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Subject: Amendments to the Out-of-Country Health Services Regulation	Reference: <i>Out-of-Country Health Services Regulation</i>	

To: All Practitioners and Billing Staff

Effective January 27, 2021, the *Out-of-Country Health Services Regulation* (the Regulation) has been updated via Order in Council 032/2021. These amendments will create operational and administrative efficiencies, and will reduce ambiguity in the application process by:

- Clarifying eligibility criteria, definitions and timelines, ensuring that Albertans better understand the application process and have clearer expectations.
- Helping Alberta physicians and dentists complete the applications on their patients' behalf, more fully and accurately, enabling applications to be processed more quickly.

The following amendments will **directly impact physicians and dentists applying for funding of medically required, out-of-country health services on behalf of eligible patients.**

1. Measures of time have been standardized between the Out-of-Country Health Services Committee (OOCHSC) and the Out-of-Country Health Services Appeal Panel (Appeal Panel) to reflect business days instead of calendar days. A business day means any day that is not a Saturday, a Sunday, a holiday, or a day when Government of Alberta offices are closed as part of the Government of Alberta's Christmas closure.
2. Elective services and emergency services definitions are clarified.
3. Program/application criteria are now clearly defined.
4. The Oochsc Chair has been granted the authority to screen out and deny applications that do not meet the following non-medical criteria:
 - a. The application was submitted more than 365 days after the out-of-country health services were received;
 - b. The patient is not a resident of Alberta and not registered under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan; and
 - c. The applying physician or dentist is not registered to practice in Alberta.
 - i. With the exception of the above specific criteria, all other out-of-country funding

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applications will be decided by the OCHSC.

5. The applying Alberta physician or dentist, the patient or the patient's representative may appeal the OCHSC Chair and/or the OCHSC's decisions.

Physicians and dentists are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the application process to help facilitate requests for out-of-country health services. **Please note that any applications submitted before January 27, 2021 will follow the previous application processes.**

Background

The Regulation establishes the OCHSC and the Appeal Panel which are independent of each other and Alberta Health. The Regulation gives the OCHSC the authority to review applications made by Alberta physicians and dentists on behalf of a patient, requesting funding for insured medical, oral surgical and/or hospital services provided outside of Canada, when those services are not available in Canada, or when all appropriate health services in Canada have been fully utilized. The Regulation establishes eligibility criteria, application processes, and administrative procedures. The Appeal Panel is given the authority to hear appeals on funding decisions made by the OCHSC through the Regulation.

For more information

Information about the OCHSC and Appeal Panel is available on the Alberta Health website at www.alberta.ca/ahcip-out-of-country-health-funding.aspx. The website includes links to the OCHSC and Appeal Panel information, the Out-of-Country Health Services Application form, and the Regulation. The OCHSC can be reached by telephone at 780-415-8744 and by email at OOCHSC@gov.ab.ca. The Appeal Panel can be reached by telephone at 780-638-3899. To call toll free in Alberta, dial 310-0000 then enter the applicable phone number.

The amended legislation is available at www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Orders/Orders_in_Council/2021/2021_032.pdf.