



Our Mission To provide quality services which enhance the lives of people with disabilities.

# Memo

**To:** All Employees

**From:** Quest Directors

**Date:** May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**Re:** Covid and Critical Worker Benefit Updates

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Dear Employees, please review the following updates concerning Covid-19 regulations and the Critical Worker Benefit.

## General Updates

Based on the Premier's updates May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the province of Alberta has seen an influx of Covid-19 cases. The new regulations do not overly impact the Quest Community however we are seeing significant staffing disruptions with multiple staff being off work (close contacts, symptomatic, childcare etc.). Please continue to follow all health-related orders as what you do in your personal time can directly impact the workplace.

In addition to staffing pressures, we will be modifying outdoor expectations in compliance with the 5-person limit. We ask that staff and individuals follow all PPE expectations to reduce the likelihood of transmission or being considered a close contact if an individual or coworker tests positive.

## Critical Worker Benefit

To date, the Critical Worker Benefit Phase 1 funds have been released to all eligible employees. The Agency has applied for the Phase 2 funds from the Government of Alberta however we are still waiting for these funds to be issued. Once the funds are released to the Agency, we will be sending out the Phase 2 benefits to all eligible staff via electronic deposit.

There has been confusion surrounding the Critical Worker benefits. We encourage you to review the attachments below. A briefing was held March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021 where frequently asked questions were reviewed by our service sector authorities. Additionally, you can find more information on the Government of Alberta website <https://www.alberta.ca/critical-worker-benefit.aspx>

Thank you for your patience and understanding,

Team of Directors



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## Questions and Answers from the Critical Worker Benefit (CWB) Orientation Session held virtually, March 8, 2021

**Q: What is the purpose of the variance field and why is the information required?**

A: The variance field displays the difference between the funds provided through the Phase I grant and those actually distributed. This variance (if any) will be carried forward to the Phase II calculation and used to offset any employer benefit expenses.

**Q: Does the same apply if an employee works for a private sector employer as well as a Service Provider and is receiving a benefit from that employer. Do we have to report this?**

A: The federal eligibility requirements stipulate an employee can receive the CWB only once, whether from a private organization or through a PDD service provider. If employer/Service provider is aware of an employee having received CWB through another employer and as such the staff member is ineligible as a result of receiving this benefit through private means/another employer, it is not necessary to include this employee on the report.

**Q: Just for clarification only employees making max 25.00/hr are eligible?**

A: No hourly maximum is in effect for the purposes of the Disability Services sector eligibility.

**Q: Will agencies be compensated for pay-outs provided using existing scope within the PDD or FSCD contract?**

A: Service Providers were permitted to provide top-ups to staff outside of the federal government initiatives where scope existed within current contracts. This decision was at the discretion of the service provider. The intent of both the Phase I Wage Incentive Top Up and Phase II Critical Worker Benefit is to not duplicate any benefit already provided up to a combined maximum of \$1200. Any employee that did not receive a top-up to the maximum of \$1200 and meets all eligibility requirements should be included on the revised Schedule C data collection spreadsheet for consideration.

**Q: If the employee is maxed out on Phase 1 at \$1200, do we need to provide their hours in phase 2?/If an employee has already received \$1200 in phase 1, would we still have to record the hours from Oct 12 - Jan 31?**

A: To receive the additional 7.66% employer benefit component, it is necessary to include the amount paid to this staff member during Phase I to ensure appropriate compensation even if the individual has already received the maximum top up.

**Q: How do we know if the employee already received the benefit through another GOA program, many employees have multiple jobs? / How can we check if the employee already received CWB from other GOA program/ministry?**

A: This requires notification on the employee's part, since a central repository of all applicants across all sectors/ministries does not exist. The responsibility of the employer/service provider is to ask the question of the employee and reflect the response accordingly on the Schedule C. It will be the



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**Q: Where do we record the employer portion of benefits (EI and CPP) on the form so that we can recoup those dollars?**

A: Please refer to cell I5. This cell will auto calculate based on the information and eligibility entered for Phase I and II information.

**Q: If a staff is on mat leave are they eligible for the CWB?**

A: Staff who may be on leave (i.e. maternity) and who are scheduled to return to the employer following the leave term, are eligible to be included in the CWB submission.

**Q: What happens if we have already completed and submitted the first application (Schedule C)? Do we have to re-submit the second spreadsheet?**

A: The initial Schedule C document only captures details regarding the Phase I roll-out. Additional information is included in the revised Schedule C which determines eligibility and resulting incentive for Phase II including the 7.66%. Both documents are therefore required.

**Q: Is there a 300 hour minimum for phase 1?**

A: The minimum applies to determination of eligibility in Phase II only. If an individual worked 200 hours in Phase I and no hours in Phase II, they remain eligible for the top up provided in Phase I but would not be eligible for the additional top-up to \$1200 in Phase II CWB. To receive the maximum top of \$1200, an employee must have worked a minimum of 300 hours in either Phase I or Phase II.

**Q: Service Providers paid out an employer benefit portion in Phase I. Do we deduct this from any surplus given back?**

A: Service Providers will be compensated in the amount of 7.66% of total incentive funds paid out for Phase I and II. This amount is included in the calculation in the header area in I5 and should be submitted as part of the revised Schedule C.

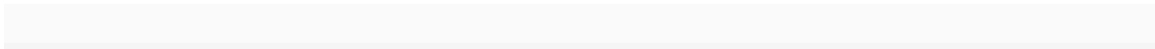
**Q: Why does PDD need the info in Columns E&F?**

A: This information supports the calculation for the combined maximum of \$1200 per staff. Including top-ups provided using PDD or FSCD funds on contract, Phase I and Phase II, the total individual top up per staff member can not exceed \$1200.

**Q: If the company just gave a one-time top up that is NOT PDD funds do we have to account for those funds?**

A: No. It is not necessary to report on top-ups that were provided from non PDD or non FSCD sources private sources. You must declare if the source of the top up were funding from another government Ministry or program.

**Q: If the agency covered the cost of a top up within our current contact not asking for extra, are the employees still eligible for the second grant?**





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A: If funds from within the PDD or FSCD contract were used to provide a top up, regardless of whether the funding came from existing scope, it is necessary to record these hours in columns E and F. Employees may be eligible to top up to a total combined benefit of \$1200.

**Q: Do we only need to complete this once, rather than one time for Phase 1 and one time for Phase 2?**

A: The revised Schedule C document will capture data for both Phase I and Phase II.

**Q: Do we need to apply for a New Grant for the CWB?**

A: By completing the revised Schedule C document, Community and Social Services will be able to determine your eligibility. Funding will be distributed using a grant agreement.

**Q: Can you please clarify what we put in for Q10 (exclude any payouts provided under the contract in column "F") as in the Detailed page, if we input the incentive paid in Phase 1, it generates a negative amount even if the employee qualifies for Phase 2 as well?**

A: This cell should contain the amount of funding paid to the staff member as a result of any eligibility under Phase I. It should not include any top-ups provided using PDD or FSCD contract funds (these are accounted for elsewhere in the template).

**Q: If the Employee no longer works for your agency why are we required to add them to this report (G11)?**

A: The template is developed in a way to also prompt a service provider to situations where an employee may not be eligible for a recognition pay or CWB. If an employee no longer works for your agency, they should not receive recognition pay or CWB under either Phase I or Phase II.