

Licensed Practical Nurses in Continuing Care

Updated: August 2026

INTRODUCTION

Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) are health professionals regulated by the College of LPNs and HCAs of Alberta (CLHA). LPNs are one of the four professional nursing designations in Alberta, the others being Registered Nurses (RNs), Nurse Practitioners (NPs), and Registered Psychiatric Nurses (RPNs). In Alberta, LPNs complete a two-year diploma program.

WORKFORCE OVERVIEW

There are nearly 22,000 practicing LPNs registered in the province. The number of LPNs has increased 40% in the past 10 years (since 2016).

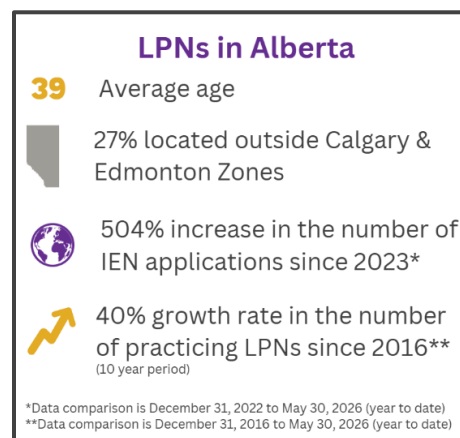
Most LPNs (67%)¹ live and work within the Edmonton and Calgary zones. Typically, over a quarter (25%) of LPNs self-report² as working in continuing care. The majority work in hospital settings (40%) and also work in community health, physician clinics, education institutions, and many other practice areas.

Internationally educated nurses (IENs) represent approximately 4% of the LPNs in the province. Since 2023, the CLHA has seen a consistent increase in application volumes due to IENs being able to apply directly to the CLHA for assessment of their education credentials and competencies.

LPN SCOPE OF PRACTICE

LPNs study foundational, evidence-informed nursing with a focused approach in critical thinking and clinical judgment. LPNs have the knowledge, skills, judgment, and abilities to contribute to all phases of the continuum of care, from prevention to acute treatment and management, to long-term and palliative care. Advanced practice authorization is available in the areas of perioperative, orthopedics, and foot care. Additionally, LPNs can enhance their clinical practice by completing additional education in areas including mental health and addictions, chronic disease management, leadership, gerontology, wound care, and palliative care.

The entry level competences for LPNs are being updated and will change to a roles-based framework to support a common competency for interjurisdictional and interprofessional



¹ Based on data reported in CLHA's 2025 Annual Report. Data is current as of the end of November 30, 2025.

² The percentage of LPNs working in continuing care has fluctuated between 26-28% since 2020.

reference, education, and practice. These competencies describe the knowledge, skills, and judgment required for LPNs entering practice in Alberta and across Canada and relate to the various roles they serve in including clinician, professional, communicator, collaborator, coordinator, leader, advocate, educator, and scholar.

For an LPN to perform restricted activities, these activities must be in alignment with regulatory, employer, and individual scopes of practice. Regulatory scope of practice outlines the boundaries of LPN practice through the Health Professions Act and related regulations, standards, policies, and guidelines. Employer scope of practice defines LPNs' role in a specific practice setting through policies, guidelines, and job descriptions. Individual scope of practice defines the activities that a particular LPN has the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform safely.

LPNS IN CONTINUING CARE

LPNs play an essential role in continuing care, providing support to patients, residents, and clients with complex medical conditions. LPNs serve in leadership and supervisory roles, often providing supervision to practical nursing students and unregulated and regulated health professionals including Health Care Aides (HCAs).

LPNs provide a range of care services, including health assessments, complex disease management, end-of-life care, medication management, peritoneal dialysis, wound care, falls prevention, patient/resident safety, management of respiratory conditions, and preventative care such as immunizations and ear syringing. Additionally, LPNs:

- Assess, plan, implement, and evaluate nursing care for patients, residents, and clients with complex care needs;
- Coordinate day to day client care, including monitoring changes in health status, making referrals, and supporting continuity of care;
- Support chronic disease management, wound care, falls prevention, dementia care, palliative/end of life care, and other client care needs;
- Participate in client care conferences and communicate with other members of the care team;
- Contribute to the quality improvement, infection prevention and control, and safety initiatives as per legislative standards;
- Are responsible for site management activities, including budgetary oversight, staffing, and building maintenance; and
- Coordinate the transport of patients, residents, and clients to specialist appointments.

LPNs work in many different practice areas in continuing care, including sub-acute, geriatrics, young adult continuing care, mental health and addictions, palliative care, home care, rehabilitation, renal dialysis, administration, and education.

The number of LPNs working in continuing care roles has increased over the last decade and is likely to continue growing as understanding about their vast scope of practice increases and the demand for aging in place and continuing care services grows, given Alberta's aging population.