

8. Coverage for Employees Temporarily Absent from Alberta (Revised)

Employees who leave Alberta temporarily for another part of Canada with the intention of returning to live in Alberta within 12 months or leave Canada with the intention of returning to live in Alberta within six months must maintain coverage with the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan during their absence. If they will be temporarily absent within Canada for more than 12 months or outside Canada for more than six months, they may apply for the following extensions of coverage:

- **Vacation or visit** - up to 24 consecutive months from the date of departure with confirmation, by phone or by mail, of their date of departure and intended date of return to Alberta,
- **Recurring absences** - normally, individuals must be physically present in Alberta for at least 183 days in a 12 month period to remain eligible for coverage. However, if individuals are unable to meet this residency requirement they may still be able to maintain coverage. For this to occur, they must satisfy Alberta Health and Wellness' requirement that they have not established permanent residence elsewhere, continue to maintain their permanent and principal residence in Alberta, and maintain most of their ties (e.g. residential, economic, personal, social) in Alberta.
- **Employment or business engagement** - up to 48 consecutive months from the date of departure with a letter from the employer confirming the length of the contract and the intended date of return.
- **Full-time studies at an accredited educational institution** - the period of temporary absence, provided the individual intends to return to Alberta when their studies are completed. Proof of enrollment from the registrar's office must be provided each year they are in school.

- **Educational leave from employment for advanced training or sabbatical leave** - up to 24 consecutive months from the date of departure. A letter from the employer confirming the leave is for training or sabbatical leave and the intended date of return is required.
- **Missionary work on behalf of a religious organization approved as a registered charity** - up to 48 consecutive months from the date of departure. A letter from the registered charity confirming the mission and the intended date of return is required.

Employees who choose to remain covered by the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan during their temporary absence and continue to receive a wage or salary should remain covered on your group plan. If the employee is on leave without pay, the employee's coverage can be terminated from your group and commenced again when the employee returns. In these cases, remember to provide the employee with a Notice to Terminating Employees (AHC0460).

When you expect an employee to be away from Alberta for more than six months, you should notify Alberta Health and Wellness before the employee leaves. Provide the date of departure, intended date of return, forwarding address and the reason for absence.