

Deployment of Health Care Providers Between Health Authorities During a Provincial State of Emergency: The Emergency Health Provider Registry

Background

On July 7, 2017, the Government of BC declared a provincial state of emergency in response to approximately 230 wildfires burning in BC. As a result, the Health Emergency Coordination Centre (HECC) was convened for the first time as the coordination and communication link within the overall provincial emergency management structure. Through the activation of the HECC, the Emergency Health Provider Registry (EHPR) was created for the coordination of health human resources across affected health authorities (HAs). The 2017 *After Action Report*¹ recommended this Registry be an ongoing resource for any type of emergency – natural or human-caused to address patient surge (as the result of hospital evacuations) and to relieve HA staff to ensure provider and patient safety and care quality.

Note: Since 2017, several improvements have been made to the EHPR. Of particular note was in 2020 when it was expanded to include non-health authority registrants.

Guiding Principles – The Emergency Health Provider Registry (Registry)

- HEMBC is accountable for the activation and deactivation protocol that determines when an emergency warrants the need to open and close the Registry to enable inter-HA deployment of health care providers to provide relief staffing in affected HAs.
- All health care providers will be offered the opportunity to voluntarily register for potential deployment to a different HA during the emergency.
- Registration is open to:
 - Health authority employees;
 - Health care providers in good standing (meet fitness to practice requirements) with their health profession regulatory college or credentialing body, who usually work in private practice and would like to be deployed to work in a health authority setting;
 - Students, including medical residents and employed student nurses; and,
 - Retired health care providers who are:
 - registered on a temporary emergency basis with their health profession regulatory college or credentialing body and are willing to work in a health authority; or,
 - unregistered but are able to support an emergency response by providing non-clinical care; or,
- unregistered but who meet the requirements outlined in the Provincial Health Officer Order to provide or support COVID-19 immunization services – provided the declared public health emergency is in effect. The Registry is provincial in scope (incl. FHA, FNHA, IHA, NHA, PHSA, VCHA, VIHA).
- The Registry is currently maintained in a centralized provincial database hosted by HealthLink BC.
- The receiving-HAs will utilize all available staff before accessing the Registry.
- Supervisor approval is required prior to any HA registrant being deploying to a different HA to avoid disruption to staffing and other planning requirements. While recommended, supervisor approval is not initially required when the HA employee registers into the EHPR.

¹ MoH Emergency Management Unit, Feb 2018 After Action Report

- It is strongly recommended that all employees registering on the EHPR be fully immunized against COVID-19. Upon deployment, all prevailing infection prevention and control policies must be followed by deployed staff, including mandatory immunization in some circumstances. The receiving HA reserves the right to require immunization prior to deployment, in accordance with the current COVID-19 conditions in their region.
- HAs will respect the collective agreement provisions for health care providers wishing to be deployed including, but not limited to,
 - deployment to the same or a substantially similar position/classification to the one they current hold (e.g., Level 4 nurse assigned to Level 4 or equivalent or lesser position/classification consistent with the employee's skills, competencies and scope).
 - compensation during the term of the deployment at their current salary during the deployment period including no interruption to benefits coverage (e.g., LTD, WCB), vacation and seniority accruals.
 - receiving HAs may, at their discretion, provide payment of costs related to travel to and from the affected HAs and/or accommodation at the prescribed rates for the health care provider's type/classification.
- HAs will establish a reconciliation process to recover funds during and/or at the conclusion of the emergency. In some cases, the Ministry of Health may consider reimbursement of HA cost for deployments deemed to be extraordinary circumstances.
- All receiving-HAs understand and agree to the accountability for workplace safety for all health care providers deployed to their sites from sending-HAs.
- Physician compensation could be loosely based off the Northern and Isolation Travel Assistance Program.²

Proposed Provider Registration and Deployment

1. Upon activation of the Registry, the HAs will, at their discretion, issue a notice advising their employees and physicians of the opportunity to voluntarily register for deployment to another HA to provide relief staffing during the emergency.
2. Interested health care providers self-register through the following link: <https://forms.hlth.gov.bc.ca/emergency-health-provider-registry>
3. The Staffing Office within each HA is granted permission from HealthLink BC to access the EHPR to review health care providers who express interest in deployment. A minimum of two people must have access to the EHPR (this is a business rule of HealthLink BC).
4. The Staffing Office in each receiving-HA will access the EHPR as required to review health care providers expressing interest in deployment.
5. If a match is made, the receiving-HA Staffing Office will contact the sending-Staffing Office to coordinate the deployment. HAs will develop processes to communicate with the health care provider, appropriate Supervisor and other requirements to facilitate or reject the provider's availability for deployment.
6. The receiving-HA will ensure the health care provider receives a thorough orientation to their deployment site to ensure employee and patient safety. Records of complete site-specific health

² <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/practitioner-professional-resources/physician-compensation/rural-practice-programs/northern-and-isolation-travel-assistance-outreach-program>

and safety orientations will be forwarded to the sending-HA to update the employee's status in the Registry and meet WorkSafe BC requirements.

7. At the conclusion of the deployment, the HAs are responsible to work through the administrative processes relating to payroll, budget transfers, etc.

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