Licensed and Essential Professionals: Understanding and Appreciating Our Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) Colleagues

Mavis Mesi-Goresko DNP, MSN, FNP-BC, RN; Colorado Nurses Association President

Scope of LPN Practice

Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) are vital members of Colorado's healthcare workforce. While their specific tasks are defined by the state's scope of practice and employer policies, LPNs consistently center their work around direct patient care across the continuum of care; from hospitals, long-term care, correctional facilities, home health and outpatient clinics. LPNs build meaningful relationships with patients, provide expert clinical care, and support positive outcomes through ongoing assessment, medication administration, patient monitoring, and education.

Landmark ANA Ruling and Its Impact on Colorado LPNs

On June 27, 2026, the American Nurses Association (ANA) made history at its Annual Membership Assembly. In a landmark decision, the ANA voted to expand membership eligibility to include Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) and Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVNs). ANA President Jennifer Mensik Kennedy, PhD, MBA, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN, announced: "The American Nurses Association (ANA) has approved a significant update to its bylaws, expanding membership eligibility to include licensed practical nurses and licensed vocational nurses (LPNs/LVNs)." This decision followed years of advocacy and successful pilot programs, empowering thousands of LPNs/LVNs to join both the ANA and their state nurses' associations. This change is one of the most significant in ANA's history. It allows the association to truly represent the full breadth of the nursing team and to better support nurses across all care settings and career pathways.

Colorado's healthcare system relies on the expertise and dedication of LPNs. They are essential not just in hospitals, but in a variety of settings including correctional facilities, long-term care, home health, outpatient clinics, and community-based environments.

The impact on Colorado's Nursing Workforce

Colorado's healthcare system relies on the expertise and dedication of LPNs. They are essential not just in hospitals, but in a variety of settings including correctional facilities, long-term care, home health, outpatient clinics, and community-based environments. LPNs bring clinical expertise, sound judgment, and technical skills to the bedside, that may not be recognized; often spending more time with patients than any other direct care healthcare providers in a variety of settings. Their compassionate care, patient advocacy, and collaborative teamwork are key to improving quality, access, and continuity within our health care system. Importantly, LPNs value the relationships they build with patients and the daily difference they make in people's lives. Their hands-on care, patient teaching, and vigilant monitoring are foundational to patient safety and recovery.

Colorado LPNs by the Numbers

There are 8,576 active LPN licenses in Colorado (coloradohealthinstitute.org) with 657 projected annual job openings statewide (mycoloradojourney.gov), a 12% projected occupational growth. The essential contributions of LPNs strengthen workforce sustainability and drive high-quality patient care. As Colorado continues to address the nursing shortage, the expertise and dedication of LPNs are more important than ever. Let's recognize, support, and celebrate our LPN colleagues, the licensed and essential professionals who are making a lasting impact on Colorado's health every day.

Call to Action

Let's move beyond misconceptions and fully appreciate the expertise, compassion, and dedication LPNs bring to Colorado's healthcare landscape. Whether you're a nurse, administrator, policymaker, or community member, take time to recognize and support LPNs in your practice, celebrate their achievements, and advocate for their continued inclusion and professional growth. Together, we can ensure LPNs are valued, empowered, and equipped to make an even greater impact on the lives of Colorado's patients and communities we serve. ■