

Overtime Guidelines

Fiscal accountability is a responsibility of all Alberta Health Services (AHS) leaders. A long-term, sustainable and province-wide approach is needed to mitigate overtime costs and, in turn, help the organization manage costs. Effective January 20, 2020, standard provincial overtime management procedures will be applied in all areas to support accountability at the right level, provide decision-making support and tracking tools, and support our front-line leaders through learning, coaching and mentoring. This process and guideline document supports proactive identification and planning to mitigate overtime risk, and is to be used in combination with daily staff planning huddles and post-overtime review huddles to support retrospective review, mentoring and accountability.

Overtime Authorization Process and Tools

The Overtime Decision Support Tool is a resource to examine factors such as the number of patients, the type of patients, and the staffing mix present and needed. The Overtime Decision Support Tool may be customized by each department/unit to reflect workflow processes and staffing population needs.

The standardized Overtime Tracking Tool will be used to track and report all overtime. It will be submitted to the ED/D on a weekly basis.

During Regular Monday – Friday Business Hours

All overtime during business/working hours must be documented and reviewed by the immediate supervisor/designate and then pre-approved by the Executive Director/Director (ED/D) prior to being worked.

- Prior to requesting approval for authorized overtime, the First Level Approver (unit manager, shift supervisor, department manager, or site manager) or their designate must document overtime considerations in the Overtime Decision Support Tool.
- All regular pay-processing overtime forms must still be completed and submitted to the First Level Approver.
- The completed Overtime Decision Support Tool will be forwarded to the responsible ED/D for overtime shift approval.

In the event that the ED/D is not available, overtime approval will be made at the unit/work area level by the in-charge individual to ensure no delays in patient care. Documentation will be submitted to the First Level Approver as soon as possible.

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In rare or emergent situations, overtime approval will be made at the unit/work area level by the in-charge individual to ensure there are no delays in patient care. Documentation will be submitted to the First Level Approver following the emergent situation. Staffing levels and OT will return to baseline immediately after the situation that required overtime has been resolved.

After Regular Business Hours, Weekends/Holidays

The unit/department level designate (charge nurse, working leader) will approve all overtime after regular business/working hours and on weekends/holidays. Overtime decision making will be documented within the Overtime Decision Support Tool and submitted at the end of the shift to the First Level Approver or their designate for review. The First Level Approver or designate will review overtime approvals and will submit documentation to the ED/D for further review.

To support decision making, each First Level Approver or their designate will document unit baseline/shift and hours of care thresholds using the Overtime Decision Support Tool.

Exemptions to the Approval Process

The designated Senior Leader for the portfolio will provide parameters and make the final decision on what situations are exempt from the approval process that will not require ED/D pre-approval.

The Overtime Decision Support Tool and the Overtime Tracking Tool are required to be completed in all service areas regardless of exemption.

Examples of possible exemptions include: established on-call/call back services, rural sites and other units that cannot staff below two-staff/minimum.

Overtime Authorization for Extension of Shift and Missed Meal Break

Overtime authorization for the extension of shifts and missed meal breaks **must** be approved by the First Level Approver. Overtime in these circumstances will only be approved if management or the shift lead (eg. clinician, charge nurse, or supervisor, etc.) has been notified in advance (minimum two hours prior to the end of shift) and has determined that the individual's workload cannot be shifted to support getting the allotted break time or finishing the shift on time.

- Exception: Emergency situations (eg. potential loss of life or limb and critical business systems). In emergency situations where two-hour notice could not be given due to unforeseen circumstances at the end of the regular shift, overtime

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approval can occur. These situations will need to be documented and submitted as part of the weekly unit overtime report.

Advance Planning and Review

The First Level Approver or designate will review documentation weekly and participate in the weekly staff planning meetings with Provincial Staff Scheduling and/or the department scheduling resource.

The First Level Approver or designate will:

- Review and provide feedback on all overtime incurred in past 24 hours.
- Review upcoming shift vacancies within the next one to 13 days and determine what solutions are available and whether there will be a need for overtime.
- Review all anticipated overtime and upcoming shift vacancies in next 14 to 21 days and make any necessary schedule adjustments.
- Review and update the Overtime Decision Support Tool and complete the Overtime Tracking Tool.
- Meet regularly with their Scheduling Team Lead (where applicable) to review short and long term staffing needs.
- Provide the weekly Overtime Tracking Tool of all unit-generated overtime to the ED/D.
 - Number of overtime requests
 - Number of overtime approvals and mitigation approaches considered
 - Number of overtime denials and what alternate solutions were used

Weekly Reporting

The First Level Approver or their designate will provide the weekly Overtime Tracking Tool to their ED/D.

The ED/D will review the weekly Overtime Tracking Tool with their designated Senior Leader and determine if any follow up is required.

Provincial Overtime Shift Fill Order

After all efforts have been made to fill the shift at straight time, all areas will follow the provincial standard overtime shift fill order:

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1. Primary (Home Department) Full Time employees
2. Regularized Relief Full Time employees
3. Primary Part Time employees who qualify
4. Regularized Relief Part Time employees who qualify
5. Primary Casual employees who qualify
 - a) Unit based
 - b) Relief team casual
6. Non-Primary Full Time employees
7. Non-Primary Part Time employees who qualify
8. Non-Primary Casual employees who qualify

Eligible Overtime Guidelines

Overtime will only be authorized when an employee is eligible as per the [Employment Standards Code](#) and the applicable [Collective Agreement](#). The [Standard Interpretation Guide](#) provides standard interpretations of overtime guidelines based on each Collective Agreement.

***Provincial Staffing Services or the Unit Scheduler will notify the Unit Manager, ED/D, and Senior Leader of any ineligible or pre-booking overtime authorizations for appropriate education and follow up.*

Definition of overtime by employee classification:

Full-time employees – any additional shifts/hours in excess of regularly scheduled shifts.

Part-time employees:

UNA	HSAA	AUPE - GSS	AUPE – Aux.
Hours in excess of daily regularly scheduled hours or on an employee's designated day of rest.	In excess of daily regularly scheduled shifts or in excess of 5:2 ratio of work days to non-work days in a four week period.	In excess of daily regularly scheduled hours or any time worked in excess of the total regular hours of work for a full-time employee in each consecutive and non-inclusive 14-day period.	In excess of the ratio of 5:2 work days to non-work days in an identified six calendar week period.

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Casual Employees:

UNA	HSAA	AUPE - GSS	AUPE – Aux.
In excess of 147.25 hours averaged over a four week period.	In excess of their scheduled shift or in excess of 155 hours in each consecutive and non-inclusive 28 calendar day period.	In excess of daily scheduled hours or any time worked in excess of the total regular hours of work for a full-time employee in each consecutive and non-inclusive 14-day period.	In excess of 7.75 hours of work, unless replacing an extended work day employee, then in excess of extended work day hours.

Provincial Staffing Services

Provincial Staffing Services is committed to supporting operational areas with their staffing needs. To support the focus on reducing overtime, Provincial Staffing Services will implement the following processes and strategies:

- Unit specific guidelines – immediate suspension of instructions and approvals for schedulers to go to overtime. Overtime authorization will occur with each instance.
- Continue distribution of weekly hot spot reports until April 30, 2020.
- Extend posting relief shifts in Automated Shift Callout (ASC) where possible out to April 30, 2020.
- Where the scheduling office has not been successful in filling a shift with straight time:
 - The scheduler will review with the scheduling team lead to ensure all options have been explored and identify any opportunities.
 - If still unable to fill at straight time, the scheduling office will contact the unit manager or their designate to review the current availability of staff, what options have already been tried, and to explore other strategies.
 - If the manager or their designate determines overtime is required, they will obtain approval as per the process.
 - If approval is granted, the manager or designate will ask the staffing office to proceed with the offer of overtime.
- Approval will be sent to the staffing office by the unit manager or their designate to fill at overtime, and required leadership approval will be assumed.

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- Provincial Staffing Services will notify the First Level Approver or designate, ED/D, and Senior Leader of any ineligible or pre-booking overtime authorizations.

Managing Overtime Banks

Overtime banks should be managed to ensure the banked hours are taken prior to March 31, 2020. The functional center is charged at the time the overtime hours are worked/banked.

- Overtime banks not taken by the dates outlined in the applicable collective agreement in a given year shall be paid out, unless otherwise mutually agreed. Payouts typically occur in March or April of each year.
- Carry over requests for all or a portion of an overtime bank must be provided to the manager with a rationale and an outline of plans to use the hours as time off. Approval of overtime carry over must be obtained from Senior Leaders through email.
- Ideally, AHS wants employees to take banked overtime as time off and minimize carry over, as well as the amount of accrued overtime in bank that is eligible for payout.
 - Payouts are paid at the rate the employee is earning at the time of payout, not the time it is accrued.
- Consider not backfilling the shift where possible. This will contribute to seeing a positive bottom line impact.
- Consideration should be given to how overtime banks and excess vacation are managed together. Consider not approving overtime carry over requests if excess vacation bank exists.

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Overtime Mitigation Tips

AHS has key practices, vacation smoothing and vacation targets to ensure units have the right staff to reduce the risk of overtime.

Ad Hoc Vacation/Leave Request Management – Granting requests for ad hoc or last minute vacation increases the risk of overtime or unfilled shifts. You should carefully consider approving leave above target and be willing to accept the risk of overtime or short staffing.

Attendance Awareness and Vacancy Management – Actively manage attendance and vacancies. Absences and vacancies draw from your relief pool and a high amount of vacancies increases the risk of overtime.

Relief Team/Pool Review – Maintain an active and healthy relief pool. Regularly assess that relief pools have enough casual and part-time employees and review whether relief employees are regularly picking up relief shifts.

Additional Information

What are Vacation Targets?

A vacation target is the number of employees per occupation that are recommended to be on vacation for any given shift class. The [Vacation Toolkit](#) provides the formula for determining the target. The target must be sufficient to provide all employees with their annual vacation entitlement over the course of the year. For more information, please view the [Vacation Policy](#).

What is Vacation Smoothing?

Vacation smoothing spreads vacation requests out over the entire year to minimize vacation demand in peak periods (summer, Christmas, and long weekends). It is necessary to schedule vacation for the employee group over the course of the entire vacation year, not just in peak periods. Using vacation targets and vacation smoothing together supports balancing relief supply and demand.

Ad Hoc Vacation Requests (Outside of the Vacation Planner)

The Vacation Toolkit recommends that you consult your unit's vacation target before approving an ad hoc vacation request. Ad hoc vacation requests are requests for vacation that occur outside of the annual planning process. Requests are considered on a first come, first serve basis as operationally feasible. If you are at or above your target, consider the operational implications of the request. You should address

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employee requests in a timely manner to allow employees time to consider alternate options.

Healthy Relief Pools

Even with the use of vacation smoothing, it is important to maintain an active and healthy relief pool. It is essential that your relief pool has enough casual and part-time employees, but equally important that those employees pick up relief shifts regularly.

[Provincial Relief Workforce Services](#) can assist you in this by performing a relief analysis.