May 30, 2012

To: Employers of Health Care Aids (HCAs)

Re: Hiring Standards for Employers of Health Care Aids (HCAs) working in Continuing Care

Employers are responsible for ensuring the competency of those employed as HCAs. To provide some clarification on this matter, the HCA Advisory Committee has outlined the HCA hiring guidelines for employers.

The attached document defines the HCA hiring guidelines to be followed by employers.

Should you have any questions on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact:
Shannon Barnard
Lead – Strategic Implementation, Workforce Planning
Seniors Health
Alberta Health Services
shannon.barnard@albertahealthservices.ca
(403) 524-4847

Kind Regards,

Cheryl Knight
Executive Director, Continuing Care Integrated Services Supportive Living & Long Term Care
Seniors Health
Alberta Health Services

CC: HCA Advisory Committee
Hiring Standards for Employers of HCAs Working in Continuing Care

The HCA Advisory committee has confirmed the following hiring standards for Continuing Care employers of HCAs as of May 2012:

- **Alberta Certified HCAs**: certificate obtained from an Alberta educational institution that offers the GOA HCA curriculum. This is the preferred hiring standard.

- **Substantially Equivalent HCAs**: education obtained from an educational institution (e.g., from another province) that offers a HCA course of approximately 500 hours of theory and practice (supervised) and which closely aligns to the content of the GOA HCA curriculum. We are in the process of updating the “substantially equivalent” school list. If you have any additional schools to add to the list, or would like a copy of the most current list, please contact the HCA Directory office: 
  HCAdirectory@albertahealthservices.ca or call toll free 1-800-432-1845.

- For HCAs who have been previously employed in Alberta as a HCA, but do not have a recognized certificate, employers may (with the consent of the prospective HCA employee) contact the HCA Directory Office to confirm the individual has been deemed competent by another Alberta employer:  HCAdirectory@albertahealthservices.ca or call toll free 1-800-432-1845.

- For prospective HCA employees who do not fit the above categories, but are experienced (e.g., have more than 500 hours of service), employers are to complete a CAP (Competency Assessment Profile) within 3 months of hire. An indentified learning plan must be completed within one year of hire. An updated CAP reflecting the 2010 GOA HCA curriculum will be shared with employers in June 2012. Once the learning plan is complete, the individual is “deemed competent” by the employer. Employers are required to update competency status quarterly through submission to the HCA Directory.

Should any HCA subsequently obtain a GOA HCA certificate (e.g., through a distance educational program), the ‘revised status’ is to be submitted to the HCA Directory as part of the quarterly update.

If the prospective employee has neither a GOA HCA certificate nor a substantially equivalent course, and does not have a minimum of 500 hours of previous experience in a HCA role, employers are strongly advised to encourage prospective employees to complete the GOA HCA certificate.

Employers with a cohort of inexperienced staff may contract a post-secondary institution to offer employment-preparation (i.e. a course consisting of the first 8 weeks of the fulltime HCA certificate course including one week of practicum).

- Domestic or foreign trained nurses (RN, LPN or RPN equivalents) are generally considered substantially equivalent. If an employer has any concerns about the individual’s competency to perform personal care, a CAP is recommended. Nursing students who have completed a minimum of 100 hours of practicum are also considered substantially equivalent. Individuals with a health care background not in nursing (e.g., EMS staff) are required to complete a CAP and learning plan as required.
Employers are reminded that they are responsible for the assignment of work. Work is to be assigned only to HCAs who are individually competent to perform the work, regardless of their educational background or work experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency status</th>
<th>Employer action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Certified: Alberta HCA certificate from a school offering the GOA curriculum</strong></td>
<td>Submit staff name to the HCA Directory as part of the quarterly update.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Substantially equivalent**                     | Employer determines the course has approximately 500 hours of theory and practice (supervised) and follows closely the GOA HCA curriculum content. Employer may:  
  1) contact the HCA Directory Office to confirm the school is listed on the “Substantially equivalent” schools list; or,  
  2) contact the school directly to confirm the details of the curriculum; or,  
  3) review the material supplied by the student. The employer may wish to request the school be added to the Substantially equivalent list by contacting the HCA Directory Office.  

Domestic or foreign trained Nurses are considered substantially equivalent. *If an employer has any concerns about the individual’s competency to perform personal care, a CAP is recommended.*  
Nursing students who have completed a minimum of 100 hours of practicum are also considered substantially equivalent.  
Submit staff name to HCA Directory as part of quarterly report.  

| Deemed competent                                | Staff who do not are not certified or substantially equivalent – submit staff name to HCA Directory upon hire. CAP within 3 months of hire; complete identified Learning Plan within 1 year of hire, or complete HCA certification course within 18 months of hire. Submit upgraded status to HCA Directory (e.g. deemed competent) as part of the quarterly status update.  

CAP non-nurse health care staff (e.g., EMS).  
CAP any staff regardless of background if concerned about competence. |

**HCA Title**

HCA is the generic termed used to describe workers who perform tasks identified in the HCA competency profile ([http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/HC-Aides-Competency-2001.pdf](http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/HC-Aides-Competency-2001.pdf)). The title used by employers may vary (e.g., Nursing Attendant, Personal Care Aide, etc.) and may be determined by labour relations. Regardless of preparation and whether certified or deemed competent, HCAs are to follow the employer’s directions regarding the position title to use when documenting on a client/resident’s health record. Becoming certified does not require a change in position title.