# Data and Research

Effective: February 2, 2026

## INTRODUCTION

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** the practice of Health Care Aides (HCAs)* in a manner that protects and serves the public interest. CLHA also regulates the practice of Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs).

The CLHA protects any data (including the personal data of LPNs and HCAs) that it holds and manages in accordance with the *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA) and other applicable laws. Data managed by the CLHA includes information collected through an LPN's or HCA's application for registration or annual renewal of their practice permit, non-LPNs'/HCAs' application information, departmental activities (e.g., conduct processes), CLHA-led research activities, **quality assurance** activities, and engagement efforts such as focus groups. This can also include LPN and HCA personal data such as **demographic information**, employment setting and status, and years of practice.

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

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to clarify when and how the CLHA may allow **researchers** to access and use the **data** managed by the CLHA for a **research study**. It also sets guidelines for collecting data from LPNs or HCAs for research purposes. CLHA will never share the **identifying personal information** of LPNs or HCAs with researchers.

This policy does not apply to cases where **non-identifying data** are shared with stakeholders and external organizations in reports (such as the Canadian Institute for Health Information, the Government of Alberta, etc.) and public inquiries for **aggregate information** that is readily available (for example, the number of active LPNs/HCAs).

* "In this document, "Health Care Aides (HCAs)" has the same meaning as "regulated member(s)" in the *Health Professions Act*".

# POLICY

## Process

Researchers who want to access and use data managed by the CLHA or collect LPN or HCA data directly must submit a request to the Director of Performance Measurement and Research (PMR) or a **designate**.

The PMR Director or designate evaluates the initial request (see process below) and may ask for additional information before making a final decision. Decisions are made at the discretion of the PMR Director or designate.

## Research Criteria

All requests are reviewed based on the CLHA's research criteria. For example, the research must align with provincial and federal privacy legislation and relate to the CLHA's regulatory duties or the LPNs'/HCAs' professional duties. These could include:

- standards and guidance;
- education and training;
- registration requirements and/or processes; and/or
- **fitness to practice.**

All requests are also assessed to identify the type and level of risk, along with the potential benefits of the research. Any risks found should be reasonable compared to the value of the knowledge gained and the expected benefits, such as improved and safer public care. These and other criteria are considered to determine if the request will be granted.

## Types of Research Requests

Requests for data access, use, and collection by researchers fall into the following categories: non-partnered, partnered, and other.

### *Non-partnered Research*

Non-partnered research means the CLHA has no direct involvement in the research activities and projects. For example, the CLHA does not directly collect data from LPNs or HCAs on behalf of non-partnered researchers (such as a survey) and does not provide any LPN or HCA data to the researcher. Instead, the CLHA plays a support role, such as informing LPNs and HCAs of the research using CLHA communication channels (e.g., social media, newsletter, etc.).

To do this, the researcher may be required to provide a summary of the research project for review by the PMR Director or designate. The summary will include the purpose, objectives, **methodology**, **ethics approval,** and other details as required.

If approved, the researcher will be required to provide a short description to be used in CLHA communications to notify LPNs or HCAs of the opportunity to participate in the study or other appropriate communications. An LPN or HCA may contact the non-partnered researcher directly if they are interested in participating.

### *Partnered Research*

Partnered research means the CLHA becomes involved as a partner by providing **in-kind** and/or money to support the research activities and projects. If appropriate, the CLHA may perform different roles in partnered research, including **funder**, **co-investigator**, or **advisor** as defined in this policy. The CLHA may also play a different role in a research project that is not listed above. The exact role and involvement of the CLHA will be determined in **collaboration** with the researcher.

The researcher will be required to submit a research proposal and, if approved, sign a research agreement. The CLHA may then establish a communication channel between the LPNs/HCAs and the researcher, enabling the LPNs/HCAs to contact the researcher directly for participation if they agree to do so. This then provides the researcher access to LPNs and HCAs through CLHA communication channels to collect information from these groups directly. The researcher may also access non-identifying LPN or HCA information managed by the CLHA (such as demographic data) that applies to their research.

### *Other Requests*

CLHA staff members enrolled in an education program may request access to, use of, and/or collection of LPN or HCA data. Staff requests will be evaluated using the CLHA research criteria described above. For eligible requests, a **Memorandum of Understanding** would be signed, detailing the purposes of the request, the process for data collection, if applicable, and the intended use of the data. The CLHA will not provide any LPN or HCA identifying data to a staff member for their education program request.

## CONCLUSION

This policy outlines when the CLHA may permit researchers to access or use LPN or HCA data managed by the CLHA and facilitate the collection of these data for research purposes.

Documents are updated frequently. For the most current version and access to related documents and resources, please visit the Knowledge Hub on clha.com.

If after reading this document you have any related questions, please contact the Department of Performance Measurement and Research at info@clha.com, 780-484-8886, or 1-800-661-5877 (toll free in Alberta).

## DEFINITIONS

**Advisor**: as an advisor, the CLHA will provide expert advice for the researcher to help it meet its goals. This might include guidance on creating research questions and choosing study methods. Usually, this role is connected to a project done by a post-secondary student, and the CLHA staff will be required to spend regular time supporting the researcher.

**Aggregate information:** information collected from many individuals that is combined and summarized to identify patterns or make comparisons without identifying the specific individuals whose information was collected. An example can be the number of LPNs/HCAs currently registered with the CLHA.

**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.

**Co-investigator**: as a co-investigator, the CLHA will participate in creating the research proposal and working on the study activities with the principal investigator(s). The CLHA staff will need to spend time on the project regularly.

**Collaboration**: working together with others to determine and achieve a shared goal.

**Data:** information, especially facts or numbers, collected to be examined, considered, and used to help make decisions.

**Demographic information:** refers to details about a group of people, such as their age, gender, where they live, and other basic facts.

**Designate:** someone who is appointed for a purpose or reason.

**Ethics approval:** a formal confirmation by an authorized group, that a research study follows ethical rules. This ensures that the rights, dignity, and well-being of participants are protected.

**Fitness to practice:** having the physical, mental, and emotional health required to provide safe, competent, and ethical client care.

**Funder**: as a funder, the CLHA provides financial support for a research project external to the College. The CLHA may advise to ensure alignment with the College's research criteria; however, the principal investigator(s) remain responsible for creating and conducting the research.

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

**Identifying personal information:** information specific to a person that could be used to identify, locate, or contact an individual.

**In-kind:** a payment or gesture provided in the form of goods or services and not money.

**Memorandum of understanding (MOU):** an agreement between two or more people, groups, or institutions. MOUs do not usually have legal authority but are used to document each party's expectations or intentions.[1]

**Methodology:** the techniques and procedures used to identify and analyze information regarding a specific research topic.

**Non-identifying data:** data that contains no specific information about an individual, such as the number of LPNs/HCAs practicing in rural versus urban areas.

**Quality assurance:** the review of practices and procedures for continuously improving the efforts within an organization.

**Researcher:** includes anyone who is conducting a research study.

**Research study:** a detailed study into a specific problem, concern, issue, or topic.[2]

## REFERENCES

[1] Harvard University. (2025). *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)*. *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) | Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health Research Administration*

[2] National Cancer Institute, *research study,* 2024, Definition of research study - NCI Dictionary of Cancer Terms - NCI.