Alberta Critical Worker Benefit –

Guidelines for the Preventive Social Services

About the Alberta Critical Worker Benefit

The Alberta Critical Worker Benefit is intended to recognize the service of select workers identified as critical for the delivery of basic services to Albertans in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Social and Community Service workers supporting direct, front line services and programs for vulnerable Albertans may be eligible for a one-time lump-sum payment of $1,200. The Government of Alberta will provide workers’ payments to their employers, and employers are responsible for distributing the payments to their workers.

Please ensure that you have read and understand the following Alberta Critical Worker Benefit Guidelines.

## Approval Process, Grant Agreement and Reporting

**Approval Process**

* Agency will review the Guidelines document and determine eligibility of their staff.
* Agency will submit to CSS.FCSSAdmin@gov.ab.ca a listing of all eligible staff with hours worked during the eligibility period. Employee information will be submitted in Schedule C – Data and Invoice Template.
* Department staff will review the submitted employee information and prepare a Grant Funding Agreement with the Agency.

**Grant Funding Agreement and Payments**

* This is a legally binding agreement, which outlines the obligations of the Government of Alberta and the employer, and must be digitally signed by an authorized signing official for the employer. The agreement is not in force until it has been approved and signed by the Minister or the Minister’s delegate.
* Agency will receive direct payment from the Government of Alberta. Agency will then distribute a one-time lump-sum payment of $1,200 to each eligible worker. Eligible workers will receive the payment through their employer’s existing payroll systems.
* The benefit is taxable income. The payment does not impact eligibility for Employment Insurance (EI). Mandatory employment deductions such as EI, Canada Pension Plan (CPP) will be deducted from the $1,200 benefit. An eligible worker is subject to the same tax rules as other Canadian residents.

**Reporting**

* Once the Agency receives the grant funding, the Agency must certify that each worker received payment within four weeks from the date the grant was received.
* The Agency will be required to submit a signed Schedule B Certification of Funding, which attests the grant was used for the purposes established in the guidelines and agreement.
* A completed Schedule C Data and Invoice Template outlining all payments made to individual employees will also be required to be submitted within four weeks from the date the grant was received.

Eligibility Criteria

**Eligibility Period**

Within a 16 week period from October 12, 2020 to January 31, 2021.

**Employer Eligibility**

An employer must meet all of the following criteria:

* Be located and operating in a community in Alberta.
* Be operating in one of the following workplace settings identified in the Eligible Occupations resource on the next page. These may include:
	+ Family violence
	+ Sexual violence
	+ Home supports
	+ Outreach supports
	+ Senior supports
	+ Social supports

**Ineligible Employers**

* Operators not in one of the above listed workplace settings.
* Federal, provincial or municipal governments.
* Political parties.
* Provincial or federal Crown agencies, boards and commissions or corporations.

**Worker Eligibility**

From October 12, 2020 to January 31, 2021:

* Worked in Alberta and legally authorized to work in Canada.
* Worked for an eligible employer in one of the eligible occupations.
* Accumulated 300 paid hours with an eligible employer.
	+ Hours accumulated before October 12, 2020 or after January 31, 2021 cannot be counted towards the 300 hours.
	+ The 300 hours must be accumulated from a single employer (the same employer applying for the grant on behalf of the worker).
	+ The 300 hours may include overtime, paid sick leave and paid vacation during the eligibility period. Overtime and hours worked during statutory holidays will be treated as straight-time.

There is no specific wage requirement for workers in this sector.

Workers that are no longer employed with the employer (e.g. retired or resigned) are eligible for the program should they meet program eligibility requirements.

An eligible worker can receive this funding one-time only and cannot receive it from more than one employer. It is the Agency’s responsibility to ensure their employees do not receive more than one benefit payment.

**Ineligible Workers**

* Management staff ineligible even if they temporarily worked on the front line during the period of eligibility.
* Non-front line staff are ineligible even if they temporarily worked on the front line during the period of eligibility.
* Business owners, contractors, self-employed persons and sole proprietors cannot receive the Critical Worker Benefit for themselves.
* Workers who do not meet the eligibility criteria.

**Eligible Occupations**

To be eligible a worker must have worked for an eligible employer in one of the following occupations.

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| **Eligible Occupations:**  |
| NOC\* Description |
| 4212 Social and community service workers |
| 4214 Early childhood educators and assistants |
| 4215 Instructors of persons with disabilities |
| 4412 Home support workers, housekeepers and related occupations |
| 6322 Cooks |
| 6711 Food counter attendants, kitchen helpers and related support occupations |
| 6731 Light duty cleaners |
| 6733 Janitors, caretakers and building superintendents |
| 6741 Dry cleaning, laundry and related occupations |
| 7513 Taxis and limousine drivers and chauffeurs (driver for client living in direct operations) |
| 7512 Bus drivers |

\*The National Occupation Classification (NOC) is Canada’s national system for describing occupations. Each occupation has a 4 digit NOC code to help the employer identify their worker’s occupation eligibility. For more information and descriptions of occupations and NOCs, visit the [Government of Canada](https://noc.esdc.gc.ca/Home/Welcome/fcdf63ac8326448eb0045481d807564e?GoCTemplateCulture=en-CA).

Employer Responsibilities

**Employers that receive the Alberta Critical Worker Benefit must commit to:**

* Ensure the funds are accurately and reliably distributed to their eligible workers as soon as they receive them from the provincial government. It is required that workers receive the entire $1,200 (less any mandatory employment payroll deductions) as a one-time lump-sum payment on a regular pay cheque. The benefit is considered income.
* Confirm with the Government of Alberta that eligible employees received payment of the benefit no later than four weeks, subject to any extension granted by the Minister, from the employer receiving their funding by submitting a signed Schedule B Certification of Funding. Refer to the Reporting section.
* Make best efforts to provide the pay to eligible workers who worked during the eligibility period and are no longer employed with the organization. Employers should ensure they have the ability to distribute the funds to these eligible workers.
* Provide T4 slips to all workers that receive the benefit which identifies that the worker has received this payment as income.
* Make sure funds are not used to reimburse the employer for any regular paid wages, top-up pay that they independently committed to their workers prior to the announcement of the Critical Worker Benefit, or any other forms of COVID-19 related payments to workers, or provide payment to ineligible workers. The Critical Worker Benefit is not a wage subsidy for employers.

Employers will be responsible for resolving any worker issues, such as eligible hours worked to count towards program eligibility. The Critical Worker Benefit does not provide dispute resolution services, including in relation to eligibility disputes, an employer’s failure to apply on behalf of a particular worker, or the employer’s administration of the Grant. The Critical Worker Benefit does accept complaints, and may audit employers, to ensure that the Grant is provided in accordance with the Grant agreement, which includes these Guidelines.

Names of employers receiving funding from the program will be published on the Government of Alberta website. Sharing this information publically will ensure that all eligible workers are aware of their employers receiving funding for the Alberta Critical Worker Benefit.

## Audit and Compliance

Grants will be carefully audited by the Government of Alberta, or their authorized representatives, upon reasonable notice to the recipient to ensure accuracy of the information provided and integrity of the program. If the Minister or Minister’s delegate is of the opinion that any false or misleading information has been provided or the funds are not paid to the workers, the Minister or Minister’s delegate may require the employer to repay any grant funds received. The employer may also be ineligible from applying for future grants.

## Information Collection and Program Evaluation

The Government of Alberta requires the collection of certain information from employers and workers to administer this program and audit its outcomes. By participating in this program, employers and workers agree to provide relevant personal information for the purpose of the program. Employers must comply with relevant privacy legislation and also inform workers of the disclosure of their personal information.

## Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Statement

The personal information collected through the Critical Worker Benefit is collected for the purpose of administering the Critical Worker Benefit by Alberta Labour and Immigration. Part of this administration includes conducting an audit, which may be conducted by an external party, after the Critical Worker Benefit has concluded, to ensure applicants met their obligations and the Critical Worker Benefit met its objectives. The personal information collection is authorized by section 33(c) of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. If you have any questions about the collection of personal information, you may contact the Director, Employment Programs at 780-427-6496 or by email at cwb@gov.ab.ca.

Appendix: Definitions for the Critical Worker Benefit

**Basic Services:** Services critical to Albertans while responding to COVID-19 pandemic.

**Contractor:** A person that operates a separate business and who enters into a contract for service. The relationship is temporary and the length of the relationship is often defined in the terms of the contract.

**Critical Workers:** Workers who were essential to the supply of food and medicines, or education services, health services or social services and who had potential high exposure to COVID-19 through work environments with high contact to the general public and surfaces and/or worked in close physical contact to others.

**Regular Paid Wage:** Includes base salary/wage, paid by an employer for a payroll period either at an hourly rate or in a predetermined fixed amount. Commission, tips, bonuses or other wage top-ups for the purpose of this program are not included in an employee’s regular wage.

**Self-employed:** An individual that operates their own business and generates revenue through selling products or services instead of working for an employer that pays a salary or a wage. A self-employed individual earns income through conducting profitable operations from a trade or business they operate directly.

**Sole Proprietor:** Sole proprietorship exists when an individual is the sole owner of a business and assumes all debts and obligations incurred by the enterprise. A sole proprietorship is an unincorporated business and has unlimited liability.

**Worker**: An employed person who works at a job or business and who is paid to work in the context of an employer-employee relationship. Under the Critical Worker Benefit, the worker is the paid employee. A worker does not include being a volunteer.