Primary Care Network

Nurse Practitioner Support Program

Program Information
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Introduction

Alberta Health’s goal is to have a health care system that keeps people healthy, while also supporting those who need care. One of Alberta Health’s priorities is to transform the health system by shifting care into community-based settings.

To help achieve this priority, there are five strategic outcomes to guide and focus the activities and initiatives of Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services, Primary Care Networks (PCNs) and other stakeholders to improve the primary health care system:

1. Access to primary health care;
2. Safety and quality of care;
3. Continuity of care;
4. Care transitions; and
5. Person experience and outcomes.

One way to achieve these outcomes is to increase the use of Nurse Practitioner (NP) services, and to increase their presence in primary and community care.

Background

NPs are experienced registered nurses with advanced education who are licensed to practice in Alberta and are regulated by the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta. NPs work in collaboration with their clients and other health care providers to provide high quality, patient-centered care. They work with diverse client populations in a variety of contexts and practice settings. NPs are competent health care professionals who can meet most primary care needs for Albertans across their lifespan. NPs provide a full range of comprehensive health services to Albertans such as assessing, diagnosing, ordering tests, setting and resetting bone fractures, and prescribing medications.

As of September 30, 2018, there were 604 NPs registered in Alberta. Approximately 72 per cent of those NPs work in acute care or specialty out-patient clinics. The number of NPs participating in primary health care and community settings is much higher in other provinces and territories across Canada.
Enabling NPs to provide care in community-based settings is a way to achieve the identified strategic outcomes for primary health care. In addition, requests have been made by NPs, communities and PCNs for specific funding to add NPs in primary health care, PCNs or other community-based settings.

**Nurse Practitioner Demonstration Project**

In 2016, Alberta Health implemented a three-year NP Demonstration Project (the Project) at four sites to explore the value of increased use of NPs in community-based health care settings with a focus on those populations with high needs. The Project is supported by individual grant agreements that provide funding to participating sites, including Calgary Urban Project Society, the Alex Community Health Center, the Boyle McCauley Health Center, and Sage Seniors Association of Edmonton.

As a way to determine the effectiveness of the Project, the Institute of Health Economics conducted an evaluation. Findings from the evaluation included:

- Extremely high patient satisfaction results;
- NPs worked to their full scope of practice in their respective health care delivery teams; and
- A team based-model improving access, continuity and allowing for the delivery of comprehensive care.
Primary Care Network Nurse Practitioner Support Program

The PCN NP Support Program has been created to increase NP services and presence in primary health care through a revised PCN funding formula and by linking NP Demonstration Project sites with PCNs. More information about the transition of the Project to the PCN NP Support Program will be made available to the Project sites.

Specifically, the PCN NP Support Program priorities are to:

- Increase access to primary health care (e.g. after hours, weekends, rural and remote areas);
- Meet un-met demand for primary health care services;
- Provide care to underserved populations; and
- Support chronic disease management.

In addition, the PCN NP Support Program assures the integration of the Project sites with the broader primary health care community.

To help increase the number of NPs as primary health care providers in community-based settings and support Alberta Health’s strategic outcomes, the PCN NP Support Program introduces two changes for PCNs that:

- Provide a supplement to the per capita funding for the NP’s panel; and
- Change how NP patient encounters are coded to allow a NP to maintain a panel of patients.

Implementation of the PCN NP Support Program will occur in two phases:

**Phase One** - The 2019-20 fiscal year will include:

- Enrolment of current PCN NPs into the PCN NP Support Program;
- Enrolment of up to 25 new NPs into the PCN NP Support Program; and
- Transition of NP Demonstration Project clinics into the PCN NP Support Program.

**Phase Two** – The 2020-21 fiscal year will include:

- Enrolment of up to 25 new NPs into the PCN NP Support Program.
Primary Care Network Nurse Practitioner Support Program Funding Model

In order to provide sustainable funding for NP services in primary health care, an amendment will be made to the existing PCN funding formula under the PCN Grant Agreement, Schedule A. This funding will be in the form of a supplement to the per capita funding for the NP’s panel.

Primary Care Network Grant Agreement Amendment

The PCN Grant Agreement, Schedule A will be amended to include a total annual funding allocation for each NP 1.0 FTE of $125,000. This funding allocation ensures NP services are supported in the PCN and allows for NPs to build their own patient panels. PCNs are responsible for budgeting for costs in excess of the $125,000 funding allocation from the PCN NP Support Program. The following is an example of how the NP funding allocation works.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Calculation</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total PCN NP Amount</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0 FTE NP x $125,000 = $125,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCN Per Capita Funding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP panel of 750 x $62 per capita = - $46,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PCN NP Support Program Supplement Amount:</strong></td>
<td>$78,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If a PCN has a NP with a 1.0 FTE and a patient panel of 750, at $62 per capita the PCN would receive $46,500. The PCN NP Support Program would provide a supplement amount of $78,500. This would provide a Total PCN NP support payment amount of $125,000 for 1.0 FTE.
Enrolment & Application Process

The application process for enrolment in the PCN NP Support Program is detailed below.

All PCNs will be required to complete Step 1 of the application process in order to enrol in the PCN NP Support Program.

Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Step 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PCNs wanting to apply to add a new NP under the PCN NP Support Program</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCNs with existing NPs registered to the PCN that are not applying for a new NP</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCNs with existing NPs registered to the PCN that are applying for a new NP under the PCN NP Support Program</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCNs without a NP registered to the PCN and do not wish to apply to the PCN NP Support Program at this time</td>
<td>✓*</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*While these PCNs are not required to complete the amending agreement, all PCNs are encouraged to submit the amending agreement to enable ease of application to the PCN NP Support Program in the future.*

Step 1: Amended Primary Care Network Grant Agreement

All PCNs must complete this step in order to enrol in the PCN NP Support Program. The amending agreement enables all NPs registered to a PCN to establish their own panels via the coding of patient encounter (formerly known as “shadow billing”) and for PCNs to receive the supplement to the per capita funding for the NP panel. However, all PCNs are encouraged to submit the Amending PCN Grant Agreements.

All Amending PCN Grant Agreements must be returned signed to Alberta Health by March 15, 2019.
Step 2: Expression of Interest Form

Phase One: All PCNs interested in adding a NP as part of the PCN NP Support Program for the 2019-20 fiscal year must submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) Form to Alberta Health by July 12, 2019.

Alberta Health will review and evaluate completed EOI Forms based on the criteria below. PCNs that currently have NPs registered to a PCN do not have to complete Step 2 unless they wish to add a new NP position. All current NPs registered to a PCN will be enrolled to the PCN NP Support Program in Step 1.

Phase Two: Information and application timelines for the 2020-21 fiscal year will be available later in 2019.

Criteria & Approval

To be considered for adding a new NP as part of the PCN NP Support Program, the PCN applicant must meet the following criteria:

- Must agree to:
  - Register the new NP(s) to a PCN; and
  - Set up the new NP(s) to code patient encounters (previously known as “shadow billing”).

  (Information about the procedures for coding patient encounters is available by contacting PCNops@gov.ab.ca.)

- Must explain how the supplement to per capita funding for the NP’s panel will:
  - Ensure sustainable improvements in services in one or more of the following areas:
    - Increase access to primary health care (e.g. after hours, weekends, rural and remote areas);
    - Meet un-met demand for primary health care services;
    - Provide care to underserved populations; and
    - Support chronic disease management.
- Utilize NPs as autonomous primary health care providers in community-based settings; and

- Align with the objectives of the Zone PCN Service Plan.

(It is understood the Zone PCN Service Plans are still under development and will evolve over time and the objectives may change.)

Assessment of need and prioritization of requests will be based on the Primary Health Care Indicators outlined in the Alberta Health Primary Health Care Community Profile: Health Data and Summary, found here:


Specific indicators that will be included in the assessment and prioritization are:

- Demographics;
- Chronic disease prevalence;
- Mortality;
- Emergency service utilization; and
  - Canadian Triage and Acuity Scale; and
  - Emergency visits.
- Primary health care indicators of community care needs.

Alberta Health will also consider health service planning data from other sources including, but not limited to, health workforce needs data and other Alberta Health indicators.

Once the EOI forms have been reviewed, Alberta Health will notify successful PCNs.

**Step 3: Business Plan Amendments**

All PCNs, both those with existing NPs registered to the PCN and those approved to add new NPs, will be required to submit a Business Plan Amendment to Alberta Health. Amended PCN

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1 *Scope of Practice for Nurse Practitioners* (College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta, 2017).
Annual Budgets and amended PCN Business Plan Amendment templates and guidelines will be available, which will include a separate line item for the PCN NP Support Program funding.

Detailed PCN Nurse Practitioner Support Program Reporting Information

Changes to the Four Cut Methodology

The revised four cut funding methodology for NPs will be effective April 1, 2019. New codes and procedures for coding of patient encounters (formerly known as “shadow billing”) will be provided to PCNs prior to April 1, 2019. The three-year look back will be in effect.

The revised four cut will include the following changes for NPs:

Cut 1
Patients who have seen one provider (includes family physicians, pediatrician and NPs) only are assigned to that provider.

Cut 2
Patients who have seen more than one provider are assigned to the provider who had the majority visits.

Cut 3
Patients who have seen multiple providers the same number of times are assigned to the provider who did the last physical exam.

Cut 4
Patients who have seen multiple providers the same number of times and had no physical exam are assigned to the provider who saw the patient last.
Payment Schedule and Methodology

Payments for NP funding will be allocated equally between the April and October per capita funding payment as set out in the PCN Grant Agreement. The first 2019-20 PCN NP Support Program payment will be released in the October 2019 per capita payment. Payment for 2020-21 will occur as per the regular PCN payment schedule in April and October.

The following is an example of the payment schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Payment Type</th>
<th>Calculation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Per Capita Payment</td>
<td>(NP panel size) x $31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supplement Payment</td>
<td>$62,500 – (Per Capita Payment Amount)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Per Capita Payment</td>
<td>(NP panel size) x $31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supplement Payment</td>
<td>$62,500 – (Per Capita Payment Amount)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Below is an example of an annual payment cycle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Payment Type</th>
<th>Calculation</th>
<th>Payment Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Per Capita Payment</td>
<td>750 x $31 = $23,250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supplement Payment</td>
<td>$62,500 – $23,250 = + $39,250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total April Payment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>$62,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Per Capita Payment</td>
<td>750 x $31 = $23,250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supplement Payment</td>
<td>$62,500 – $23,250 = + $39,250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total October Payment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>$62,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total Annual Payment (April + October)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>$125,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If any adjustments due to NP panel size or final FTE utilization need to be made to the overall per capita payment, it will occur the following October based on the Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements.

Unused NP funding falls outside the scope of the Operational Stability Fund. A separate PCN NP Support Program Schedule will be added to the PCN Annual Report Template. PCNs cannot retain unused funds.

**Operational Documents**

Activities supported by the PCN NP Support Program funding are subject to PCN policy.

As per the Grant Agreement, all PCNs are expected to provide their operational documents (Business Plans, Business Plan Amendments, Annual Budgets, Annual Reports and Mid-Year Reports) and report the use of PCN per capita funding and any additional support provided to the PCN from Alberta Health.

Alberta Health will be providing updated operational documents to reflect the PCN NP Support Program.

**Business Plan Renewals (2020-23)**

PCNs will provide a description of the programs and services being supported by per capita funding and supplement to the per capita funding for the NP panel.

The Business Plan will indicate how the NP will ensure sustainable improvements in services in one or more of the following areas:

- Increase access to primary health care (e.g. after hours, weekends, rural and remote areas);
- Meet un-met demand for primary health care services;
- Provide care to underserved populations; and
- Support chronic disease management.

The PCN Business Plan will provide a breakdown of how these funds will be utilized over their three-year business cycle (budgeted FTE, remuneration, other expenses).

**Business Plan Amendments**

All amendments to programs and services supported by NP Support Program funding are subject to a submission of a Business Plan Amendment if there is an approved three-year Business Plan.
**Annual Budgets**

All submitted Annual Budgets will provide a financial forecast of the amount of revenue and expenses budgeted for the PCN NP Support Program. This funding should reflect programs and services described in the PCN’s renewed Business Plan.

The funding received by the PCN from Alberta Health will be reflected in a separate line item as NP Operational Revenue (Statement of Operations).

Projected expenses will be detailed in Priority Initiative Expenses and Central Allocations (Statement of Operations).

**Annual Reports**

PCNs will provide a fiscal year-end summary of the programs and services supported by funding from the PCN NP Support Program. PCNs must provide detailed information on how the program supports the PCN objectives.

Annual Reports will include a separate schedule/note to the financial section detailing fiscal year end financials for:

- Approved per capita funding and the supplement to the per capita funding for the PCN NP program; and

- Unexpended (surplus) grant funds from the PCN NP Support Program.

**Mid-Year Reports**

All submitted Mid-Year Reports will provide a mid-year summary of PCN revenue and expenses for the PCN NP Support Program to September 30th of the fiscal year.

Any variance in per capita spending and supplemental funding from the PCN NP Support Program will clarify how the rest of the funds will be utilized within the second half of the fiscal year.