



Allied Health Policy Secretariat

Health Sector Workforce and Beneficiary Services Division

Allied Health Definition: Q & A

Why did BC develop a definition of allied health?

- The lack of a universal definition for allied health has led to inconsistency amongst health system partners as to who is included in the allied health workforce. This has implications for program and policy development and has created challenges for providing focussed allied health leadership in our health care system.
- The definition is meant to provide a guide and common language to support allied health service delivery and health human resource policy development. It is also a step towards improving awareness and recognition of allied health roles and ensuring equitable representation of allied health occupations in BC as the province implements more integrated, team-based models of care.

How was the definition of allied health developed?

- An initial draft definition was developed through research conducted by the Ministry of Health in 2019. A jurisdictional scan and evidence review of allied health definitions further informed this draft.
- In Spring 2021, the Allied Health Policy Secretariat (AHPS) undertook a comprehensive allied health provincial consultation, including surveys and focus groups which sought feedback on the use of the term “allied health” as well as on a proposed definition.
- The current definition was further refined by engaging with experts in other jurisdictions (including Alberta, Manitoba, Australia, New Zealand, and the UK), and a review of the National Occupational Classification (NOC) codes for the health workforce in Canada. It incorporates input from individuals in frontline allied health positions, students, labour unions, professional associations, regulators, Indigenous partners, post secondary institutions, and health authority stakeholders.

Why are non-clinical support staff not included in the definition?

- While all members of the health care team make valuable contributions to patient, client and resident care, the allied health workforce includes those who:
 - Complete occupation-specific education or training
 - Deliver or support direct patient/resident/client care, and
 - Develop, contribute to, or inform patient/resident/client care plans

Why are dentists, health care assistants, midwives, and nurse practitioners not included in the allied health definition?

- Dentists, midwives, and nurse practitioners are more aligned to medical practice and are considered medical staff within publicly funded health care organizations.
- Health care assistants are more aligned with nursing practice and nursing career pathways.

Are Indigenous traditional health and wellness providers part of the allied health workforce?

- The AHPS is committed to working alongside Indigenous partners to understand and recognize Indigenous traditional health and wellness providers in BC within the broader health workforce, while embedding cultural safety and humility into health care service delivery.
- Through initial feedback and consultation with the Office of Indigenous Health and health authority VPs of Indigenous Health, in addition to the provincial consultation, the AHPS heard that Indigenous Elders, traditional medicine providers, and Indigenous patient navigators may not necessarily identify with the allied health workforce. There is a need for further engagement around opportunities for the Ministry of Health to support these roles while upholding Indigenous rights and self-determination. AHPS is committed to safe and continued dialogue and consultation with the full range of Indigenous partners.

What about those disciplines that work primarily in the private sector?

- The focus of the AHPS is on those allied health disciplines that support publicly funded health care services, in alignment with the Ministry's strategic priorities. However, the AHPS is the key point of contact for all allied health disciplines and works across government to coordinate efforts and provide leadership for this workforce.

There are occupations missing from the list, what should I do?

- The list of occupations may not be exhaustive, and the definition is intended to be flexible and responsive to the growing and changing health care landscape in BC. If you think there is a discipline missing, please email the Allied Health Policy Secretariat at Allied.Health@gov.bc.ca to share your thoughts.