

Out-of-Country Health Services Committee Information Sheet

1. What is the Out-of-Country Health Services Committee?

The Out-of-Country Health Services Committee (OOCHSC) considers applications for funding of insured medical, oral surgical and/or hospital services that are not available in Canada. Applications must be made by Alberta physicians or dentists on behalf of eligible Alberta residents.

The Oochsc was established under the *Alberta Health Care Insurance Act* and continues under the [Out-of-Country Health Services Regulation](#) (on the Queen's Printer's website www.qp.alberta.ca). The Oochsc is independent and operates at arm's length from Alberta Health and Wellness. When making funding decisions, the Oochsc is required to follow the criteria set out in the [Out-of-Country Health Services Regulation](#).

2. Who are the Oochsc members?

The Oochsc is made up of four Alberta physicians and one non-voting chair who is an employee of Alberta Health and Wellness. The physicians and the chair are appointed by the Minister of Alberta Health and Wellness.

3. Who can apply for funding for out-of-country health services?

Applications can be made **only** by an Alberta physician or dentist on behalf of an Alberta resident.

4. What conditions must be met for an application to be considered for out-of-country health services funding?

- The application must be made on behalf of an **Alberta resident** who is registered with the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan (AHCIP) and who has not opted out of the AHCIP.
- The services must be medical, oral surgical, and/or hospital services and **insured** under the AHCIP and/or the Hospitalization Benefits Plan.
- The resident must have endeavoured to receive the services in Canada, and there is documentation that the services are **not available in Canada**.
- The services **cannot be experimental or applied research**.
- The services must be **medically necessary**, according to an Alberta physician or dentist.
- Applications to the Oochsc for funding of elective services **must be made prior to receiving the services**. Elective services are defined as insured services and insured hospital services that are not provided in an emergency or in other circumstances in which medical care is required without delay.
- For insured services or insured hospital services that are not elective, an application for funding to the Oochsc may be made prior to receiving the services or **not later than 365 days** after the services were received.

Submitting an application for funding does not guarantee funding approval. All out-of-country health services funding decisions are based on medical and clinical information considered by the Oochsc and current legislation.

Please note that under the Regulation, the OCHSC may not approve payment to the patient or travel companion for out-of-country accommodation and subsistence costs, even if the OCHSC approves the application.

5. What information is required to complete an application?

Applications must be completed by an Alberta physician or dentist and must include the following documents/information:

- a) A letter of referral/support, or a completed Application Form (available online at www.health.alberta.ca/documents/OCHSC-Application-Form.pdf), including the following information:
 - The health services/treatment for which funding is requested.
 - Expected duration of the initial out-of-country health services and the dates on which the health services will be provided.
 - The number and frequency of expected out-of-country follow-up visits, if any.
 - Address of the out-of-country facility where the health services are to be obtained.
 - Name and specialty of the out-of-country physician who will provide and/or coordinate the health services.
 - The arrangements that have been made for follow-up care in Alberta or elsewhere in Canada.
- b) The reason for seeking funding for out-of-country health services and a minimum of **one** of the following to support that reason:
 - Documentation confirming that relevant health services in Alberta and elsewhere in Canada have been fully utilized.
 - Documentation confirming that the health service is not available in Alberta or elsewhere in Canada.
 - If the health service is available in Alberta or elsewhere in Canada, an explanation as to why it is not being utilized.
- c) A recent health history/summary of the patient that is relevant to the health service for which funding is requested, prepared by an Alberta physician or dentist and which **must** include:
 - The clinical diagnosis relevant to the application.
 - Any health services previously provided for the condition, when and where they were provided, and the outcome.
 - Copies of existing relevant findings and/or reports from specialists and/or consultants (in the field of medicine or dentistry relevant to the condition for which funding of health services is requested).
 - Copies of relevant diagnostic and laboratory reports.
 - If applicable, additional health services considered or explored but not pursued and the reason(s) why.
- d) Any other information relevant to the application.

Note: Do **not** include invoices, receipts or any other information related to the costs of out-of-country services with the application.

This health information is collected and will be used by the OCHSC and possibly the Out-of-Country Health Services Appeal Panel under sections 20 and 27 of the *Health Information Act* and the *Out-of-Country Health Services Regulation* for the purpose of determining the patient's eligibility for funding under the Regulation. Inquiries regarding the collection of this information may be directed to the OCHSC chair at 780-415-8744, or to the address below.

6. Where should the application be sent?

All application letters and forms, and supporting documents must be sent to:

**Chair, Out-of-Country Health Services Committee
Alberta Health and Wellness
PO Box 1360, Station Main
Edmonton AB T5J 2N3**

FAX: 780-415-0963

If you need further information please call 780-415-8744 in the Edmonton area or toll-free elsewhere in Alberta by dialling 310-0000, then 780-415-8744.

7. When can a decision on the application be expected?

Once the OCHSC chair has determined that an application is complete, the OCHSC has 60 days to assess the application and make a decision. If the application is urgent for medical reasons, the physician or dentist must state this on the application, along with the reasons for the urgency and the timeframe within which it is recommended that the health services/ treatment be initiated.

The OCHSC will send a written copy of its decision with reasons to the applicant and the patient on whose behalf the application was made, within 10 days of making its decision, excluding Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.

8. What if I disagree with the OCHSC's decision?

Decisions made by the OCHSC can be appealed. Appeals may be submitted by the Alberta physician or dentist who submitted the application for the Alberta resident, or by the Alberta resident.

All appeals must be submitted in writing to the Out-of-Country Health Services Appeal Panel within 60 days of the appellant receiving the OCHSC decision letter. The appeal letter must be sent:

By mail to: **Chair, Out-of-Country Health Services Appeal Panel
Alberta Health and Wellness
PO Box 1360, Station Main
Edmonton AB T5J 2N3**

or

By fax to: **780-422-1958
Attention: Chair, Out-of-Country Health Services Appeal Panel**

More information about the Appeal Panel is available on the Alberta Health and Wellness website at: www.health.alberta.ca/documents/OCHSC-Appeal-Panel-Info.pdf.