

Health Career Access Program- FAQs

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What is the Health Career Access Program (HCAP)?

The Health Career Access Program (HCAP) is a program where individuals are recruited to take part in paid education and training to become Registered Health Care Assistants (HCA). Tuition, fees and pay are provided in return for candidates agreeing to a one year Return of Service (ROS) agreement whereas upon successful completion of the program, they will work for one year as a Registered HCA in the facility that sponsored their involvement.

The program is designed to increase the Health Care Assistant workforce in B.C. The HCAP employment, education and training program may take between 10 to 18 months to complete. All HCAP candidates that successfully complete their college program will receive a provincially recognized Health Care Assistant (HCA) credential.

HCAP provides an opportunity for applicants hired to the Long Term Care sector to begin employment as Health Care Support Workers (HCSWs) before their school begins. This work experience is not a clinical care role. Applicants hired into Community Care sector positions will not have employment hours before school starts but enter college directly at the scheduled time.

HCAP will help meet several high-priority goals in the B.C. Health Sector and in the province more generally:

- Reduce the barriers to entry into health care careers by providing applicants with an income while attending school.
- Support non-clinical care of residents who live in Long Term Care, Assisted Living sites and Home Support throughout Northern Health.
- Support Northern Health efforts regarding public safety and quality care.

What is a Health Care Support Worker?

Health Care Support Workers (HCSW) are supervised by registered nurses and other regulated health care professionals. HCSWs provide a variety of important non-clinical, non-direct care supports to patients and residents.

Typical duties may include:

- Establishing a caring relationship with residents and their families
- Providing support and assistance with recreational activities
- Assisting and directing visitors
- Restocking supplies
- Performing housekeeping tasks

- Providing support and assistance at mealtimes

Upon hire to Northern Health as a HCSW, there may be several months where the HCSW works at a long-term care facility before beginning to attend school. If the candidate is hired to the Community Care sector, there will be no work related experience prior to starting school.

What is a Health Care Assistant?

Health Care Assistants are known by various titles, including Care Aide, Long Term Care Aide, Community Health Worker among others. They provide a wide variety of personal care supports in a variety of health care settings including acute care hospitals, assisted living facilities, group homes, long-term care and community care as well as in-home settings. They report to Registered Nurses and other regulated health care professionals and follow established care plans to provide personal care such as bathing, grooming, dressing, assisting with meals and oral hygiene.

Other duties include:

- Helping in the delivery of nursing care, including taking temperature, pulse and respiration readings
- Documenting information on a patient chart
- Responding to call bells/alarms in hospital settings
- Observing and monitoring patient progress, symptoms and behavioural changes and reporting significant observations
- Utilizing mechanical aides (specialty beds, lifts, wheelchairs and stretchers) to transport patients safely
- Providing assistance with positioning, lifting and/or transferring patients using established lifting/safety techniques
- Maintaining a clean and safe environment for patients and staff

Who is eligible to apply to the Health Career Access Program?

Anyone who is a Canadian citizen or has permanent residency status and meets the requirements for the Health Care Support Worker (HCSW) qualifications (listed below) are invited to apply. This includes Northern Health employees (internal staff) who may be working in non-direct care roles, internationally educated nurses who have not had their qualifications recognized, and individuals with no health sector experience.

Applicants must also fully meet the post-secondary school's Health Care Assistant program requirements.

Requirements for Northern Health

Education

- Grade 10, including successful completion of English 10 or equivalency AND meets all the requirements for the Health Care Assistant Program at the local college.

Skills and abilities of a Health Care Support Worker:

- Ability to communicate effectively, both verbally and in writing
- Ability to deal with other effectively
- Ability to organize work and problem solve
- Physical ability to carry out the duties of the position
- Ability to operate related equipment

How do I apply to HCAP program if I am a Northern Health employee?

Step 1: Apply to a Health Care Support Worker Training Opportunity posting on [iSite](#).

*If internal postings are closed, internal applicants can apply to external postings on [Expect More](#).

How do I apply to the program if I don't work for Northern Health?

Apply to a Health Care Support Worker position at [Expect More](#). Look under the job category "Support services".

What is the Return of Service Agreement (ROS)?

All HCAP applicants are required to sign a 12-month return of service agreement. By signing, applicants are agreeing to work as a Health Care Assistant for a one-year period upon completion of the HCA college program. The agreement specifies the location where the candidate will work. The ROS contract explains the details and the terms and conditions should the candidate not complete the ROS contract period i.e. repayment of tuition, stipend and fees.

How much does the Health Care Assistant program cost?

Provincial funds will cover the cost for the Health Care Assistant program including tuition, mandatory fees and books. Successful applicants will be paid for hours worked (if applicable) and receive a stipend when taking college classes.

There will be some supplies you will need to provide to get started:

1. A computer and software (i.e. email, office programs, MS Word)
2. Computer camera and speakers and
3. Reliable and adequate Internet access

You may have virtual classes and you will also need to complete your homework assignments for the college and do any online orientation classes for Northern Health. You also need email capacity to communicate to the college and Northern Health. If you are living in a rural setting, you may need to talk to the College and Northern Health to determine if your internet speed is adequate.

What supplies and costs are covered for me as a student?

Your tuition and necessary books and fees are covered. A small stipend is available if you apply for it to cover other costs related to Food Safe and First Aide/CPR course fees. For more information on the stipend please review “How much is the pre-requisite support fund (stipend) and how do I apply for it?” below.

Students are expected to bear the costs of fuel/mileage to and from school, including parking expenses.

For some students from smaller remote communities who are required to travel to a larger community for clinical labs clinical preceptorships, Northern Health will cover the costs for travel and accommodation. Successful candidates will be given specific information on this when accepted into the college portion of the program.

What if I don't have Food Safe or CPR when I apply to the program?

There is a small stipend available with Health Match BC to help cover some of the cost for Food Safe and CPR/First Aide requirements. Students are responsible for arranging and completing these courses as part of their paid orientation time upon hire to Northern Health. Note: these courses are part of college admissions requirements.

How do I complete the pre-requisites course and other hiring requirements? How is it paid for? Do I take it outside of work or school? As part of work? As part of school?

The candidate is required to submit all necessary documentation to **BOTH** Northern Health and the College they are applying to begin the HCAP program.

Document	College	Northern Health
Application for Health Care Attendant Program – contact the college program directed to by your Northern Health advisor	Yes	Yes
Criminal Records Check – Northern Health will send you an email that contains all the information and links to apply online and pay electronically with a credit card. *Once a CRC is processed through Northern Health, you will be able to 'share' the results with the college via the Criminal Record Review Program.	*Yes	Yes
Program Waiver – this form permit Northern Health and the college to discuss your application and status in the program.	Yes	Yes

Record of Immunizations including Covid Vaccination and TB screening. Make an appointment with Public Health to get your records or update your vaccinations.	Yes	Yes on-line reporting
Proof of Canadian Citizenship or Permanent Residency status	Yes	Yes
CPR and First Aide certificates (SPECO)	Yes	Recorded in Learning Hub
Food Safe Certificate (SPECO)	Yes	
N95 Fit Testing Certificate (SPECO)	Yes	
BC Provincial HCAP online Orientation – you will be sent links to this course and it must be completed before attendance in college. These courses take approximately 5 - 7 days to complete and include First Aid, CPR-C and Foodsafe.	No	
SPECO - student documentation (for college purposes)	Yes	N/A

Students should arrange First Aid, CPR or Food Safe training through the links in the [Provincial online orientation](#). You should be scheduling this training as soon as possible and it should be completed before classes start. You may be already working at your facility by this the time the course is available; discuss this with your hiring manager to let them know the dates you arranged.

Immunizations and Tuberculosis (TB) testing: you are to make appointments for TB testing and getting updated vaccinations as soon as you know you are hired into a position. This testing and vaccinations are necessary for both your schooling and employment.

Where can I go to get more information on the immunizations I need?

Please review the [list of immunizations](#) for Health Care Workers in BC, or contact your Public Health Unit.

Where can I sign up for Food Safe?

You can register for the online Food Safe course [here](#). It is also in your BC Provincial Online Orientation program.

Where can I sign up for CPR training?

You can register for CPR training through the [Canadian RedCross](#) or local accredited schools in your area. Many schools offer the CPR-C and First Aide as a two day course.

Where can I sign up for First Aide?

Please review and select from [WorkSafeBC's list of first aid training providers or local accredited schools in your area](#). As noted above, many schools offer the CPR-C and First Aid as a two day course.

How much is the pre-requisite support fund (stipend) and how do I apply for it?

Once an applicant is confirmed as accepted into the HCAP program a one-time support fund (stipend) amount of \$342 is available to support successful applicants with any costs related to their application to the program, including the completion of pre-requisite courses (Food Safe, First Aid, CPR-C and English Proficiency testing).

This stipend is a fixed amount and not dependent on the type, number, or costs of the pre-requisites required by the applicant.

To qualify, applicants must:

- Submit proof of acceptance into HCAP (e.g., a confirmation letter from Northern Health pending completion of the prerequisite courses.
- Complete and submit an [HCAP Pre-Requisite Stipend Application Form](#) with all supporting documents to the Choose2Care team at Health Match BC.

Can I take the program part time?

No. The HCAP program requires a full-time commitment during the education time allotted to candidate to complete it.

What orientation can I expect?

Once a applicant is hired by Northern Health they will receive a package of information including the next steps to begin the online orientations courses. There are 3 online curriculums to complete in the first two weeks of hire:

1. Northern Health "new employee" orientation
2. The Provincial Standard HCAP orientation,
3. Northern Health HCAP orientation

Note: The online orientation requires access to the Learning Hub platform. This platform is not compatible with Mac devices (including iPads and iPhones). We are encouraging all employees who experience this disruption to contact their managers who will assist you in completing your online orientation on a Northern Health computer.

Do I have to work shifts as a Health Care Support Worker? Does that include overnight shifts when I have school the next day?

If you work shifts as an HCSW (those hired to the Long Term Care sector) they may be on rotation, but they are usually daytime and evening.

Because the HCSW positions are supernumerary (that means, above baseline staffing compliments), your supervisor will ensure you are not scheduled for an overnight shift prior to a school day.

What is the schedule for the education, work and clinical placements for the HCSW position?

As of January 2022, candidates in the HCAP will attend school full time.

Work experience hours for those candidates hired to the Long Term Care sector will be arranged prior to school start up then will stop once school starts. For candidates hired to the Community Sector, there will be no work experience prior to the start date of school.

All HCAP candidates are required to attend all school and any scheduled work hours.

How do I get my work schedule if assigned to work in Long Term Care Home?

Once you have a network account, you login into [mySchedule](#) to view your schedule.

Who do I talk to if I have questions about my work schedule?

Contact your site manager.

What do I do if I am sick during an education day?

Notify your college instructor.

What do I do if I am sick during a work day at a long term care home?

You need to contact [EARL \(Employee Absence Reporting Line\)](#).

How do I schedule and take my accumulated vacation time? (i.e. vacation banks if I have them)

An HCAP candidate may only take vacation or time off outside of the college schedule. You cannot miss any scheduled school days in order to take vacation or time off.

If you wish to take vacation time during the working component, please discuss with your hiring manager and complete [Leave Request Form](#).

What will my college school schedule look like?

This depends on which community/region of Northern Health you are taking the college program and when that college is scheduling their program(s).

For the 2022 year, all college programs will have the student attend school in a full time model on a Monday to Friday day time schedule with the exception of labs, clinicals and preceptorships - these may include weekends, evenings and nights.

The college timetable allows time to complete assignments, study, contact instructors etc. within their schedule. However, you will likely need to put in additional time on weekends and evenings for studying and completing assignments throughout the program to ensure you are successful.

You will receive your college schedule from the college instructors.

Will there be homework?

Yes. There will be a series of assignments and tests required for you to complete the Health Care Assistant Program. You will need to develop good time management skills to manage both the HCA program and HCSW work schedules and workloads.

Why am I required to sign a waiver?

You are required to sign waivers with both Northern Health and the college you complete the Health Care Assistant (HCA) certificate program to allow both institutions to share your academic or other relevant information on your status and progress: including being notified by HCA instructors if you are starting to struggle with the program. This ensures you are aware at all times, of how you are doing and allows NH to identify possible supports to help you successfully complete the HCA Certificate program.

Do I need to live in the location of the position I am applying for?

Yes. You need to be available full time in the community and facility/program in which you have been accepted as a HCSW position. You are expected to apply for an HCA position to begin your 1-year Return of Service contract at the site/facility/program once you completed the program and are registered with the provincial body.

In some rural remote communities, some HCAP candidates may need to travel for school clinical placements and skills labs within Northern Health in order to complete the education program. Travel expenses for students in these specific situation will be covered should travel be necessary. The manager of the HCAP program will discuss the situation with the candidate.

I need help with the NH Learning Hub – who do I ask?

Contact EducationServices@northernhealth.ca or the assigned HCAP clinical educator in your region.

How do I access my NH email?

You can obtain your network username and password from your site manager after your are hired.

How do I access my pay stub?

You access your paystub through [i-Site](#).

Who do I contact if there are issues with my pay?

You need to complete a [paycheque inquiry form](#) and submit it to your site manager.

How do my benefits work now that I am an HCSW or if I am a new hire?

Your terms and conditions of your benefits are outlined in your letter of offer.

What do I do once I successfully complete the HCAP program?

You will take all steps necessary to become registered Health Care Aide in the BC Care Aide Registry immediately upon finishing and apply for on regular and relief postings at your primary work site. Short listed candidates will be provided more information through their return of service agreements.

What happens if I don't complete the Health Care Assistant Certificate Program?

If you are an internal candidate, that is, were a NH employee whom applied for a posting, the term of the HCSW position will end and Northern Health will return you to your pre-program position/status.

If you are an external candidate, that is, your were hired outside of NH, you will be asked to vacate your HCSW position, but will have the opportunity to apply on other NH jobs for which you are qualified as an external candidate.

Who do I contact with additional questions?

Please email HCAP@northernhealth.ca.