NPAA Nurse Practitioner Association of Alberta

Start A Practice Guide for Nurse Practitioners

Updated: June 2025

The Goal

To provide guidance and resources to nurse practitioners who are engaging in the Government of Alberta Nurse Practitioner Primary Care Program. This guide aims to support the navigation of the program and the opportunity to set up team-based practices in the province of Alberta.

Disclosure

This guide does not replace professional legal, accounting, real-estate, financial, insurance or banking advice or any other professional advice necessary for successful business arrangements. Nurse practitioners must seek out individual counsel to meet the needs of their unique business situations. The intended use of this resource is to assist in thinking through many of the essential aspects of starting and managing your own practice.

Disclaimer

This guide is current as of June 2025 and is intended to support nurse practitioners navigating the NPPCP. It will be updated as more information becomes available. Please check https://albertanps.com/np-pcp-journey for the most up-to-date version. **This document is a resource—not a replacement for professional legal, business, or regulatory advice.**

NPAA Nurse Practitioner Association of Alberta

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1.0 **Introduction**

As a healthcare professional looking to establish a publicly funded nurse practitioner clinic, this booklet serves as a resource guide for launching a practice. The contents of this guide are designed to outline specific steps aligned with the regulations and requirements of the province of Alberta. We will delve into various aspects that necessitate consideration before starting operations. It is important to note that while this guide provides valuable insights, it does not serve as a substitute for professional advice in areas such as legal, accounting, real estate, finance, insurance, banking, or other business operations.

This guide will help you navigate the planning considerations for setting up your clinic and outline the registration, licensing, and compliance requirements you must fulfill. Additionally, it will offer guidance on the type of practice you may wish to establish or join. Furthermore, it will provide advice on the foundational steps of initiating a business, including crafting a business plan, selecting a suitable location, acquiring necessary equipment, hiring staff, implementing technology, and devising marketing strategies.

1.1 **Readiness & Planning**

The initial step in embarking on the journey of opening a business is to reflect on your motivation. This endeavor is not without its challenges and may necessitate personal sacrifices. If you are currently employed as a Nurse Practitioner within Alberta Health Services (AHS) or the Primary Care Network (PCN), transitioning to entrepreneurship will entail relinquishing certain benefits such as pension, sick days, and union support in exchange for autonomy and the independence of running a business. Once you have come to terms with this significant change, the subsequent consideration involves determining whether you wish to commence this venture as a solo or in collaborative practice. Strategies for networking and connecting with potential partners will be detailed further in this guide.

Conducting thorough research and planning is a crucial aspect of establishing a successful healthcare practice in Alberta. According to the Alberta Medical Association (AMA) data from 2016, there were approximately 650,000 unattached patients, with projections in 2020 indicating a potential increase to 800,000. The presence of a substantial number of unattached patients presents nurse practitioners with

an opportunity to build a patient panel. It is important to note that the current funding model administered by Primary and Preventive Health Services (PPHS) — formerly Alberta Health (AH) — does not include specialty clinics.

In recent years, Alberta has seen significant population growth due to migration, both from within Canada and internationally. In 2022/2023, Alberta experienced record net gains in interprovincial migration, with 56,245 more people moving to the province than leaving it. This trend highlights the increasing demand for healthcare services as the population continues to grow. Additionally, Canada welcomed 485,000 new permanent residents in 2024, with plans to maintain this level in subsequent years, further adding to the potential patient base in Alberta.

During the research phase, it is imperative to define your practice goals, determine the services you intend to offer, establish your preferred work schedule, decide on the size of your patient panel, select a location in Alberta for your practice, and consider whether you prefer a solo practice or a shared workspace. To assist in determining the services you intend to offer, consider creating a detailed checklist as part of your planning process. For example, if you were to open up a business, have you considered the following:

- Practice name and registration number
- Type of business (e.g., solo entrepreneurship vs. corporation)
- Insurance requirements
- Tax considerations
- Practice location and size of office space

These questions and considerations will be explored in more detail in subsequent sections of this guide to assist you in making informed decisions about your future healthcare practice.

1.2 **Registration and Application**

For individuals looking to participate in the Nurse Practitioner Primary Care Program in Alberta (NPPCP), there are several key criteria that must be met:

- Hold a valid NP license in Alberta and be registered with the College of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CRNA) as a Family/All Ages nurse practitioner with no conditions on your practice permit;
- Reside physically in Alberta;
- Commit to offering after-hours appointments (evenings, weekends, statutory holidays) as outlined in the NP Program Guide;
- Be registered with Alberta Find a Doctor (ABFD);
- Enroll in Community Information Integration/ Central Patient Attachment Registry (CII/CPAR), and;
- Be enrolled with Netcare and purchase/utilize a government-approved Electronic Medical Record (EMR) system (Accuro, Ava, CHR, Healthquest, Med Access, PS Suite, Wolf);
- Maintain minimum professional liability and commercial liability insurance;
- Share patient panel data with the Health Council of Alberta (HCA) for quality improvement purposes;

- Submit all service reports as per Primary and Preventative Health Service (PPHS) requirements;
- Meet the expectation of providing 1928 clinical hours per year to your defined panel.

The application process for the NPPCP involves two steps. The first step is the completion of the Expression of Interest (EOI), followed by the formal application for the program. Both forms can be accessed online at www.AlbertaNPs.com to initiate the registration process. Any questions about your application can be sent to pcprogram@albertanps.com (please see Resources & Support)

1.3 The Process with NPPCP

Participating in the NPPCP involves several key steps to ensure a smooth transition into practice and alignment with government funding and reporting requirements. Below is an overview of the process from initial expression of interest to receiving program funds:

1. Expression of Interest (EOI)
2. Application
3. Approval Timeline
4. Onboarding with Primary and Preventative Health Services
5. Business Arrangement Forms
6. Legal Arrangements
7. Transfer of Funds

1. **Expression of Interest (EOI)**
   Submit an Expression of Interest form to the PPHS NPPCP team. This form outlines your intent to participate in the program and includes basic information about your proposed practice (e.g., location, model, services, etc.). The NPPCP team uses this to assess alignment with program priorities and eligibility.

2. **Application**
   If your EOI is accepted, you'll be invited to complete the full application. This requires more detailed information, such as:
   a. Clinical service plans
   b. Community or PCN partnerships
   c. Practice model and patient panel goals
   d. Confirmation of solo, collaborative, or PCN-based setup

3. **Approval Timeline**
   Once your application is submitted, it undergoes a review process with Primary and Preventative Health Services. Approval typically takes **4–6 weeks**. During this time, you may be asked for clarification or additional documentation to support your application.

4. **Onboarding with Primary and Preventative Health Services**
   Once approved, you will begin onboarding with Primary and Preventative Health Services, which includes several key steps related to clinical systems and compliance:
   a. **Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA):** You must complete a PIA and receive approval from the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner (OIPC) before seeing patients or collecting health information.
   b. **CII/CPAR Setup:** Enroll in the Community Information Integration (CII) and Central Patient Attachment Registry (CPAR) to support continuity of care and centralized patient attachment tracking.
   c. **Alberta Netcare Access:** You must register as a custodian to gain access to Alberta Netcare and assign access to your team members.
   d. **Facility and Prescriber ID:** You will need to apply for a **Facility ID** and a **Prescriber ID**, both required for submitting billing and reporting data.

5. **Business Arrangement Forms**
   Complete and submit Primary and Preventative Health Services's business arrangement forms, which detail the structure of your practice and its funding relationship with the Ministry. These forms are required before funding can be issued.

6. **Legal Arrangements**
   In parallel, you may need to finalize legal agreements such as:
   a. **Practice contracts,** (such as a partnership agreement, if working within a PCN or clinic group)
   b. Return-of-Service (ROS) agreement
   c. Leases or independent contractor agreements
   d. **Vendor contracts** (EMR, billing, etc.)

   It's advisable to seek legal review of these documents to ensure your responsibilities and protections are clearly outlined.

7. **Transfer of Funds**
   Once onboarding steps and all required documentation are complete, **program funding** from Primary and Preventative Health Services will begin. This funding is **not fee-for-service billing**, but is a panel and time-based arrangement, similar to an **Alternative Relationship Plan (ARP)** and is specific to nurse practitioners.

   Key details:
   a. **Payments are issued bi-weekly** via direct deposit
   b. Funding is based on your approved Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) and service expectations outlined in your Letter of Participation (LOP).
   c. Funds are **pro-rated** based on your start date
   d. Primary and Preventative Health Services's **fiscal year runs from April 1 to March 31**, which may impact annual planning, reporting cycles, and reconciliation
   e. Other payouts
      i. PMSP - Available until April 2026 will be paid out Quarterly

ii. Panel size adjustment payments are reviewed in March and September by PPHS and paid out one month later. It is based on CII/CPAR data and not your own EMR panel size.
iii. Rural Remote Northern Program (RRNP) - is embedded in your biweekly payments. (insert link to RRNP chart)

It is important to track your clinic's service delivery and expenditures in alignment with this fiscal schedule and to maintain accurate service event reporting for accountability and reconciliation purposes. It is also important to utilize EMR ICD 9 or 10 data to support the development of complexity modifiers and showcasing NP workload in the future.

2.0 Developing Your Business

2.1 Business Plan

As you embark on the journey of establishing your own business, it is essential to craft a solid business plan to guide your efforts. There are various approaches to creating a business plan, and seeking guidance from professionals such as lawyers and accountants is highly recommended. A useful resource for drafting your business plan is the Business Development Bank of Canada's (BDC) website, where you can find templates and tools to assist you in this process (BDC Business Plan).

Your business plan will encompass important aspects such as the potential to form a corporation, determining how you will allocate payments to yourself, and other vital financial considerations. It is advisable to consult with an accountant to ensure that your business structure is optimized for financial success.

The subsequent sections of this guide will delve into the specifics of launching a medical practice, (legal, finance etc..) tailored to meet the unique requirements and challenges of the healthcare industry in Alberta.

2.2 Incorporating

In Canada, Nurse Practitioners are not permitted to establish a professional corporation under their name; however, NPs are able to register their healthcare business as a corporate entity.

Incorporating offers several benefits, including tax advantages and potential income-splitting opportunities with family members. Through incorporation, nurse practitioners can limit their personal liability in case of lawsuits or debts incurred by the practice.

Medical professionals who are considering incorporating their practice should seek guidance from legal and financial professionals to navigate the process and ensure compliance with relevant laws and regulations.

2.2.1 **Sole Proprietorship**

Sole Proprietorship is informal, unincorporated, and not legally separated from its owner. The owner is entitled to 100% of the business's profits, but is also 100% responsible for its debts. Profits and losses are reported on the owner's individual tax returns. These businesses usually start as a hobby and have a small customer base. This direction may be more appropriate for low-profit, low-risk businesses.

- **Pros:**
  - Easier to start with less paperwork and lower initial costs.
  - You have complete control over all decisions and operations.
  - All earnings go directly to you, with no corporate taxes involved.
  - Personal income taxes only, no need for separate corporate tax filings.
- **Cons:**
  - You are personally liable for any debts or lawsuits against your practice.
  - Income is taxed at personal income tax rates, which may be higher than corporate tax rates.
  - You can't split income with family members to reduce the overall tax burden.
  - Raising capital can be more difficult, potentially limiting growth.

2.2.2 **Incorporation**

A corporation is a legal entity that is owned by shareholders and run by a board of director(s). They have many of the rights that individuals have, as then they can own assets, enter into contracts, borrow/lend money, sue, and be sued. Small businesses form corporations to attract investors and provide limited liability protection. They tend to have a board of directors, bylaws (which are required to form and maintain a corporation), a lower tax rate, and complex operational rules & regulations.

- **Pros:**
  - Corporate tax rates are typically lower than personal tax rates.
  - Potential to split income with family members, reducing the overall tax burden.
  - Personal assets are protected from business debts and legal actions.
  - Incorporation can enhance the professional image of your practice.
- **Cons:**
  - More paperwork, higher costs, and ongoing legal and financial obligations.
  - Requires both personal and corporate tax returns, adding complexity.
  - Must comply with more regulations and laws, requiring professional guidance.
  - Earnings may be taxed at both the corporate level and when distributed as personal income.
  - Requires an annual general meeting, tax filings with the provincial and federal governments.

2.2.3 **Partnership**

A partnership is a business owned by more than one individual that isn't formally organized. A partnership files taxes under the partners' names, and the partners are liable for any actions taken against the business. The business start-up costs are lower than other business structure types, and less paperwork. These businesses, like a sole proprietorship, have a small customer base.

- **Pros:**
  - Shared responsibilities and workload make management easier.
  - Access to more resources and financial support from multiple partners.
  - Combined skills and expertise, enhancing practice quality.
  - Easier to raise capital or secure loans due to multiple contributors.
- **Cons:**
  - Shared liability, putting personal assets at risk for business debts or legal issues.
  - Potential conflicts or disagreements between partners.
  - Less control over decision-making due to the need for consensus.
  - Profits must be split, meaning you don't keep 100% of the earnings.

2.3 **Protecting Yourself and Your Business with Insurance**

Running a medical practice involves inherent risks. The right insurance coverage is essential to protect yourself, your patients, your team, and your clinic's future. That's why the NPAA has partnered with Lloyd Sadd to offer exclusive insurance and health benefit packages tailored to Nurse Practitioners in Alberta.

These offerings are available only to NPAA Membership PLUS holders, providing access to discounted rates, expert support, and insurance solutions that meet both legal requirements and best practice standards for NP-led clinics.

Professional Liability Insurance (Malpractice Insurance): This type of insurance is essential for healthcare providers to protect against claims of negligence, errors, or omissions in patient care. Professional liability insurance can cover legal fees, settlements, and damages resulting from malpractice lawsuits. This insurance is a mandatory component of the Primary and Preventative Health Services NPPCP program.

General Liability Insurance: General liability insurance provides coverage for third-party claims of bodily injury, property damage, or personal injury that occur on your practice premises or as a result of your business operations. It can help cover legal expenses and damages in case of a lawsuit. This insurance is a mandatory component of the Primary and Preventative Health Services NPPCP program

Property Insurance: Property insurance protects your practice's physical assets, including your office building, medical equipment, furniture, and supplies, from risks such as fire, theft, vandalism, or natural disasters. It can help cover the cost of repairs or replacement of damaged property.

Workers' Compensation Insurance: If you have employees in your medical practice, workers' compensation insurance is required by law. This insurance provides benefits to employees who are injured or become ill as a result of their work, covering medical expenses and lost wages.

Cyber Liability Insurance: As technology becomes more prevalent in healthcare, it's advised to protect your practice against cyber threats and data breaches. Cyber liability insurance can help cover the costs associated with data recovery, notification to affected individuals, and potential lawsuits.

Assessing your clinic's unique risks and insurance needs is a critical step in protecting your business. Partnering with a knowledgeable insurance broker can help ensure you have the right coverage in place. Through our collaboration with Lloyd Sadd, NPAA Membership PLUS holders gain access to tailored insurance and health benefit solutions at discounted rates, designed specifically for Nurse Practitioners and NP-led clinics.

Currently CRNA mandates that NPs hold Core PLI Insurance through CNPS. This can be obtained at the time of registration and renewal with the college. CNPS also offers some supplemental and business insurance through BMS. It is important that each NP assesses their own risks and understands the limitations of their plans.

2.4 **Professionals You Should Reach Out To**

When starting a nurse practitioner practice, it is crucial to consult with appropriate business professionals in order to ensure you are set up for success. Here are some key individuals and professionals to engage:

- **Lawyer:** Legal experts can provide guidance on regulatory compliance, malpractice liability, business structure, and contractual agreements. Lawyers will help you decide whether to incorporate and can complete this with you.
- **Accountant and Financial Advisor:** Financial professionals can assist in financial planning, budgeting, tax considerations, billing practices, and revenue management. This can help you decide whether you want to open your corporation or remain a sole proprietor. They will also help you decide whether you want to pay yourself a salary or only through dividends.
- **IT Specialists:** IT professionals can assist in selecting and implementing Electronic Medical Record (EMR) systems, telehealth platforms, and other technology solutions.
- **Insurance Advisors:** Insurance experts can assist in choosing and understanding liability insurance, malpractice coverage, and other insurance needs specific to healthcare practices.
- **Clinical Experts:** Experienced clinicians, preferably NPs or other healthcare providers, can offer insights into clinical practice guidelines, care protocols, and patient care best practices.

- **Privacy Specialists:** Privacy professionals can provide guidance on health information privacy laws, data security standards, and compliance requirements, including Alberta's Health Information Act (HIA). They can assist with developing privacy policies, completing Privacy Impact Assessments (PIAs), and ensuring your clinic's practices align with legislative requirements.

Consulting with a diverse group of professionals ensures that you receive comprehensive guidance across legal, financial, operational, clinical, and administrative aspects of starting and running a successful NP practice. Their expertise and insights can help you navigate challenges, make informed decisions, and set your practice up for long-term success.

The NPAA has held multiple webinars with industry professionals to support your NPPCP journey. Some of those resources are available on the NPAA website for your reference under the Membership PLUS section.

2.4.1 **Key Contacts:**

Establishing and operating a clinic under the NPPCP requires coordination with several systems and vendors across technology, operations, and compliance. Below is a list of key contacts and systems to support clinic setup and ongoing management:

CII/CPAR: Participation enables improved continuity of care and patient attachment reporting
https://www.albertanetcare.ca/learningcentre/CII-CPAR.htm

Alberta Netcare: Required for access to patient health records and lab results.
https://www.albertanetcare.ca

H-Link: Required for submitting health service claims and connecting with provincial systems.

Electronic Medical Records (EMRs): Choose from a provincially approved EMR vendor for NPPCP clinic compliance. Each vendor has its own contact and onboarding process; NPAA can provide guidance or peer reviews to support your selection.**

- Common options include:
    - Accuro, Ava EMR, CHR (TELUS Health), Healthquest, MedAccess, PS Suite, Wolf

➔ Note on Accredited Submitters and Billing Setup
To submit claims through H-Link, NPs must do so via an accredited submitter – typically an approved EMR provider. NPs can either:

- Apply to become their own submitter using an accredited EMR, or
- Use a clinic's existing EMR and billing prefix (in which case they must apply for a Business Arrangement number linked to that prefix).

PPHS maintains a list of approved EMR vendors who are also submitters. Common platforms such as CHR, MedAccess, Acurro, Ava, PS Suite, and Healthquest meet this requirement.

***The NPAA continues to source discounts with some of the above EMR providers. See the NPAA website under Membership Benefits and also under Membership PLUS.*

Payroll and Accounting: Platforms such as QuickBooks, Xero, or dedicated accounting support via a CPA. ADP is a common provider for payroll and HR services.

Website Development: Options range from self-managed platforms like Squarespace or Wix, to professional developers familiar with clinic websites and online forms.

Phone & Internet Services: Consider vendors who offer business VoIP packages, call routing, and reliable clinic connectivity (e.g., Telus, Shaw Business).

Online Booking Systems: May be built into your EMR or provided separately (e.g., Jane App)

Office Supplies & Equipment: Source from national retailers such as Staples or Grand & Toy, depending on your clinical and administrative needs.

3.0 **Starting Your Practice**

With your business plan in place, the next crucial steps involve determining the type of practice you will establish, submitting your Expression of Interest (EOI) and application to the Government of Alberta (GoA) for approval to launch your clinic. Prior to applying, you will need to carefully select an optimal office location and proceed with setting up your clinic. Including the location of your practice in your application will lead to a more successful approval. These key actions are essential in laying the foundation for your successful practice. Make sure not to sign any binding agreements until you obtain your final approval following your application

3.1 **Selecting A Practice Type**

After completing the EOI and registration process, there are various important factors to consider as you establish your practice. One key decision is determining the practice type that best aligns with your goals and preferences: solo practice, partnership, or joining an existing clinic.

> 🔍 **Need help deciding which model is right for you?**
>
> Use the **Practice Type Decision Checklist** to compare Solo Practice, Partnership, and Joining a Clinic. It's designed to help you evaluate your goals, workload preferences, and setup capacity.
>
> *(Checklist available in Section 7.1 as well.)*

3.1.2 **Solo Practice**

Operating as a solo nurse practitioner will require you to manage your practice independently, without being part of a larger group.

- **Benefits:**
  - Independence: Full control over decision-making, patient care, scheduling, and administration
  - Autonomy: Establishing practice policies, treatment protocols, and standards of care
  - Limited support staff: A hands-on approach to administrative tasks can enhance profitability
- **Downsides:**
  - Limited peer support
  - Higher costs as expenses are not shared with colleagues
  - Sole responsibility for coverage during sick days, vacations, or personal leave
  - Liability for all business practices
  - Additional burden of completing practice implementation requirements yourself, such as CII/CPAR, Alberta Netcare, setting up an EMR, and completing a clinic Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA)

> 💡 **Tip from NPPA members**:
>
> Many solo NPs found that completing their own Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) was a valuable learning experience. It helped clarify operational questions early on and prepared them for handling privacy and workflow issues more confidently.
>
> *Consider reaching out to PIA support providers such as Brightsquid, Privacy Desk, or your EMR vendor for guidance. (Submission link available in Section 7.1 as well.)*

3.1.2 **Partnership**

Forming a partnership involves collaborating with other NPs or MDs to establish and run a practice together.

- **Benefits:**
  - Shared income to cover expenses, leading to lower startup costs
  - Colleagues available for coverage during absences
  - Potential for shared decision-making and division of administrative responsibilities
- **Downsides:**
  - Decreased autonomy in decision-making
  - Shared liability for practice operations

3.1.3 **Joining a Clinic**

Joining an established clinic entails becoming a part of a group of NPs or MDs and contributing a percentage of your income to the practice.

- **Benefits:**
  - Set costs with a hands-off approach to business development
- **Downsides:**
  - Limited influence on business development decisions

Ultimately, the choice of practice model depends on your preferences and goals.

3.2 **Targeting Your Ideal Patient Population**

Attracting the right patients to your practice goes beyond just providing excellent care—it requires a strategic approach to marketing, visibility, and relationship-building. Here's how to effectively target and engage your ideal patient demographic:

- **Define Your Ideal Primary Care Patient**
  - Clearly define the key characteristics of your ideal patients, such as age, gender, health conditions, lifestyle preferences, and geographic location.
  - Understand the unique needs of these groups, so you can effectively cater your services to meet their expectations and health goals. This also enables you to develop a balanced panel so that complexity is balanced and access for all patients is maintained.

- **Market Your Services**
  - Consider offering niche services or specialized treatments that directly align with the needs of your target population. For instance, specific procedures or treatments or specialized training such as chronic disease management.
  - Highlight flexible scheduling options (like telemedicine or extended hours) to attract busy individuals who may have trouble accessing traditional primary care services, ensuring that this stays in alignment with the Ministerial Order limitations.

- **Build Relationships**
  - Build strong relationships by focusing on communication, trust, and empathy. A personalized approach makes patients feel valued, encouraging loyalty and ongoing referrals.
  - Show your patients that you are invested in their health long-term, which can lead to consistent visits and positive word-of-mouth.

- **Seek Referrals**
  - Actively encourage satisfied patients to refer others. Word-of-mouth referrals are incredibly powerful, especially when prospective patients can relate to the experiences of those they know.
  - Consider networking with other healthcare professionals to generate patient referrals, especially when you have specific specialties that complement other providers.

3.2.1 **Marketing Strategies**

In addition to traditional healthcare approaches and your listing on Alberta Find a Doctor, it's essential to market your practice effectively to ensure it thrives. As a nurse practitioner, you are essentially building a small business and should approach it as such. Here are some marketing strategies to help get your practice off the ground and in front of the right people:

- **Social Media**
  - Use platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn to share helpful content, engage with potential patients, and raise awareness about your services. Social media allows you to build a connection with your community and stay top-of-mind.
  - Regularly share informative posts related to health topics, wellness tips, or the unique services you offer. This will help position you as an expert in your field.
  - Remember that as an NP posting on social media, you are speaking for all NPs and should consider the professionalism of your posts, ensuring it is respectful to your NP and physician colleagues.

- **Google Ads & Online Advertising**
  - Use Google Ads and other online advertising platforms to target specific demographics based on location, age, health concerns, and more. Online ads are a great way to reach people actively searching for healthcare providers.
  - Start small with your ad budget and track results to optimize your campaigns as needed.

- **Website and Online Reviews**
  - Having a user-friendly, informative website is crucial for establishing your practice online. Ensure it's optimized for mobile devices, includes clear contact information, and highlights your services.
  - Encourage satisfied patients to leave reviews on Google or other platforms. Prospective patients increasingly rely on online reviews before making healthcare decisions, so building a strong reputation is vital.

- **Cold Calling & Door Knocking**
  - While it's traditional, cold calling or door knocking in your local community can help you connect with potential patients. Introduce yourself, explain your services, and let them know how you can help.
  - Engaging directly with the community will build trust and increase your practice's visibility.

- **NPAA Website & Find A Doctor Listings**
  - Ensure your practice is listed on the NPAA website and other directories like "Find A Doctor" to increase visibility among potential clients who are looking for nurse practitioners.
  - Leverage the NPAA's resources to connect with patients and other healthcare providers. This can also help to foster a sense of community and legitimacy for your practice.

- **Contacting Primary Care Networks (PCN)**
    - Reach out to your local Primary Care Network (PCN) to get access to lists of patients who are actively looking for healthcare providers. This could be an excellent opportunity to build your patient base
    - Consider becoming a PCN member. When you join a PCN, the PCN receives funding from the government to support patient care, for each patient on your panel. Approximately 63 dollars for each patient. This funding translates into additional resources for patients and perhaps even support staff for your local clinic. It does not, however, go directly back to you or your clinic.
    - Notify your PCN if you are accepting new patients as PCNs often receive public inquiries from individuals seeking a new primary care provider and may refer them to your clinic.

3.2.2 **Marketing Campaigns and Education**

It's important to remember that educating the public about the role of nurse practitioners (NPs) is essential, especially for those who may not fully understand the difference between an NP and a GP. Consider running an education campaign to raise awareness and clarify the services you provide. This can include:

- Host informational sessions where you explain your services, expertise, and how you can help.
- Work alongside organizations like the NPAA to promote the role of NPs in healthcare and engage with a broader audience.
- Access NPAA resources for pre-built flyers to distribute in your clinic to help support public awareness about the NP role.

By implementing a well-rounded marketing strategy and educating your community, you'll increase your visibility, attract more patients, and ensure long-term success for your practice.

3.3 **Office Selection Strategy**

The selection of an office location is a strategic process that demands thorough consideration and evaluation. It entails a diligent search for a space that aligns with your practice's requirements while maintaining fiscal responsibility. Ideally, the office rent should be managed to represent a modest percentage, typically between 5-15%, of your practice's income.

When reviewing potential office spaces, it is imperative to distinguish between essential necessities and desirable amenities. Essential elements such as a reception area, accessible restroom facilities, and an examination office are required. Conversely, desirable amenities like staff rooms, additional exam rooms, and private offices offer added comfort and efficiency but may not be vital to basic operations and will increase cost. A list of mandatory clinic essentials is available on the AHS and CPSA website.

The financial burden of office rent varies widely, ranging from nominal costs to more substantial commitments, potentially reaching up to $7,500 per month. Seeking guidance from reputable Real Estate professionals and meeting with a realtor or property management company may provide valuable insights into available office sites.

The selection process should extend beyond financial costs and explore its proximity to your target patient population, availability of parking facilities, capacity for patient waiting areas, and accessibility for individuals with diverse needs (e.g., wheelchair access). Ensuring ample space for a receptionist to manage patient flow efficiently is equally pivotal in optimizing the operational functionality of the medical office.

Ultimately, the process of selecting an office location requires a balance of practicality, financial, and patient-centric considerations. By reviewing these aspects, healthcare providers can secure an office space that not only meets their operational needs but also fosters a conducive environment for delivering quality care to their patients.

Alternatively, you may decide to join an existing and established clinic. The shared overhead costs typically range between 20-30% of your total compensation by Primary and Preventative Health Services. You must ensure that you obtain a detailed list of what services (staff, cleaning, front desk support) and materials (examination rooms, supplies etc) are included in your agreement.

3.4 **Reception & Waiting Room Design Tips**

The reception and waiting room area of your medical office plays a pivotal role in shaping patients' first impressions and overall experience. It serves as the initial point of contact, where patients check in and await their appointments. Designing a welcoming and functional space is crucial to providing a positive and comfortable environment for your patients.

In the waiting room, it is essential to prioritize patient comfort and privacy. Invest in a sufficient number of comfortable chairs that are barrier-free and can be easily cleaned and disinfected according to infection prevention and control protocols. Providing hand sanitizer stations and maintaining a clean and inviting decor can enhance the overall ambiance of the space. Optional items such as side tables for magazines/adverts, reading materials, a television, or a sound system can further elevate the patient experience. Offering refreshments, Wi-Fi access, and charging stations can also enhance patient satisfaction during their visit.

In the reception area, prioritize creating an efficient and organized workspace for your administrative staff. Equip the receptionist/medical office assistant with a comfortable chair and ergonomic desk setup to support their daily tasks. Essential items to procure for this area include a computer with electronic medical records (EMR) and appointment booking software, a telephone, patient information forms, clipboards, pens, payment processing systems, and privacy measures that comply with privacy regulations such as PIPEDA. The EMR chosen should be one of the approved to connect with CII/CPAR and fax capability, be user-friendly, and come with customer support.

Consider optional items like a photocopier to streamline administrative processes and enhance productivity in the office. Providing adequate supplies, such as notepads and sticky notes, can support efficient communication and task management within the busy reception area.

By carefully planning and outfitting the reception and waiting room areas with thoughtful design elements and essential amenities, you can create a welcoming and functional space that enhances the patient experience and supports the smooth operation of your medical practice. All of these considerations, and more, are requirements of your Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA).

3.5 **Designing A Functional Medical Examination Area**

Following the waiting room, the medical examination area plays a crucial role in delivering quality medical care to patients. This space serves as the primary location for conducting interviews, examinations, and procedures, underscoring the importance of creating a welcoming, inclusive, and practical environment. A well-designed examination area should be appropriately sized, well-lit, and thoughtfully arranged to facilitate efficient workflow and effective communication between the healthcare provider and the patient. Inclusivity features, such as bariatric-sized chairs, automatic doors, and easy access for wheelchairs and walkers, should be incorporated to ensure that all patients, regardless of their physical abilities, feel comfortable and supported during their visit.

It is essential to outfit the medical examination area with the necessary equipment and supplies to support comprehensive patient care. Key items to consider acquiring for this space include an examination table, medical supplies cabinet, sink, examination chair, a Hypertension Canada approved automated BP machine, stethoscope, otoscope, ophthalmoscope, reflex hammer, scale, height measurement tool, computer, examination light, waste bin, seating for patients, and privacy curtains/screens.

The layout and design of the examination area should be optimized to maximize available space and ensure ease of access to necessary tools and resources. Depending on the types of examinations and procedures conducted in the room, a recommended size ranging from 100-150 square feet can provide ample space for essential equipment and patient interactions. Strategic placement of furniture and equipment can enhance workflow efficiency and create a comfortable setting for both patients and healthcare providers.

By investing in a well-equipped and thoughtfully designed medical examination area, healthcare providers can enhance the quality of care offered to patients and create a professional and inviting atmosphere within their practice. Prioritizing functionality, organization, and patient comfort in the design of this space can contribute to positive patient experiences and successful healthcare outcomes.

Implement standard policies and procedures to keep yourself, patients and staff safe. Standards for Infection Prevention and Control Measures from the CPSA assist to ensure that you are compliant with AHS standards for medical clinics.

- ➔ You should consider if you are compliant with the Personal Services Regulation and Standards and notify AHS prior to providing any personal services.
- ➔ Medical Device Reprocessing Standards should also be followed.
- ➔ Medical Clinic Standards available through CPSA https://cpsa.ca/facilities-clinics/ipac/

4.0 Setting Up Medical Supplies For The Clinic

When setting up a medical clinic, it is essential to maintain a well-stocked inventory of medical supplies to provide quality care to patients. While specific needs may vary based on the type of clinic and services offered, here are some essential medical supplies commonly required:

- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**: Including gloves, masks, gowns, and face shields to protect healthcare providers and patients from infections.
- **Basic Wound Care Supplies**: Such as bandages, gauze pads, adhesive tape, wound dressings, wound closure strips, and antiseptic solutions, scissors
- **Examination Room Supplies**: Including examination table paper, disposable sheets, gowns, waterproof pads, disinfecting wipes, lubricating jelly, disposable speculums, speculum light, and sample cups.
- **Emergency Supplies**: An Automated External Defibrillator (AED), oxygen tanks, and an emergency cart stocked with essential medications and tools to manage urgent medical situations.

  > 💡 *Clinics may find that basic supplies such as swabs, urine specimen cups, pregnancy tests, and cytology containers are used far more frequently than advanced emergency equipment. Be sure to align your emergency preparedness with the actual services and risk profile of your clinic.*

- **Biohazard Waste Disposal**: Establishing protocols for the safe disposal of biohazardous waste, including the use of designated biohazard containers and regular collection services to ensure compliance with health regulations.
- **Laboratory Supplies (optional)**: Test tubes, specimen containers, microscope slides, swabs, and laboratory coats for sample collection and testing, with organized systems for lab collection and timely transport of samples.

Depending on the services provided, consider including:

- **Medications**: Essential prescription and over-the-counter medications for common ailments and chronic conditions. This may include free patient samples, OTC products, or medications required for a crash cart. **Note**: Prescription medications are never for sale.
- **Surgical Instruments**: Scissors, forceps, scalpels, needle holders, sutures, and surgical drapes for minor surgical procedures. Examples may include laceration repair, incision and drainage of abscesses, punch biopsies, mole removals, or removal of embedded foreign bodies, depending on the NP's scope of practice and setting. Depending on clinic preference and volume, providers may choose to use disposable, pre-packaged sterile kits or reusable instruments, which would

require access to an autoclave for proper sterilization. Choice should reflect the clinic's workflow, infection control protocols, and cost considerations.

- **Treatment Equipment**: Consider which minor procedures you plan to offer, if any, and identify the equipment you will need. This may include items such as syringes, needles, gauze, Xylocaine, epinephrine, and other clinical supplies. Many procedures can be performed using pre-packaged sterile kits—for example, laceration trays, IUD insertion trays, endometrial biopsy kits, disposable or reusable scalpel blades and handles, sutures, and more.

Regular monitoring and replenishment of medical supplies are crucial to ensuring the clinic is well-equipped to handle patient needs efficiently and effectively. Collaborating with healthcare providers, purchasing managers, and suppliers will aid in selecting and maintaining a comprehensive inventory tailored to the clinic's specific requirements.

5.0 Utilizing Technology In Your Medical Practice

In the modern era of healthcare, there has been a significant shift towards the use of technology such as online Electronic Medical Records (EMR), faxing, scanning, and digital charting in place of traditional paper-based methods. Particularly within the Primary Care Program in Alberta, there is an expectation for healthcare providers to adopt EMRs for patient management. Additionally, various other technologies play a critical role in enhancing the efficiency and quality of care in a clinical setting. Under the NPPCP, it is a requirement for Nurse Practitioners to have an EMR.

Electronic Medical Record (EMR)
An EMR is a digital representation of patients' medical information, including their medical history, immunization records, allergies, test results, and treatment plans. The Government of Alberta recommends obtaining an EMR that is compatible with CII/CPAR — Accuro, Ava, CHR, Healthquest, Med Access, PS Suite, and Wolf. Each EMR has its own set of advantages and disadvantages, so it is essential to refer to the EMR reviews provided by the NPAA for more in-depth information on these systems. The NPAA is working to obtain discounts with a few vendors through the Membership PLUS tier.

Medical Scribe Programs: If you choose to employ a scribe to assist with charting, they must be included in your Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) and follow all relevant privacy and security protocols.

Additional Technology & Operational Tools

- **Telephone**: Effective telephone communication is essential for providing patients with direct access to the clinic. When selecting a telephone service, consider factors such as the number of phone lines needed, whether extensions are necessary, the requirement for an answering machine, and whether a directory is needed to direct callers to the appropriate party within the clinic.

- **Computer**: Choosing the right computer setup is a personal preference, with options ranging from desktop computers in each room to utilizing laptops. Both options offer similar computing power, but it is crucial to ensure that all computers meet security and compliance requirements, including regulations such as PIPEDA, and are compatible with the EMR software being used.

- **Fax Machine, Photocopiers, Scanners:** While there are digital alternatives available for functions traditionally performed by fax machines, photocopiers, and scanners, these devices remain essential for the efficient operation of a medical practice. Fax machines are commonly used for sending consults to specialists, while photocopiers and scanners are utilized to convert paper-based documents, such as patient forms, pharmacy information, lab results, and records from other healthcare providers, into digital formats for integration into the EMR system. That said, some providers successfully use digital fax services instead of traditional machines.

Setting Up for Special Patient Populations and Billing Systems

- **Refugee Health Coverage (IFHP):** To receive reimbursement for seeing refugees covered under the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP), you must register with Medavie Blue Cross.
    - **Info**: Medavie IFHP for Providers

- **Workplace Injury Billing (WCB Alberta):** If you plan to treat work-related injuries, you'll need a WCB provider number and should familiarize yourself with billing requirements.
    - **Info:** WCB Billing Information
    - **Support:** WCB Physician Help Line

- **Prac ID (Practice Identification Number):** All NPs new to Alberta must apply for a Prac ID to begin billing and accessing provincial systems.

- **APL & Connect Care Setup:** You must register for a Provider ID and Submitter ID with Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) to receive lab results and submit requisitions.
    - **Info:** APL/Connect Care Setup

By integrating these essential technologies into your medical practice, you can streamline administrative processes, enhance communication with patients and colleagues, and improve the overall quality of care delivered within your clinic. It is important to evaluate your specific needs and preferences when selecting and utilizing technology to ensure optimal functionality and compliance with industry standards. Again, all of these considerations will need to be specified in your Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA).

6.0 Embracing Additional Technological Supports

6.1 Alberta Netcare

Alberta Netcare, the provincial electronic health record (EHR) system, is a valuable resource for healthcare providers. By accessing Alberta Netcare (https://www.albertanetcare.ca/), providers can review crucial patient information such as medication records, laboratory results, diagnostic imaging, consults, and surgical history.

Integrating your chosen EMR system with Alberta Netcare can provide seamless access to vital patient data directly at your fingertips, enhancing the efficiency and quality of care provided. It is imperative to note that utilizing this EHR system is essential for delivering high-quality medical care to your patients.

This is a requirement for participation in the NPPCP. Nurse Practitioners setting up new clinics must ensure they are enrolled in Alberta Netcare as a custodian and can grant access to additional staff and users as needed. Primary and Preventative Health Services has dedicated experts available to help guide you through the setup process, including registration, access configuration, and integration with your EMR.

6.2 Nurse Practitioner Association Of Alberta (NPAA)

The Nurse Practitioner Association of Alberta (NPAA) offers a wealth of resources and support for its members and Nurse Practitioners looking to establish or enhance their practices. By visiting the NPAA website (https://www.albertanp.com), new providers can seek guidance and access valuable tools to kickstart their clinic operations. Additionally, NPAA hosts educational webinars, informative Town Halls, and provides opportunities to access key resources at reduced rates. Be sure to explore the offerings and benefits available through NPAA to support your professional development and practice success.

6.3 Billing Through Workers' Compensation Board (WCB)

Nurse Practitioners in Alberta who wish to treat WCB patients must be registered as authorized providers and follow specific billing guidelines.

The NPAA has put together a WCB Billing Guide as a resource.

Steps to Register:

1. Contact WCB Alberta to register as a provider: www.wcb.ab.ca
2. You will need a WCB Provider ID.
3. Ensure your EMR or billing software supports WCB submissions, or register via their online portal.

Billing Requirements:

- Use the appropriate WCB billing codes for assessment and treatment services.
- Submit claims through WCB's online portal or compatible EMR.
- Maintain accurate patient encounter documentation.
- Bill separately from NPPCP reporting — WCB billings are not part of the ARP funding and are paid on a fee-for-service basis.

More Info:

- Contact WCB Alberta Provider Relations: 1-866-922-9221
- Provider Info: https://www.wcb.ab.ca/health-care-providers/

7.0 Resources & Support

Thank you for taking the time to review this practice guidebook. While the information provided covers a significant portion of the steps required to launch a practice, each individual's journey may be different. As you progress in establishing your practice, it is important to reach out to NPAA for access to additional resources and expert assistance. Feel free to get in touch with NPAA by sending an email to pcprogram@albertanps.com for guidance and support as you navigate the complexities of practice management.

7.1 Resources

We recommend bookmarking or downloading the following:

- **NP Primary Care Program Guide** (link to latest PDF)
- **Your assigned Primary and Preventative Health Services Analyst** (provided during onboarding)
- **NPAA Membership PLUS Resources** – Discounted access to EMR vendors, insurance, and legal services
- **Decide on your practice type** – Use this tool to help decide if a solo, partnership, or clinic-based model aligns best with your goals and lifestyle. Practice Type Decision Checklist
- **Complete a PIA** – A PIA is required before seeing patients. Solo providers are responsible for submitting their own to the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Alberta (OIPC).
    - Providers like Privacy Desk, Brightsquid, and some EMR vendors offer guided support. Many solo NPs report that going through the process themselves clarified major practice decisions, especially around documentation, workflows, and staff roles.
    - Link to OIPC PIA submission portal
- **Business Insurance Information** – Malpractice, commercial, and cyber liability
- **Health Benefits Options for NPs** – Extended health and dental packages
- **WCB Billing Setup** – Registration and fee-for-service billing through WCB
- **Private Pay Services & Collection Guide** – Navigating out-of-pocket service billing
- **NPPCP Billing Code Reference Guide** – (link to latest PDF)
- **CII/CPAR Registration Overview** – With setup checklist
- **Practice Type Decision Checklist** – Solo vs. partnership vs. joining a clinic

7.1.1 **Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA)**

Completing your own PIA (Privacy Impact Assessment) can be a valuable learning process, especially for solo practitioners. A completed PIA is required before seeing patients and must be submitted to the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Alberta (OIPC).

Many providers find that engaging directly with an approved PIA consultant helps answer operational, workflow, and compliance questions early on.

You may wish to explore:

- **Privacy Desk**
- **Brightsquid**
- **eCompliance**
- **EMR vendor-specific privacy partners**

NPAA may be able to connect you with recommended vendors

7.1.2 **Clinical Operations & Staffing**

- **Integrating into a PCN** – Process and considerations if joining an existing network
- **Hiring & HR Basics** – MOA roles, employee benefits, contracts, payroll
- **Managing Your Patient Panel** – Setting realistic capacity, intake, and tracking systems
- **Patient Consent Processes** – Typically integrated into your PIA and EMR
- **Policy & Procedure Manual Templates** – Often included in your PIA documentation
- **Referrals Management** – Tips for sending and receiving referrals effectively

7.1.3 **Learning & Networking**

- **Alberta Netcare Learning Centre** – Essential walkthroughs for new clinic custodians
- **Professional Associations & Peer Networks** – Consider joining NPAA and other national or specialty organizations
- **Attend Conferences & Webinars** – Stay current on changes in practice, policy, and funding

7.2 **Billing: Service Event Submissions**

Under the NPPCP, service event submissions are tracked via your EMR and linked to your Business Arrangement (BA) number. Nurse practitioners may submit directly or through an existing clinic setup.

Approved EMRs for Direct Submission:

- CHR (Collaborative Health Record)
- MedAccess
- Accuro
- Ava
- PS Suite
- Healthquest
- Wolf

(*Contact Health.HLink@gov.ab.ca for the latest list of accredited EMRs, or review this list*)

To Submit Independently:

1. Use a Primary and Preventative Health Services–approved EMR.
2. Apply to become your own submitter with Primary and Preventative Health Services.
3. Once approved, begin submitting service events directly.

If Joining an Existing Clinic:

- Use their EMR system and submit under their prefix.
- You must still apply for your own **Business Arrangement (BA) number** to receive NPPCP funding.

7.2 **FAQs**

- 2024.10.28 FAQ NPPCP Member Funding-AH Response.pdf

Where to Find Further Help: Contact NPAA at pcprogram@albertanps.com or Primary and Preventative Health Services at health.npprogram@gov.ab.ca for additional guidance. Explore professional associations and networks for support.