

Ministry of Health
Assistant Deputy Minister's Office
Emergency Health Services Division

5700 Yonge Street, 6th Floor
Toronto ON M2M 4K5
Tel.: 647 919-6921
www.Ontario.ca/health

Ministère de la Santé
Bureau du sous-ministre adjoint
Division des services de santé d'urgence

5700, rue Yonge, 6^e étage
Toronto ON M2M 4K5
Tél. : 647 919-6921
www.Ontario.ca/santé

January 12, 2022

MEMORANDUM TO: Ontario Health Regional Officers and Associations

FROM: **Susan Picarello**
Assistant Deputy Minister
Emergency Health Services Division
Ministry of Health

RE: Notification of Changes to the Dedicated Offload Nurses Program (DONP) Terms and Conditions

As you are aware, a growing demand for emergency department (ED) services – coupled with staffing and hospital capacity challenges due to the pandemic – are placing significant stress on our emergency health system and increasing ambulance offload time (AOT) across the province. The government remains committed to reducing ambulance offload delays, taking a multi-pronged approach to improve ambulance availability and timely emergency care for the benefit of Ontarians.

Since 2008, select municipalities have received funding through the Dedicated Offload Nurses Program (DONP) to establish nurses in hospital EDs focused on receiving and caring for patients arriving by ambulance. This initiative has helped reduce ambulance offload time (AOT) by about 38 per cent since it began. We are grateful to our nurses, paramedic services, and health partners for working together to improve Ontario's emergency health system through this program.

Given the system's current health human resource (HHR) challenges – straining Ontario's valuable nurses in particular – we have been asked by various partners to support supplementing the offload function in EDs. There is a strong need for action to broaden the eligible health professionals who can safely offload patients and assist nurses with this critical work. The shared goal is to reduce AOT and return ambulances to communities as soon as possible to serve growing 9-1-1 calls and emergency patients needing care across the province.

As a result, the Ministry of Health is expanding the pool of health professionals who can offload patients with DONP funding – providing more people with access to timely emergency care, while reducing AOT and mitigating HHR shortages. The additional health care workers being considered are regulated professionals with the required competencies. They include paramedics, community paramedics, respiratory therapists and physician assistants – in addition to nurses as currently covered under section 4.4 (c) of the Memorandum of Agreement. With this change, hospitals facing a shortage of available nurses would be able to apply DONP funding to staff offload positions in their EDs with these eligible health professionals.

We will work closely with sector associations, service providers, Ontario Health, and hospital partners to discuss the details of this change, collaborating on a plan that can be implemented quickly and safely for patients and providers.

Thank you for your continued dedication to providing quality emergency health services to people across the province. The Director of the Emergency Health Regulatory and Accountability Branch, Steven Haddad, will be reaching out this week with further details.

Sincerely,



Susan Picarello
Assistant Deputy Minister
Emergency Health Services Division

- c: Steven Haddad, Director, Emergency Health Regulatory and Accountability Branch
- Stuart Mooney, Director, Emergency Health Program Management and Delivery Branch
- Christopher Baillie, Senior Field Manager, Central East Field Office
- Shawn Wolkowski, Senior Field Manager, Southwest Field Office
- Steve O'Neil, Senior Field Manager (A), North Field Office
- Dr. Jason Prpic, Co-Chair, Ontario Base Hospital Group Medical Advisory Committee
- Maud Huiskamp, Co-Chair, Ontario Base Hospital Group Medical Advisory Committee
- Chief Peter Dundas, President, Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs (OAPC)
- Paul Charbonneau, Executive Director, Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs (OAPC)
- Monika Turner, Director of Policy, Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)
- Fern Dominelli, Executive Director, Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association
- Michelle Boileau, Chair, Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association
- Tara Wilson, Director, Hospitals Branch