

# Health Care Assistants: Alternative Careers

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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## 1. Health Care Assistants (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 2021: 44101/ NOC 2016: 4412]**

Also look for these job titles:

- family caregiver
- housekeeper
- live-in caregiver - seniors
- personal care aide – home care

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- 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 \$20.00

Source: <https://www.workbc.ca/career-profiles/home-support-workers-housekeepers-and-related-occupations>

## **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 \$25/hour

Source: Career Cruising <https://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 \$22/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 \$17.00

Source: <https://www.workbc.ca/career-profiles/light-duty-cleaners>

## **2. Employment Outlook**

### **Home Support Care Worker**

There are many job opportunities for home support care workers in all regions of BC. Most are employed in the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island/Coastal regions of the province.

There is growing agreement that elderly people and people with complex health issues can be better treated at home. As a result, the role of the home support care worker has grown and changed. The job now focuses more on personal care and health-related duties, and less on household-related tasks, such as cooking and cleaning.



Source: WorkBC

### 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). It is the only public college program in the Lower Mainland that offers a blend of physical and mental health skills training.

<https://www.douglascollege.ca/program/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 16 weeks of practical experience in clinical settings.

<https://www.okanagan.bc.ca/health-and-social-development/therapist-assistant>

### **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/programs/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.icims.com>

- **Interior Health Authority**

<https://www.interiorhealth.ca/careers>

- **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**

<https://careers.providencehealthcare.org/>

**First Nations Health Authority**

<https://www.fnha.ca/about/work-with-us>

**Indeed.ca**

<https://ca.indeed.com/>

**BC Seniors Living Association - Privately funded residential care facilities**

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

## **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**

<https://www.vch.ca/en/about-us/get-involved/volunteer>

**Fraser Health Authority**

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

**Providence Health Care**

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

**Long Term Care and Assisted Living Directory**

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

<https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/quickfacts/location/>



## 6. Helpful Resources

### **BC Health Career Access Program, Government of BC**

This program provides a path for applicants with no health care experience to get hired and receive paid employer sponsored health care assistant training.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/job-seekers-employees/find-a-job/health-care>

### **BC Care Aide & Community Health Worker Registry**

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

### **BC Care Providers Association**

<https://bccare.ca/>

### **FAST Seniors Care**

This free program serves as a bridge between B.C. employers who need skilled talent and immigrants seeking to start their careers in the seniors' care and living sector.

<https://www.ltcbc.ca/about>

### **Canadian Support Workers Association**

<https://canadianswassociation.com/>

### **Personal Support Worker Canada**

Provides samples of cover letters and resumes

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

Click on 'Job Search Resources' at <https://www.vpl.ca/siic/> for help on:

- resumes & cover letters
- getting Canadian work experience
- networking for employment
- 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 <https://www.vpl.ca/siic>.