

BACKGROUND

Rural, Remote, Northern Program (RRNP)

Program origin: The Clinical Stabilization Initiative, established in the 2006 trilateral amending agreement, includes three programs: Business Costs Program, Rural, Remote, Northern Program and the Communities in Crisis Program. The trilateral working group modeled the RRNP on the general structure of the British Columbia Rural Incentive Program, but has adapted it to serve and support Alberta physicians.

Effective date: September 1, 2007 – Retroactive payments for all services provided on or after this date.

Purpose: RRNP supports recruitment and retention by providing physicians with financial incentives to practise in rural, remote and northern communities.

Eligibility: Physicians practising in all communities identified as rural, remote and northern will be eligible to receive financial incentives.

- The list of RRNP-eligible communities includes all those communities eligible to receive program assistance through the Alberta Rural Physician Action Plan (RPAP).
- Although not on the list of RPAP eligible communities, Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie are also eligible for incentive payments by virtue of their status as “communities in crisis.”
- Excluded communities are Airdrie, Calgary, Devon, Edmonton, Leduc, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Sherwood Park, St. Albert and Stony Plain.

Payments: The two components of RRNP physician payments vary based on the number of points assigned to a community. The payment components are:

- **RRNP premium payments applied automatically to claims for every insured health service** provided by physicians in eligible communities. This payment is applied as a percentage added on to the fee-for-service or alternate relationship plan (ARP) payments for insured health services.
- **An additional flat fee paid to a physician who practises and resides in the community**, if his/her annual income from insured services provided within the community is at least \$50,000.

EXAMPLE: RRNP incentive payments for physicians in a community with 19 points

- **Health service premium payments** – A physician who provides services in Community X, which has a cumulative score of 19 points, would receive 8.63% added on to his/her fee-for-service payments.
- **Flat fee payments** – If the physician also resides in this community, he/she will also receive a flat fee payment of \$18,130 per year, provided his/her annual income for insured services in the community is greater than \$50,000.

- Approximately 70% of the total RRNP budget will be paid through the RRNP health service premium payments and 30% through the flat fee payments.
- Levels of both the RRNP health service premium payments and the flat fee payment vary by community, based on a point rating system determined using the criteria below.
- The RRNP health service premium payments will be applied automatically to all health service claims for insured health services provided by **any physician in an eligible community** when payment is made. This means that locum physicians and visiting physicians will be eligible to receive these health services premium payments.
- The flat fee payment will **only be made to physicians meeting the program's residency requirement**, providing their annual income from insured services provided within the community is at least \$50,000.
- Physicians will need to declare a home address for RRNP residency purposes.
- Payments to ARP physicians will be based on assessment of practices in eligible communities.
- Payments through the RRNP are capped at \$60,000 per physician per year.

Relative Medical Isolation Criteria: The level of incentives will vary by community depending on the total points assigned when determining the relative medical isolation of the community. The number of points increases as medical isolation increases. The points are earned as follows:

Points assigned per criterion

General Practitioner Points – Awarded if community does not have over 20 GPs within 35 km.

- 0-3 GPs60 points
- 4-10 GPs40 points
- 11-20 GPs20 points

Specialist Points – Awarded if community does not have over 4 specialists within 70 km.

- No specialists.....60 points
- 1 specialist.....50 points
- 2 specialists40 points
- 3 specialists20 points

Population Points – Awarded if community has population less than 30,000.

- Less than 5,00025 points
- 5,000 to 10,000.....15 points
- 10,000 to 30,000.....10 points

Regional Centre Points – Awarded if community is at least 70 km from Calgary, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, or Red Deer.

- First 70 km4 points
- Each additional 35 km.....2 points
- Maximum.....30 points*

Latitude Points – Awarded for communities located at 54 degrees latitude and further north.

- 54 and 55 degrees.....20 points
- 56 degrees and greater30 points

Total Points Adjusted by Arcs – All communities have the sum of points assigned according to the above criteria reduced depending on the community’s distance from Calgary or Edmonton.

- Within 100 km of Calgary or Edmonton multiply by 0.10
- Between 100-300 km from Calgary or Edmonton..... multiply by 0.15
- Between 300-750 km from Calgary or Edmonton..... multiply by 0.20
- Over 750 km from Calgary or Edmonton multiply by 0.25

High Growth Communities

- Fort McMurray.....80 points
- Grande Prairie.....60 points

Communities earning less than six points

Physicians working in communities assigned less than six points will receive only flat fee payments. The premium payments for insured health services are not paid in these communities.

- **Communities with less than three points** – Physicians residing in communities with less than three points (e.g., a community designated very few points for medical isolation as it is close to Edmonton or Calgary), will receive only a flat fee payment of \$4,000, but no RRNP premium payments for insured health services.
- **Communities with four to six points** – As noted above, physicians who reside in these communities will receive a flat fee payment of \$8,000, but no RRNP premium payments for insured health services.