

PANDEMIC H1N1 INFLUENZA PHYSICIAN PAYMENT PLAN 2009/2010

PURPOSE

The Pandemic H1N1 Influenza Physician Payment Plan (the "Payment Plan") outlines the criteria and processes which Alberta Health and Wellness (AHW) may choose to implement in order to coordinate the setup and issuance of physician payment, in the event that the Alberta Pandemic Influenza Plan is activated. In addition, the Payment Plan will provide clarity to physicians with regard to the financial support they will receive while providing services in an H1N1 influenza pandemic response plan. The Payment Plan addresses physician roles and sets out the criteria for the various Payment Plan Elements, such as those related to physician eligibility. The Payment Plan forms part of the Alberta Pandemic Influenza Plan, section 10, "Health Workforce".

GOALS

The Payment Plan is designed to:

1. Provide optimal care for all patients experiencing H1N1 influenza.
2. Utilize existing payment and administrative processes for physician remuneration wherever feasible, even if duties change in contractual situations.
3. Establish alternative payment and administrative systems for physician payment in extraordinary circumstances.

PAYMENT PLAN CRITERIA

To be eligible for compensation under any element of the Payment Plan an individual physician must be licensed to practice by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta and must:

1. Be rostered with AHS for the purposes of providing services within the pandemic response plan;
2. Be activated from the roster by AHS to serve patients at a work site designated by AHS to support the pandemic plans of AHS. This could include hospitals, AACCC/UCC, atypical facilities temporarily established for the purpose (e.g., school gymnasias), or a physician office now deemed dedicated to support AHS' pandemic efforts; and
3. Take all appropriate infection control and transmission precautions including compliance with all applicable guidelines, and if it is reasonably available, immunization against H1N1.

PAYMENT PLAN ACTIVATION

AHW may activate some or all of the Payment Plan, as is required to address health care system needs as a result of a pandemic influenza outbreak when a:

Declaration of a public health emergency is made pursuant to 52.1(1), of the *Public Health Act*; or

The Chief Medical Officer of Health determines, in his discretion, that it is appropriate to implement some or all of such Payment Plan due to the pandemic causing a major disruption in the health care system even though a public health emergency has not been declared.

Upon activation AHW shall advise the Alberta Medical Association and AHS which Payment Plan elements are in effect and any changes, additions, or deletions to such elements. For

clarity the Minister of Health reserves the right to commence, modify and cancel the Payment Plan at any time in his sole discretion.

PAYMENT PLAN ELEMENTS

Upon implementation of the Payment Plan AHW may implement, as appropriate, any one or more of the following program elements:

- Telephone Advice - Health Service Code
- Liability Insurance
- Short-Term Disability
- Temporary Compensation - Hourly Rates
- Business Interruption
- Elevated Compensation – Hourly Rates

Telephone Advice Health Service Code

Upon activation of this element AHW will activate a temporary health service code (HSC) in the Schedule of Medical Benefits (SOMB) to allow physicians to bill fee for service for providing H1N1 related advice and services to patients via telephone during a pandemic.

Liability Insurance

Upon activation of this element AHW will cover the \$1,000 deductible for Canadian Medical Protective Association (CMPA) fees for retired and other non-practicing physicians who return to practice at the request of AHS for the purpose of actively participating in the AHS pandemic response plan.

Short-Term Disability

Upon activation of this element any physician meeting the Payment Plan criteria may be eligible to receive disability payments if they:

- a) become ill with H1N1 influenza as a result of caring for patients during the pandemic
- b) are totally disabled as a result of contracting H1N1 influenza; and
- c) are forced to stop work.

Any such physician will be eligible to receive a one time payment from AHW to compensate for up to a maximum of twenty two (22) consecutive days of lost income, beginning on the eighth day of being forced to cease work and ending the earlier of twenty-two (22) days later, or the day they are no longer considered contagious and are able to return to work.

The short-term disability payment amount will be based on the physician's average billings during the twelve months previous to activation of the pandemic plan prorated on a daily basis. For physicians who may have been in practice less than 12 continuous months in the province of Alberta, average billings for the months they have practiced will be used. For physicians presently remunerated under an Alternate Payment Plan (clinical or academic) or an AHS contract the payment arrangements under their applicable plan will be used in the calculation of the proration.

Payments would be made upon submission to AHW of a completed application, required evidence, and supporting documentation as required by AHW to verify eligibility and the amount of payment.

Temporary Compensation

Physicians, AHS and AHW will utilize existing payment and administrative processes for physician remuneration, even if duties change in contractual situations, unless extraordinary circumstances arise. In such extraordinary circumstance, the following alternative payment mechanism has been identified:

Hourly Rates

Hourly rates are intended to provide appropriate gross income for physicians activated from the roster by AHS to serve patients at a work site designated by AHS to support the pandemic plans of AHS. Hourly rates are also applicable for retired or non-practicing physicians who have been reactivated under the plan.

Base Hourly Rate - \$225

Evening and Weekend Hourly Rate - \$270

Night Hourly Rate – \$295

Business Interruption

Upon activation of this element eligible physicians may receive support in the event of Major Disruption of their practices during a pandemic event.

“Major Disruption” to normal business practice is considered to have occurred when a physician endures a significant financial hardship, as a direct result of implementation of the Alberta Health Services (AHS) pandemic response plan. (For example as a result of surgeries being cancelled for an extended period of time)

To be eligible for compensation under the Business Interruption element an applicant physician must provide evidence of being rostered as set out in criteria one of the H1N1 Pandemic Influenza Physician Payment Plan 2009-2010, participated as requested by AHS, and must:

1. Make application for financial assistance to AHW in the form and manner set out by AHW.
2. Provide evidence of having sustained significant financial losses during the pandemic as a result of a Major Disruption.
3. Provide evidence of measures taken to mitigate financial losses. (provide evidence of making changes necessary to reduce their day to day overhead costs, such as lay offs, or reduced hours of work, all of this should also lead to a reduction in business cost expenses)
4. Provide evidence of actual business cost expenses incurred during the pandemic.
5. Provide evidence of earnings from the physician's clinical practice, during the pandemic.

Any physician meeting the Business Interruption criteria may be eligible to receive a one time payment from AHW to compensate for up to 75% of the business cost expenses they incurred as a result of a Major Disruption during a pandemic event. The Alberta Physician Overhead Cost Model - 2009 will serve as a guide for determining allowable expenses and maximum amounts for each Section by zone; amounts will be prorated for the pandemic timeframe. The timeframe of the pandemic shall be determined by the Minister in his sole discretion.

Elevated Compensation

Elevated hourly payment rates are intended to provide appropriate gross income for physicians in the event that the Minister is required to exercise his conscription power pursuant to 52.6(1)(c) of the *Public Health Act*. Physicians who are required to serve patients may be eligible to receive elevated hourly payment rates. Calculated using the Schedule of Medical Benefits (SOMB) time of day definitions, the following rates have been determined:

Base Rate - \$259

Evening and Weekend Premium – Base plus \$144

Night Premium – Base plus \$259

ACTIVATION OF PAYMENT PLAN ELEMENTS

Activation of Payment Plan Elements will be gradual, based on severity and associated effects on scarce health care resources. AHW will determine the funding element(s) to be activated based on the severity of disruption experienced throughout the health system, including the ability of AHW resources to maintain a manual payment system required by this plan.

The Payment Plan includes elements for business interruption and for AHS temporary physician staff compensation. Implementation of payment elements will be relative to the activated payment plan stage. The trigger for various stages will be determined based upon the severity of impact to the health system.

ACCOUNTABILITY

AHW will reconcile all payments for physician participating in the AHS pandemic response plan activation of the Payment Plan to ensure no duplicate payments have been made.

APPLICATION AND PROCESSING

The Payment Plan is intended to address an extraordinary event in an efficient and effective manner. AHW shall establish forms, processes and deadlines for making and processing Payment Plan claims and shall advise the AMA, accordingly. AHW reserves the right to make changes to the Payment Plan, and any forms, processes and deadlines as it deems appropriate. Calculation of Payment Plan payments shall be done by AHW. Any concerns, complaints or disputes with respect to the amount of any payment under the Payment Plan, eligibility shall be referred to the Minister of Health whose decision shall be final and binding and may be made without providing reasons.