

Joint Statement on the Suspension of the Direct Patient Care Staffing Process

March 31, 2020

The 2019-2022 Nurses' Bargaining Association (NBA) Collective Agreement includes a provision (Article 60) that requires health authorities (HA) and Providence Health Care (PHC) to implement a direct patient care staffing assessment process. Implementation of this new contract language is intended to be a collaborative process, where local level managers and in-charge nurses determine immediate (short-term) staffing requirements.

Over the last year, HA/PHC and NBA have been working collaboratively on implementation plans for patient care assessment processes and tools, including education and change management for front-line managers and nurses. The assessment process is designed to identify situations where nurses providing direct patient care are working short. As of April 1, 2020, nurses identified as working short were to be paid a working short premium.

Major education and change management efforts had been planned to begin in mid-February and continue through the months of April and May. However, as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, many of these efforts were scaled back or suspended while the system prepared to deal with the anticipated COVID-19 patient surge. Because of the challenges with being able to fully implement the assessment process at this time, and because the process is the means by which entitlement to the working short premium is determined, the parties have agreed that the premium will be paid, as applicable in the collective agreement, as a temporary measure until the implementation efforts can resume.

As a result of this agreement, **all nurses working for a health authority or PHC who provide direct patient care will be paid the working short premium for the month of April for every straight time hour worked.** This direction is intended to honour the employer's collective agreement obligation to pay the working short premium while ensuring there will be no disputes between the union and employer on this important issue during this critical time.

This temporary means of determining payment of the working short premium is effective until April 30, 2020. In the latter part of April, HEABC and NBA will assess the need to continue suspending implementation of the direct patient care assessment process.

HEABC and NBA appreciate the hard work that has been done to implement the direct patient care staffing process to date. Implementation of this new process is the most significant change in the relationship between nurses and managers in a decade. Implementation of the change at the department and unit level is a significant effort that requires focused attention by managers and nurses. The parties are committed to implementing Article 60 contract provisions when they can be given the appropriate focus and attention they require.