

Licensed Practical Nurses in Primary 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. LPNs work in a variety of settings, including primary care, where in recent years there has been an increase in the number of LPNs self-reporting as working in this area.

WORKFORCE OVERVIEW

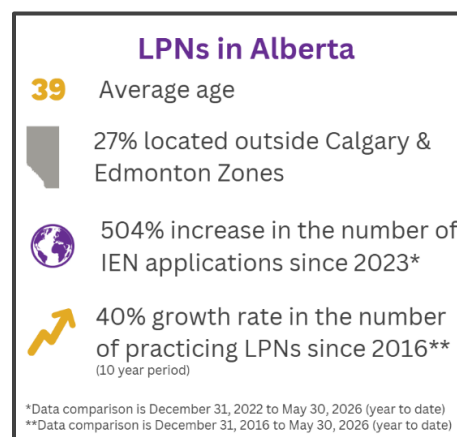
There are over 21,000 practicing LPNs registered in the province. The number of LPNs in Alberta has increased 40% in the past 10 years (since 2016).

Most LPNs (67%)¹ live and work within the Edmonton and Calgary zones. The majority of LPNs work in hospital settings (40%) such as emergency, medicine/surgical, maternity, pediatrics, ambulatory care, and mental health. LPNs also work in continuing care, primary care, rehabilitation facilities, mental health and addiction centres, educational 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 continuing care 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



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

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 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 PRIMARY CARE

LPNs provide a wide variety of services in primary care, including assisting in the completion of assessments that are part of a complete medical exam; providing chronic disease management; supporting women's health, including maternal and pre- and post-natal care; providing mental health supports; and performing many activities that support the public. Some of these activities include:

- Wound care, excluding sharps debridement
- Immunization administration to patients 5 years of age and older
- Collecting swab specimens (nasal, skin, wound, pap smears)
- Performing lab collections and monitoring of results
- Performing non-ionizing radiation procedures
- Ear syringing under indirect supervision
- Allergy testing and immunotherapy injections
- Cryotherapy (removing damaged or diseased tissue)
- Sexually transmitted infection specimen collection, counselling, and treatment
- Intravenous or injection administration of biologics
- Suture and staple removal
- Punch, scissor, shave biopsies and suturing above the dermis

Over 3,300 LPNs (18%) self-reported² as working in primary care (includes community health centres, physician clinics, primary care networks, public health units).

² Based on self-reported data collected during 2026 renewal, current as of November 30, 2025.