

RN Certified Practice Opioid Use Disorder & RPN Certified Practice Opioid Use Disorder – Frequently Asked Questions

The BC College of Nurses and Midwives (BCCNM) board on Sep. 21, 2023, approved a series of new and amended standards, limits, and conditions to create a new designation of certified practice for opioid use disorder (OUD) for registered nurses (RNs) and registered psychiatric nurses (RPNs).

RNs and RPNs who are currently diagnosing and treating clients with OUD under the Public Health Officer (PHO) order *Registered Nurse and Registered Psychiatric Nurse Public Health Pharmacotherapy* will have the opportunity to transition to this new certified practice designation. BCCNM will contact all nurses currently prescribing under the PHO order in late October inviting them to apply for certified practice OUD (CP-OUD). There will be no application fee and certified practice OUD registration will be granted to eligible nurses by November 30, 2023.

What is certified practice?

Certified practices are restricted activities that can only be performed by nurses or nurse practitioners who have been certified by BCCNM.

Registered Nurses (Certified) and Registered Psychiatric Nurses (Certified) are allowed within their autonomous scope of practice to diagnose a disease, disorder, or condition and treat by prescribing, compounding, dispensing, administering, or ordering medications according to their certified practice designation. Certified practice RNs and RPNs may also diagnose and treat conditions that are within the autonomous scope of general RN or RPN practice and the nurse's individual competence.

Certified practices for registered nurses are outlined in [Section 8: Restricted Activities for Certified Practice](#) of the [Scope of Practice for Registered Nurses: Standards, Limits, Conditions](#) and set out within specific certified practice DSTs. The DSTs set the parameters for this expanded scope of practice.

Certified practices for registered psychiatric nurses are outlined in [Section 6: BCCNM Limits and Conditions for Certified Practice Registered Psychiatric Nurses](#) of the [Scope of Practice for Registered Psychiatric Nurses: Standards, Limits, Conditions](#) and set out within specific certified practice DSTs. The DSTs set the parameters for this expanded scope of practice.

The Certified Practice DSTs and the competencies for CP-OUD are maintained by the BC Centre on Substance Use (BCCSU). The Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of BC (NNPBC) maintain the DSTs and competencies for the other certified practice areas (Remote, RN First

Call, and Reproductive Health-Sexually Transmitted Infections/Reproductive Health-Contraceptive Management).

Successfully completing BCCNM requirements for certified practice allows nurses to:

- Use the title Registered Nurse (Certified) or RN(C), or Registered Psychiatric Nurse (Certified) or RPN(C) if they are on BCCNM's certified practice roster
- Diagnose diseases and disorders set out in decision support tools (DSTs)
- Autonomously carry out restricted activities set out in the DSTs that would otherwise require an order, e.g., diagnosing diseases/disorders
- Prescribe, compound, dispense, and administer Schedule I and Schedule IA medications as set out in the DSTs

Certified practice nurses must meet the annual [quality assurance requirements](#) for certified practice.

I was prescribing OAT under the provincial Public Health Officer Order. What happens now?

BCCNM will contact all RNs and RPNs currently authorized to diagnose and treat opioid use disorder in late October, inviting them to apply for CP-ODU designation. There will be no application fee and CP-ODU registration will be granted to eligible RNs and RPNs by November 30, 2023.

Individuals who do not wish to maintain their authority to diagnose and treat opioid use disorder should inform BCCNM by November 30, 2023, by emailing register@bccnm.ca.

What is changing with the transition to CP-ODU?

The changes for prescribers are:

- RNs and RPNs who transition to CP-ODU will have a new title.
- Nurses certified in OUD will need to attest during registration renewal that they have practised in their certified practice area in the past year and meet the quality assurance requirement to set one professional development goal annually relating to their certified practice.

Certified practice nurses must ensure they are competent before performing any new activity added to their certified practice designation and as identified within their certified practice

decision support tools such as diagnosing or treating a new disease, disorder, or condition, or providing a new treatment.

Certified practice RNs and RPNs are not required to notify BCCNM at the time they have attained competence for a new activity. It is appropriate to include this activity as a component of their annual professional development plan. For example, RNs or RPNs who have been prescribing buprenorphine-naloxone for the treatment of opioid use disorder and have attained the competence to prescribe methadone or slow-release oral morphine, as outlined in the BCCSU competencies and decision support tools, do not need to notify BCCNM that they are now prescribing these medications.

How do I become a certified practice-OD nurse?

Registered nurses and RPNs cannot apply for CP-OD until they meet all the conditions set out in the BCCNM certified practice limits and conditions, including receiving approval or recognition from their organization/employer as a prescriber, and completing the required certified practice education program offered by BCCSU.

[BCCSU FAQ for currently practicing RN/RPN OAT prescribers](#)

What are the major differences between prescribing under the PHO order and prescribing under certified practice?

The establishment of CP-OD enables a shift from RN/RPN OAT Prescribing under the temporary public health order to a permanent practice in BC. Nurses with CP-OD designation will be able to continue prescribing to treat OUD as before under the PHO order. There are no major differences in diagnosing and treating OUD, other than CP-OD RNs and RPNs will be authorized to give a client-specific order for another nurse to administer or dispense a medication to a client.

What are the steps to transitioning to certified practice status if I am actively providing OUD care and prescribing OAT?

BCCNM will contact all RNs and RPNs currently authorized to diagnose and treat opioid use disorder in late October, inviting them to apply for CP-OD. There will be no application fee and CP-OD applications will be granted registration by November 30, 2023. The BCCNM online directory will be updated with the CP-OD registration [here](#).

Nurses who transition to this new designation of certified practice will continue to prescribe as before, meeting the BCCNM standards, limits, and conditions for certified practice, including CP-OD. Other than holding a new title, there should be no change in nurses' practice.

Individuals who do not wish to maintain their authority to diagnose and treat opioid use disorder should inform BCCNM by November 30, 2023, by emailing register@bccnm.ca.

Nurses who do not apply for CP-OD with the BCCNM by November 30, 2023, will not be able to engage in the certified practice restricted activities (i.e., establish a diagnosis of OUD, order

and interpret diagnostic tests or prescribe medications) until they have successfully applied for CP-ODU designation.

Will I have to pay any additional fees for this?

Current RN/RPN OAT prescribers under the public health order will not have to pay a fee to transfer over to CP-ODU designation if they transfer over before Nov 30, 2023. RNs and RPNs who do not currently hold a Certified Practice in another area and apply for CP-ODU designation as of Dec 1, 2023 will pay a fee of \$115.00. Please refer to the BCCNM website for up to date associated [fees](#).

Will I be required to complete additional education as a result of this change? Will I be able to continue prescribing OAT while I complete any additional required education?

No. However, certified practice OUD RNs and RPNs will be expected to complete additional education and ensure they are competent before performing any *new* activity added to their certified practice designation and as identified within their certified practice decision support tools such as diagnosing or treating a new disease, disorder, condition, or providing a new treatment.

Will the transition to certified practice change my scope of practice at all?

No. Certified practice OUD RNs and RPNs will be able to continue prescribing to treat OUD as before under the PHO order. Scope of practice for certified practice OUD will continue to be outlined in the BCCSU [DSTs for OUD](#).

Now that I can give a client-specific order for another nurse to act on, will I be required to take additional education on this topic before engaging in this activity?

No additional education is required to give a client-specific order for another nurse to act on, as this is already part of the scope of practice for registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses. Nurses remain responsible and accountable for their decisions. Prescribing nurses should review the scope of practice standards for giving client-specific orders for [registered nurses](#) and [registered psychiatric nurses](#).

Certified Practice OUD RNs and RPNs ensure approval from their employer that as a CP-ODU prescriber, another nurse can act on the client-specific order written by an RN or RPN CP-ODU prescriber.

Should nurses have any questions about organizational limits on their scope of practice, they can contact the organization's Professional Practice department for further clarity.

Will this change my title?

Certified practice OUD RNs and RPNs working in a certified practice role may use the titles Registered Nurse (Certified), and RN(C) or Registered Psychiatric Nurse and RPN(C). If a

certified practice opioid use disorder registrant wishes to note their specific certification, they may append the following terms:

Opioid Use Disorder Certified

Please refer to the BCCNM [Use of Title](#) Practice Standard for more information.

Will this change how nurses obtain a controlled drugs and substances (CDS) prescription pad?

No. Certified practice OUD RNs and RPNs will continue to log into their BCCNM online services account to order CDS prescription pads.

Will this change how nurses obtain an MSP billing number?

No. Certified practice OUD RNs and RPNs will continue to apply for an MSP practitioner number through enrolling with the Medical Services Plan, after they have acquired certified practice designation. Nurses who already have an MSP practitioner number do not need to re-apply.

For more information about enrollment and to access the application, visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/practitioner-professional-resources/msp/registered-nurses-certified/enrolment>

For more visit about eligible clients and services, please visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/practitioner-professional-resources/msp/registered-nurses-certified>

What is a BCCNM prescriber number and how does this differ from an MSP billing number?

A BCCNM prescriber number will be assigned to each certified practice nurse to indicate that they are authorized to prescribe. Whereas, an MSP billing number is required to order lab and diagnostic tests.

Will the transition to certified practice change my responsibilities as an OAT nurse prescriber?

This transition to certified practice will not change your responsibility or accountability as an OAT prescriber. However, as of Nov 1, 2023, the standards, limits, and conditions for prescribing for OUD have been revised to align with the new Certified Practice in Opioid Use Disorder:

- [Review the revised prescribing standard for RNs](#)
- [Review the revised prescribing standard for RPNs](#)

An additional key difference is that the RN/RPN prescriber must have a certified practice designation to diagnose and treat opioid use disorder. And they must maintain this designation to continue to diagnose and treat opioid use disorder.

- [Review the new standards, limits, and conditions for RNs for CP-ODU](#)
- [Review the new standards, limits, and conditions for RPNs for CP-ODU](#)

Will I be practicing more autonomously than I was before certified practice implementation?

No. Certified practice OUD RNs and RPNs will remain accountable for their practice and prescribing decisions, regardless of the result of any consultation. If you have questions about autonomous practice, please review the BCCNM scope of practice standard on Acting Within Autonomous Scope of Practice for [RNs](#) and [RPNs](#) and [contact BCCNM Standards and Guidance](#) for further clarification of the standard.

What is my responsibility to ensure my employer has in place before practicing as a certified practice nurse?

Certified practice nurses who prescribe medications associated with their certified practice area, only prescribe when:

- They have the approval or are recognized by their organization/employer as a prescriber
- Supports and policies are in place to support safe prescribing

Before prescribing certified practice nurses ensure they have PharmaNet access, which requires approval from the "PharmaNet Administrator" for their site. For more information, visit the [PRIME](#) enrolment site.

I only finished the buprenorphine-naloxone part of the BCCSU POATSP training pathway, will I still be eligible for certified practice OUD?

Yes. As a nurse with CP-ODU, you will be allowed to diagnose and treat OUD according to the competencies that you have attained and by following BCCSU DSTs, including prescribing buprenorphine-naloxone. RNs and RPNs will be expected to complete additional education and ensure they are competent before performing any new activity added to their certified practice designation and as identified within their certified practice decision support tools such as diagnosing or treating a new disease, disorder, condition, or providing a new treatment.

Do I have to declare with the BCCNM if I complete upskilling to prescribe methadone, slow-release oral morphine?

Certified practice RNs and RPNs are required to complete additional education and ensure they are competent before performing a new activity added to their certified practice designation and as identified within their certified practice decision support tools such as diagnosing or treating a new disease, disorder, condition, or providing a new treatment. They are not required to notify



BCCNM at the time they have attained the competence for this new activity. It is appropriate to include this activity as a component of their annual professional development plan. In this instance, RNs or RPNs who have been prescribing buprenorphine-naloxone for the treatment of opioid use disorder and have attained the competence to prescribe methadone or slow-release oral morphine, as outlined in the BCCSU competencies and decision support tools, do not need to notify BCCNM that they are now prescribing these medications.

How will this change my yearly registration renewal with the BCCNM?

Upon yearly renewal of their RN or RPN registration, CP-ODD RNs and RPNs must attest to “*In the past year did you practice in your certified practice area?*” and, “*In the past year did you prescribe in your certified practice area?*” To maintain currency of practice they must have practised in the certified practice in the previous three-year period. To maintain authority to prescribe, CP-ODD nurses must have prescribed in the certified practice area in the previous three-year period.

Each year, registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses must participate in quality assurance activities, as outlined by the BCCNM which include an example related to certified practice in the self-assessment and professional development plan.

I completed the POATSP training pathway to prescribe OAT in 2021 and have not practiced since then, can I still transition over to certified practice?

RNs and RPNs who meet the BCCNM requirements to apply for CP-ODD may apply to BCCNM for this certification. Upon yearly renewal of their registration, RNs and RPNs with certified practice must attest to “*In the past year did you practice in your certified practice area?*” To maintain currency of practice they must have practiced in the certified practice in the previous three-year period.

If I don't transition to certified practice before Dec 1, 2023, what happens? Will I have to re-take the POATSP education and training pathway later?

Nurses who are currently prescribing under the PHO and who do not transfer to certified practice before Dec 1, 2023, will be required to pay a fee if they do not currently hold another certified practice and are applying for their first certified practice status, and will not be able to diagnose and treat opioid use disorder as of December 1, 2023, until they have applied for certified practice OUD designation. Nurses who have not maintained currency by “working in the area of certified practice” in past three-year period, will be required to complete the required education and training again to apply for certified practice status.

Implementation leads and employer specific FAQ

As a clinical lead supporting CP-ODD RN and RPNs, if I complete the education and training pathway to obtain CP-ODD designation, but I do not currently prescribe in my role, will I be able to apply for and maintain CP-ODD status?

Registered nurses and RPNs who meet the BCCNM requirements to apply for CP-ODU may apply to BCCNM for this certification. Registered nurses and RPNs with certified practice must attest to *“In the past year did you practice in your certified practice area?”* To maintain currency of practice they must have practiced in the certified practice in the previous three-year period.

CP-ODU nurses will also attest to having prescribed in their certified practice area in the last year, to maintain currency of prescribing practice they must have prescribed in the certified practice area in the previous three-year period.

I want to implement certified practice OUD at my site, what are my obligations as an employer before implementing any certified practice?

Employers are responsible to ensure there are structures in place that enable CP-ODU nurses to safely engage in certified practice activities. For example, ensuring continuity of care and escalation pathways are in place for CP-ODU RNs and RPNs to consult and refer to physicians or nurse practitioners or other members of the health care team as outlined in the DSTs for treating OUD.

These pathways need to be viable and physicians and nurse practitioners providing consultation and receiving referrals should be included in implementation planning. CP-ODU nurses must also have access to Pharmanet, and mechanisms to order and follow-up on diagnostic tests and ensure continuity of care must also be in place.

I want to implement certified practice OUD at my site, is Medical Health Officer (MHO) Approval still required?

Under Certified Practice OUD, MHO approval is no longer required. However, CP-ODU nurses must have approval or recognition from their organization/employer as a prescriber. Employers are responsible to ensure there are supports and policies in place for CP-ODU RNs and RPNs to practice safely. Organizations may still wish to collaborate with their MHO prior to implementation.

I have active nurse prescribers at my clinical site, are there any required actions to take as an employer for these nurses to transition to CP-ODU?

No. However, employers endorse that nurses may practice within their scope of practice as outlined for their specific certified practice designation. This can be done through adjusting job descriptions to include a specific certified practice. Employers may choose to place additional limits on certified practice activities that occur at their sites. If there are RN and RPN OAT prescribers who are on leave from their positions, it would be prudent to contact them and support their transition to CP-ODU designation if they wish to continue to diagnose and treat OUD when they return from leave.

What are my responsibilities as an implementation lead supporting RNs and RPNs with this transition to CP-ODU?

Individual nurses are responsible for managing their transition to certified practice designation and for following BCCNM standards, limits and conditions.

**Do I need to formally endorse a nurse to complete the required training to apply for CP-
OUD or can they self-enroll in order to complete the required training and apply for
certified practice independently?**

At this time, formal submission to the BCCSU POATSP RN/RPN education and training pathway is still required through a designated regional health authority lead, however, we are working on adapting the training pathway submissions and this may change in the future.

**Will CP-OUD nurses require any sort of employer endorsement to obtain a CDS
prescription pad and engage in certified practice activities in their care setting? If so,
how do I proceed with this endorsement?**

Employers need to endorse that nurses may practice within their scope of practice as outlined for their specific certified practice designation. This can be done through adjusting job descriptions to include a specific certified practice designation. However, no formal declaration is required to be sent to the BCCNM or BCCSU. After the education and training pathway has been completed, the BCCNM will also provide instructions to access PharmaNet with help from the employer, apply to Medical Services Plan (MSP) to obtain an MSP number, and order a CDS prescription pad.