

Health Professions and Occupations Act: Updates for Certified RNs and RPNs

[The Health Professions and Occupations Act](#) (HPOA) came into effect on April 1, 2026, replacing the [Health Professions Act](#). Most of the changes associated with the HPOA affect regulatory colleges rather than nurses. However, there are language changes relevant to certified RNs and RPNs.

There are five BCCNM Certification Programs for RNs: Reproductive Health (Contraceptive Management), Reproductive Health (Sexually Transmitted Infections), Opioid Use Disorder, RN First Call, and Remote Practice; and one BCCNM Certification Program for RPNs - Opioid Use Disorder. Currently, certified RNs and RPNs follow their certification-specific decision support tools (DSTs) named in their BCCNM certification-specific practice standard to guide their practice. DSTs are stewarded by three organizations:

- The BC Centre for Disease Control: Sexually Transmitted Infections DSTs,
- The BC Centre for Substance Use: Opioid Use Disorder DSTs, and
- Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of BC: Contraceptive Management, RN First Call, and Remote Practice DSTs

As announced by the regulatory college, the BC College of Nurses and Midwives, updates have been made to certified RN/RPN practice standards to align with the HPOA. These changes do not impact the *scope of practice* for certified registered nurses or certified registered psychiatric nurses. The approach aims to improve clarity in communicating practice standards and to align with similar changes being made for midwifery certification.

Certified Nurses' practice standards have been reorganized so that each certification program—Reproductive Health, Remote Practice, RN First Call, and Opioid Use Disorder—has its own dedicated practice standard. In addition to this change, language within these standards has been updated to align with the HPOA. A summary of these language changes can be found on the BCCNM webpage: [Updates to nurse certified practice to align with HPOA](#)

Over the coming months, Certified Nurses will see the following language changes across DSTs and related materials:

1. The title "Certified Practice Nurse" will now be known as "Certified RN" or "Certified RPN" and may include the following titles:
 - a. Certified nurse
 - b. Registered nurse (Certified) or RN(C)
 - c. Registered Psychiatric Nurse (Certified) or RPN(C)
2. Certified nurses may also choose to identify their specific certification program (for example, Opioid Use Disorder). These title provisions are included in the reorganized practice standards.
3. The term "designation" is no longer used to describe the certification
4. The term "certified practice area" is now described as certification, certified nurse and certification programs, followed by the name of the specific certification program

Once changes are integrated into the DSTs, a communication memo will be sent out to notify certified nurses of the change. If you have any questions, you may contact BCCNM through the [standards support intake request form](#) or the respective host organization for the DSTs aligned with your certification.

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