

# Flex Benefit Program



The multi-employer HSAA Collective Agreement includes a Flex Benefit Program—a supplemental benefit program. Each calendar year it provides credits (benefit dollars) in an account for you to customize your total benefit package to meet your needs. Covenant Health and the HSAA believe the Flex Benefit Program is an effective mechanism for supporting the personal needs and goals of employees throughout their work life.

Your Flex Benefit Program is fully funded by Covenant Health.

## How it works

### Who is eligible

You are eligible for credits in the upcoming year, if on November 1 of the current year you are:

- a regular employee in a benefits eligible position, or
- a regular benefit eligible employee in a temporary assignment, or
- in receipt of disability benefits and are within 30 months from your date of disability.

You are not eligible for the upcoming year's credits, if on November 1 of this year you are:

- **a temporary employee**, or
- not in a position that is eligible for benefits.

### Credits

Each January 1, new credits are loaded into your flex account. Your credits are calculated as a flat amount of \$1,250, plus a second amount of \$1,500 that is prorated according to your Full Time Equivalent (FTE) as of November 1 of the previous year.

For example:

- If you are full time on November 1, your credits for next year will total \$2,750 (\$1,250 + \$1,500)
- If you are .6 FTE on November 1, your credits for next year will total \$2,150 [\$1,250 + \$900 (\$1,500 x .6)]

**Credit allotments do not change throughout the year if your FTE changes. A change in your FTE will affect your credit amount for the following year.**

### Who is covered

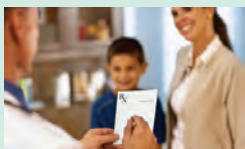
Dependents of eligible employees may also be covered under Account #1 and #2 (**Family care only**). The definition of eligible dependent is defined by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and is more extensive than what is allowed under your health and dental plans. If you normally claim an expense for a dependent on your tax return, that individual would be covered by the health account. **Family care** expenses you incur for that individual would be eligible under Account # 2.

**Go to the back page to find out how your credits work!**

# Your options/accounts

Prior to the beginning of each calendar year, you will be advised of your credit amounts for the next year. You have several options/accounts to choose from. You must allocate your credits to the account(s) of your choice prior to December 1.

You have five categories to choose from, which are in three accounts:

<b>Account # 1</b>	
<b>Health</b>	<p><b>Claiming information:</b> All claims under this account must be sent to Alberta Blue Cross for reimbursement with receipt(s). Please complete the Wellness, Professional Development, Family Care Claim Form and attach your receipts. Receipts must be in the employee's name. Claims for professional registrations or courses are payable no earlier than the date the registration is due or the course begins. These dates must be indicated on your receipts and/or claim form.</p> <p><b>Claim timeframes</b> Your Flex Benefit Program year-end is December 31. You have 60 days from that date to ensure all eligible expenses incurred in the year are received by Alberta Blue Cross. <b>After the 60-day claiming period, your credits are forfeited.</b></p> <p><b>Claim payments</b> Claims are paid as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Claims for \$50 or more are processed at the end of each month and mailed to your home address.</li> <li>• Claims between \$15 and \$50 accumulate to the end of the quarter and are paid.</li> <li>• Any balance less than \$15 accumulates and is paid out at the end of the year.</li> </ul> <p><b>Credits and eligible expenses information</b> Alberta Blue Cross processes claims for Accounts # 1 and # 2. You may obtain information regarding claims history, account status and claims information from Alberta Blue Cross in several ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Call 780-498-8000 for questions related to account status, claims information, or general inquiries related to your account.</li> <li>2. Visit the Alberta Blue Cross plan member web site. If you have not yet logged on as a plan member, go <a href="http://www.ab.bluecross.ca/online_services.html">www.ab.bluecross.ca/online_services.html</a> and follow the registration process.</li> </ol>
Non-taxable	
Eligible expenses for you and your dependents	
<p>This account supplements your core health and dental plans. It covers a wide range of health related expenses over and above what is covered under your health and dental plans.</p> <p>Eligible expenses are defined by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and are subject to change without notice. A list of eligible expenses can be obtained from the Alberta Blue Cross web site for plan members at <a href="http://www.ab.bluecross.ca/gpmd_hsa.html">www.ab.bluecross.ca/gpmd_hsa.html</a>. Once there you will find a link to the CRA web site. Reimbursements from this account are not taxable.</p>	
<p><b>Claiming information:</b> Unpaid balances for claims submitted to your core health and dental plans are automatically transferred to this account for reimbursement, provided you have credits remaining. You can turn this feature off by completing a Request for Discretionary/Manual Payment form. By asking for discretionary payments, this means that reimbursements will only be paid if a completed claim form is submitted to Alberta Blue Cross with the necessary receipts. You can obtain the Request for Discretionary/Manual payment form by going to <a href="http://www.caritas.ab.ca/ForEmployees/Benefits/BenefitForms/default.htm">www.caritas.ab.ca/ForEmployees/Benefits/BenefitForms/default.htm</a>.</p> <p>If you are coordinating benefits, other eligible health account expenses that are not covered by your core health and dental plans can be submitted to Alberta Blue Cross for reimbursement. Complete a Health Spending Account claim form and attach your original receipt(s).</p>	

## Account statements

Statements of the remaining credits in your account will be attached to each payment. Alberta Blue Cross also generates statements each quarter, regardless of whether or not you submitted a claim to allow you to review your account balance. Account statements are not generated if there are no credits left in that account.



**Account #2 is outlined on page 3.**

**Account #3 is outlined on page 4.**



# Your options/accounts

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Account #3 is outlined on page 4.

## Account # 2

Family care	Professional development	Wellness
Taxable benefit*		
Eligible expenses for you and your dependents	Eligible expenses for you	Eligible expenses for you
<p>This account has three categories: family care, professional development and wellness. It provides reimbursement for expenses that do not meet CRA guidelines, but promote your wellness and professional development. The family care category is provided to assist you with expenses related to family care, which includes both dependent children and adults. When facility or league fees include both social and physical activities, only the portion for the physical activities is eligible under the Wellness. Benefits paid from these accounts are taxable, and Alberta Blue Cross issues a T4A each year for all reimbursements paid out of this account.</p>		
<p><b>Family care</b> Types of expenses covered include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child care - approved day care, home care fees, nannies, approved after school care.</li> <li>Dependent care - medical and/or non-medical expenses related to the care of a dependent child, spouse, and parent.</li> </ul> <p><b>Expenses include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medical products/supplies – walkers, medical beds, etc.</li> <li>Non-medical products – lifts, home installed supportive aids, air filtration products, guide dogs, care giver guides, etc.</li> <li>Eldercare counselling.</li> <li>Homecare assistance.</li> <li>Transportation.</li> <li>Friendly visiting.</li> <li>Caregiver support programs.</li> <li>Respite, holiday, weekend, nursing and emergency care.</li> <li>Retirement and nursing homes, long term care facilities.</li> <li>Day programs.</li> <li>Rehabilitation centres.</li> </ul> <p><b>Exclusions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Services provided by a family member.</li> <li>Domestic services (cooking, cleaning, etc).</li> <li>Registration or finder fees.</li> <li>Costs related to after school care activities (field trips, children's camps).</li> </ul> <p>Note: You should first determine if expenses are eligible under CRA regulations. If they are, these expenses should be claimed under the Supplementary Health Care plan or your Health Account first.</p>	<p><b>Professional development</b> Types of expenses covered include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Courses, seminars, conferences or classes, registration and/or tuition fees (must be related to your professional development) and from an accredited institution.</li> <li>Books or texts required for a course, seminar, conference or class .</li> <li>Professional journals, books or publications (directly related to your professional development, etc.).</li> <li>Professional fees or registrations and/or voluntary association fees related to your discipline.</li> <li>Accommodation and travel costs associated with course attendance – taxis, air travel, car rentals, hotels, meals. Note: Course information and proof of attendance at the course is required. Please submit this information with associated expense receipts. Travel costs reimbursed according to your collective agreement.</li> <li>Software</li> </ul> <p><b>Exclusions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expenses for spouses and dependents.</li> <li>Courses, seminars, conferences or classes provided by a non-accredited institution.</li> <li>Courses, seminars, conferences or classes for personal development.</li> <li>Computers, printers and laptops.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Wellness</b> Types of eligible expenses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fitness centre fees – YMCA, Spa Lady, Kinsmen Centre, Curves, etc.</li> <li>Sports league/facility fees where the main focus is a physical activity – curling, tennis, skiing</li> <li>Sports equipment required for a physical activity – skis, helmets, tennis rackets, bicycles, hockey equipment and athletic footwear (skates, soccer shoes, etc.)</li> <li>Instructed classes (group exercise classes) — yoga, tai chi, pilates, aerobics, karate.</li> <li>Certified instruction for a physical activity — personal trainers, Canskate program for adults, tennis, skiing, dance, golf lessons.</li> <li>Home exercise fitness equipment (new and used) – treadmills, stationary bikes, weights.</li> <li>Wellness related programs—weight management, nutrition instruction and counseling, smoking cessation, stress management.</li> </ul> <p><b>Exclusions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apparel, clothing, non-athletic footwear or personal footwear.</li> <li>Golf related expenses (except lessons).</li> <li>Memberships/fees and/or expenses for family members.</li> <li>Nutrition replacements and food.</li> <li>Services provided by a family member.</li> </ul>

\* Expenses reimbursed from this account are taxable, therefore original receipts are not required as you may be eligible for personal tax relief.

## Account # 3

### Group RRSP (Administered by RBC)

Non-taxable\*\*

Credits directed to an account for you and/or your spouse

The option to allocate flex credits to a group RRSP is intended to assist you to set aside additional funds for retirement.

You can choose to allocate all or part of your credits to a personal or spousal RRSP.

RRSP contributions made with flex credits are processed in a lump sum at the beginning of the calendar year and deposited into your account with RBC.

You have the option of making additional contributions through payroll or in a lump sum directly with RBC.

You are required to complete a RBC Group RRSP Enrolment form to open an account. If you are contributing to a spousal plan you and your spouse will be required to complete an enrolment form. When the accounts are open, you must contact RBC to advise of the amount of credits you wish to be transferred to your spouse's plan.

If you do not complete an Enrolment form, your credits will default to Account # 1 (Health).

You are expected to monitor how remitted amounts are coordinated with your allowable annual RRSP contribution room and other Canada Revenue Agency regulations.

\*\* Tax is not deducted from your RRSP contributions. However, your contributions are a taxable benefit and are included as taxable earnings on your Covenant Health T4. However, to counter/defer tax, RBC issues a tax receipt to be used when filing your personal income tax statement.

#### Group RRSP account information

RBC is the administrator for the Covenant Health RRSP. Contact RBC for further information regarding your RRSP account balance.



## How credits work

### Credit allocations

You can choose to allocate all of your credits to one account, or divide your credits between the accounts. Your choice depends on where you expect to incur expenses such as, health expenses including major dental work or eye glasses; or professional development expenses such as professional fees or course tuition. Each year, you are required to allocate your new credits. Once allocated, your credits cannot be adjusted/changed. The Health Spending Account is non-taxable and your Wellness Spending Account is taxable.

### Credit allocation deadline

The Benefits Department must receive your credit allocation choice(s) by December 1 of each year. If you are allocating credits to the Group Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP), you must also complete and return your RBC RRSP Enrolment form with your allocation form by December 1. If these documents are not received by December 1, all of your credits will default to Account # 1.

Note: Credits allocated to Account # 2 can be used for one category or all three categories. (Family Care, Professional Development and Wellness).

### Credit carry forward

As with your Health Spending Account, your flex credits automatically carry forward in the same account for one year. If the carry-forward credits are not used by the end of the carry-forward year, they will be forfeited.

For example: If you allocated credits to both Accounts # 1 and # 2, for the upcoming flex year and credits are left over at the end of that year, the unused credits will carry forward in these accounts for the next year. If you do not use these carry-forward credits by the end of that year (two years from now), you will lose them.

Alberta Blue Cross tracks credits on a "first in, first out" basis to minimize the risk of credit forfeiture. Thus your "oldest" credits are used first.

**Note: Credits do not carry forward if you are on a leave of absence. You must use your credits by the end of the year in which the leave started.**

