
Critical Worker Benefit

Application guidelines for the health sector

March 15, 2021

Superseded

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Ministry of Health

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About the Critical Worker Benefit

The Critical Worker Benefit is intended to recognize the service of select workers identified as critical for the delivery of basic services to Albertans in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Critical Worker Benefit provides a one-time lump-sum payment to eligible workers.

As this is funding provided from government to workers, this benefit is not intended to affect any employment agreement, including a collective agreement or alter any terms and conditions of workers' employment. In administering the benefit, Employers are required to comply with the Critical Worker Benefit program guidelines and the applicable grant agreement, and Employers do not have discretion with respect to the amount of the benefit or a worker's eligibility for the benefit.

Applications will be assessed on a first completed application, first approved basis. Exhaustion of program funding may result in an Employer's application not being approved.

Where to Apply for the Critical Worker Benefit

The following guidelines apply to private for-profit and not-for-profit employers in **Eligible Private For-Profit and Not-for-Profit Health Care Settings**. All eligible employers will be required to apply for the Critical Worker Benefit through the Health Care COVID-19 Funding for Critical Workers and Operators Application.

Private Health Clinics, including offices of physicians, offices of dentists, and offices of other health practitioners, must apply for the Critical Worker Benefit through the [Private Sector Application Portal](#).

Alberta Health Services (AHS), Covenant Health, CapitalCare, Alberta Precision Laboratories, and Carewest do not need to apply for the Critical Worker Benefit through either application portal. The Government of Alberta will work directly with AHS on behalf of these organizations to provide the Critical Worker Benefit to eligible employees.

Before you apply, please ensure that you have read and understand these Critical Worker Benefit Application Guidelines for the health sector.

Grant Payment, Delivery and Employer Responsibilities

Grant Payment

Each eligible Critical Worker will receive a one-time lump-sum payment of \$1,200 for a minimum of 300 paid hours during the defined eligibility period (October 12, 2020 to January 31, 2021). The payment does not impact eligibility for Employment Insurance (EI). The Critical Worker Benefit lump-sum payment:

- is not part of an employee's base salary;
- has no impact on benefits paid by Employers;
- is non-pensionable earnings; and
- is subject to the following payroll deductions for employees- Income Tax, Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Employment Insurance (EI).

An eligible worker is subject to the same tax rules as other Canadian residents unless the worker's income is eligible for the tax exemption under the *Indian Act*.

Employers will also receive 7.66 per cent of the total funds approved for the employers' eligible workers as additional funding, over and above the \$1,200 per approved worker. These funds to the Employers are intended to offset the Employer's contributions to CPP and EI when distributing funds to the Critical Worker Benefit for employees.

Delivery of Payment

Individual workers do not apply directly for the benefit. Employers must submit applications on behalf of their eligible workers.

Upon approval of the Employer's application, the Government of Alberta will provide payment for the eligible workers to the Employer, who is responsible for distributing the payments to the workers. If an eligible worker or eligible former worker meets all the criteria, the Employer is expected to apply to the program.

Under the Critical Worker Benefit Program, an eligible Employer can apply on behalf of an unlimited number of eligible workers. However, an Employer can receive funding for each worker one-time only. All applications will be assessed according to the eligibility criteria. Applications will be audited by the Government of Alberta, or their authorized representatives, to ensure accuracy of the information provided and integrity of the program.

Employers will be notified through the Health online application portal when they have been approved.

Eligible Employers will receive direct payments from the Government of Alberta. Employers will then distribute funding to their eligible workers. Eligible workers will receive the payment through their Employer's existing payroll systems, with appropriate accountability requirements to the government in place to ensure the Employer provides the payment to workers.

Employers that receive the Critical Worker Benefit must commit to:

- Ensure the funds are accurately and reliably distributed to their eligible workers as soon as they receive them from the provincial government. It is required that workers receive the entire \$1,200 (less CPP, EI and Income Tax deductions) as a one-time lump-sum payment on a regular pay cheque. The benefit is considered income.
- Confirm with the Government of Alberta that the eligible workers that were approved by government received the benefit no later than four weeks from the date the Employer received their funding, subject to any extensions in writing granted by the Department of Health. The Employer will do this by submitting a **Confirmation of Grant Recipient**. Refer to the Confirmation of Grant Recipient section below.
- Make best efforts to provide the pay to eligible workers who worked during the eligibility period and are no longer employed with the organization. Employers should ensure they have the ability distribute the funds to these eligible workers.
- Provide T4 slips to all workers that receive the benefit, which identifies that the worker has received this payment as income.
- Make sure funds are not used to reimburse the Employer for any regular paid wages, top-up pay that they independently committed to their workers prior to the announcement of the Critical Worker Benefit, or any other forms of COVID-19 related payments to workers, or provide payment to ineligible workers. The Critical Worker Benefit is not a wage subsidy for Employers.

Employers will be responsible for resolving any worker issues, such as eligible hours worked to count towards program eligibility. The Critical Worker Benefit Program does not provide dispute resolution services, including in relation to eligibility disputes, an Employer's failure to apply on behalf of a particular worker, or the Employer's administration of the Grant. The Critical Worker Benefit Program does accept complaints, and may audit Employers, to ensure that the Grant is provided in accordance with the Grant agreement.

Eligibility Criteria for Private For-Profit and Not-for-Profit Employers and Employees

The following eligibility criteria applies to private for-profit and not-for-profit health care Employers and employees. These Employers will be required to apply for the Critical Worker Benefit through the [Health Care COVID-19 Funding for Critical Workers and Operators Application](#).

Alberta Health Services (AHS), Covenant Health, CapitalCare, Alberta Precision Laboratories, and Carewest do not need to apply for the Critical Worker Benefit through the application. The Government of Alberta will work directly with AHS on behalf of these organizations to provide the Critical Worker Benefit to eligible employees. Alberta Health Services (AHS), Covenant Health, CapitalCare, Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL), and Carewest are not subject to the eligibility criteria below. To view the eligibility criteria for AHS, Covenant Health, and their wholly owned subsidiaries, please see **Appendix B: Eligibility Criteria for Alberta Health Services, Covenant Health, Capital Care, Alberta Precision Laboratories and Carewest**.

Private Health Clinics, including Offices of Physicians, Offices of Dentists, and Offices of Other Health Practitioners, must apply for the Critical Worker Benefit through the [Private Sector Application Portal](#).

Eligibility Period

Within a 16 week period from October 12, 2020 to January 31, 2021.

Employer Eligibility

An Employer must meet all of the following criteria:

- Be located and validly operating in Alberta.
- Be operating in an **Eligible Private For-Profit and Not-for-Profit Health Care Setting**

Ineligible Employers

- Employers not located and validly operating in Alberta.
- Employers not operating or employing staff in one of the **Eligible Private For-Profit and Not-for-Profit Health Care Settings**
- Federal, provincial or municipal governments.
- Political parties.
- Provincial or federal Crown agencies, boards and commissions or corporations.

Critical Worker Eligibility

From October 12, 2020 to January 31, 2021, eligible employees:

- Worked in Alberta and for an Eligible Albertan Employer.
- Were legally authorized to work in Canada during the eligibility period.
- Worked for an eligible Employer in one of the **Eligible Private For-Profit and Not-for-Profit Health Care Settings**
- Worked in an **Eligible Private For-Profit and Not-for-Profit Health Care Occupations**.
- Accumulated 300 paid hours with an eligible Employer.
- Hours accumulated must be hours worked in the Eligible Private For-Profit and Not-for-Profit Health Care Setting and in the **Eligible Private For-Profit and Not-for-Profit Health Care Occupations**.
- Hours accumulated before October 12, 2020 or after January 31, 2021 cannot be counted towards the 300 hours.
- The 300 hours must be accumulated from a single Employer (the same Employer applying for the grant on behalf of the worker).
- The 300 hours may include overtime and paid leaves (including paid sick leave) during the eligibility period. Overtime and hours worked during statutory holidays must be treated as straight time.

Workers that are no longer employed with the Employer (e.g. retired or resigned) are eligible for the program should they meet program eligibility requirements.

Some employees may perform diverse tasks at their workplaces and some employees may have been re-assigned to work in an eligible occupation. Employers will decide if an employee's scope of work meets the criteria to be included in the application for the Critical Worker Benefit.

An eligible worker can receive this funding one-time only and cannot receive multiple funding payments through multiple employers.

Ineligible Workers

- Workers who do not meet the eligibility criteria.
- Management staff are not in-scope for the Critical Worker Benefit.
- Business owners, contractors, self-employed persons and sole proprietors cannot receive the Critical Worker Benefit for themselves. Physicians and medical residents are excluded from the benefit.
- Health Care Aides working in Long Term Care (LTC) and Designated Supportive Living (DSL) who are receiving the current \$2/hour wage top up are not eligible for the Critical Worker Benefit.

Eligible Private For-Profit and Not-for-Profit Health Care Settings

Please see **Appendix A**: Definitions for the Critical Worker Benefit for the Critical Worker Benefit Definitions.

CATEGORY	ELIGIBLE HEALTH CARE SETTINGS
Addiction and Mental Health	Addiction Residential Treatment Centres
	AMH Community/Outpatient Services where the primary purpose of agency is to provide addiction and mental health services
	Opioid Agonist Therapy Clinics
	Residential Mental Health Treatment Facilities
	Supervised Consumption Services or Overdose Prevention Sites
Continuing Care	Long-term care (LTC)
	Designated supportive living (DSL)
	Licensed Supportive Living (LSL)
Diagnostic Imaging	Diagnostic Imaging Clinics
Emergency Medical Services	Air ambulance
	Ground ambulance
Home Care	Home care providing in-home health and personal care services
Hospice	Residential hospices
Medical Laboratories	Medical laboratories under contract with Alberta Precision Laboratories for COVID-19 testing*.

*Only work pertaining to the contracted COVID-19 testing is eligible for inclusion in the application for the Critical Worker Benefit.

Eligible Private For-Profit and Not-for-Profit Health Care Occupations

ROLE CATEGORY	ELIGIBLE HEALTH CARE OCCUPATIONS
Administrative Services	Administrative Support
	Admission Clerk
	Case Or Care Coordinator
	Clerk
	Educator
	Medical Office Assistant
	Medical Receptionist
	Receptionist
	Staffing Coordinator
	Unit Clerk
Allied Health	Dietitian
	Infection Prevention and Control Practitioners
	Occupational Therapist
	Occupational Therapy Assistant
	Physiotherapist
	Pharmacist
	Pharmacy Technician/ Assistant
	Physiotherapy Assistant
	Recreation Assistant
	Recreational Therapist
	Registered Dietitian
	Registered Social Worker
	Respiratory Therapist
	Social Worker (Medical, Psychiatric)
	Speech Language Pathologist
	Speech Therapy Assistant
Therapy Assistant	

Diagnostic and Therapeutic Services	Electroneurophysiology technologists (ENPs)
	Medical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians*
	Medical radiation technologists (MRTs)
	Medical Sonographers
	Other Medical Technologists and Technicians
Emergency Medical Services	Advanced Care Paramedic
	Emergency Medical Responder
	Primary Care Paramedic
Mental Health and Addiction	Counsellor
	Psychologist
	Registered Psychiatric Nurse
	Therapist
Non- Clinical Support Services	Activity/Recreation Worker
	Cook
	Dining Room Attendant
	Driver
	Environmental Services
	Food Services Worker
	Hospitality Services
	Housekeeping
	Housing Support Aide
	Laundry Services
	Maintenance Worker
	Security Staff and screeners
	Support Service Worker
	Visitation Coordinator
	Volunteer Coordinator

Nursing	Graduate Nurse
	Licensed Practical Nurse
	Nursing Care Coordinator
	Nurse Practitioner
	Registered Nurse
	Registered Psychiatric Nurse
	Undergraduate Nurse
Patient Care Support Services	Addictions Worker
	Client Care Assistant
	Comfort Care Aide
	Crisis Intervention Worker
	Health Care Aide**
	Home Support Worker
	Mental Health Worker
	Orderly
	Patient Care Aide
	Patient Service Associate
	Personal Care Attendant - Medical
	Psychiatric Aide
	Rehabilitation Worker
Resident Care Aide - Medical	
Cultural and Faith-Based Support Services	Chaplain
	Elder
	Spiritual Care Worker

* Only Medical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians working directly on APL contracted COVID-19 testing are eligible for inclusion in the application for the Critical Worker Benefit.

**Health Care Aides working in LTC and DSL who are receiving the current \$2/hour wage top up are not eligible for the Critical Worker Benefit.

Confirmation of Grant Recipient

Once the Employer receives the grant for which their workers were approved, the Employer must confirm that each worker received the Grant within four weeks from the date the grant was received, or another date that has been approved in writing by the Department of Health, by submitting a Confirmation of Grant Recipient to the Critical Worker Benefit Program. The Employer will receive a notification on when this confirmation must be submitted, which attests the grant was used for the purposes set out in the Grant Agreement.

How to Apply

All applications must be submitted through the Health online application portal. Employers can access the Health online application portal here: [Health Care COVID-19 Funding for Critical Workers and Operators Application](#)

1. Create a user account

In order to access the Health online application portal, Employers must register for a secure login name and password. Once the account has been created, Employers can use their new credentials to log in to the Health online application portal.

2. Fill out and submit an application through the Health online application portal

Applications must be submitted through the Health online application portal before the Health application intake closure deadline (March 31, 2021).

The Health online application will include:

- A completed Application Form with information to establish eligibility, including a declaration that the information provided to assess eligibility is true, complete and correct.
- Accurate banking information to facilitate direct deposit of funds to Employer's account (for Employer to distribute to eligible workers)

Information regarding each worker who the Employer deems eligible for payment must be provided, including:

- Full name
- Date of birth
- Social Insurance Number
- Hours paid during eligibility period

Application and Grant Agreement

Employers are required to submit documentation to validate their business by providing:

- Alberta Corporate Access Number (ACAN).
- Legal business name and address.

Grant Agreement

- This is a legally binding agreement, which outlines the obligations of the Government of Alberta and the Employer, and must be signed by an authorized signing official for the Employer.
- The agreement is not in force until it has been approved and signed by the Minister of Health or the Minister's delegate, which will not occur unless the application has been approved.

Reconsideration of Applications

If an employer disagrees with Alberta Health's decision to decline or partially decline the application, the employer may request a review of the application by calling EHealth Support Services +1(833) 611-1140. The request for a review must be submitted within 10 days of the date of the original decision. Reconsideration is only available if an employer's application has been declined or partially declined.

Audit and Compliance

Applications and corresponding grants will be carefully audited by the Government of Alberta, or their authorized representatives, upon reasonable notice to the recipient to ensure accuracy of the information provided and integrity of the program. If the Minister of Health or Minister's delegate is of the opinion that any false or misleading information has been provided or the funds are not paid to the workers, the Minister or Minister's delegate may decline the Employer's application or may require the Employer to repay any grant funds received. The Employer may also be ineligible from applying for future grants.

Information Collection and Program Evaluation

The Government of Alberta requires the collection of certain information from Employers and workers to administer this program and audit its outcomes. By participating in this program, Employers agree to provide relevant personal information for the purpose of the program. Employers must comply with relevant privacy legislation and must inform workers of the disclosure of their personal information.

Federal reporting requirements

The Critical Worker Benefit is partly funded by the Government of Canada. The province is required to report to the federal government on the cost of the program.

Provincial reporting requirements

The Government of Alberta is committed to maintaining an accountable, open and transparent environment to the public. In accordance with this commitment, information on awarded grants may be publicly disclosed online.

For more information, please contact the EHealth Support Services +1(833) 611-1140.

Appendix A: Definitions for the Critical Worker Benefit

AMH Community/Outpatient Services – The primary purpose of the agency is to provide addiction and mental health services.

Contractor: A person that operates a separate business and who enters into a contract for service. The relationship is temporary and the length of the relationship is often defined in the terms of the contract.

Critical Workers: Workers who are essential to the supply of food and medicines, education services, health services, or social services and who had potential high exposure to COVID-19 through work environments. This could be through high levels of contact with the general public, high-contact surfaces, and/or worked in close physical contact to others.

Diagnostic Imaging Clinics: facilities accredited by the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta (CPSA) to provide diagnostic imaging (DI) services including: diagnostic radiology, diagnostic mammography, diagnostic ultrasound, diagnostic echocardiography, diagnostic magnetic resonance imaging, diagnostic computed tomography, diagnostic nuclear medicine, and diagnostic bone densitometry.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS): the provision of ground and air ambulance services. The ground ambulance services are licensed under the *Emergency Health Services Act*.

In-home health and personal care services:

- **Health services:** includes registered nurse (RN), licensed practical nurse (LPN) care, allied health, and case managers in private home care agencies or private long-term care facilities. Care must be provided within the client's home (i.e. clients do not go to a clinic or community center).
- **Personal care services:** services for assisting patients with Activities of Daily Living (ADL). This includes, but may not be limited to:
 - grooming and personal hygiene;
 - bathing;
 - oral care;
 - communication impairments and related issues;
 - treatment of skin and wounds;
 - orthotic devices including but not limited to compression stockings;
 - food and fluid intake;
 - urinary function including urinary catheter care;
 - drainage systems;
 - bowel care, including ostomy care;
 - end of life care;

- mobility/transferring;
- mental health and wellness (including social and emotional health);
- respiratory care;
- vital signs;
- medication management; and authorized exercises (including range of motion).

Licensed Supportive Living: facilities that provide accommodation for four (4) or more individuals, and provide or arrange for services related to safety and security, and offer or arrange for at least one meal a day or housekeeping services. These accommodations are licensed under the *Supportive Living Accommodation Licensing Act*.

Opioid Agonist Therapy Clinics: includes clinics whose primary purpose is to provide oral opioid agonist therapy services.

Residential Addiction Treatment Facility: residential addiction treatment services for clients seeking to address their addiction, includes detoxification. These operators are licensed under the *Mental Health Services Protection Act* (with the exception of First Nation service providers).

Residential Community Hospice: facilities that are staffed 24 hours a day and are dedicated to accommodating patients requiring Palliative End of Life Care (diagnosed with a life-limiting illness), including palliative respite. These palliative beds are not in an acute care facility.

Residential Mental Health Treatment Facility: includes facilities in the community that provide overnight services and offer short-term mental health treatment, and transitional and permanent/long-term services to clients with varying mental health issues.

Supervised Consumption Services and Overdose Prevention Sites: sites where providers receive funding from the Alberta government for the provision of supervised consumption services, which includes monitoring the consumption of pre-obtained drugs and responding accordingly.

Worker: An employed person who works at a job or business and who is paid to work in the context of an Employer-employee relationship. Under the Critical Worker Benefit, the worker is the paid employee. A volunteer does not fall within this definition of worker.

Appendix B: Eligibility Criteria for Alberta Health Services, Covenant Health, Capital Care, Alberta Precision Laboratories and Carewest

Eligibility Period

Within a 16 week period from October 12, 2020 to January 31, 2021.

Employer Eligibility

An Employer must meet all of the following criteria:

- Employer is AHS, Covenant Health, CapitalCare, Alberta Precision Laboratories or Carewest.

Ineligible Employers

- Any Employers that are not AHS, Covenant Health, CapitalCare, Alberta Precision Laboratories or Carewest.

Worker Eligibility

From October 12, 2020 to January 31, 2021:

- Worked in Alberta and legally authorized to work in Canada.
- Worked for AHS, Covenant Health, CapitalCare, Alberta Precision Laboratories, or Carewest.
- Be a member of the AHS unions and equivalent subsidiary and Covenant Health unions:
 - AUPE
 - UNA
 - HSAA
 - CUPE
 - USW
 - IUOE
- If not a member of one of the above unions, the employee may be in the classification of Nurse Practitioner.
- Accumulated 300 paid hours with an eligible Employer.
 - Hours accumulated before October 12, 2020 or after January 31, 2021 cannot be counted towards the 300 hours.

- The 300 hours must be accumulated from a single Employer (the same Employer applying for the grant on behalf of the worker).
- The 300 hours may include paid leaves during the eligibility period. Hours worked during statutory holidays should be treated as straight time.

Workers that are no longer employed with the Employer (e.g. retired or resigned) are eligible for the program should they meet program eligibility requirements and contact the Employer.

An eligible worker can receive this funding one-time only and cannot receive multiple funding payments through multiple employers.

Ineligible Workers

- Management staff and other non-union staff, unless specifically included above, are not in-scope for the Critical Worker Benefit, even if they temporarily worked on front line during the period of eligibility.
- Residents who are members of PARA (Professional Association of Resident *Physicians* of Alberta (*PARA*)) and physicians are excluded from the Critical Worker Benefit.
- Business owners, contractors, self-employed persons and sole proprietors cannot receive the Critical Worker Benefit for themselves.
- Workers who do not meet the eligibility criteria.