

## 1. NURSE PRACTITIONERS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

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# 1. NURSE PRACTITIONERS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

## 1.1 Legislation Governing Nurse Practitioners

The *Health Professions Amendment Act*, passed in British Columbia in October 2003, allows for the repeal of the separate acts governing health professionals, including the *Nurses (Registered) Act*, and still enables all six health professionals to be under the *Health Professions Act*. The *Health Professions Act* provides a common regulatory framework for governing health professionals in BC. Each profession will be governed by regulations specific to its profession under the *Health Professions Act*. The first profession with such regulation is registered nursing.

The designation of registered nursing under the *Health Professions Act* includes the introduction of nurse practitioners and sets out the scope of practice for registered nurses and nurse practitioners within British Columbia.

The goal of introducing nurse practitioners in British Columbia is to improve client health outcomes by increasing accessibility to health care services and filling gaps that presently exist in health care delivery.

The government is responsible for developing legislation and funding education programs. The College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia (CRNBC) is responsible for regulating nursing practice under the *Nurses (Registered) and Nurse Practitioners Regulation*.

Regulation of nurse practitioners by the CRNBC requires them to develop policy and processes in three separate but interdependent areas:

- Competencies and recognition of nurse practitioner education programs;
- Initial registration requirements; and
- Practice oversight including registration renewal requirements.

## ***Health Professions Act and Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners Regulation***

The *Health Professions Act*, with its accompanying Regulation, legislates the following changes in the governance of the registered nursing profession in British Columbia:

- It establishes the scope of practice for registered nursing;
- It recognizes nurse practitioners as a new category of registered nurse.
- It introduces the concept of reserved actions\* for registered nurses;
- It describes reserved actions that registered nurses can initiate and carry out under (a) their own authority and responsibility; (b) the order of a physician; (c) certified practice; or (d) as a nurse practitioner.
- It changes the Registered Nurses Association of British Columbia to the College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia (CRNBC), which will continue to set standards and regulate the practice of registered nurses.
- It authorizes the regulatory body to develop additional requirements for some aspects of registered nursing practice and nurse practitioners.

To view statutes on line:

***Health Professions Act***

[http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/H/96183\\_01.htm](http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/H/96183_01.htm)

***Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners Regulation***

[http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/reg/H/HealthProf/233\\_2005.htm](http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/reg/H/HealthProf/233_2005.htm)

## **Other Legislation Affecting Nurse Practitioners**

### **AMENDED LEGISLATION**

Amendments have been made to a number of Acts and Regulations so that nurses can legally fulfil their responsibilities as outlined by the *Health Professions Act* and as regulated by the College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia.

#### ***Crime Victim Assistance Act***

Section 2 of the Crime Victim Assistance (General) Regulation, B.C. 161/2002 is amended to include registered nurses in the list of health professionals under the *Health Professions Act*.

#### ***Health Care (Consent) and Care Facility (Admissions) Act***

Section 3 of the Health Care Consent Regulation, B.C. Reg. 20/2000, is amended by repealing paragraph (f).

#### ***Health and Social Services Delivery Improvement Act***

Section 7 of the Health Sector Labour Adjustment Regulation, B.C. 139/2002, is amended to include registered nurses.

#### ***Insurance Premium Tax Act***

Section 1 of the Approved Plan Regulation, B.C. Reg. 143/2005, is amended by repealing paragraph (b)(v).

#### ***Medicare Protection Act***

Section 45 of the Medical and Health Care Services Regulation, B.C. Reg. 426/97, is amended by including nurse practitioners as a “category of persons” permitted to request diagnostic services as “benefits” under the *Medicare Protection Act*.

**Mines Act**

Section 18 (1)(b) of the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System Regulation (Mines), B.C. Reg. 257/88, is repealed and replaced with:

“(b) a person authorized under an enactment to practice nursing, psychiatric nursing or licensed practical nursing in British Columbia”.

**Motor Vehicle Act**

Form 1 in the Schedule to the Blood Sample Certificate Regulation, B.C. Reg. 333/83, is amended by replacing “registered nurse within the meaning of the *Nurses (Registered) Act*” with “registered nurse authorized under an enactment to practice as a registered nurse in British Columbia.”

**Pharmacists, Pharmacy Operations and Drug Scheduling Act**

The Prescribed Health Care Profession Regulation, B.C. Reg. 277/97, is amended by adding the following section:

“Nursing as a nurse practitioner is a prescribed health care profession for the purposes of the definition of “practitioner” in section 1 of the *Pharmacists, Pharmacy Operations and Drug Scheduling Act*.”

**CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS**

Under existing provincial legislation, physicians are given certain responsibilities that could also be done by nurse practitioners. Such responsibilities include:

- exercising the coroner’s powers;
- certifying the health of inmates;
- diagnosing a psychological condition for the purposes of compensation;
- certifying that an individual is a person with disabilities;
- reporting patients who are medically unfit to drive;
- certifying that a student is fit to return to school; and
- reporting births and stillbirths.

Consideration is currently being given to amending the legislation to reference nurse practitioners. In the meantime, nurse practitioners should note that they are not authorized to perform these functions at the present time.

## 1.2 Definition and Scope of Practice

Nurse practitioners are registered nurses who have achieved additional competencies required for registration as a nurse practitioner with the College of Registered Nurse of British Columbia (CRNBC). They provide services from a holistic nursing perspective, integrating elements such as diagnosing, prescribing, ordering diagnostic tests and managing common acute conditions and chronic illnesses into their practice.

As a health practitioner working in a broad variety of settings where there is a health system need, including acute care, residential care, mental health and community practice, the nurse practitioner manages common acute and chronic illness and offers preventative health education and planning that encourages clients to be as healthy as possible and take an active role in health care decisions. A nurse practitioner is part of a health care team and can meet many primary health care needs commonly performed by physicians; however, the medical conditions that nurse practitioners are able to take responsibility for are less complicated than those treated by a physician.

The legal authority for the nurse practitioner scope of practice is set out in the Nurses (Registered) and Nurse Practitioners Regulation under the *Health Professions Act*. The Regulation assigns reserved actions to nurse practitioners for activities such as: making a diagnosis to identify a disease, disorder or condition; ordering diagnostic services; and prescribing and dispensing drugs. As specified in the Regulation, these activities are provided in accordance with standards, limits and conditions established by the CRNBC.

### 1.3 College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia

The College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia (CRNBC) is the regulatory body for registered nurses, nurse practitioners and licensed graduate nurses in British Columbia.

The CRNBC sets standards, limits and conditions related to the scope of practice of registered nurses and nurse practitioners under the Nurses (Registered) and Nurse Practitioners Regulation.

The CRNBC has developed a rigorous framework that provides a foundation to appropriately and effectively regulate the practice of nurse practitioners within government legislation.

#### College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia

For detailed information on the education, competencies, standards, limits and conditions for scope of practice, and registration criteria for nurse practitioners in BC:

**Mail:** College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia  
2855 Arbutus Street  
Vancouver, B.C. V6J 3Y8

**Tel:** 604-736-7331 or 1-800-565-6505

**Fax:** 604-738-2272

**Web site:** <http://www.crnbc.ca>

## 1.4 Nurse Practitioner Education Program

Nurse practitioner education programs in B.C. are in place at the University of British Columbia (UBC), the University of Victoria (UVIC), and the University of Northern BC (UNBC). Additionally, a Graduate Certificate Nurse Practitioner (Adult) Post-Masters Program is available through the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT).

For additional information on nurse practitioner education programs at the above educational institutes:

**UBC:** [http://www.nursing.ubc.ca/Academic\\_Programs/Graduate\\_Programs/MSN/NPP](http://www.nursing.ubc.ca/Academic_Programs/Graduate_Programs/MSN/NPP)

**UBC:**

**UVIC:** <http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2005/CDs/NUNP/CTs.html>

**UNBC:** <http://www.unbc.ca/nursing/practitioner.html>

**BCIT:** <http://www.bcit.ca/study/programs/a005grcert>