

# Health Career Access Program

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Leadership Handbook  
July 2025



# Table of contents

Table of contents .....	2
Glossary of Acronyms .....	4
Welcome! .....	5
An Overview .....	6
HCAP Funding .....	6
Role of the Employee.....	6
Program Outcomes .....	6
Duration .....	6
Return of Service (ROS).....	6
HCAP Program Roles and Responsibilities .....	7
How Does HCAP Work? .....	9
Participant Overview .....	9
Employer Journey .....	10
Hiring .....	11
Candidate Assessment.....	11
PSI Requirements.....	11
Job Offer.....	11
Participant Supports .....	11
HCSW Education and Orientation Details.....	12
Required Training.....	12
Site-Based Orientation.....	13
Creating a Supportive and Inclusive Environment .....	13
Post-Secondary Institution Schedule .....	14
HCSW in the Workplace .....	15
Job Summary.....	15
Examples of Duties and Responsibilities .....	15
Supervision and Direction.....	16
Daily Assignment.....	17

Oversight and Assignment of Tasks .....	17
Introductions in the Clinical Setting.....	18
Resident, Client, and Family Education .....	19
Unit Posters.....	19
Monthly Communication .....	19
Announce New HCSWs .....	19
Family Council Participation .....	19
Staff Education- Coaching and Education for Staff.....	20
Understand and Utilize the HCSW Role .....	20
Emphasize Companionship and Resident Rapport.....	20
Address Role Frustration Constructively .....	20
Build a Stable, Supportive Team .....	20
Additional support: .....	21
Peer Mentorship Program .....	21
Why Participate?.....	21
How to Get Involved: .....	21
Performance Management .....	22
Transitioning from HCSW to HCA .....	22
A Message of Appreciation .....	23
Appendices.....	24
Appendix 1: Additional Resources .....	24

## Glossary of Acronyms

Acronym	Term
AL	Assisted Living
BCCA	British Columbia Health Care Aide
CBA	Community Bargaining Association
CPR	Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation
CRC	Criminal Records Check
EEOI	Employer Expression of Interest
EFA	Employer Funding Agreement
EAL	English as an Additional Language
FBA	Facilities Bargaining Association
FTE	Full-time Equivalent
HA	Health Authority
HCA	Health Care Assistant
HCAP	Health Career Access Program
HCSW	Health Care Support Worker
HCW	Health Care Worker
HEABC	Health Employers Association of British Columbia
LPN	Licensed Practical Nurse
LTC	Long-Term Care
MOH	Ministry of Health
PEOI	Participant Expression of Interest
PSI	Post-Secondary Institution
RN	Registered Nurse
ROS	Return of Service
VCH	Vancouver Coastal Health

## Welcome!

Welcome to the Health Career Access Program (HCAP)! HCAP is a ministry-funded initiative announced by the B.C. Ministry of Health (MOH) on September 9, 2020. It provides fully funded education and on-the-job training for individuals to become Health Care Assistants (HCAs) in B.C.

Through HCAP, participants are hired into the Health Care Support Worker (HCSW) role, an entry - level, non-clinical position designed to support healthcare workers in long-term care (LTC), assisted living (AL), and home support. While HCSWs do not provide direct care, they help create a safe and organized environment by assisting with non-clinical tasks and supporting residents and clients through companionship and meaningful interactions. This program aims to increase the number of trained health care assistants/workers in these settings.

With funding from the MOH, Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) and its affiliates hire eligible applicants as HCSWs and cover tuition costs for their health care assistant education. Once participants complete their training and register with the B.C. Care Aide Registry, they can transition into full-scope health care assistant/worker roles.

Your partnership plays an essential role in strengthening healthcare staffing by welcoming and integrating this new talent. We are committed to supporting your efforts by providing resources and guidance to help facilitate a smooth transition for new HCAP team members in long term care, assisted living and home support.

### What this handbook will do for you:

1. Introduce leaders to HCAP
2. Clearly define roles and responsibilities
3. Walk you through the onboarding process
4. Offer resources to support you throughout the program

This handbook serves as a practical guide to help VCH managers navigate HCAP effectively while aligning with MOH updates and requirements. It is meant to be read in conjunction with the [Health Career Access Program: Employer Guidance](#) document issued by the MOH.

## **An Overview**

### **HCAP Funding**

The MOH, through HCAP, provides funding for the HCSW position. This includes financial support for formal training at a participating post-secondary institution, covering tuition, course materials, wages, and stipends for the HCSW while they are actively working and attending school. HCAP covers the costs of initial orientation and education, while local cost centers are responsible for financing return of service (ROS) positions and associated expenses.

### **Role of the Employee**

Prior to beginning their role as an HCSW, participants must complete predetermined onboarding requirements. While the scope of practice may differ between HCSWs and other employees, all individuals are expected to uphold the same high standards of professionalism. This includes strict adherence to organizational policies and procedures, including absence reporting.

### **Program Outcomes**

The HCAP program prepares HCSWs through post-secondary education and site-specific practical experience. The time spent as an HCSW allows students to gain familiarity with the healthcare environment and integrate with the healthcare team. Upon successful completion of their certification, HCAP students will transition into full-scope health care assistants/workers, taking on broader responsibilities and further strengthening their role within the team.

### **Duration**

The duration of the program typically ranges from 20-24 months, depending on the length of the certificate program and the work placement.

### **Return of Service (ROS)**

Participants must commit to a 12-month return of service at their hiring site, in exchange for the paid education opportunity. The ROS period will begin upon receipt of their BC Health Care Aide (BCCA) registration number and officially starting their role as a Health Care Assistant/Worker.



## HCAP Program Roles and Responsibilities

VCH has received direction from the MOH to facilitate the implementation of HCAP within the region. The HCAP team is your first point of contact for hiring and onboarding participants. Onboarding is a collaborative process between the VCH HCAP team and the hiring manager.

### HCAP Team Roles and Responsibilities:

The HCAP Team provides ongoing support to ensure the success of participants throughout their program journey, including both the student phase and the ROS phase.

- **HCAP Funds and Processes:** Arranges tuition, weekly stipend, off duty payments, and travel or mileage reimbursement.
- **Monitor HCSW Progress:** Track student progress and engagement throughout the program, including coursework, clinical placements, and the return-of-service commitment. Provides site managers with key date information including Post-Secondary Institution (PSI) start dates and anticipated graduation dates.
- **Support the Application Process:** Assists candidates with the PSI application and enrollment process.
- **Clarify Employer Expectations:** Define employer roles and responsibilities to support alignment with program objectives.
- **Provide Education and Resources:** Offers guidance, mentorship, and education materials to support employers, staff, and participants throughout the program.
- **Address Course Absences:** If a candidate does not successfully complete their PSI courses, the HCAP team will consult with the hiring manager to determine the appropriateness of reintegration into a future cohort.
- **Return of Service Support:** Prior to graduation, Talent Acquisition meets with participants to review key information (ROS requirements) and next steps (application to job vacancies).

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*CONTACT US*  
[VCHHCAPInquiries@vch.ca](mailto:VCHHCAPInquiries@vch.ca)

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## Hiring Manager Responsibilities

- **Approve Leave Requests and schedule Changes:** While HCSWs are supernumerary, they are still expected to follow the [Employee Guide to Scheduling Services](#). Approved leaves must not interfere with the HCSWs ability to complete the PSI certificate schedule.
- **Receive and Respond to EARL Notifications:** HCSWs do not require backfill. However, managers must notify the HCAP team of absences greater than 20 days during the return of service.
- **Include HCSWs in Site Education and Communications:** Site leaders must ensure HCSWs are included in all site communications, seasonal education, team huddles, and training opportunities—just like any other staff member.
- **Manage Employee Performance:** Clinical managers and supervisors should follow standard [VCH performance management guidelines](#). Consult your designated HR advisor to address performance concerns promptly and effectively.
- **Assess Employee Suitability for PSI Admission:** The HCSW placement is a valuable opportunity for both the participant and manager to assess suitability for a future health care assistant/ worker role. If concerns arise regarding a candidate’s readiness for PSI, please contact the HCAP team to discuss next steps.
- **Recognition:** Provide [timely recognition](#) for a job well done and important milestones (graduation).
- **Plan for a successful return of service:** Once the participant’s graduation date is known, managers should proactively reach out to begin planning for their return. Early coordination supports a smooth transition and enhances retention.
- **Approve Program Reinsertions:** If a participant is unsuccessful in completing their PSI coursework, hiring managers may be asked to approve or decline re-entry into a future cohort.

## Post-Secondary **Institute** (PSI) Roles and Responsibilities

While the participant is in the student phase of the program the PSI is responsible for:

- **Reaching out to HCAP Candidates:** Upon receiving the cohort list from the project coordinator, promptly contact HCAP candidates to provide details on the application process and requirements.
- **Attendance:** Manage student attendance in accordance with PSI policies and procedures.
- **Performance:** Oversee student performance and determine graduation outcomes based on institutional policies.
- **Cohort Planning:** Inform the HCAP team when a student misses a course and provide guidance on the appropriateness of reinsertion into a future cohort.



# How Does HCAP Work?

## Participant Overview

### 1. Accessing the HCAP Program at VCH Owned and Operated Sites

Interested individuals can join the HCAP program through one of two job postings:

- a) [Home Support](#)
- b) [Long Term Care](#)

### 2. Return of Service Agreement

Once hired, participants sign an [Return of Service \(ROS\)](#) agreement

### 3. HCAP Orientation Phases

Upon hiring, participants complete four (4) orientation phases:

- a) Provincial Orientation Curriculum (Phase A)
- b) Regional New Employee Orientation (Phase B)
- c) Site Based-Orientation (Phase C)
- d) Buddy Shifts (Phase D)- 4-5 buddy shifts based on students need

Employees must complete Phases A and B before beginning site-based orientation or attending school.

### 4. Work Component Prior to School:

- Participants in long term care work as an HCSW at their hiring site while waiting for school to begin.
- Note: The Home Support stream does not currently have a working component, only 5 supernumerary buddy shifts before school.

### 5. Education Leave:

- Participants take education leave to complete the full-time Health Care Assistant certificate program at the designated PSI.

### 6. Graduation and Registration Process:

- Upon successful completion of the program, participants graduate with HCA certificate.
- Participants return to work as an HCSW for one to two weeks while awaiting their BCCA registration number.

### 7. HCA Orientation and ROS Period:

- Once registered, participants complete an HCA specific orientation organized by their site leader and begin their 12-month ROS commitment at their hiring site, working as a Health Care Assistant/Worker.
- Graduates apply for available positions. If none exist, they are hired casual.

## Employer Journey

1. Requesting Allocations
  - Workforce data is compiled and presented to VCH directors to inform seat requests for the next fiscal year.
  - Seat requests are submitted by the HCAP team to the MOH for approval.
2. Seat Allocation
  - The MOH sends final seat allocations to the HCAP team. The program coordinator shares approved allocations with site leaders.
3. Hiring Process
  - Based on MOH allocations, VCH Recruitment screens, interviews, and conducts reference checks for potential HCAP hires.
  - Candidates are presented to the hiring manager, who makes the final hiring decision and confirms a start date aligned with the designated PSI cohort.
  - The HCAP team sends a welcome email to the new hire and site manager, outlining proposed orientation dates and PSI entry requirements.
4. The VCH onboarding and HCAP teams will support the participants through the orientation requirements needed prior to starting onsite.
5. Site Based Orientation, Buddy Shifts and HCSW Mentorship
  - Site leadership is expected to connect directly with the HCAP employee 14 days in advance with the location, time, and person to meet on their first day of orientation.
6. Education Leave
  - Employers provide education leave for participants to complete the post-secondary certificate program
7. ROS Preparation
  - Upon graduation, the HCAP team facilitates a learning session for participants reinforcing the ROS commitment and applying for postings.
  - Talent Acquisition will meet with the graduate to discuss current vacancies. If no permanent vacancies are available, participants will be hired for a casual position.
8. Transition to Health Care Assistant/ Worker Role
  - Site leader to prepare comprehensive HCA orientation and plan for integration of the participant into the regular workforce.

## Hiring

HCAP is using a centralized recruitment and hiring model. Talent Acquisition will complete the initial candidate assessment and entry interview prior to presenting candidates to site managers.

### Candidate Assessment

To participate in HCAP, individuals must meet the Minimum [HCA Program Entry Requirements](#) established by the BC Care Aide & Community Health Worker Registry. The basic criterion for participants includes:

- Successful completion of Grade 10 or mature student status
- Proof of meeting HCA Program Entry – English Language Competency Requirements
- Canadian citizenship or permanent resident
- Completion of a Criminal Record Check from the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, including clearance to work with vulnerable adults.

### PSI Requirements

During the hiring phase, the HCAP Team will collaborate with participants to develop an onboarding schedule that ensures the completion of both PSI admission requirements and HCSW onboarding requirements.

### Job Offer

Once hired by the site manager, the HCAP participant will proceed through the standard onboarding and hiring processes currently in place.

### Participant Supports

Once conditionally accepted into the HCAP program and hired into a HCSW position, a stipend of \$342 is available through Choose2Care to support applicants with the costs related to the completion of pre-requisite courses for the HCAP program. This stipend is a fixed amount and not dependent on the type, number, or costs of the pre-requisites required of each applicant.

To receive the stipend, applicants must apply and submit receipts directly to Choose2Care. Additional reimbursement is also available for the following: English Language Proficiency Test, Accuplacer Assessment, Criminal Record Check, Immunizations. To qualify for reimbursement, participants must provide proof of employment and an itemized receipt.

Eligible immunization costs are limited to form review or assessment fees and vaccines including: Tdap-IPV, Hepatitis B, and MMR. For Hepatitis B, reimbursement is only available for all three doses, and the receipt must clearly indicate that the full series has been administered. VCH HCAP

students will be directed to VCH staff immunization clinics and partner pharmacies through the regional onboarding process.

In exceptional circumstances, additional travel and accommodation expenses may also be eligible for reimbursement if a participant must travel a significant distance to complete a required in-person component of their post-secondary certificate (e.g., practicum). Regular employee-requested travel is not covered. For VCH managers, please refer to the [Employee Expenses](#) section on the intranet.

## HCSW Education and Orientation Details

VCH HCAP employees complete a structured four-phase orientation designed specifically to prepare them for the roles and responsibilities of a HCSW. Please note that this orientation does not encompass all the requirements of the Health Care Assistant/Worker orientation. Additional onboarding and training will be required once participants graduate and transition into the health care assistant/worker position.

Managers play a key role in welcoming and supporting new HCAP employees as they transition into their roles. Many new hires come with little or no healthcare experience, and their success depends on a strong foundation built through structured education and orientation. We appreciate your leadership in ensuring they gain the necessary skills and confidence to contribute effectively to resident and client care.

### Required Training

Participants are required to complete the Regional and Provincial Orientation curriculums specific to their work area.

#### ***To be completed before the start date:***

- [VCH Orientation Online for Point of Care Staff](#) (18480)

#### ***To be completed on or after the start date:***

Home Support:

- VCH Regional Orientation Includes:
  - Welcome to VCH (25154)
  - Union Meet and Greet
  - Safety and Best Practice (25447)

- [VCH Health Care Support Worker in Community Orientation Program](#) (30629).
- Provincial Violence Prevention Curriculum classroom course

Long Term Care:

- VCH Regional Orientation Includes
  - Welcome to VCH (25154)
  - Union Meet and Greet
  - Long Term Care HCSW (25556)
- [Provincial Standard Health Care Support Worker Orientation Program](#) (24230)
- Provincial Violence Prevention Curriculum classroom course

## Site-Based Orientation

To support the successful integration of HCSWs into the health care team, a 4-hour site-based Meet and Greet with the Clinical Nurse Educator (CNE) or designate is recommended. This session helps set a positive first impression and offers an important opportunity to welcome the participant, fostering early connection and confidence in their new role. The Meet and Greet may be incorporated into one of the scheduled buddy shifts.

During this final phase of orientation, HCSWs will be paired with:

- A buddy (RN, LPN, HCA, or Allied Health Professional) for 4–5 shifts, based on individual needs and manager discretion
- An assigned mentor (CNE, educator, or allied professional) who will provide ongoing support throughout the program

For further details, please refer to the [Orientation Manual for Health Care Support Workers](#), which includes additional guidance and resources.

Managers are responsible for ensuring participants are informed of the dates, times, and locations of all onsite shifts.

## Creating a Supportive and Inclusive Environment

It is essential to prepare staff to welcome and integrate new HCSWs into the team. Fostering a welcoming culture helps new employees feel valued, engaged, and motivated to learn.

Site leadership should:

- Communicate the arrival of the HCSW to staff in advance

- Assign a supportive team member to guide them
- Promote an inclusive and respectful environment from day one

As HCSWs join care teams, there may be questions about their scope of practice and role. The HCAP team is available to offer mentorship and educational support to site leaders, HCSWs, and the broader team to ensure a smooth and confident transition.

## **Post-Secondary Institution Schedule**

Each PSI follows its own academic schedule, including education and workplace components. Participants are placed on education leave during school terms and are not scheduled for shifts during school breaks.

Participants who are ill during education continue to receive stipend payments; however, employers are not responsible for monitoring class attendance. The HCAP team maintains regular contact with each PSI and will coordinate follow-up on extended absences. Stipend payments cease during prolonged illness that prevent participation in both work and education.

## HCSW in the Workplace

In long-term care and assisted living, new HCSWs will work in a supernumerary capacity for approximately three months prior to their PSI placement, and for an additional two weeks after completing it. During this time, they will focus on non-direct and/or non-clinical tasks as outlined in the [Dos and Don't document](#).

### Job Summary

In keeping with a client- and family-centered care approach and the values of our organization, HCSWs provide valuable non-clinical and non-direct care support under the guidance of a Registered Nurse or other regulated healthcare professional. Their contributions help enhance the comfort, safety, and overall experience of clients, residents, families, and visitors in long-term care, assisted living, and home support settings. HCSWs are important members of the care team, supporting day-to-day operations in alignment with the care plan and established safety practices.

HCAP is intended to be a work/learn program that engages HCSWs in learning opportunities (formal and informal) to enrich the understanding of their role and the roles of other team members in the facilities. The HCSW may take part in relevant observational learning beyond the scope of their role with the following provisions as per the [MOH Employer Guidance Document](#):

- The policies of the site or community care provider do not limit the ability of an HCSW to engage in observational learning while in their HCSW role.
- The client is informed that the HCSW is engaged in a work/learn program to train as an HCA.
- Consent of the client, or their next of kin if the client is unable to provide consent, is provided (verbal or documented).
- If they are unable to provide consent, then observation will not be allowed. The organization's supervisor must approve any observation of clinical care activities.

### Examples of Duties and Responsibilities

- Participates as an integral member of a healthcare delivery team to provide a variety of non-direct and/or non-clinical healthcare supports to clients, residents, families, and/or visitors to meet established needs.
- Establishes rapport with clients, residents, and families, and assists in promoting physical, emotional, cultural, social, and spiritual well-being. Observes clients and residents, and their environments, to identify and report unsafe conditions, behavioral and/or physical changes to designated supervisor.



- Assists with mealtime activities; sets up, welcomes, and transports clients or residents to dining areas, sets up and collects meal trays, assists with limited food preparation such as heating prepared food, making tea, coffee, toast, etc., where clients or residents require support.
- Provide assistance in carrying out activities; sets up supplies and equipment, assists with transporting clients or residents to designated areas, encourages participation in activities and provides support to clients or residents where required.
- Performs housekeeping duties such as sweeping and mopping floors, vacuuming, dusting, washing dishes, and washing, drying, folding, and delivering laundry, where required.
- Greets visitors and others in accordance with established safety, security and infection control procedures and guidelines; provides information and/or redirects to appropriate person or area, where required.
- Check and restock supplies as required, including personal care, first aid, and housekeeping supplies and assist in taking inventory.
- Completes and maintains related records electronically, or using documents such as inter-shift communication books, daily log sheets and progress reports related to non-direct and/or non-clinical healthcare activities.
- Performs other related duties as assigned.

## Supervision and Direction

HCSWs work under the supervision and direction of a regulated health care professional. This supervision involves providing guidance and consultation and can occur in different ways depending on the care setting.

- **Direct supervision** means the regulated health care professional is physically present at the point of care alongside the HCSW.
- **Indirect supervision** applies when the professional is on-site and available to provide guidance but may not be in the same room—this is common in community health settings where the supervisor is nearby and accessible.
- **Remote indirect supervision** means the supervisor is not physically present but remains available for consultation and support through technology (e.g., phone or video).

In all cases, the supervising regulated health care professional must be employed by the same organization and have a clear understanding of the HCSW scope and limitations.

## Daily Assignment

HCSWs contribute to the care team by supporting daily operations through non-clinical and non-direct care tasks that align with individual care plans. Their role is designed to enhance existing staffing, not replace it.

Daily assignments for HCSWs will be coordinated by a regulated health care professional. The HCSW role is considered supplementary and should not be built into baseline staffing assignments.

## Oversight and Assignment of Tasks

Both regulated and unregulated health professionals working in the clinical area may oversee and assign non-clinical, non-direct care tasks to HCSWs, if they are familiar with the HCSW role and its limitations.

**Note:** HCSWs do not perform assessments, provide treatment, or deliver hands-on care to residents or clients. Their role is to support the care team by assisting with non-clinical, non-direct care tasks and activities.

Please refer to the [HCSW Dos and Don'ts](#) document for examples of what can and cannot be assigned to HCSWs.

If a task you wish to assign is not listed in the [Dos and Don'ts document](#), consider whether it fits within the general scope of typical HCSW duties listed above. If it does not clearly align, please consult with the Regional Practice Initiatives Lead for HCAP by emailing [VCHHCAPInquiries@vch.ca](mailto:VCHHCAPInquiries@vch.ca).

If the task appears to align with typical HCSW duties, use the following two questions to confirm it is appropriate to assign:

1. **Does the task require assessment or treatment?**
  - **Yes** → *Do not assign. This is outside the HCSW scope.*
  - **No** → Proceed to the next question.
2. **Does the task involve hands-on, direct care to the resident or client?**
  - **Yes** → *Do not assign. This is outside the HCSW scope.*
  - **No** → If the task supports the resident/client in a non-clinical, non-direct way, *it can be assigned to the HCSW.*

## Introductions in the Clinical Setting

Taking a moment to introduce yourself is a small but powerful part of building trust and creating a respectful, person-centered environment.

Inspired by the [#hellomynameis](#) campaign, this small act helps residents, clients, and families feel seen, safe, and supported. A clear and friendly introduction also helps others understand your role and what you can help with.

All HCSWs are encouraged and expected to know how to confidently introduce themselves in the clinical setting.

**Below is an introduction HCSWs may use:**

“Hello, my name is [Your First Name], and I’m part of the Health Career Access Program- also called HCAP. I’m here as a Health Care Support Worker while I complete my training to become a Health Care Assistant.”

“My role is to support the care team with things like meals, tidying, and visiting.”

“There are some things I’m not trained to help with just yet like assisting you to the bathroom, but I will always let a nurse or care aide know if you need something outside of my role.”

“It’s really nice to meet you, and I’m happy to be here.”

*Don’t hesitate to modify or shorten your introduction as you get more comfortable. Less can be more once resident families and staff begin to recognize you and your role.*

To learn more about the [#hellomynameis](#) campaign at [hellomynameis.org.uk](http://hellomynameis.org.uk)

## Resident, Client, and Family Education

Engaging residents and families in understanding the HCSW role is essential to fostering trust, transparency, and a sense of community. Providing clear, consistent messaging helps set expectations and supports a smoother integration of HCSWs into the care team. Key strategies for resident and family education may include:

### Unit Posters

Post clear, visually appealing posters in common areas that explain the role of the HCSW. These can include:

- A photo of the HCSW team (with first names)
- A brief explanation of their role and how they support the care team
- Reassurance that HCSWs are supervised and do not perform hands-on clinical care.

### Monthly Communication

Include HCAP updates in your site's regular family newsletter or contribute to the LTC Connection monthly email. Updates can include:

- Welcoming new HCSWs
- Highlighting the value of companionship and non-clinical support
- Promoting resident stories or positive experiences with HCSWs

### Announce New HCSWs

Notify families when a new cohort of HCSWs begins. A short, friendly message from leadership can help build trust and proactively address questions or concerns.

### Family Council Participation

Encourage leaders or invite HCAP team representatives to attend Family Council meetings to:

- Provide an overview of the HCSW role
- Answer questions and address concerns
- Gather feedback on how the integration of HCSWs is being experienced by residents and families

## **Staff Education- Coaching and Education for Staff**

Supporting a positive and productive environment for HCAP Students begins with equipping the clinical team to work collaboratively and effectively with HCSWs. Leaders play a key role in coaching staff to understand the role, value, and limitations of the HCSW position. The following focus areas can help guide education and team development.

### **Understand and Utilize the HCSW Role**

- Provide ongoing coaching to help staff understand the scope of the HCSW role.
- Highlight how HCSWs can enhance team workflow by supporting non-clinical aspects of care (e.g., mealtime assistance, companionship, unit tidiness).
- Reinforce that supervision and mentorship are shared responsibilities across the team.

### **Emphasize Companionship and Resident Rapport**

- Remind staff that one of the most impactful aspects of the HCSW role is building meaningful relationships with residents.
- Encourage HCSWs to spend quality one-on-one time with residents, which promotes emotional well-being and reduces social isolation.

### **Address Role Frustration Constructively**

- Acknowledge that HCSWs may feel limited by their scope, especially when unable to assist with direct care tasks.
- Create opportunities for reflection and feedback, reminding staff that support, and validation are essential parts of mentorship.
- Ensure that the team values all contributions, including those that are non-clinical but resident-centered and enhancing the environment of care.

### **Build a Stable, Supportive Team**

- Work toward consistency in team assignments to help foster trust and comfort for HCSWs and residents.
- Consider designating a small group of consistent team members to mentor and model best practices.
- Ensure staff are aware of who the HCSW is partnered with each day and maintain open lines of communication.

## Additional support:

For questions or support related to educating staff or coaching through practice issues, reach out to the HCAP Regional Practice Initiatives Lead or the LPN Educator by emailing [VCHHCAPInquiries@vch.ca](mailto:VCHHCAPInquiries@vch.ca).

## Peer Mentorship Program

The HCAP Peer Mentorship Program is a structured work-integrated learning initiative that combines hands-on experience with mentorship. Experienced Health Care Assistants are paired with HCSWs for up to and including your first 3 months working as a registered HCA. The goal of this program is to foster learning, skill development, confidence, connection with peers, and overall support for your transition into your new role.

### Why Participate?

- **Support a culture of learning:** Mentors help create a welcoming, supportive environment for those who are new to the health care field.
- **Enhance leadership skills:** Participation offers mentors the opportunity to build coaching, communication, and team-building skills.
- **Promote retention and confidence:** Structured mentorship during the initial months as a registered HCA helps bridge the transition from student to independent team member.
- **Strengthen team cohesion:** Peer mentors contribute to a culture of shared responsibility and collaborative care, benefiting the whole team.

### How to Get Involved:

Staff interested in becoming mentors can speak with their supervisor. The HCAP team relies on site leaders to identify and support suitable staff to serve as mentors. Formal mentor training and ongoing support are provided through the HCAP program.

Encouraging staff to enroll in the Peer Mentorship Program enhances the quality of the learning environment, supports smoother transitions to practice, and builds a strong, resilient workforce.

## Performance Management

Performance management for HCAP students should follow the same principles and processes as for all other VCH employees. Leaders are encouraged to refer to the [VCH Performance Management](#) page for tools, templates, and guidelines, or to connect directly with an HR advisor for additional support.

## Transitioning from HCSW to HCA

As HCAP students complete their studies and transition from HCSW roles into HCA positions, it's important to recognize that the orientation needs for these roles are distinct. The initial HCSW orientation does not prepare individuals for the full scope of responsibilities of an HCA, as HCSWs do not provide direct care. When students return to their sites as newly registered HCAs, site managers and educators should ensure they receive a comprehensive HCA orientation—just as they would for any new HCA hire. This includes scheduling any outstanding mandatory courses and supporting a full complement of buddy shifts to promote confidence, competence, and continuity of care.



## A Message of Appreciation

As HCAP students complete their journey and step into the full practice of Health Care Assistants, we want to extend our deepest thanks to our site leaders for the essential role you play in their success.

Your leadership has helped shape supportive, learner-ready environments where students feel welcomed, empowered, and able to thrive. You have not only opened the door to learning but ensured that each student was surrounded by caring mentors and collaborative teams committed to their growth.

We recognize that it takes a village, and your teams have shown up with patience, professionalism, and kindness, making a lasting impression on these future care providers. Your commitment to mentorship and team-based learning builds confidence in our students and strengthens the foundation of our health system.




We invite you to take a moment of celebration at the end of your students' final HCSW shifts to:

- Acknowledge their accomplishments and welcome them into their new roles as HCAs
- Recognize the mentors and team members who supported them along the way
- Mark the moment with a sweet treat or team gathering
- Share photos of the celebration to the [VCH Photo Gallery](#)
- Send a [High Five](#)

Thank you for your leadership, and for creating the kind of workplaces where learning, connection, and compassionate care can flourish.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Additional Resources

Resource	Link
<a href="#">Orientation Manual for Health Care Support Workers (Long Term Care)</a>	 Orientation Manual for HCSW - June 202
<a href="#">Orientation Manual for Health Care Support Workers (Home Support)</a>	 Student Guide - Home support HCAF
<a href="#">HCSW Roles and Responsibilities</a>	
<a href="#">HCSW Dos and Don'ts</a>	<a href="https://www.vch.ca/en/media/33411">https://www.vch.ca/en/media/33411</a>
<a href="#">Frequently Asked Questions for Employees</a>	<a href="#">HCAP-FAQs-for-Participants.pdf</a>
<a href="#">Frequently Asked Questions for Employers</a>	<a href="#">HCAP FAQ for Employers</a>
<a href="#">HCAP Employer Guidance MOH</a>	
<a href="#">HCSW Peer Mentorship Guide for the Mentee</a>	<a href="#">33361</a>
<a href="#">HCSW Peer Mentorship Guide for the Mentor</a>	<a href="#">33366</a>
<a href="#">HCSW Competency Assessment Tool</a>	<a href="#">33416</a>