
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health
Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training

Creating new opportunities for nurse practitioners as part of team-based care system

VANCOUVER – Minister of Health Adrian Dix has announced that the Province is creating 200 new nurse practitioner (NP) positions to support patients as part of a shift to a team-based primary health-care system.

“We know that there are significant numbers of British Columbians who have inadequate access to a primary care provider,” said Dix. “NPs are a viable, patient-centred solution to improving access, but we know that compared to other jurisdictions, B.C. has not made the best use of NPs. With the steps we are taking to fully leverage and integrate NPs into the province’s primary care system, this is about to change.”

The positions are being supported by approximately \$115 million over three years, to secure NPs’ employment in primary care settings throughout British Columbia. Government is also increasing the number of NP education seats by 66%.

Nurse practitioners are health practitioners who can work on their own, or with physicians and other health professionals, to provide care across a person’s life span. This includes diagnosing and treating illnesses, ordering and interpreting tests, prescribing medications and performing medical procedures. There are 426 practicing NPs in B.C. The new positions will make a total of 626 NPs working in communities throughout the province.

“This move is backed by the largest investment in NPs in the province’s history, and is a critical building block of a broader plan to improve access to primary health care,” added Dix.

The distribution of nurse practitioner positions will be based on regions with the highest need of primary care services. The positions will be available to new graduates, as well as current nurse practitioners, who wish to work to their full scope of practice in a primary care setting.

“This is great news for nurse practitioners and British Columbians in need of primary care,” said Fiona Hutchison, president of the British Columbia Nurse Practitioner Association. “Fully integrating additional nurse practitioners into our provincial health-care system enables us to be more fully utilized and work to our full scope of practice — something we’ve been calling on for some time.”

As well, \$1.2 million over two years will fund an additional 30 nurse practitioner education seats. Beginning in the 2018-19 school year, 15 additional nurse practitioner seats will be added at the University of British Columbia (UBC), five seats at the University of Victoria (UVIC) and five seats at the University of Northern British Columbia. An additional five seats will be added at UVIC in 2019-20. These institutions will have the ability to train a total of 75 nurse practitioners per year.

“B.C.’s nurse practitioner education programs equip graduates with the expertise to assess, diagnose and treat common illnesses,” said Melanie Mark, Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training. “Supporting our public post-secondary institutions in expanding the number of nurse practitioner seats mean more British Columbians can get the quality day-to-day health care they need and deserve.”

“UBC started offering a nurse practitioner program in 2003, and many of our graduates have since gone on to serve in leadership roles in primary health care in B.C. I'm thrilled that the new investment will enable us to double the number of graduates from this program," said Elizabeth Saewyc, director of the UBC school of nursing. "We in the faculty also look forward to offering our research expertise to help evaluate the improvements in access to primary care that these additional seats will bring."

Increasing the number of jobs and nurse practitioner seats is part of work underway to support a human resources strategy to ensure the health-care workforce meets the needs of patients. As part of this, as announced on April 18, 2018, the ministries of Health and Advanced Education, Skills and Training are providing approximately \$3.3 million to create new health-care assistant seats in 11 post-secondary institutions throughout British Columbia.

Learn More:

To learn more about the Province’s strategy to increase the number of health-care assistants, visit: news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018HLTH0019-000666

To learn about the University of British Columbia’s nurse practitioner program, visit: nursing.ubc.ca/graduate-program/master-nursing-nurse-practitioner

University of Northern British Columbia’s nurse practitioner program: www.unbc.ca/nursing/family-nurse-practitioner-mscn-fnp

University of Victoria’s nurse practitioner program: www.uvic.ca/hsd/nursing/graduate/practitioner/index.php

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