

PHYSICIAN INCOME STABILITY PROGRAM

As published in the April 27th MSI Physicians Bulletin, Physicians have until May 7/20 to submit a completed declaration form if they would like to participate in the Physician Stabilization Program. Due to higher than expected call volumes and email requests, there may be a delay in responding to incoming inquiries. If you do not receive a response to your inquiry by May 7, please be assured that you will have the opportunity to submit the declaration form once MSI is in contact with you.

PHYSICIAN INCOME STABILITY PROGRAM Q&A

Q: What will be included in MSI's calculation of my 2019 billings?

A: MSI FFS billings will include all of a physician's billings to the MSI program for codes in the MSI tariff of fees for insured medical services, excluding the following billings:

- The unattached patient bonus
- Workers' Compensation
- Inpatient care billings (if the physician is a core team member of an approved Community Hospital Inpatient Program (CHIP) site), and
- Primary Maternity Care (PMC) billings if the physician is a core team member of a PMC.

If a physician has either increased or decreased their regular work hours since 2019, the base income will be adjusted accordingly (e.g., if a physician has gone from full-time to part-time, or vice versa).

Q: Are chronic disease management codes excluded from the calculation?

A: No, payment for chronic disease management codes are included in the 2019 FFS calculation.

Q: Where can I obtain information on my 2019 billings so I can decide which option to choose?

A: If physicians need information about their 2019 billing they can contact MSI at 902-496-7011 or toll-free 1-866-553-0585 (option 1/option 1) or email msiproviders@medavie.ca.

Q: Will extended leaves in 2019 be taken into account when the income for the Physician Stabilization Program is calculated?

A: Physicians will need to request special consideration when submitting the declaration form.

Q: When will the first payment for this program be?

A: The first biweekly payment under the program will be June 3/20. Physician declaration forms are due back to MSI by May 7, 2020.

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Q: Where can I get more information on COVID-19 deployment?

A: The Nova Scotia Health Authority is managing deployment efforts. Physicians seeking more information about deployment can contact physicianrecruit@nshealth.ca.

Q: I am a family doctor who has been working in a COVID assessment clinic. To date, I have been paid at the GP sessional rate. Is the work I have done so far eligible to be paid at the pandemic sessional rate?

A: Yes, the new pandemic sessional rate of \$180.60 now applies to all COVID assessment clinic work.

Q: Can I continue to bill FFS for my evening and weekend on call work?

A: If a physician enters into the Physician Stabilization Program, these claims are to be shadow billed as they are included in the income within this program, with the exception for PMC and CHIP.

Q: Can this program be prorated for part-time physicians?

A: Yes, this program can be prorated for part time physicians.

Q: Are FFS physicians who work at walk-in clinics able to apply for this program?

A: Yes.

Q: I am a new physician who began practising late in early 2020. Am I eligible to participate?

A: Physicians who started their practice in Nova Scotia after 1 January 2020 will be eligible for a base income of \$9,973 bi-weekly, based on a full-time practice, plus any COVID-19 deployment compensation as detailed in the *Program Terms*. That amount will be pro-rated for part time physicians. Please indicate this special circumstance on your physician declaration.

Q: Can I opt into the program now and opt out later?

A: As per the program terms, a physician may terminate their participation in the program *after July 1, 2020*, by providing written notice to the Minister at least two weeks in advance. The Minister may terminate a physician's participation in the program as described in clause 25 by providing written notice to the physician.

Q: What are the accountability expectations within this program? Do I have to shadow bill?

A: Physicians are required to shadow bill for all regular office or hospital-based services delivered within their practice while participating in the program. Shadow billings remain subject to billing rules and billing audit provisions.

Q: I don't want to opt into this program. Can I still participate in COVID-19 deployment?

A: Participation in the income stability program is voluntary. If you choose not to participate you can still be deployed and compensated for COVID-19 work. Please contact the NSHA to organize your COVID-19 deployment work.

PHYSICIAN INCOME STABILITY PROGRAM Q&A

Q: Can I refuse deployment?

A: A physician may refuse a deployment request only in one of the following circumstances:

- the work is outside the physician's individual competence or contrary to the physician's license or any restrictions or conditions imposed by the College
- a lack of PPE results in an extraordinary risk to the physician
- the deployment would require the physician to breach public health orders (e.g. a requirement to self-isolate)
- the deployment would require the physician to travel greater than 120 kilometres one-way, and such travel would result in undue hardship to the physician (as determined by the Department).

Q: If I refuse deployment, am I still eligible to participate in this program?

A: When deploying physicians, the health authority or Minister will make reasonable efforts to accommodate limitations on the Physician's availability for deployment. If a physician refuses a deployment request, the physician must give notice in writing to the health authority and to the Minister outlining the reason for the refusal (and provide any further information or supporting information requested by the health authority and/or Minister) and remain available for other deployment as needed.

Q: I have an AFP/APP as well as FFS billings for exclusions to my contract. Am I eligible for the stabilization funding for my FFS contract exclusions and my AFP/APP funding will continue?

A: The income stability program will only apply to the FFS portion of your earnings. Physicians will remain eligible to receive other payments that are typically payable in addition to a physician's fee-for-service claims including:

- Master Agreement incentive programs
- Leadership/administrative stipends
- Pathology List B payments
- Facility on-call stipends
- Workers' compensation billings
- Payment under other programs or funding models for which the physician is eligible (including the Primary Maternity Care (PMC) Program)
- Community Hospital Inpatient Program (CHIP), payment for Emergency Department or Hospitalist shifts, part-time APP or C/AFP entitlements, etc.)

Q: Can I access other federal or provincial wage subsidy programs on top of this?

A: This program does not restrict physicians from participating in other provincial or federal COVID stabilization initiative. However, participating physicians' consent to the disclosure of any information concerning financial assistance, support, insurance or indemnity of any kind received by the Physician in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic to the Minister. This could include COVID-19 pandemic related funding from the Government of Canada, the Government of Nova Scotia, the government of any other Canadian province, and any of their Ministers, Departments or related corporations or entities, and any other person or entity. It is recommended that physicians read the guidelines of the other provincial or federal programs carefully to ensure eligibility.

PHYSICIAN INCOME STABILITY PROGRAM Q&A

Q: Can I take a vacation or leave of absence if I participate in this program?

A: A physician participating in this program may take a short leave of absence from practice during the pandemic, if approved in writing in advance by the Minister. Otherwise the physician must remain in NS (except as authorized to leave for work required by the health authority or the Department or for those who regularly commute to work in NS from NB). Please direct inquiries to Vimy Glass at Vimy.Glass@novascotia.ca

Q: If my shadow billings under the program period exceed what I was paid, will I be eligible for a top-up for the difference between what I was paid and the value of my shadow billings?

A: Physicians will shadow bill for all services delivered within their regular practice while participating in the program. If a physician shadow bills for non-deployment work more than their base income (Option 1 or Option 2), then the physician will be paid the difference. This will be paid to the physician following the end of the program.

Q: When will retroactive payments from March 13 to the implementation date be made?

A: All retroactive payments owing under the program (base income for the period of March 13, 2020 to the first bi-weekly pay period of the program) will be calculated and paid following termination of the program.