



Nurse Practitioners  
Association of Canada

Association des  
infirmières et  
infirmiers praticiens  
du Canada

NPAC-AIIPC  
1205-1033 Marinaside Crescent  
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## Position Statement

# Nurse Practitioner Residencies and Fellowships in Canada

### Introduction

Nurse Practitioners (NPs) are essential to the Canadian healthcare system, delivering high-quality, patient-centered care across various settings. However, as the complexity of healthcare needs grow, the structure of NP education and training must evolve accordingly. To ensure NPs are adequately prepared for specialized practice, the Nurse Practitioners Association of Canada (NPAC) advocates for the establishment of accredited residency and fellowship programs in Canada.

### Background

Nurse Practitioners with their advanced education and training, provide a wide range of healthcare services, including diagnosing and managing acute and chronic conditions, prescribing medications, and performing advanced procedures. While NP programs provide a generalist foundation, the increasing demand for specialized care in areas such as cardiology, oncology, mental health, and pediatrics highlights the need for additional formal education.

In the United States, NP residency and fellowship programs have been increasingly recognized for their value in refining NPs' knowledge and skills, particularly in specialized areas. These programs provide structured, supervised experiences that help NPs transition from graduate education to clinical practice, ensuring they are well-equipped to deliver high-quality care.



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As the NP profession evolves in Canada, it is important to reflect on the transitions that medical education has undergone in the past century. The history of medical education in Canada highlights the critical role that residency and fellowship programs have played in ensuring physicians are adequately prepared for independent practice. While initial medical training was largely apprenticeship-based, as medical knowledge expanded and the need for specialized expertise grew, the introduction of formal residency and fellowship programs became essential. Today, residency and fellowship programs are an integral part of medical education, overseen by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC) and the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC).

The NPAC calls for the establishment and recognition of accredited NP residency and fellowship programs in Canada for NPs, linking this necessity to the evolving landscape of NP education. The upcoming shift to a generalist entry-level competency model for NP education in 2026, and the lessons learned from the implementation of physician residencies in Canada and NP residencies in the United States necessitate that we ensure the Nurse Practitioner is readily prepared to meet the health care needs of Canadians now and for the future.

## **The Impact of NP Residency and Fellowship Programs**

### 1. Enhanced Clinical Competence:

- Residency and fellowship programs offer NPs the opportunity to gain in-depth clinical experience in their chosen specialty. These programs provide structured, supervised training that enhances clinical competence and confidence, leading to better patient outcomes.

### 2. Bridging the Education-Practice Gap:

- Transitioning from a generalist NP role to a specialized practice can be challenging. Residency and fellowship programs help bridge this gap by offering specialized education and hands-on experience, ensuring NPs are well-prepared for the complexities of specialty care.



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### 3. Standardization of Training:

- Currently, there is variability in the preparation of NPs for specialty practice. Implementing standardized residency and fellowship programs ensures consistency in training, promoting uniformity in the quality of care provided by NPs across Canada.

### 4. Improved Patient Care:

- Patients with complex and specialized healthcare needs benefit from care provided by NPs with advanced training. Residency and fellowship programs equip NPs with the expertise to manage intricate cases, leading to improved patient outcomes and satisfaction.

### 5. Support for Healthcare Systems:

- As healthcare systems strive to meet the demands of an aging population and the increasing prevalence of chronic diseases, NPs with specialized training can alleviate the burden on other healthcare providers, improve access to care and contribute to more efficient and effective healthcare delivery, in turn, supporting a robust publicly funded health system.

### 6. Professional Development and Retention:

- Residency and fellowship programs offer NPs opportunities for professional growth and career advancement. This not only enhances job satisfaction but also aids in retaining skilled practitioners within the healthcare system, addressing workforce recruitment and retention.

## Recommendations

### 1. Development of Residency and Fellowship Programs:

- Educational institutions, healthcare organizations, and professional bodies such as NPAC should collaborate to develop and implement accredited residency and fellowship programs for NPs in various specialties.



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## 2. Funding and Support:

- Government agencies, healthcare organizations, and post-secondary institutions and other stakeholders must provide funding and resources to support the establishment and sustainability of these programs, ensuring accessibility for NPs across Canada.

## 3. Accreditation Framework:

- NPAC will develop standards for residency and fellowship programs, ensuring they meet the required educational and clinical practice criteria.

## 4. Mentorship and Supervision:

- Experienced clinicians (NPs and Physicians) should be engaged in mentoring and supervising NPs during their residency and fellowship programs, providing guidance and support to foster professional growth.

## 5. Evaluation and Continuous Improvement:

- Programs should incorporate robust evaluation mechanisms to assess outcomes and ensure continuous improvement, adapting to the evolving needs of the healthcare system and patient populations.

## Conclusion

The implementation of residency and fellowship programs for Nurse Practitioners in Canada is essential to meet the growing demands of specialized healthcare. By enhancing clinical competence, standardizing NP education and training, and improving patient care, these programs will strengthen the NP workforce and contribute to a more efficient and effective healthcare system. Collaboration among educational institutions, healthcare organizations, regulatory bodies, government agencies and the NPAC is crucial to realizing this vision and ensuring the highest standards of care for all Canadians.



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## **About NPAC**

The Nurse Practitioners Association of Canada (NPAC) is the national voice of Nurse Practitioners, representing NPs in every province and territory. NPAC advocates for evidence-based policy, education, and practice environments that enable NPs to deliver accessible, high-quality care to all Canadians.

*Approved by the Nurse Practitioners Association of Canada Board of Directors: September 2024*