



Frequently Asked Questions

Designation Assessment on Health Care Assistants (HCAs)

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What is happening?

The Health Professions and Occupations Regulatory Oversight Office (the Oversight Office) has launched its first designation assessment, focusing on practitioners known as HCAs (HCA).

As part of this assessment, the Oversight Office is gathering information about the roles, practices, and risks associated with HCAs and the health services they provide in B.C.

Information gathered will inform recommendations to the Minister of Health on whether to regulate HCAs under the B.C. health law known as the *Health Professions and Occupations Act* (HPOA).

More information about the Oversight Office's policies on designation assessments is available on our website: <https://hporoo.ca/health-professions-and-occupations-regulatory-oversight-office/about-us/designation-assessments/>

Who are Health Care Assistants?

HCAs are a type of unregulated health practitioner that provide hands-on care services to clients. This often requires following care plans, supporting clients with their mobility, personal hygiene, grooming, meal preparation, and medication routines, amongst other things.

HCAs may work under various job titles such as Care Aide, Community Health Worker, and Resident Care Attendant, to name a few, depending on their employment setting.

HCAs commonly work in a variety of settings including long-term care homes, hospitals, and even directly in patients' residences among other places.

How can I participate?

An online public survey is open from September 21 to November 20, 2026 at <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/engagement/health-care-assistant-regulation/>

People who wish to provide a written submission are welcome to submit them by email to engage@hporoo.ca.

In addition to the public survey, the Oversight Office will conduct targeted consultations with groups and organizations with expertise and experience relevant to HCAs. If your



organization has not been contacted and believes it has relevant information to share, please reach out to engage@hporoo.ca.

Do I need specialized knowledge to participate?

No. You do not need to be an HCA or have expertise in health regulation. The Oversight Office welcomes input from anyone, including those who have relevant experiences, concerns, or perspectives, and people who have received care from an HCA or supported a family member who receives care.

What is a Designation Assessment?

A designation assessment refers to a process used to assess a group of currently unregulated health practitioners and to make recommendations to the B.C. Minister of Health on whether they should become regulated under the HPOA.

A designation assessment involves assessing the risk of harm posed to the public from the health services delivered by the group of unregulated health practitioners. This requires consulting with partners, interested parties, and the public, evaluating the risk factors involved, and compiling a report with recommendations.

More information about the Oversight Office's policies on designation assessments is available on our website: <https://hporoo.ca/health-professions-and-occupations-regulatory-oversight-office/about-us/designation-assessments/>

What does “designation” mean?

Designation under the HPOA means a group of health practitioners have been “designated” as either a health profession or health occupation and are regulated under B.C. health law.

If a new health profession or health occupation is designated, regulations around protected titles, scope of practice, and who governs them are established by the Ministry of Health. The Oversight Office is not a statutory decision maker and is not involved with the final decision to designate new professions and occupations or the development of regulations.

A designation assessment only results in recommendations. It does not, by itself, designate or regulate a health profession or occupation.



What is the difference between a health profession and health occupation?

Regulated health professions and health occupations are defined as follows:

Health professions

- have sufficient qualifications to have a professional level of skills and judgement
- are personally responsible for determining the appropriate course of care for patients
- provide health services that may present a risk of harm

Health occupations

- do not determine the appropriate course of care for patients
- provide health services, that in comparison to health services provided by regulated health professionals, present a lower risk of harm to the public
- have either:
 - sufficient qualifications to protect the public from harm while providing health services
 - a regulated health professional supervising them or directing them when providing health services

Does initiating a designation assessment mean that HCAs will be regulated?

No. Initiating a designation assessment does not mean that a decision has been made to regulate HCAs.

The assessment is an information-gathering process. The Oversight Office will consider information gathered through consultation, engagement, and research to inform an evidence-based recommendations report. The report will be given to the Minister of Health, who then decides whether to regulate HCAs.

What will the designation assessment examine?

The Oversight Office will examine many variables relating to HCAs. This includes, but is not limited, to:

- the health services that HCAs provide



- the settings in which HCAs work
- the training and education HCAs receive
- the risks of harm associated with health services provided
- how risks are currently prevented or addressed
- existing oversight mechanisms
- whether regulation under the HPOA could address identified risks
- the potential impacts of regulation
- whether other approaches could adequately protect the public
- other areas identified during the assessment

Who will be consulted?

We are seeking input broadly, including from groups like:

- HCAs
- regulatory colleges
- other regulated health professionals
- employers of HCAs
- Indigenous persons who provide similar types of health services in accordance with Indigenous practices
- post-secondary institutions that provide training relevant to health care assisting
- the public

How many HCAs are working in B.C.?

As of October 1, 2025, approximately 58,900 HCAs¹ held active registration with the B.C. Care Aide & Community Health Worker Registry (the Registry). However, registration with the Registry is only mandatory for HCAs employed by publicly funded healthcare organizations. HCAs working for employers who are not required to hire from the registry, including privately funded employers, are not captured in this data. As such, the total number of HCAs working in the province is estimated to be higher.

What is the B.C. Care Aide & Community Health Worker Registry (the Registry)?

The Registry is a database used by some employers of HCAs to verify whether they have joined the Registry and have completed a recognized education program. HCAs

¹ <https://www.choose2care.ca/faq/>



who work in publicly funded health care organizations are required to join the Registry. For those working in other settings, joining is voluntary. Private organizations (that do not receive public funds) and publicly funded organizations in the social services sector can hire HCAs who are not on the Registry.

The Registry database is not publicly accessible. This means only health care employers, registered with the Registry, can look up if a HCA is on the Registry.

Publicly funded health care employers must report a HCA to the Registry when they have suspended or terminated them because of alleged abuse or neglect. Other employers do not currently have to do this.

A health care assistant's registration with the Registry may be suspended when an alleged abuse or neglect report is made. The Registry may remove them or undo the suspension after investigations and appeals. An HCA who is removed from the Registry could still apply for jobs with employers who do not have to hire from the Registry.

Learn more about the Registry at: <https://www.cachwr.bc.ca/>

Why is the Oversight Office conducting a Designation Assessment on HCAs?

The Oversight Office continuously monitors variables relating to risk and the delivery of health services by unregulated practitioners. Before initiating a designation assessment, the Oversight Office considers available information to inform whether a group of unregulated practitioners provide health services and if those services pose a potential risk of harm.

After reviewing available information, the Superintendent is able to initiate a designation assessment if they determined this to be in the public interest.

More information about the Oversight Office's Public Interest Decision-Making is available on our website:

https://hporoo.ca/app/uploads/sites/986/documents/Explanatory_Note_Public_Interest_Decision_Making.pdf

What happens next?

An online survey is now open until November 20, 2026. People are encouraged to participate, including patients, HCAs, health practitioners, employers, and anyone with



experience or knowledge of HCAs:

<https://engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/engagement/health-care-assistant-regulation/>

We also welcome written submissions which can be emailed to engage@hporoo.ca.

During the designation assessment, the Oversight Office may publish interim reports on the current status of the assessment, information based on feedback from the public engagement, or any other relevant updates.

After completing the designation assessment, the Superintendent will make recommendations to inform the Minister of Health on whether or not to regulate HCAs under the *Health Professions and Occupations Act* and will publish our findings after the Minister makes a decision.

What is the Health Professions and Occupations Act (HPOA)?

In Canada, each province is responsible for regulating its health practitioners and establishing its own regulatory framework to govern them. The HPOA is the legislation in B.C. that governs regulated health practitioners.

The HPOA also establishes the Health Professions and Occupations Regulatory Oversight Office (the Oversight Office). The Oversight Office is an independent office of government that provides regulatory oversight of how health professions and occupations are regulated in B.C. to protect the public from harm and discrimination in B.C.'s healthcare system.

More information about the Oversight Office, including who we are and what we do, is available on our website: <https://hporoo.ca/health-professions-and-occupations-regulatory-oversight-office/about-us/>

What does regulation under the Health Professions and Occupations Act (HPOA) mean?

In B.C., health regulation means that a group of health practitioners have been designated and regulated under the *Health Professions and Occupations Act* (HPOA) as either a **health profession** or a **health occupation**.

There are 25 regulated health professionals that have been designated under the HPOA. These health professionals are regulated by 6 regulatory health colleges. As of September 21, 2026, no health occupations have been designated.



As part of a designation assessment's recommendations, the Oversight Office may recommend regulation under the HPOA, and if so, whether the health practitioners should be regulated as a health profession or a health occupation.

What is the role of a regulatory college?

The role of a regulatory college is to protect the public from harm and discrimination through regulation of the health professionals they govern. Regulated health professionals are required to obtain a license to practice, pay a licensing fee, meet professional or qualification standards, and have their name listed in a publicly accessible registry.

Regulation also results in the creation of a complaints system that allows people to submit complaints about a health practitioner. The regulator who oversees them is then able to investigate complaints, and in some cases, take disciplinary action against them.

What is the difference between the public survey and a written submission?

The public survey provides a structured way to answer questions about HCAs, public safety, and possible regulation.

A written submission provides an opportunity to share more detailed information, research, evidence, or organizational perspectives. Individuals and organizations may participate through either or both methods.

What will happen to the information collected?

The Oversight Office will analyze the information collected through engagement alongside research, available data, and other information gathered. This information will help the Oversight Office assess risks, consider possible options, and make recommendations based on the evidence.

Input received through the engagement will be considered collectively. Recommendations will not be based on the number of responses supporting or opposing regulation alone.



The Oversight Office's report may refer to or include anonymized information or responses that received during engagement and consultation.

Will this assessment affect HCAs' current jobs?

No. The designation assessment does not itself change HCAs' current employment, duties, qualifications, or ability to work. The assessment is an information-gathering, evaluation, and recommendation process.

Who will make the final decision?

The Oversight Office will complete the designation assessment and prepare a report with recommendations. The final decision about whether and how to regulate HCAs will be made by the Minister of Health.

When will the assessment be completed?

The Oversight Office will need time to complete engagement, review submissions, conduct a risk assessment, analyze the evidence, and prepare recommendations. Key dates and updates will be posted on the Oversight Office's website as the assessment progresses at <https://hporoo.ca/>.