

COVID-19 Response

Frequently Asked Questions for Covenant Health Employees

1. I am concerned about getting sick at work. What should I do?

Ensure that you are aware of the protocols that have been established regarding COVID-19 and any infectious disease. Hand washing is the single most effective way of preventing the spread of viruses. Ensure [hand-washing information](#) is posted in your work areas.

If you are concerned you may contact Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness at 780-342-8070 (Edmonton area) or 1-855-342-8070 (toll-free) and press 1.

Additional information can be found on [Insite](#) or at [ahs.ca/covid](#).

2. Do I need a medical note to call in sick?

During this period, we will not be asking staff to get a medical note for proof of illness, except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. for management of specific claims under insurance plans or WCB). This helps reduce an already strained healthcare system.

If you need to call in sick, please provide the general reason for the absence such as family illness, medical appointment, self-illness, etc. If the absence is because you are experiencing respiratory or flu-like symptoms, especially cough, fever, shortness of breath or sore throat, please self-isolate. Refer to the [Symptom and Travelers Guidance](#) and contact Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness at 780-342-8070 (Edmonton area) or 1-855-342-8070 (toll-free) and press 1 or with any questions.

3. I have recently returned from outside of Canada. What should I do?

Staff who have travelled and returned from outside of Canada are to follow the directions for self-isolation, as outlined on [Insite](#) or [ahs.ca/covid](#).

4. I am required to self isolate. How should this absence be timecoded? (NEW March 20, 2020)

Staff who have been instructed to self-isolate by either Health Link, Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness (OHS) or the Medical Officers of Health will be coded as follows:

Asymptomatic – Full-time, part-time and casual staff who are asymptomatic (not presenting influenza like symptoms) and restricted from work for the self-isolation period as instructed by either Health Link, Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness, or Medical Officers of Health will be provided with paid leave (AFD pay code) for all regularly scheduled shifts. Part-time and casual

staff who have been pre-scheduled for additional shifts during the self-isolation period will also be provided with paid leave (AFD pay code).

Symptomatic – If full-time or part-time staff become symptomatic (influenza like symptoms presenting), they will be coded paid sick leave for any regularly scheduled shifts as per their position FTE to the extent of their income continuance bank. Employees must be cleared to return to work by Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness.

- Once the sick leave bank is depleted, benefit eligible employees can apply for Short Term Disability (STD) or Bridging Benefits for income replacement. The waiting period and the requirement for an Attending Physician Statement (Doctor's note) are not required, as per insurer policy.
- As per already established processes, part-time or casual staff will not be paid for any additional picked-up shifts, even if those shifts were prescheduled, if they are unable to work them due to becoming symptomatic.
- Casual staff and part-time staff that do not have disability benefits may be eligible for supports put in place by the [Alberta Government](#) and [Government of Canada](#). Application details are forthcoming. As per standard processing, if Records of Employment are required requests must be made to HR Contact Center.
- Refer to time coding documentation for further details.
- If it is confirmed that a staff member's illness is directly correlated to the workplace, the WCB claim process will be initiated through contacting Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness at 780-3428070 (Edmonton area) or 1-855-342-8070 (toll-free). Additional information can be found at:
 - Worker Fact Sheet: https://wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/workers/WFS_COVID-19.pdf o
 - Employer/Manager Fact Sheet: https://wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/employers/EFS_COVID-19.pdf

Staff who are able to work at home during the self-isolation period will be coded as regular.

5. I have made the decision to travel outside of Canada even though it is recommended not to. Does the time coding as outlined in question #4 above still apply?

For the moment, yes, the time coding as outlined in question #4 is still applicable, however this is under review and may change as the situation progresses.

6. Can I work from home during this period?

Given the critical importance of our service to Albertans during this crisis, we need our staff to report to work.

As the Government and Covenant Health are recommending proactive social distancing measures to minimize or stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus, Managers will be encouraged to support employees whose work can be reasonably and appropriately completed from home. Covenant

Health has an Alternative Workplace Arrangements Guide, which applies to Covenant Health employees in relation to COVID-19 response. Employees and managers will be expected to follow appropriate processes to ensure the health and safety of the employee and the security and privacy of Covenant Health's information.

Information Technology will not be providing equipment above and beyond what is currently assigned to the employee/department unless there are extenuating circumstances. SLT approval will be required for any additional equipment requests. This may mean that some individuals may not be able to work at home.

7. What if I have concerns about my health and safety while at work?

All steps are being taken to protect your health and safety and minimize the risk of spread of the virus. If you believe that there is a dangerous working condition that constitutes a danger to your health and safety, discuss this with your manager who will work together with you and Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness to address the concerns. Please contact Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness at 780-342-8070 (Edmonton area) or 1-855-342-8070 (toll-free) and select option #4.

Staff members who have travelled and returned from outside of Canada are to follow the directions, as outlined on [Insite](#) or [ahs.ca/covid](#). Staff will be instructed by either Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness or Public Health if they are to be restricted from work.

8. I am unable to attend work due to child care issues, what do I do?

You should work with your manager to determine if there are other options, such as switching shifts or flexible hours. Otherwise, missed time will be coded in accordance with the applicable collective agreement or terms and conditions of employment. Appropriate coding will be used, including special leave, personal leave, or vacation, prior to considering unpaid leave, if child care arrangements cannot be made.

9. What direction is Covenant Health providing related to personal travel?

Before booking or embarking on travel outside of the province of Alberta, it is strongly recommended that individuals evaluate all associated risks, which may include the risk of becoming ill, falling under the restrictions of a foreign government, or forfeiting traveler's cancellation or medical coverage.

On March 12, 2020, the Government of Alberta advised that travel outside Canada is not recommended at this time and that individuals returning to Canada will be required to self-isolate for a period of 14 days. Covenant Health expects staff will adhere to the recommendation to not travel outside of Canada.

Government further announced on March 13, upcoming changes to the Employment Standards Code to allow employees who are required to self-isolate or are caring for a loved one with COVID19 to take 14 days of paid job protected leave to cover the self-isolation period. As Government provides more details on how these changes are to be administered, Covenant Health will assess the implications to how staff are compensated for the self-isolation period.

Should the Government of Canada issue a travel ban, travel to restricted countries after the ban has been put in place will result in the cancellation of COV's emergency travel insurance for staff. Destinations are confirmed on the [Government of Canada's website](#).

10. Are there any restrictions for Covenant Health business travel during the COVID-19 pandemic?

In accordance with Chief Medical Officer of Health direction given on March 12, All Covenant Health business travel outside of the country is suspended, until further notice.

All non-essential business travel outside of the province is suspended until further notice. Essential travel may be approved at the discretion of the applicable SLT member. SLT will be provided with enhanced criteria for consideration of requests for travel outside the province.

SLT will set expectations within their portfolio regarding essential travel within the province. SLT will be provided with enhanced criteria for consideration of requests for travel inside the province.

11. Is there any direction regarding meetings and social distancing?

Covenant Health will apply direction from the Chief Medical Officer of Health/Public Health regarding mass gatherings and social distancing. For Covenant Health, in person events with more than 50 attendees will be cancelled, until further notice.

Additional measures will include:

- Moving in person meetings to a virtual format – SKYPE, Teleconference etc.
- Postpone in person meetings and non-critical group activities. Additionally, work areas will be asked to review their non-essential meetings and reduce as appropriate.
- Maintain Physical Distance - maintain at 1 - 2 meters distance between themselves and others.
- Individuals will be encouraged to cease physical contact (e.g. shaking hands).
- Where possible, employees should take stairs rather than elevators.
- Work from home where possible and operationally feasible

12. What if I had a pre-approved vacation and now want to cancel and reschedule?

Speak to your manager directly for approval to delay or reschedule vacation time. Depending on individual circumstances and taking into consideration the extenuating circumstances and operational impact of the request, managers may consider allowing a staff member to reschedule their vacation to another time during the vacation year as outlined:

Note: Changing a staff member's vacation does NOT re-open the annual vacation planning process.

COV will not be responsible for non-refundable costs incurred for staff-initiated vacation rescheduling requests.

Care will be taken to review each situation on its own set of circumstances.

13. I have a high vacation bank-and was going to take time before the end of March to limit vacation carryover as per Covenant Health direction. Given the current COVID-19 situation and need for resources, can we reconsider this?

Yes, given the exceptional circumstances, we are relaxing the previous direction provided. Any plans that you may have had to take vacation prior to March 31 can be reconsidered and changed as appropriate, subject to operational requirements.

14. Given we will likely be short-staffed, will my vacation be cancelled?

Cancelling vacations is intended to be used only after all other efforts have been exhausted. In all cases supporting documentation for cancellation request and subsequent reimbursements is required.

If Covenant Health cancels vacation for an in-scope employee, under the collective agreement, that employee is entitled to reimbursement of all non-refundable costs related to Covenant Health's cancellation of the vacation and restoration of unused vacation days to the employee's vacation bank.

If Covenant Health cancels OOS vacation, that employee will be entitled to reimbursement of all reasonable non-refundable costs related to Covenant Health's cancellation of vacation and restoration of unused vacation days to the employee's vacation bank. Evidence will be required to support the reimbursement. You should exhaust all opportunities to replace a shift(s) and attempt all other possible arrangements prior to cancelling all or a portion of a staff member's approved vacation.

15. Will I be redeployed to another area? Or mandated overtime?

Given the critical importance of our service to Albertans during this crisis, we are called to do everything we can as individuals and teams to problem-solve and find creative solutions to meet ensure Albertans are safe and receive the care they need—now more than ever. This is a worldwide pandemic and recognized critical unforeseen emergencies may result in redeployment of staff (site specific or cross-site) or the assignment of mandatory overtime, in line with our Collective Agreements in order to meet the demands of this continually changing environment.

Staff, patient safety, and orientation to new areas of work will be supported in all redeployment situations.

Covenant Health does not undertake these actions lightly and we greatly appreciate the collective efforts of our staff in these difficult times. Your commitment to our patients and residents, especially those most vulnerable, is at the heart of our mission, our teamwork and our caring culture.

16. I have unused personal leave days by March 31, but am unable to use them due to work commitments involving our response to COVID-19. Can I still take these days sometime in the next fiscal year?

Any unused personal leave days in the 2019/20 fiscal year will not be carried over into 2020/21. Personal leave banks for 2020/21 will be loaded in the system for April 1.

17. I am a non-union staff that has been working many extra hours overtime in response to COVID-19. Will I be compensated for this time?

OOS Overtime – Program Support, Professional and Non-management Employees As outlined in the relevant Terms and Conditions of Employment, regular and temporary full time and part time non-management and professional employees are eligible for overtime. Daily overtime hours worked shall be paid at 1.5 x your basic rate of pay for the first 3 hours and 2 x thereafter. Time off in lieu of overtime is accumulated at the applicable overtime rates. Overtime not taken as time off will be paid out prior to March 31st.

Management – Additional Hours Worked

For COVID-19, Managers are eligible to be compensated for hours worked outside their regular shift at the basic rate of pay or banked at straight time for hours worked greater than 44 hours in a week.

SLT/ELT are not eligible for overtime and are encouraged to flex their time at a later date.

All overtime must be approved by a manager. Managers must work with their staff to track and accurately report any incurred overtime.

Premium pay will be provided as per the Terms and Conditions of Employment.

Refer to [time coding documentation](#) for further details.

18. Where can I go for questions about my health or travel benefits related to COVID-19?

For the most current information on your health and travel benefits related COVID-19, please visit <https://www.ab.bluecross.ca/news/covid-19-updates.php> or call Alberta Blue Cross directly at 1-800-661-6995.

19. Who do these guidelines apply to?

All decisions, unless explicitly noted, will apply to all Covenant Health staff (employees, physicians, midwives, volunteers), including contracted employees.

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