

**Date:** October 2, 2019  
**To:** All AHS Medical Staff  
**From:** Dr. Francois Belanger, VP Quality and CMO  
**RE:** Physician On Call Program Changes Effective October 1, 2019

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Dear Colleagues,

AHS is making changes to the Physician On Call Program (POCP) effective October 1, 2019 as per the recent decision by the Physician Compensation Committee (PCC) communicated to all physicians on September 30, 2019. These changes are required in order for AHS to be financially compliant with the funding that AHS has received for the program in fiscal year 2019/20.

The current POCP has five call categories – four specialist on call (SOC) levels and a rural on call (ROC). They include Level A (respond immediately), B1 (respond in less than an hour), B2 (respond within 1 to 4 hours), B3 (respond between 4 hours and the end of the call shift) and ROC.

AHS will be changing the number of physician on-call categories from five to three and reducing the hourly stipend amount. The on call categories will now be categorized as On Site, Off Site and ROC. The total number of programs across the province will remain the same.

More specifically:

- Current SOC programs categorized as Level A and B1 will be combined into a new category of On Site Call with an hourly stipend of \$21.00. Expected response times for On Site Call are immediately to less than an hour depending on the urgency of the patient care situation.
- Current SOC programs categorized as Levels B2 and B3 will be combined into a new category of Off Site Call with an hourly stipend of \$11.50. Expected response times for Off Site Call are within greater than one hour to the end of the call shift depending on the patient care situation.
- ROC will remain a separate call category with a new hourly stipend of \$20.00.

AHS is committed to a fair and transparent process during this time of change and, as such, AHS will be conducting a provincial review of the POCP after the completion of the AHS Review which will include consultation with multiple external and internal stakeholders such as AH, the AMA, AHS medical leaders, representative physicians providing call in the current call programs and operational leaders.

In addition, the 1.05% increase negotiated by the AMA in the Amending Agreement that ended March 31, 2018 was never applied to the POCP. AHS will ensure that each physician that has provided call will receive retroactive payments for all shifts dating back to April 1, 2017 and up until September 30, 2019. Physicians can expect to receive those payments towards the end of October 2019.

The changes being made to the POCP will help ensure responsible stewardship of our healthcare system. Physicians' professional obligation of providing safe, high quality and timely care to patients and families does not change as a result of these changes.

Alberta Health (AH) and the AMA are aware that AHS is implementing changes to the POCP effective October 1, 2019.

Please see the attached FAQ for more information.

If you have questions or concerns regarding these changes and how they impact you, please contact your respective Zone Clinical Department Head or your respective Zone Medical Affairs Office.

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