COVID-19 Critical Worker Benefit (CWB) FAQs

May 4, 2021

Please note: Information in these FAQs is based on the Government of Alberta’s (GoA) Critical Worker Benefit Application Guidelines for the Health Sector (refer to Appendix B for eligibility criteria pertaining to AHS), which the government continues to update.

These FAQs will be adjusted as updates to the Critical Worker Benefit Application Guidelines for the Health Sector are made, however it is possible there may be discrepancies between these FAQs and that document. In the event of a discrepancy, the information provided by government will take precedence.

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1. What is the Critical Worker Benefit (CWB)?

According to the Government of Alberta’s (GoA) Critical Worker Benefit Application Guidelines for the Health Sector, which is subject to update by the government, the 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 (CWB) provides a one-time lump-sum payment to eligible workers.

2. Who at AHS is eligible for the CWB?

The GoA set specific criteria that employees must meet to be eligible for this one-time lump sum payment, including:

- Employee must have 300 paid hours with the employer between Oct. 12, 2020 and Jan. 31, 2021
- The 300 hours may be accumulated by working in multiple eligible positions with one or more of the following employers: (AHS, Carewest, Covenant Health and APL)
- Employee must be a member of the union or specifically noted classifications (i.e. nurse practitioners, clinical/surgical/physician assistants)
- Front line managers, supervisors, and team leads in departments such as nursing inpatient, emergency medical services, linen/laundry, food services, housekeeping, admissions/discharge are also eligible
- Employee must not receive the benefit more than once, if you work at multiple eligible employers/workplaces in Alberta
Refer to Appendix B of the Critical Worker Benefit Application Guidelines for the Health Sector, for full eligibility criteria pertaining to AHS.

Please note that Foundations workers are not eligible for the benefit.

3. How and when will eligible workers receive the CWB payment?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employee Group/Status</th>
<th>Pay Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active employees who have received an eligibility letter as of March 30, 2021</td>
<td>April 28, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible employees on leave who have received an eligibility letter dated April 7, 2021</td>
<td>May 12, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees (active and on leave) whose overtime hours must be included in order to meet the 300 hour threshold</td>
<td>May 26, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All eligible front line managers/supervisors/team leads</td>
<td>May 26, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees who work in more than one eligible position at AHS, Carewest, Covenant Health and/or APL and when their hours are combined, meet the 300 hour threshold</td>
<td>May 26, 2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. What is the role of AHS in GoA Critical Worker Benefits program?

AHS’ role is that of paymaster, which means it will distribute the payment based on the eligibility set by the GoA. All unionized employees, nurse practitioners, clinical/surgical/physician assistants and eligible front line managers/supervisors/team leads will be notified as to whether they will receive the payment. The benefit will be paid through our existing payroll process.

AHS did not determine the eligibility for this benefit and, at this time, we are unable to provide any additional compensation to those who are ineligible.

5. Which paid hours are included in the total 300 hours to qualify for the CWB?

The government criteria is to have accumulated 300 paid hours with AHS between Oct. 12, 2020 – Jan. 31, 2021 including employer-paid leaves (e.g. sick leave,
vacation and personal leave). Overtime and hours worked during statutory holidays are counted as straight-time.

Hours pertaining to unpaid leaves and/or leaves for which a benefit payment is being provided by a third party (e.g., direct pay by WCB, short-term disability and long-term disability) cannot be counted.

6. Do the 300 hours need to be worked in a single AHS position? Or will staff who work multiple positions or additional shifts in other units at AHS have their hours counted together?

Hours can be accrued across any eligible positions with AHS to total the required 300 paid hours within the timeframe identified in the program.

7. Can paid hours be accumulated with other health care employers (e.g., Covenant Health, CapitalCare, Alberta Precision Laboratories, Carewest, or others) be counted into the AHS total?

As of May 3, 2021, the government has expanded their criteria to permit eligible employees to combine their hours worked at the following employers: AHS, Carewest, Covenant Health and/or APL, provided each position is eligible for the CWB.

Where eligibility exists under multiple employers, the CWB will be paid by the employer where the worker holds the larger FTE (where equal, AHS will pay the CWB).

8. What if I work for and am eligible for the CWB because I work with other employers (e.g. private and non-profit)? Will I get the benefit twice?

No. Workers can only receive one CWB payment, even if they work for multiple employers/workplaces in Alberta.

9. Are workers who work in corporate or office settings eligible for the CWB?

Yes, providing they meet the eligibility criteria.
10. Are workers who performed work remotely or from home eligible for the CWB?
Yes, providing they meet the eligibility criteria.

11. Are employees who are not unionized eligible for the CWB if they provide direct patient care or other critical services in their roles?
No, except for nurse practitioners, clinical/surgical/physician assistants and eligible front line managers, supervisors and teams leads. (Following initial messaging that all non-union exempt employees were ineligible for the CWB, the government later changed its eligibility criteria to include these positions).

According to Appendix B of the Critical Worker Benefit Application Guidelines for the Health Sector:
- Management staff and other non-union staff are not eligible for the benefit, even if they temporarily worked on front line during the period of eligibility.
- Members of the NUEE (Non-Union Exempt Employees) and PARA (Professional Association of Resident Physician of Alberta) groups are excluded from the benefit.

12. Is there an appeal or exception process for workers who believe they should receive the CWB?
No. According to the Critical Worker Benefit Application Guidelines for the Health Sector, employers do not have discretion with respect to a worker’s eligibility for the benefit.

AHS is unable to make decisions to administer the benefit outside of the criteria set by government. Refer to Appendix B of the document linked above for full eligibility criteria pertaining to AHS.

13. What should I do if I believe I have worked the hours required to be eligible for the CWB but received a letter of ineligibility?
Log into the HR Contact Centre portal at https://albertahealthservices.service-now.com/hr. Click on the Critical Worker Benefit banner to open a case where you will select “Disputing eligible hours” from a drop down menu and provide supporting information for review.
14. Are workers who met the criteria while working in a unionized position and have since transferred to a NUEE position still eligible to receive the payment?

Yes, providing they meet the eligibility criteria. Refer to Appendix B of the Critical Worker Benefit Application Guidelines for the Health Sector for full eligibility criteria pertaining to AHS.

15. Will contracted workers be paid by AHS for the CWB?

No. Contracted workers will need to contact their respective employer for details to their CWB eligibility and payment.

16. Are terminated workers eligible for the CWB?

Yes. According to the government’s eligibility criteria, workers that are no longer employed with AHS (e.g. retired or resigned) are eligible for the program should they meet program eligibility requirements and contact the employer.

Eligible terminated employees need to email by April 30, 2021 criticalworkerbenefitapplication@ahs.ca

Eligible terminated employees will receive payment via paper cheques which are mailed to them at their provided address.

17. Will the CWB payment show on AHS pay advices?

Yes, a separate pay advice reflecting only the CWB payment will be issued to each employee who receives the payment.

18. Is the CWB taxable? Will AHS withhold the required tax?

Yes. AHS will withhold the required payroll taxes which includes income tax, CPP and EI. Union dues will not apply to CWB payments.

Please note that if an employee is in receipt of EI Benefits they will be required to report the CWB payment as income in the week in which it was paid.

19. Do workers have the option to direct the CWB payment to an RRSP, TFSA or another account?

No. The CWB will be deposited into the same bank account where the worker’s regular pay cheque is deposited.
20. Why is my personal information being shared with Alberta Health? What is being shared?

The CWB is a program of the GoA. Because of this, the GoA requires AHS to send personal information including social insurance number, date of birth, employee number and full name of all eligible employees.

This information is being provided via encrypted and password protected file to GoA to ensure no duplicate payments are processed for those who may be eligible at multiple employers.

You may object to the transfer of your personal information to the GoA, by opting out. The process is dependent on employee status:

- Active Employees have until April 9, 2021 to opt out by contacting HR Contact Centre [https://albertahealthservices.service-now.com/hr](https://albertahealthservices.service-now.com/hr)
- Employees on leave have until April 23, 2021 to opt out by contacting HR Contact Centre [https://albertahealthservices.service-now.com/hr](https://albertahealthservices.service-now.com/hr)
- Terminated employees who submit an application between April 1, 2021 and April 30, 2021 to [criticalworkerbenefitapplication@ahs.ca](mailto:criticalworkerbenefitapplication@ahs.ca) for CWB, will be advised that information will be shared with GoA. At this time, you can choose to opt out or rescind your application immediately.
- Employees (active and on leave) whose overtime hours must be included in order to meet the 300 hours and eligible front line managers/supervisors/team leads have until May 14, 2021 to opt out by contacting HR Contact Centre [https://albertahealthservices.service-now.com/hr](https://albertahealthservices.service-now.com/hr)
- Employees (active and on leave) who work in more than one eligible position at AHS, Carewest, Covenant Health and/or APL and when their hours are combined, meet the 300 hour threshold have until May 14 to opt out by contacting HR Contact Centre [https://albertahealthservices.service-now.com/hr](https://albertahealthservices.service-now.com/hr)

*It’s important that you understand that by objecting to the transfer of your personal information to the GoA, you will no longer be eligible to receive the Critical Worker Benefit.*

If we do not receive your objection, AHS will proceed to send your personal information to the GoA to process your CWB payment.