

Health Career Access Program- FAQs

March 2024

What is the Health Career Access Program (HCAP)?

The program is designed to increase the Health Care Assistant workforce in BC.

The Health Career Access Program (HCAP) is a program where individuals are 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.

When is the Health Career Access Program (HCAP) offered?

The program is offered twice a year for each region:

Northern Interior – January and August

Northwest- February and September

Northeast- March and October

What is a Health Care Assistant? *The title used of a worker after graduation.*

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 of a program graduate 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 employment with Northern Health (this may include a BC Drivers License and use of personal vehicle for work) and
- fully meets the post-secondary school's Health Care Assistant program entrance requirements.

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 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.

What is the Health Care Assistant program include?

- Students must take this program full time. There is no option for parttime schooling.
- 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.
- Depending on the college you would be entering the program with, will determine if your theory courses are online or face to face in a classroom setting. All clinical practicums (approximately half of the course time) is in person (face to face) at the college and training facilities.

Students taking the course online will need to supply:

1. A personal computer and appropriate software (i.e. email, office programs, MS Word) Most college systems will not interface with MAC products.
2. Computer camera and speakers and
3. Reliable and adequate Internet access

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

Your tuition and necessary books and fees are covered.

A \$342.00 stipend is available if you apply for it to cover other costs related to Food Safe and First Aide/CPR course fees. 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.

For students who may need to take English testing, there may also be funding available for this.

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

For some students who live in rural remote communities who are required to travel to a larger community for clinical labs clinical preceptorships, Northern Health assess the situation and determine travel supports.

Will there be homework?

Yes lots. This is an academically rigorous program. You will be expected to be present every weekday in class. Attendance is mandatory. You will need to develop good time management skills to be successful.

The student will need pass/succeed in **every course concurrently** in order to remain in the program as a sponsored student.

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

Candidates are paid 37.5 hours each week to attend school full time. This includes STAT holidays. There is no time away from school for vacation or other personal events.

If a candidate is assigned a work experience before school starts, the schedule for the work in a Long-Term Care home 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.

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

Notify your college instructor immediately. The college communicates your attendance to Northern Health.

What if a candidate is already an NH employee and has a “bank of vacation hours” how do I schedule and take my accumulated vacation time?

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).

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.

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.

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

You will take all steps necessary to become registered Health Care Aide in the BC Care Aide Registry immediately upon finishing. The college instructors will have more information for you on this process

You will immediately 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. There may be opportunity to apply on other NH jobs for which you are qualified as an external candidate.

This section may be applicable to some applicants who are hired into HCAP as an additional employment opportunity before school starts.

Upon hire to Northern Health as a HCSW, there may be several months where the candidate may work 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.

Not all cohorts each year have this opportunity. Before school starts, some candidates may be hired for the period of several months to work in a long term care home as a Health Care Support Worker. The Recruiter who interviews you will provide you this information

What is a Health Care Support Worker? *It is a job description for a student work experience before school starts (the recruiter will advise the candidate if this is applicable to the cohort)*

This work experience **may be** applicable for some students before the start of classes. 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

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".

Who do I contact with additional questions?

Please email HCAP@northernhealth.ca