

Questions and Answers

Single Site Staffing Initiative - Transition Update



Ministry of
Health

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Definitions

“Single Site Orders”:	Single Site Orders have limited health sector employees to working at only one long-term care, assisted living, or provincial mental health facility since April 2020.
“COVID Leave” and “COVID Leave Site”:	<p>If an employee held multiple jobs in long-term care, assisted living, or provincial mental health facilities prior to April 2020, those employees were generally restricted from working at all but one of those facilities when the Single Site Orders were implemented.</p> <p>Employees were placed on a COVID-related unpaid leave of absence (“COVID Leave”) from sites they were restricted from working at, for the duration of the Single Site Orders. These are referred to as “COVID Leave Sites” in this document.</p>
Full Time Equivalency (FTE):	How a position or employee’s total hours compare to a full-time position. 1.0 FTE represents one full time position.
Employment status:	Employment status is either: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Regular (part-time or full-time), or- Casual (including casual employees working in temporary positions)
Relative Seniority (unionized positions/facilities only):	<p>Relative seniority means an employee’s seniority “ranking” will be restored if they return to a COVID Leave Site.</p> <p>For example, if they were 5th on the seniority list prior to being restricted from working at the facility, they will be restored to at least the 5th position through an adjustment to their seniority if they choose to return to work there when the Single Site Orders expire. Their ranking may increase if staff above them on the seniority list have left their position.</p>

End of Worksite Restriction

1. When did the requirement for staff to work at a single site end?

- The end of the worksite restriction occurred on December 31, 2022, when the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) lifted the Single Site Order.

- The intention was to end the restriction in time to help alleviate staffing as we move through the winter flu season.

2. Does the requirement for staff to work within a cluster of facilities remain?

- No, facility clusters were eliminated when the Single Site Order was lifted. There are no longer any restrictions on where staff may work.

3. Why did the restriction not end sooner?

- The timeline for ending the worksite restriction has been a joint decision by the PHO, legal counsel, and subject matter experts who have considered the public health value, as well as the labour considerations involved in unwinding the Single Site Order.
- The health and safety of clients, residents, and staff of long-term care (LTC) and assisted living (AL) facilities is a priority. Restrictions were lifted based on the most current understanding of COVID-19 and the high vaccination rate that is in these settings.

4. Will the vaccination requirement for staff remain?

- Consistent with current provincial health officer orders, health-care system workers will continue to be required to be vaccinated with a primary COVID-19 vaccine series, unless they have obtained an exemption from the provincial health officer.
- The current requirement is that staff must have received, at least 7 days previously:
 - Two doses (or a combination of doses) of an mRNA, viral vector, or protein-based vaccine, or
 - In the case of the Janssen viral vector vaccine, one dose

5. Why was the restriction lifted when there are still cases of COVID-19 in the community?

- With BC's high levels of vaccination (especially amongst health care staff, clients, and residents of LTC and AL facilities), the PHO has determined that staff with the required vaccinations may resume multi-site work.
- When the worksite restriction ended, the majority of health care staff, clients and residents of LTC and AL facilities had received their fourth dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Employee Return to COVID Leave Site(s)

6. Will employees return to their COVID Leave Site(s) once the Single Site Order is lifted?

- Employees will have the option of returning to their former employment status and FTE at their COVID Leave Site(s).
- Employees must have communicated their decision to their employer(s), by November 30, 2022.

7. What if employees do not want to return to the site they were working before the single site order, and would prefer to stay where they are currently working?

- Employees will have the option to remain at the site they are currently working.
- However, employees who have taken temporary positions away from their COVID Leave Site will not be guaranteed that these temporary positions will become permanent.
 - **Unionized employees:** If temporary position becomes permanent, it will be filled based on the selection process under the applicable collective agreement.
 - **Non-unionized employees:** If a temporary position becomes permanent, it will be filled according to the employer's established hiring process.
- Employees must communicate their decision to their employer(s), as soon as possible and no later than November 30, 2022.

8. What happens if an employee's position at their COVID Leave Site has been filled by another employee while the returning employee was on COVID Leave?

- If the position was filled temporarily, the temporary position will end, and the returning employee will resume working in the position.
- If a returning employee's position was filled permanently, and no vacancies are available, the job security provisions of the applicable collective agreement will apply.

9. Will employees be able to work more than one job?

- Yes. Once the worksite restriction is lifted, employees may work multiple jobs at multiple sites.

10. Can employees apply for permanent postings?

- Yes, employees will be able to apply for permanent postings.

11. Will employees' benefits/vacation etc. continue?

- **Unionized employees:** Employees who return to active employment at their COVID Leave Site(s) will be entitled to continue or resume uninterrupted health, welfare, and pension benefits in accordance with their collective agreement.
- **Non-unionized employees:** Employers are encouraged to work with employees returning to active employment at their COVID Leave Site(s), with regard to continuation of any benefits they may be entitled to.

12. Will seniority be maintained?

- **Unionized employees:** When employees return to their COVID Leave Site(s), their relative placement on the seniority list will be retained as it was when the worksite restriction was implemented (e.g., if an employee was 5th on seniority list when the worksite restriction began, they will be placed 5th on the list when it is lifted).
- **Non-unionized employees:** Employers are encouraged to work with employees at the site level to determine appropriate seniority rankings.

Wage Levelling

13. Will wage levelling funding continue?

- As outlined in the Minister of Health's November 2020 mandate letter, Government is committed to providing workers in long-term care and assisted living with "levelled up wages" after the pandemic ends.
- The province will continue to temporarily fund wage levelling after the Health Care Labour Adjustment (COVID-19) Order ends on December 31, 2022.

14. Which operators are eligible for wage levelling funding?

- The temporary funding for wage levelling will continue to apply to LTC and AL operators with publicly funded beds and to fully private operators.
 - However, this funding will be optional for fully private operators.
- For ALL employers who decide to continue to receive the wage levelling funding, they will be expected to match the HEABC rates and maintain the existing staffing levels at their sites.
- Employers from each site are required to provide additional information as part of their contract agreement in order to receive funding.

15. Can private operators/employers opt out of wage levelling?

- Yes, private operators/employers have the choice of whether to enter into agreements to receive funding for wage levelling.
- However, operators/employers must opt entirely in or entirely out of wage levelling, for all eligible employees at all of their facilities. There is no option to receive wage levelling funds for only a portion of eligible employees or facilities.

16. How will wage levelling funding be provided?

- Funds for wage levelling will be provided via standardized contracts between health authorities and LTC/AL operators.

17. Which staff roles will be eligible for wage levelling?

- Wage levelling will continue to apply to all directly-employed staff and all sub-contracted staff roles that are currently receiving wage levelling. The scope of current job roles receiving wage levelling does not change.
- As of January 1, 2023, directly employed (i.e., not sub-contracted) allied health staff at facilities that have government contracts for **publicly funded** beds will also be brought into scope for wage levelling.

18. What about employees not directly employed by operators?

- Sub-contracted staff roles currently in scope for the worksite restriction/wage levelling will continue to receive government funding for levelled wages on a temporary basis.

- Wage levelling will not be extended to sub-contracted staff roles that have not received it during the worksite restriction.

19. What will employees' pay rates be?

- As during Single Site Order, employers must continue to pay staff at current Health Employers Association of BC (HEABC)-negotiated rates, as funding for wage levelling will remain in place.

20. HEABC-negotiated pay rates have increased with the newly ratified collective agreements. Will employers pay staff at the new rates retroactive to the start date of the new agreements (“back pay”)?

- Unionized and non-unionized employees will receive back pay to April 1, 2022.

Staffing Data

21. Will employers still be required to upload staffing data to the BC Health Staffing website/database?

- Yes. The Information Collection Order will remain in place until the PHO determines there is no longer public health benefit in monitoring staff location, and uploads of staffing data will continue in the short-to-medium term following the end of the worksite restriction.
- There will be no change in the type of information required or frequency of uploads.

22. Why do employers need to continue reporting staffing information if staff are no longer restricted in where they can work?

- Though the worksite restriction is ending, the COVID-19 public health emergency in BC is not over.
- The PHO has determined that collection of staffing information will continue until the public health emergency situation in BC has ended.
- Continued information collection will support ongoing monitoring of multi-site work during the transition away from the worksite restriction and will facilitate a timely response should the PHO determine that a worksite restriction needs to be reinstated.

23. Who will be required to report staffing information?

- All employers (including sub-contractors) who have been required to upload staffing information during the single site initiative will continue to be required to do so until the PHO lifts the Information Collection Order.

Additional Health Measures

24. Will other restrictions on LTC/AL facilities be removed as well?

- The Single Site Order does not include other COVID-19-related restrictions and requirements currently in place for LTC/AL facilities, such as proof of vaccination, rapid antigen testing, and visitor screening. The status of these measures is determined by the PHO and is not connected to the removal of the Single Site Order.

Additional Questions can be sent to Hlth.LabourAndAgreements@gov.bc.ca