

COVID-19 Critical Worker Benefit (CWB)

May 5, 2021

Please note: information in this FAQ is based on the Government of Alberta’s (GoA) [Critical Worker Benefit Application Guidelines for the Health Sector](#), **which the government continues to update**. Refer to Appendix B for eligibility criteria pertaining to Covenant Health,

This FAQ 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 this FAQ 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 updates by the government, the benefit is intended to recognize select workers identified by the government as critical to delivering basic services to Albertans in response to COVID-19. The CWB provides a one-time lump-sum payment to eligible workers.

2. Who at Covenant Health is eligible for the CWB?

The GoA has set 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
- 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 employee works 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 Covenant Health. **In addition to the eligibility criteria outlined in Appendix B, certain out-of-scope positions at Covenant Health were approved to be included if they had a direct unionized comparator position at AHS.**

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

3. When will eligible workers receive the CWB payment?

Employee Group/Status	Pay Date
Active employees who have received an eligibility letter as of March 30, 2021	April 28, 2021
Eligible employees on leave who have received an eligibility letter dated April 7, 2021	May 12, 2021
Employees (active and on leave) whose overtime hours must be included in order to meet the 300 hour threshold	May 26, 2021
All eligible front line managers/supervisors/team leads	May 26, 2021
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	May 26, 2021

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

AHS' role is that of paymaster, which means it will distribute the payment to Covenant Health employees based on the eligibility determined by the GoA. All unionized employees, nurse practitioners, eligible front line managers/supervisors/team leads and other approved positions (see question #2) will be notified as to whether they will receive the payment, based on whether they meet the 300 paid hours threshold within the identified timeframe. The benefit will be paid through our existing payroll process.

Covenant Health 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 Covenant Health between October 12, 2020 - January 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 overtime, 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 Covenant Health position? Or will staff who work multiple positions or additional shifts in other units at Covenant Health have their hours counted together?

Hours can be accrued across any eligible positions with Covenant Health 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., AHS, CapitalCare, Alberta Precision Laboratories, Carewest, or others) be counted into the Covenant Health 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 meet the eligibility criteria with 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 (see question #2).

10. Are workers who performed work remotely or from home eligible for the CWB?

Yes, providing they meet the eligibility criteria (see question #2).

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, eligible front line managers, supervisors and team leads and those on the approved list (refer to question #2). Following initial messaging that all out-of-scope employees were ineligible for the CWB, the government reconsidered its eligibility criteria to include a small number of out of scope positions.

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](#), there is no discretion with respect to a worker's eligibility for the benefit.

Covenant Health is unable to make decisions on who should receive the benefit outside of the criteria set by government.

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](#). 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 an eligible position and have since transferred to a position that is not included still eligible to receive the payment?

Yes, providing they met the eligibility criteria during the identified timeframe.

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

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

16. Are terminated workers eligible for the CWB?

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

Eligible terminated employees need to email by April 30, 2021 criticalworkerbenefitapplication@covenanthealth.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 Covenant Health 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 required tax be withheld?

Yes. Required payroll taxes which includes income tax, CPP and EI will be withheld. 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 Covenant Health to disclose personal information (through AHS to the GoA) 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>
- Employees on leave have until April 23, 2021 to opt out by contacting HR Contact Centre <https://albertahealthservices.service-now.com/hr>
- Terminated employees who submit an application between April 1, 2021 and April 30, 2021 to criticalworkerbenefitapplication@covenanthealth.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>
- 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>

It's important that you understand that by objecting to the disclosure 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, your personal information will be disclosed to the GoA to process your CWB payment.