

Health Care Assistants: Alternative Careers

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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1. Health Care Assistant (HCA) – Alternative Careers

In B.C., health care assistants (HCA) help people, especially older adults, who require basic nursing care. HCAs work in continuing care such as home support, adult day care and assisted living.

Although HCAs are not regulated in B.C. you must register with the B.C. Care Aide & Community Health Worker Registry if you work for publicly-funded health care employers: <https://www.cachwr.bc.ca/Home.aspx>

You may find that your international training and experience as a HCA are not immediately accepted in B.C. The skills you have already acquired (ability to work well with others, good communication skills, patience, compassion and experience assisting the elderly in daily living activities) can be used in these alternative careers:

- Home Support Workers / Residential Care Worker
- Hospital Service Worker
- Activity Aide / Recreation Therapy Aide
- Housekeeping Aide

Alternative Careers

Home Support Worker / Residential Care Worker (NOC 4412)

Also look for these job titles:

- family caregiver
- housekeeper
- live-in caregiver - seniors
- personal care aide – home care
- resident care aide
- respite worker - home support

You provide personal care and companionship for seniors, persons with disabilities and clients who are sick. Care is usually provided within the client's residence.

Duties:

- Help patients with daily living activities, such as bathing, dressing and eating
- Provide care and companionship for individuals
- Keep track of medications and take basic measurements such as temperature and pulse
- May perform routine housekeeping duties such as laundry, washing dishes and making beds

Requirements:

- secondary school education, criminal record check, tuberculosis screening

Skills:

- physical stamina
- strong interpersonal skills
- sensitivity and patience
- excellent observational skills
- ability to adapt to constantly changing environments
- ability to follow direction and procedure

Wages:

- median hourly wage \$18.00

Source: <https://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/4412>

Hospital Service Worker

Also referred to as: dietary aide, linen attendant, porter, and storeperson

You help keep hospitals running by preparing meals, ordering supplies, moving patients, and doing many other tasks.

Duties:

- serve meals
- wash and iron sheets and clothing
- lift patients in and out of wheelchairs
- transport patients around hospitals
- order and distribute supplies

Requirements:

- high school diploma; most training is on the job

Skills:

- energetic and in good physical condition
- responsible, reliable, able to follow instructions
- work well independently and as part of a team

Wages:

- between minimum wage and \$20/hour

Source: Career Cruising <http://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising>

Activity Aide / Recreation Therapy Aide

Duties:

- participate in establishing recreation and activity programs for clients
- help organize and lead arts and crafts, sports, music, exercise and social events

Requirements:

- secondary school education
- may require recreational program certificate or diploma

Skills:

- enthusiastic and energetic and friendly
- creative
- self motivated

Wages:

- between minimum wage and \$20/hour

Housekeeping Aide

Also referred to as hospital cleaner

Duties:

- responsible for disinfecting, cleaning and upkeep of hospital rooms or resident rooms

Requirements:

- high school diploma preferred
- most training is on the job including, workplace training in infection control

Skills:

- energetic and in good physical condition
- responsible, reliable, able to follow instructions
- work well independently and as part of a team

Wages:

- median hourly wage \$15.00

Source: <https://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/6731>

2. Employment Outlook

Home Support Care Worker

There is currently a province-wide shortage of home support care workers. Opportunities will be strongest on Vancouver Island and in the Okanagan, Greater Vancouver and Fraser Valley as many people move to these regions to retire.

An increase in demand is contributing to higher salaries and increased opportunities to work in diverse environments.

Job Openings Outlook in BC 2018-2028 (NOC 4412)



Source: <https://www.workbc.ca>

3. Retraining

You may want to consider upgrading your skills to increase your employment options in this field. The following courses may improve your current skills.

Health Care Assistant programs:

Graduates may work in any level of continuing care, including: home support, adult day care, assisted living, and complex care (including special care units).

- **Recognized BC Health Care Assistant Programs**

<https://www.cachwr.bc.ca/About-the-Registry/List-of-HCA-programs-in-BC.aspx>

Health Care Support Worker Program

- **Douglas College**

Students learn to assist with daily living (bathing, personal grooming, eating, maintaining mobility), and with psychosocial challenges. This program is combination of the Health Care Assistant (HCA) Certificate Program (two semesters) and the Community Mental Health Worker (CMHW) Certificate Program (one semester).

<https://www.douglascollege.ca/programs-courses/catalogue/programs/CTHCSW>

Therapists Assistant Diploma

- **Okanagan College**

This diploma prepares you to work as an Assistant to Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists and Recreational Therapists. It is a two-year diploma of full-time study including including 16 weeks of practical experience in clinical settings.

https://www.okanagan.bc.ca/Programs/Areas_of_Study/health/therapist-assistant.html

Nursing Unit Clerk programs:

- Unit Clerks work with physicians and nurses; you process doctor's orders and instructions and perform other clerical duties. The complex and detailed nature of this job requires excellent communication, decision making and

problem-solving skills to coordinate quality patient care. These are 6.5 to 8 month, full time programs.

- **University of Fraser Valley:**

<https://www.ufv.ca/continuing-education/programs/nursing-unit-clerk/>

- **Vancouver Community College:**

<https://www.vcc.ca/programscourses/program-areas/health-sciences/health-unit-coordinator/>

4. Searching for Jobs

BC's Provincial Health Authorities

BC's health authorities provide health services in all BC regions

- **Vancouver Coastal Health Authority**
<https://careers.vch.ca/>
- **Fraser Health Authority**
<https://careers.fraserhealth.ca/search-jobs.aspx>
- **Interior Health Authority**
<https://www.interiorhealth.ca/careers/Pages/default.aspx>
- **Northern Health Authority**
<https://careers.northernhealth.ca/>
- **Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA)**
<http://www.phsa.ca/careers>
- **Island Health Authority**
<https://www.islandhealth.ca/careers>

Providence Health Care

<http://www.providencehealthcare.org/careers>

Indeed.ca

www.indeed.ca

Neuvoo

<https://neuvoo.ca/>

Privately funded residential care facilities

<https://www.bcsla.ca/senior-housing-career-opportunities/>

Personal Support Worker Canada

<http://www.personalsupportworker.com/>

5. Volunteering in the Field

Volunteering in health care facilities can help you to explore a new career and learn more about the health care system in BC. You will meet new people and build a network of contacts that can lead to information on job openings and inside connections with potential employers.

The following organizations accept volunteers in hospitals, residential care facilities, palliative care and other community settings.

Vancouver Coastal Health Authority

<http://www.vch.ca/get-involved/volunteer/>

Fraser Health Authority

<http://www.fraserhealth.ca/about-us/volunteer/>

Providence Health Care

<http://www.providencehealthcare.org/volunteers>

Community Care Facilities, BC Ministry of Health

Other volunteer opportunities may be available from individual care facilities across BC:

<http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/ccf/survey/index.php/displaycommunity/index>

6. Helpful Resources

BC Care Aide & Community Health Worker Registry

<https://www.cachwr.bc.ca/Home.aspx>

Personal Support Worker Canada

Provides samples of cover letters and resumes

<http://www.personalsupportworker.com/>

Click on 'Job Search Resources' at <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca> for help on:

- resumes & cover letters
- getting Canadian work experience
- networking for employment
- online social networks
- Canadian workplace culture

Questions? Please ask the Information Staff in the Central Library, Vancouver Public Library or telephone 604-331-3603.

Please note that the information in this guide is also available online through the Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre website at <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/>.