

Member update | May 2023

After Hours Coverage Program

Dear Victoria & South Island Members,

Here is an update on the FPSC After Hours Coverage Program pilot, in which our divisions are participating:

- Updated project timeline
- Initial response to the launch webinar
- What to expect when patients access the service
- What to expect when staffing the service
- What's next

Revised project timeline

While the original aspirational hope of FPBC was to launch the pilot at the end of March 2023, the work required to develop a comprehensive people, process, and technology plan for a service that will hopefully expand into a foundational component of primary care across BC proved extensive than initially envisioned.

The launch date for the After Hours Coverage Program pilot is rescheduled to Fall 2023.

The current project timeline, subject to revision, is:

1. Monthly updates about the service (starting now and continuing throughout the pilot).
2. Kick-off webinar: Key details about using the service and staffing the service and opening of sign-up forms.
3. Onboarding: Sign-up for those who want to use the service and sign-up and training for those who want to staff the service.
4. Launch: Launch of 6-month pilot.

Initial response to the launch webinar

Following FPBC's launch webinar in mid-December 2022, a survey was conducted amongst physicians in the four pilot communities. The purpose of the survey was to ensure physician interest in using and staffing such a service in order to help design the pilot. Many thanks to the UBC Digital Emergency Medicine Unit, who are co-developing the pilot's evaluation framework.

Highlights

- Across the four pilot communities, there are approximately 995 family physicians working at 174 patient medical homes (PMH) serving the needs of 558,412 attached patients. The mean self-reported panel size is 1,143.
- Among survey respondents (approximately 200), there was strong interest in both referring patients to and staffing the After Hours Coverage Program pilot.

- A majority of survey respondents (64%) indicated they would be interested in using the service with a further 23% wanting more information before making a decision.
- 24% of respondents said they were “interested” in staffing the service with a further 41% “maybe interested” once they had more information. The majority (75%) indicated that they preferred to work between one and three 3-hour shifts each month.
- The most important considerations for staffing the service were compensation, ensuring work-life balance and managing other commitments, the ability to have flexible scheduling, and the timing of shifts.
- While the study is useful, it was at a single point in time when people didn’t have all the necessary information required to make a decision. There were also differences in how each division promoted the survey to its members.

You can read more details about the survey results on the program website at fpsc.bc.ca/after-hours-coverage.

What to expect when patients access the service

If you sign up to use the service:

- You will direct your **attached** patients to call a dedicated number for after hours care (811 will continue to be the number for **unattached** patients).
- Calls will initially be triaged by HealthLink BC staff.
- For any health emergency obviously requiring an ER, patients will be directed to BC Emergency Health Services; any patients calling with administrative queries or calls otherwise outside of the scope of the service will be directed to contact their patient medical home when it opens.
- If a call is in-scope, then it will be added to a queue to receive a call-back from the physician staffing the service.
- Patients will be provided with the anticipated wait time.
- After the call is completed, a copy of the encounter note will be sent to the community family physician (FP) or nurse practitioner (NP) for the patient and uploaded to CareConnect.
- If it is felt that the patient needs to be seen urgently by their MRP (most responsible provider), then a warm FP to MRP handover will be done around 9:00 a.m. the next morning by the last FP working the service.

What to expect when staffing the service

While more information is available on the program website (fpsc.bc.ca/after-hours-coverage), some of the more common questions we have received are:

- **How long are the shifts?** Shifts are 3–4 hours in length, depending on time of day. If it works better for you to do two shifts back-to-back, that is absolutely possible; otherwise, the shorter shift length should allow you to sleep before/after your shift (our priority in staffing the clinic is those with longitudinal practices in community).

- **How many shifts do I have to sign up for/what's the maximum number?**
Fundamentally, the intent is not to create a new silo to pull people out of longitudinal care, so we will balance how many people we have signing up to take shifts. “A few shifts a month” is what we anticipate, but until we start the pilot we won't actually know. We have about 40 3-hour shifts each week to fill.
- **Am I responsible for following up on any labs/prescriptions/medical imaging I order?**
While we anticipate the need for this being VERY LOW, as this is an urgent after hours service, if you do order something, others staffing the AHCP service will handle following up during dedicated follow-up times each afternoon.

Next phase of work

Thanks to division partners and clinicians who participated in the working groups and steering committee, FPSC's completed key project phases, including requirements and service design, and are now beginning development stage. A key feature of this pilot is that by partnering with HealthLink BC, FPSC can leverage additional staff and infrastructure to lessen the burden for divisions and physicians by providing a provincial solution for patients.

A large team at HealthLink BC, supported by project managers from PHSA and Doctors of BC, are working hard to move this project forward and ensure we successfully launch this provincial-quality project as quickly as possible.

About the pilot

The After Hours Coverage Pilot is an FPSC initiative that provides family physicians and nurse practitioners with a solution supported by HealthLink BC that meets the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC requirements for after hours coverage for **longitudinal patients**. The program aims to address pain points raised by family doctors during the recent Doctors of BC engagement series (see [The Future of Primary Care: Doctors of BC 2022 Member Engagement Report](#)).

The pilot aims to launch in summer 2023 in Langley, South Okanagan Similkameen, South Island and Victoria, and Thompson Region divisions. It will run for six months. During the pilot, **attached patients** in the pilot communities will be able to call a dedicated line at HealthLink BC for after hours medical care and management from a longitudinal perspective.

With gratitude,

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After Hours Coverage Program

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