask ESAC to review the program's interim report and make a recommendation to Council regarding the program's Approved to Implement status. At this phase, the possible approval considerations ESAC may recommend to the Council include a warning or the withdrawal of the Approved to Implement status.

- a) **Warning:** The CLPNA, on behalf of Council, may initiate a warning at any point in time or phase in the CLPNA's review of a program. The CLPNA CEO or designate must inform the president/owner/designate of the institution or agency in this regard. A warning is related to specific standards or indicators where noncompliance may have detrimental effects on safety and/or student outcomes (e.g., legal contracts not being in place, insufficient qualified faculty, safety concerns). The program is expected to comply with the terms specified but is not required to notify the students, and a warning will not appear on the CLPNA website to inform the public.

Failure of the institution or agency to comply with a warning to the satisfaction of the CLPNA could result in the decision by the Council to change or withdraw the current program approval status (withdrawal being the only possible option for continued noncompliance at the post-implementation or interim review phase).

- b) **Approved to Implement Withdrawn:** When the Approved to Implement status of a new program is withdrawn, the program must restart the approval process. This will require the payment of a new program application fee in accordance with the PN Programs Fee Schedule. The withdrawal of the approval status of any PN program requires consultation with the Ministers of Primary and Preventative Health Services and Advanced Education.

An Approved to Implement status would be withdrawn for the following reasons:

- a program that has not made progress towards compliance with program approval standards and indicators or;
- has not complied with post-implementation reporting;
- a significant concern impacting continued implementation has been identified; or
- a program's non-compliance with a program approval indicator poses a significant risk to public safety.

Please see the Education Program Review policy for more information about the review process or the scoring of indicators.

***Program Initiated Considerations at the Post-implementation or Interim Review Phase***

At the interim review phase, the following program approval considerations may be initiated by the new program in consultation with the CLPNA.

- a) ***Delayed Implementation:*** Should the institution or agency wish to proceed at a later date (longer than 12 months) with the implementation of a new PN program, a new application, beginning with a Notice of Intent and as outlined in the new program approval process, must be completed. An application fee may be required.
- b) ***Delayed Implementation Due to External Factors:*** Should an institution or agency not be able to implement a new PN program within the 12-month timeframe due to factors outside of the program's control, the CLPNA's Executive Officer, Registration & Education may grant the program an extension with no corresponding fee.
- c) ***Program-Initiated Termination:*** Should a program with an Approved to Implement status decide to stop offering the program, it must notify the CLPNA via a Notice of Change. The Notice of Change should include the date of the last graduating cohort and, if applicable, alternate arrangements to enable students to complete the program elsewhere. Upon receipt, the CLPNA will advise the two ministers, and the program's "Approved to Implement" status will be removed.

***Cohort Review Phase***

Once a new program has been in operation long enough to have graduate data available, it will undergo a cohort review. The cohort review report will be provided to ESAC so that a recommendation can be made to the CLPNA Council on the program's approval status. There are two possible approval categories (Full Approval or Conditional) for ESAC to recommend to Council at the cohort review (or re-approval) phase.

Section 132.1 of the *Health Professions Act* requires the Council of a provincial regulatory college to consult with the Ministers of Primary and Preventative Health Services and Advanced Education before any program approval decision is made. ESAC's recommendations are sent to the above-mentioned ministries prior to Council's approval. The CLPNA's Council will consider all feedback received from the ministers before making an approval decision.

***Full Approval:*** PN programs that meet the minimum criteria for approval may be awarded a five-year approval by Council. A program with full approval is expected to continue to maintain or work towards meeting all program approval standards and indicators, and complete periodic progress reporting.

***Minimum Criteria for the Full Approval Status:***

- A PN diploma, refresher, or advanced practice program must achieve a minimum compliance score of 75% on each of the six Practical Nurse Program Approval Standards (Program Leadership, Resources, Curriculum, Faculty, Student Support, and Collaborative Relationships) and an overall compliance score of 80% to be recommended for full approval.

A Full Approval status is valid for five years and is contingent on the program continuing to comply with the CLPNA's education standards and indicators. Continuous compliance is monitored through periodic progress reports that occur at six months and one year, as well as the required Notices of Change. At the end of the five-year period, a program is required to undergo another full program review, whereby it may be eligible for and granted (by Council) another five-year approval.

**Conditional Approval:** This is a probationary status whereby programs are required to meet conditions in order to move to a Full Approval status. The Conditional Approval letter will specify the required timelines for reporting and compliance. Probationary statuses do not have an end date unless specified by ESAC and/or approved by Council. The program can achieve Full Approval status upon meeting all the conditions stipulated in their Conditional Approval letter within the timelines specified.

Full Approval status will only be granted for up to five years. If a program takes two years to meet the stipulated conditions while it is conditionally approved, their Full Approval status will expire after three years.

A Conditional Approval status would be recommended for the following reasons:

- a program has not met the minimum criteria for full approval;
- a program has met the minimum criteria, however, during the program review a significant concern was identified that impacts the program's ability to comply with program approval standards and indicators; or
- a program has met the minimum criteria, but a program's non-compliance with a program approval indicator poses a significant risk to public safety.

### ***Program Approval Considerations at the Cohort Review Phase***

The possible approval considerations that ESAC may recommend to Council at the cohort review phase are outlined below.

- a) **Warning:** The CLPNA, on behalf of the Council, may initiate a warning at any point of time or phase in the CLPNA's review of a program. The CLPNA CEO or designate must inform the president/owner/designate of the institution or agency in this regard. A warning is related to specific standards or indicators where noncompliance may have detrimental effects on safety and/or student outcomes (e.g., legal contracts not being in place, insufficient qualified faculty, safety concerns). The program is expected to comply with the terms specified but is not required to notify the students, and a warning will not appear on the CLPNA website to inform the public.

Failure of the institution or agency to comply with a warning to the satisfaction of the CLPNA could result in the decision by Council to change the current program approval status (i.e., from Full Approval to Conditional Approval, or withdraw the program's current approval status). The

withdrawal of the approval status of any PN program requires consultation with the Ministers of Primary and Preventative Health Services and Advanced Education.

- b) **Approval Withdrawn:** Approval is withdrawn when a program is unable to take corrective action within the specified timeline to achieve compliance. The PN program lead and the president/owner/designate of the institution or agency will receive a letter indicating the date when the program approval status is withdrawn and in effect. The program must make alternate arrangements to enable any existing students to complete the program elsewhere.

An approval status would be withdrawn for either of the following reasons.

- A program with a Conditional Approval status has not made progress toward compliance with program approval standards and indicators or has not complied with reporting.
- A program's non-compliance with a program approval indicator poses a significant risk to public safety.

When the Council grants a PN education program either Full Approval or Conditional Approval, the program is monitored periodically by the CLPNA. Six-month reviews are scheduled to assess progress toward compliance on unmet indicators, and annual reviews are scheduled to ensure monitoring with ongoing compliance with the education standards and indicators. These reports are reviewed by the CLPNA's PN Education Coordinator and the Executive Officer, Registration & Education. If no issues or risks have been identified, the CLPNA will notify the institution or agency that they have met the reporting requirements and advise of any next steps. If issues or risks have been identified, they will be escalated to ESAC (and/or by ESAC to the Council).

### **Program Re-Approval**

Full Approval status expires after five years. Following this, the program is required to undergo another full program review (i.e., a cohort review), where it is again eligible for another five-year approval. Please see the *Education Program Review* policy for more information on review teams and site visits.

### **Program Changes**

Approved programs are required to notify the CLPNA of planned changes to their program if the change has the potential to deviate from the initial approved program. The CLPNA accepts Notices of Change throughout the year. All Notices of Change must be submitted a minimum of six months prior to the program change being implemented to allow for due process. Please see the *Education Program Review* policy for more information on review teams and site visits.

### **Government Consultation and Advisement**

Section 132.1 of the *Health Professions Act* requires the Council of a provincial regulatory college to consult with the Ministers of Primary and Preventative Health Services and Advanced Education before any program approval decision is made. The timeframe for consultation is approximately six to eight weeks. The CLPNA's Council will consider all feedback received from the ministers before making any

approval decision. Once Council has made an approval decision the above-mentioned ministers are advised of the decision as a courtesy.

### **Notification to Students and the Public**

The approval status (Approved to Implement, Full Approval, Conditional Approval) of PN programs is reflected on the CLPNA website. Approval considerations, including a warning, are not reflected on the CLPNA website.

Upon the CLPNA notifying the president/owner/designate of the institution or agency of a warning action, it is expected that they advise their students in writing.

If the status of a PN program is downgraded from a permanent to a probationary status, the CLPNA will advise both the PSI and the government, with the latter change in status to be reflected on the CLPNA website.

As noted, the Council must consult with the Minister of Primary and Preventative Health Services and the Minister of Advanced Education prior to withdrawing the approval of any approved PN program. The withdrawal of approval requires there to have been a significant change in circumstances and would typically be preceded by a warning from the CLPNA to the institution or agency unless there is evidence of imminent and high risk to public safety, public trust, and/or continued noncompliance.

## **CONCLUSION**

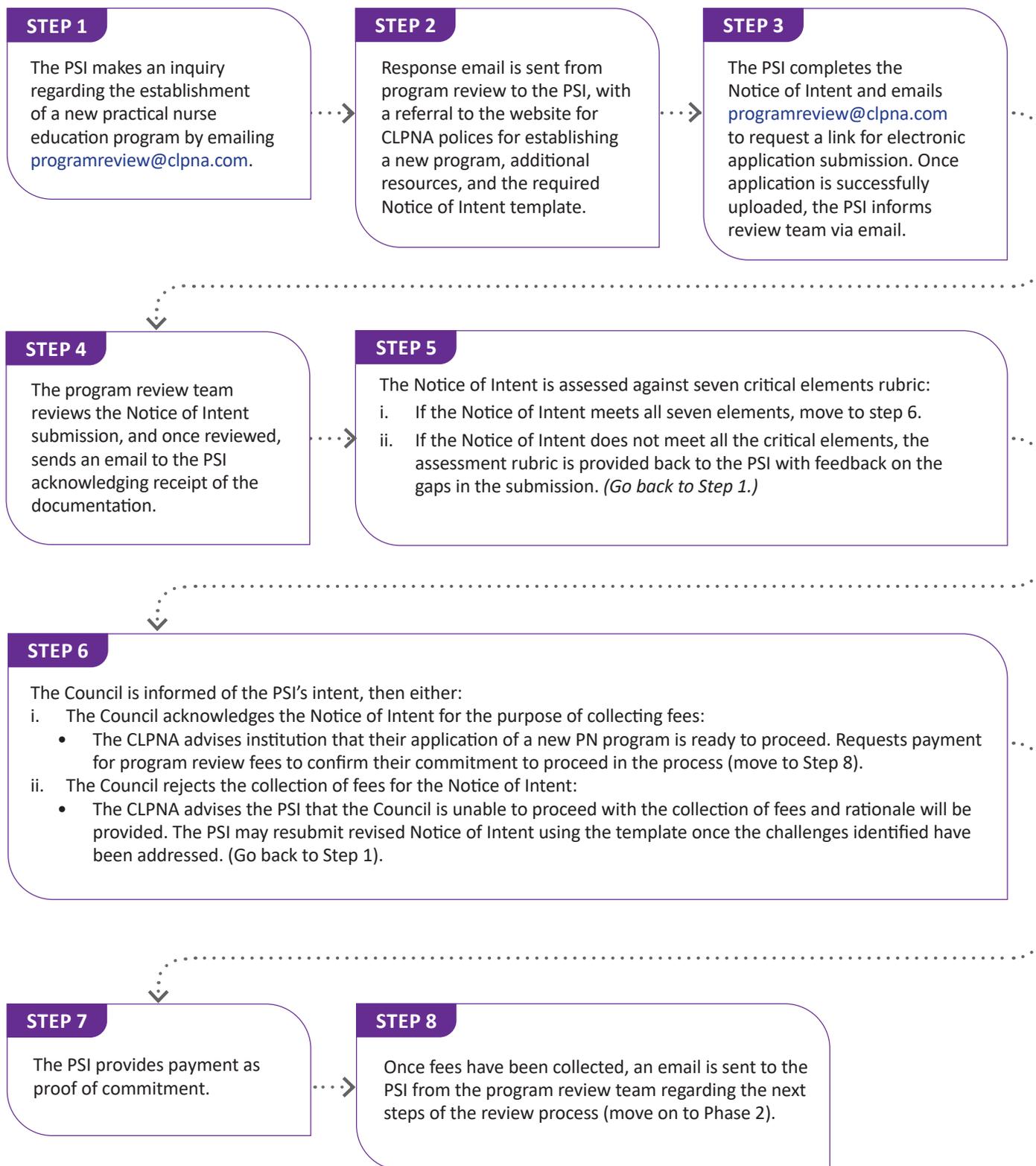
CLPNA staff work with institutions and agencies to establish and monitor new PN programs across Alberta that are of the highest quality and graduate competent nurses for the workforce. The CLPNA also reviews and monitors PN diploma, refresher, and advanced practice programs.

This policy outlines a process for establishing a new PN education program, (diploma, refresher, and/or advanced practice). It covers the notice of intent stage, the multiple review stages, program review categories, and approval categories. It also outlines program approval considerations at different stages of the process.

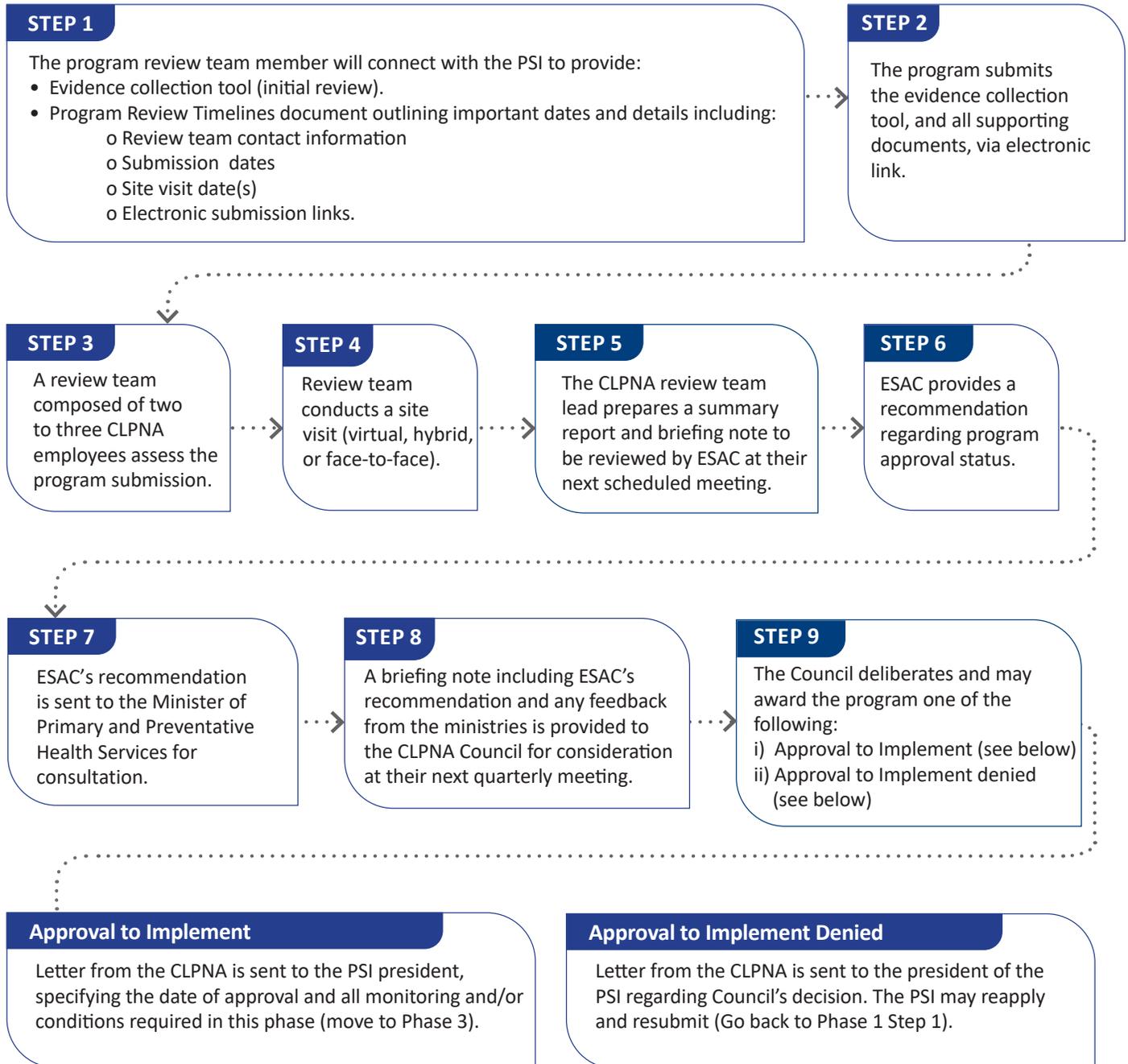
If you have any questions about the information found in this document, please email [programreview@clpna.com](mailto:programreview@clpna.com) or you can also reach out by phone at 780-484-8886 or 1-800-661- 5877 (toll free in Alberta).

Documents are updated frequently. For the most current version and access to related documents and resources, please visit the Knowledge Hub on [clpna.com](http://clpna.com).

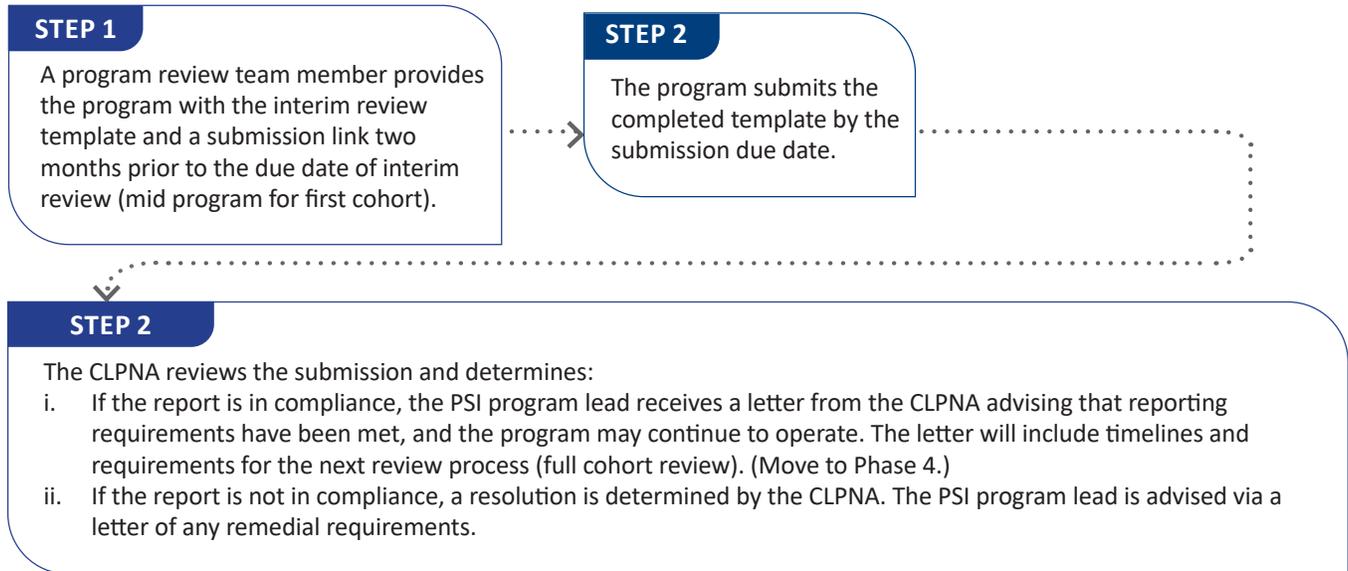
## ➤ PHASE 1: Notice of Intent



## ➤ PHASE 2: Initial Program Review



## ➤ Phase 3 - Post Implementation or Interim Review



## ➤ Phase 4 - Cohort Review

