

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

The College of Licensed Practical Nurses and Health Care Aides of Alberta (CLHA) has the **authority** under the *Health Professions Act* (HPA) to carry out its activities and **govern** its Health Care Aides (HCAs) in a manner that protects and serves the public interest.

The HPA requires that the CLHA's role of public protection be separate from functions such as advocacy, hiring employees, discussions about pay, and supporting a profession's interests. This info sheet clarifies the differences in the role of regulatory colleges, associations, unions, and employers to help HCAs better engage with these organizations.

Understanding the difference between them will help an HCA know where to seek support, guidance, or accountability in various situations that may arise within their scope of providing care to clients.

Terms found in the definition section are **bolded** where they appear for the first time in this document.

THE BASICS: What Do They Do?



**REGULATORY
COLLEGE**

Protect the public.

- Ensures that healthcare laws are followed.
- Sets **registration, annual renewal, and continuing competence program requirements**.
- Approves HCA education programs.
- Creates standards of practice, code of ethics, and other guidance materials.
- Handles complaints of unprofessional **conduct**.



ASSOCIATION

Advocate for and support the needs and interests of members.

- Advocates for profession to the government, employers, and other healthcare organizations.
- May provide education, job information, social events, and awards for members.
- May promote research related to the profession.



UNION

Represents employees in discussions and negotiations with the employer.

- Negotiates with employer about wages, benefits, work conditions, and job security for employees.
- Advocates for the interests and concerns of their members when communicating with employers. For example, unions could help employees express their demands for more benefits to their employer.
- Advocates for employees' rights.
- Handles grievances under the collective agreement between employees and their employers.
- Provides support for members who face disciplinary actions or who have work problems.



EMPLOYER

Hire and pay people for their work.

- Follows Alberta's employment laws to make sure employees (including HCAs) are treated safely, fairly, and without discrimination.
- Explains the job duties of employees.
- Makes sure employees understand their rights.
- Creates employer policies and procedures.
- Provides training, education, and equipment to increase safety at work.

IN PRACTICE: Where Can You Find Support?

PAY AND BENEFITS

Does my pay increase based on the years I have worked?

Will I get more pay if I am working evenings, 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 help with work problems and support employees with things like pay and benefits. Regulatory colleges and associations do not decide how much you get paid or what health benefits you get.



EMPLOYER

In most cases, your employer pays you for your work and will provide you information about your pay and any included health benefits.

NETWORKING AND EVENTS

How do I connect with other HCAs?



ASSOCIATION

Associations plan events for people to meet and make connections. They also promote working relationships between members of the same profession, which can benefit the professionals and the profession.

EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

How can I learn about the education I need to become an HCA?



REGULATORY COLLEGE - CLHA

The Registration Department at the CLHA can answer questions about the education needed and the application process to become an HCA.

How do I stay up to date on the continuing competence program requirements?



REGULATORY COLLEGE - CLHA

The CLHA manages the continuing competence program. HCAs need to follow these requirements yearly to show they are always learning and maintaining their competence.

Where do I find more education if I want to increase my knowledge and skills?



REGULATORY COLLEGE - CLHA

The CLHA has self-study **learning modules** on different topics that can help increase an HCA's knowledge, skills, and understanding of regulation. The Professional Development Department at the CLHA can answer any questions about further education that CLHA offers.



ASSOCIATION

Associations may offer education and **certifications** that can improve an HCA's knowledge in certain areas for the purpose of job opportunities.



EMPLOYER

Employers may also offer education and certifications that can improve an HCA's knowledge in certain areas related to job responsibilities.

EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

If I have questions about the HCA scope of practice, **professional responsibilities**, legislation, or regulation, where can I find help?



REGULATORY COLLEGE - CLHA

The CLHA Practice Department provides guidance to HCAs, employers, and the public related to scope of practice, professional responsibilities, and legislation. The CLHA also provides learning sessions on topics related to regulation.

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 HCAs to perform their roles. Employers tell you what skills and training are needed to complete the job you have been assigned.

HCAs are responsible for identifying their learning needs and speaking to their employer about how to get the education, if needed.

ADVOCACY

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



ASSOCIATION

Associations may advocate for and promote the interests of a profession.

Who should I contact if I want better working conditions?



UNION

If you are part of a union, your union is responsible for labour relations between you and your employer. Unions can assist with discussions that members have with their employers about **work conditions**. You should direct concerns about work conditions to your union.



EMPLOYER

If your workplace is not unionized, speak to your employer about working conditions and concerns.

PROTECTION

I have safety concerns because of the conduct of another HCA or professional healthcare employee. What should I do?



EMPLOYER

Speak to your employer about any concerns you have about the conduct of another staff member.



REGULATORY COLLEGE - CLHA

The role of the CLHA is to protect the public, which means handling complaints and **conduct issues**. If you have concerns about an HCA's or LPN's professional conduct or competence, make a complaint at clha.com or email the Conduct Team at complaints@clha.com.



OTHER REGULATORY COLLEGES

Conduct concerns about another professional healthcare employee can be reported to the regulatory college to which they belong.

DEFINITIONS

Advocate: to ask for, support, or recommend an action.

Annual renewal: when an HCA's registration is renewed yearly, therefore allowing the HCA to work in the profession in Alberta.

Authority: refers to the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience. It can also mean the appropriate person to give orders or make decisions.

Certification: when a person is identified as having demonstrated that they have the knowledge and skill needed to perform a task, activity, or role in the workplace, often after receiving relevant education or training.

Conduct issues: concern that a member of a profession may have engaged in unprofessional conduct, including unskilled, unprofessional, or unethical practices.

Continuing competence program: a system that supports HCAs in achieving and demonstrating competence through the completion of learning and practice activities relevant to their job.

Govern: a: to lead, control, or manage an organization or group, often by creating rules and making decisions that guide their actions.

Learning modules: education to help HCAs understand regulation and the requirements related to their profession.

Professional responsibilities: requirements or duties that a professional, like an HCA, must respect and comply with.

Professional service: defined in the *Health Professions Act* as a service that falls within the practice of an HCA. This includes one or more of the following:

- assist and support activities of daily living to provide basic personal care and health services,
- assist in teaching a Health Care Aide certificate program approved by the council,
- participate in client education and promotion of client wellness across the lifespan,
- teach health care aide techniques and practices to practitioners in the workplace, and
- provide restricted activities provided by the regulation.

Registration: when a regulatory college approves an applicant to use a specific title, like Health Care Aide, and work in a certain profession.

Regulate: a set of activities that promote and protect the public by decreasing or removing harm or potential harm that may occur when providing **professional services**.

Requirements: something that is needed.

Unprofessional conduct: according to the HPA, unprofessional conduct includes actions and behaviours that reflect poorly on the HCA profession. Unprofessional conduct includes displaying a lack of knowledge, skill or judgment to provide professional services, not following the HCA standards of practice and code of ethics, or any other behaviour that is defined as unprofessional conduct under section 1(1) of the HPA.

Work conditions: factors that affect the working environment, such as work-life balance, number of hours at work, and the health and safety measures at an employee's place of employment.