

# NEW AHS OT GUIDELINES AND PATIENT SAFETY

On January 20, 2020, Alberta Health Services (AHS) released new *Overtime Guidelines* and a corresponding *Overtime Decision Support Tool*, which outlines a new overtime (OT) authorization process including exemptions to that process. These guidelines replace the previous memos sent out by Deb Gordon, Vice President and Chief Health Operations Officer Northern Alberta, and Brenda Huband, Vice President and Chief Health Operations Officer Southern Alberta, regarding the authorization of OT by Charge Nurses.

*United Nurses of Alberta (UNA) has significant concerns with aspects of the guidelines and decision support tool, the ability to reasonably apply them in workplaces, and the potential effect it may have on ensuring units and programs are appropriately staffed to ensure safe patient care.*

## REVIEW THE GUIDELINES

It is important for you to review the guidelines in detail and ensure you are familiar with the Employer's expectations. The Employer should be providing you with adequate, uninterrupted time to do this, and the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification.

The OT guidelines permit RNs and RPNs to authorize OT in the following situations:

- ▶ In the event that OT can't be pre-approved by an Executive Director/Director during regular Mon-Fri business hours, OT approval will be made at the unit/work area by the **in-charge** individual to ensure no delays in patient care.
- ▶ The unit/department level designate (**charge nurse**, working leader) will approve all OT after regular business/working hours and on weekends/holidays.  
**Note:** You may wish to clarify the meaning of regular business/working hours for your setting.

The OT guidelines list the following exemptions to the regular OT approval process:

- ▶ Possible exemptions to the process include: established on-call/call back services, rural sites, and other units that cannot be staffed below two-staff minimum.
- ▶ In emergency situations where two-hour notice (for OT authorization for extension of shift and missed meal breaks) could not be given due to unforeseen circumstances at the end of the regular shift, overtime approval can occur.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT HOW THE GUIDELINES ARE BEING APPLIED IN YOUR WORKPLACE:

- ▶ If you have requested OT to ensure safe patient care and it has been denied, make your immediate Supervisor/Manager/Manager-On-Call aware of your concerns, and document your concerns through the Professional Responsibility Concern (PRC) Process.
- ▶ Filling out a PRC Form:
  - ▶ Fill out a PRC Form as soon as possible, providing as much detail as possible about your concern. Do not use the names of patients/residents/clients on the form.
  - ▶ You can fill out a paper form or you may fill out the PRC Form electronically on the UNA app and online at <https://dms.una.ca/forms/prc>
- ▶ If you worked OT and it was not possible to obtain authorization because of unforeseeable circumstances, and it was denied by the Employer, please contact your Local Executive and/or Labour Relations Officer (LRO) immediately for guidance.

## KEY MESSAGES:

- ▶ Review the guidelines in detail and the Employer should be providing you with adequate time to do so and the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification.
- ▶ Charge Nurses are permitted to authorize OT if it is required to ensure no delays in patient care, in emergency situations, and after regular business/working hours and on weekends/holidays.
- ▶ Professional Nursing Standards and Code of Ethics dictate that RNs and RPNs are required to advocate for the necessary resources to ensure safe, competent, and ethical nursing care.
- ▶ Document concerns on a PRC Form when OT is requested to ensure safe patient care and it is being denied.
- ▶ Contact your Local or LRO about situations where you worked OT that is being denied.
- ▶ UNA will continue to address any violations of the AHS/UNA Collective Agreement through Article 32: Dispute Resolution Process.

**If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your Local Executive or UNA Provincial Office at 1-800-252-9394.**