

Health Care Assistant (HCA) Competency Assessment

Suggested Strategies & Resources to Support HCA Candidate Preparation

Disclaimer: While the material is intended to support candidates in preparation for the Health Care Assistant Competency Assessment, it is not intended to be comprehensive and there is no guarantee that reviewing this information will result in fully competent candidate performance on the assessment.

Visit the www.inspireassessments.org and look at the resources to help you prepare for the Computer Based Assessment (CBA) and the Simulated Lab Assessment (SLA).

Recommended Textbook: may be purchased at <https://www.amazon.ca> or at <https://www.vitalsource.com> in either paperback or e-book format. May also be available to take out on loan from your local public library.

Wilk, M.J. (2022) *Sorrentino's Canadian Textbook for the Support Worker* (5th Edition). Elsevier.

Review the Health Care Assistant Core Competency Profile (2014; Updated 2023)

<https://www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2023/hca-core-competency-profile-april-2023.pdf>

This HCA Core Competency Profile establishes a set of competencies (knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes) that HCAs in BC are expected to possess as an outcome of their baseline education. These competencies reflect the minimum standards required to ensure that HCAs provide the public with safe, competent and ethical care.

Review the Health Care Assistant Program Provincial Curriculum 2023

<https://opentextbc.ca/hcacurriculum/>

There is a standardized provincial curriculum for Health Care Assistants in British Columbia. Reviewing the required course concepts and learning outcomes would be a helpful way to assess your own knowledge, skills and abilities as you prepare for the HCA Competency Assessment.

You will find key excerpts from the HCA Curriculum in [Appendix A](#) of this document.

Review the Health Care Assistant Program Supplement to the Provincial Curriculum Guide (2023) –

<https://opentextbc.ca/hcasupplement/>

1. There are a number of Video Scenarios for Student Self-Assessment within the Supplement section on [Personal Care and Assistance course resources](#) which could be helpful to understanding the role and key duties of the HCA.

Video scenarios have been developed for students to self-assess their learning prior to their first

clinical practice experience.

[Roles and Responsibilities of the HCA](#)

[Communicating with the Health Care Team](#)

[Isolation Precautions](#)

[Lifts and Transfers](#)

[Morning Care](#)

2. There are also a number of online learning tools, including HCA skills videos in the [Personal Care and Assistance course resources](#). Recognized BC Health Care Assistant programs created these resources, and they are used to educate and prepare HCA students for practice.

Lortie, C. & Fontaine, N. (2022). [AM Skills Care](#). [Video]. Selkirk College and College of the Rockies. https://media.bccampus.ca/media/0_m3jtuj4o

Christianson, T. & Morris, K. (2023). [Personal care skills for health care assistants](#).

Review the BC HCA Care Activities Chart

The [BC Health Care Assistant \(HCA\) Care Activities Chart](#) has been developed as a resource for HCAs, and others who want to understand more about HCA education and training in BC. It lists care activities that BC Health Care Assistants (HCAs) may be expected to perform as part of their duties. It also specifies care activities taught within in the Health Care Assistant Program Provincial Curriculum and categorizes care activities as tasks or restricted activities.

Review the BC HCA Decision-Making Tool

HCAs can use the [BC HCA Decision-Making Tool](#) on the Registry website to help them determine whether they should carry out a task that is assigned to them. The decision-making tool only pertains to tasks, not restricted activities.

Visit these websites and review resources and videos:

Safe Practice Free Online Courses & Review Material / Information:

WorkSafeBC Injury Prevention Resources for Health Care

<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/health-safety/industries/health-care-social-services>

SafeCare BC Resources and Tools

<https://safecarebc.ca/#>

Cognitive Health Challenges Review Material / Information:

Alzheimer Society British Columbia, Living with Dementia

<https://alzheimer.ca/bc/en/help-support/im-healthcare-provider/healthcare-resources-bc/guidelines-care>

<http://www.alzheimer.ca/en/bc/Living-with-dementia/Ways-to-communicate>

<http://www.alzheimer.ca/en/bc/Living-with-dementia/Day-to-day-living>

WorkSafeBC, Working with People with Dementia

<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/health-safety/industries/health-care-social-services/topics/working-with-people-with-dementia>

Teepa Snow, *Positive Approach to Brain Change*

<http://teepasnow.com/> and <https://www.youtube.com/user/teepasnow>

Programs for Elderly, Documentary Films on Aging

<http://www.programsforelderly.com/documentaries-memory.php>

Additional Resources:

Government of British Columbia, Protection from Elder Abuse and Neglect

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/seniors/health-safety/protection-from-elder-abuse-and-neglect>

Appendix A

Health Care Assistant Program: Provincial Curriculum 2023 (Page 17):

Health Care Assistant Program Learning Outcomes

1. Provide person-centred care and assistance that recognizes and respects the uniqueness of each individual client.
2. Use an informed problem-solving approach to provide care and assistance that promotes the physical, psychological, cognitive, social, and spiritual health and well-being of clients and families.
3. Provide person-centred care and assistance for clients experiencing complex health challenges.
4. Provide person-centred care and assistance for clients experiencing cognitive and/or mental health challenges.
5. Interact with other members of the health care team in ways that contribute to effective working relationships and the achievement of goals.
6. Communicate clearly, accurately, and sensitively with clients and families in a variety of community and facility contexts.
7. Provide personal care and assistance in a safe, competent, and organized manner.
8. Recognize and respond to own self-development, learning, and health enhancement needs.
9. Perform the care provider role in a reflective, responsible, accountable, and professional manner.

Health Care Assistant Program: Provincial Curriculum 2023, pp. 61 - 66

Tasks and Restricted Activities:

Care Activities

The care activities in the skills list below include both tasks and restricted activities.

Tasks: care activities that HCAs are educated and trained to perform as part of their assigned HCA role.

Restricted activities: higher-risk care activities outlined in health professional regulations that an HCA cannot perform without authorization by a regulated health professional (such as a registered nurse). This process requires client-specific delegation and is limited by the boundaries permitted by legislation and the regulated health professional's regulatory college.

Personal Care & Assistance Course

Course Content

Problem-solving when carrying out care-giving procedures

- Planning and implementing care based on the client's needs, the established care plan, and agency policies.
- Observing the client and the situation prior to commencing care.
- Identifying unsafe environments or situations.
- Establishing priorities for care with consideration to client acuity.
- Seeking assistance, if necessary, to maintain the safety of the client and the care provider.
- Organizing equipment and supplies to efficiently complete care activities.
- Checking equipment for safety and functionality.
- Reporting equipment malfunction.
- Performing the procedure(s).
- Maintaining client privacy and dignity.
- Encouraging independence and self-care as much as possible.
- Cleaning equipment after use and returning to appropriate place.
- Tidying the client's environment.
- Evaluating effectiveness of the procedure and care.

- Reporting and recording actions, results, and observations.
- Responding appropriately to emergency situations.
- Asepsis and prevention of infection.
- Microorganisms and the spread of infection.
- Principles and practice of medical asepsis.
- Routine practices.
- Hand washing.
- Gloving.
- Isolation precautions.
- Doffing and donning personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Promoting comfort and rest
- Admitting a person to a facility.
- Promoting comfort, rest and sleep.

Promoting personal hygiene

- Oral hygiene.
- Bathing – bed bath, tub baths and showers.
- Providing perineal care.
- Assisting with grooming and dressing (e.g., hair care, shaving, changing clothing).
- Morning and evening care.
- Back massage and skin care.
- Using pressure relieving devices.

Moving, positioning and transferring a client

- Body mechanics.
- Turning and moving a client in a hospital or regular bed.
- Using positioning devices.
- Transferring a person to a stretcher.
- Moving a client to the side of a bed and assisting them to sit.
- Transferring a client from a bed to a chair or wheelchair and back.
- Transferring a client from a wheelchair to a bath chair or toilet.
- Using mechanical lifts including ceiling lifts.
- Cleaning of equipment.

Bedmaking

- Making a closed bed.
- Making an open bed.
- Making an occupied bed.

Promoting exercise and activity

- Bed rest.
- Assisting with ambulation.
- Assisting with walking devices – especially safe use of walkers with resting seat.
- Assisting with wheelchairs.
- Dealing with falls.

Assisting with Dietary Intake

- Serving meals in ways that encourage normalizing interactions.
- Assisting clients with eating and drinking.
- Using appropriate techniques and strategies to safely assist individuals experiencing difficulty biting, chewing, or swallowing.
- Using adaptive utensils.
- Observing and recording intake and output.

Promoting urinary and bowel elimination

- Using bedpans and urinals.
- Toileting techniques.
- Using commodes.
- Assisting the person with urinary and bowel incontinence.
- Using urinary incontinence products.
- Assisting the client with condom catheter drainage.
- Assisting the client with an established catheter (may be delegated).
- Emptying drainage bags.
- Collecting urine specimens.
- Factors affecting bowel elimination.
- Assisting with bowel training.
- Administering enemas and suppositories (must have client-specific delegation from a regulated health professional to perform any restricted activities).
- Assisting the client with an established ostomy (must have client-specific delegation from a regulated health professional to perform any restricted activities).
- Collecting stool specimens.

Hand and Foot Care

- After assessment of the client by a regulated health professional, HCAs may assist with hand and foot care tasks limited to:
 - Observing for any changes and reporting to the supervisor.
 - Nail clipping for clients without chronic diseases like diabetes without swollen feet, without compromised skin, or without compromised nail integrity.
 - Soaking, massaging, and applying lotion to hands and feet as per the care plan.

Compression Stockings

- After assessment of the client by a regulated health professional, HCAs may apply and
- remove compression stockings as per the care plan.
- Wash and dry stockings as per care plan.

Measuring vital signs

- Measuring height and weight.
- Measuring body temperature.
- Monitoring pulse and respirations.
- Being familiar with differing types of equipment.
- Reporting and recording vital signs.

Heat and cold applications (usually delegated)

- Knowing policies and procedures of facility/agency.
- Theory of heat and cold applications.
- Safety considerations and checks.

Medications

General Information Regarding Medications

- Types of medications (capsules, tablets, ointments, suppositories, liquids, drops, inhalers).
- Common abbreviations used with medications.
- Critical “rights” of assisting with medications.
- Reading medication labels.
- Roles and responsibilities, legal implications of actions.
- Observing the client for unexpected effects (recognizing what is not normal for the client and reporting it).

- Individual's right to refuse medication.
- Documentation as required by the care plan.

Medication Assistance

Medication assistance includes activities taught in the HCA curriculum that an HCA could perform if assigned by a regulated health professional and as indicated in the client's health care plan, for a client who is able to direct their own care. These include:

- Reminding the client to take their medication.
- Reading the medication label to the client.
- Providing the medication container to the client.
- Opening blister packs or dosettes.
- Loosening or removing container lids.
- Recapping the device or closing the medication container or bottle.
- Placing the medication in the client's hand.
- Steadying the client's hand while the client places medications in their mouth or administers their own eye drops, nasal sprays, or other medication.
- Using an enabler (such as a medicine cup, spoon, or oral syringe) to assist the client in getting the medication into their mouth.
- Supervising clients during self-administration.
- Providing the client with water or other fluids for rinsing the client's mouth or to help them swallow medication.

Medication Administration

Medication administration includes restricted activities taught in the HCA curriculum that an HCA could only perform if delegated by a regulated health professional to perform for a specific client, and as indicated in the client's care plan. These include:

- Applying a transdermal patch.
- Administering prescription ear or eye drops.
- Inserting a rectal suppository or enema.
- Applying a prescription cream or ointment.

Dispensing, compounding, and administering medication are considered **restricted activities** in British Columbia. Restricted activities are performed by regulated health professionals, such as registered nurses and licensed practical nurses, who have the restricted activity outlined in their profession-specific regulation.

A regulated health professional (registered nurse) *may* in some circumstances, through delegation to a specific individual, authorize an HCA to perform medication administration for a specific client, within the boundaries permitted by legislation and the regulated health professional's regulatory college, as well as the education, training, and competency of the individual HCA.

Assisting with Oxygen Needs

- General precautions for the safe use of oxygen.
- Application and removal of nasal prongs.
- Dealing with oxygen tubing.
- Recognizing oxygen concentrators, tanks (compressed oxygen), and liquid oxygen.
- Turning on and off the nebulizer.

A regulated health professional must authorize an HCA to make any adjustments to oxygen, as administering oxygen is a restricted activity.

Home Management

- Applying agency policies and procedures.
- Observing the home for safety risks (for client and caregiver).
- Fire hazards and safety precautions.
- Maintaining safety and medical asepsis in the home setting.
- Using common cleaning agents, following Workplace Hazardous Materials Information Systems (WHMIS) plan.
- Using body mechanics in a home environment.
- Dealing with emergencies in the home.
- Community resources and supports.