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Bulletin 230701 — COVID-19 Advance Payment Program Recoveries

Important Update: the COVID-19 Advance Payment Program recoveries to resume August 2023

To: All Physicians, Hospital-based Dentists, Optometrists, Podiatrists

Category: Physician Services, Dentist Services, Optometrist Services, Podiatrist Services

Written by: Claims Services Branch; Health Programs and Delivery Division

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COVID-19 Advance Payment Program

Ontario's health care providers played a critical role in the province's pandemic response and we once again extend our thanks to all health care providers, administrators and staff who supported this work. Because of these efforts, the pandemic is behind us and together we are returning to the businesses of building a health care system that connects people to care, close to home.

On April 22, 2020, the Ministry of Health (the ministry) established the COVID-19 Advance Payment Program to provide monthly, interest-free loan payments to eligible health care providers to address any cash flow issues that may have arisen during the initial stages of the pandemic. When we introduced this program, we were clear that these payments would need to be paid back, as is the case with any loan.

Previous INFOBulletins (4754 (<https://www.ontario.ca/document/ohip-infobulletins-2020/bulletin-4754-covid-19-advance-payment-program>), 9142 (<https://www.ontario.ca/document/ohip-infobulletins-2020/bulletin-9142-covid-19-advance-payment-program>), 8161 (<https://www.ontario.ca/document/ohip-infobulletins-2020/bulletin-8161-covid-19-advance-payment-program>), and 7130 (<https://www.ontario.ca/document/ohip-infobulletins-2020/bulletin-7130-covid-19-advance-payment-program>)) introduced this program and provided further information and updates.

Advance OHIP Payment Recoveries

As per INFOBulletin 210406 (<https://www.ontario.ca/document/ohip-infobulletins-2021/bulletin-210406-recoveries-paused-covid-19-advance-payment-program>), the ministry began loan repayments in April 2021 and to date has recovered nearly \$139 million out of the total \$660 million provided.

With the current low rates of COVID-19 and high vaccination rates, Ontario's health system will continue to transition to a post-pandemic state and focus resources on delivering services where they are most needed. At a time when it's never been more important to invest in front-line services, it is critical that the ministry continue to recover the over \$521 million loan payments. These funds are critical for important priorities like expanding access to team-based primary care, home care, mental health services and shortening wait times for key surgeries and procedures.

As we continue the post-pandemic transition, the ministry would like to advise you that the timing and loan repayment period will be as follows:

- loan repayments will resume **August 2023**
- to alleviate the financial pressure to providers, the remaining loan

repayments will be extended over **12 equal deductions** from monthly OHIP payments from August 2023 to July 2024, instead of original five months

- consistent with the process used in April 2021, the loan repayments will be applied against a provider's future OHIP payments through the Remittance Advice
- no interest will be charged

The ministry has conducted an analysis against providers' recent billings and is confident in the ability for those who still owe to repay any outstanding loans. That said, in the event that an individual provider is concerned about their ability to repay the loan, the ministry is willing to consider extending the timeline for recovery to mitigate the financial impact.

Note: Advance payments will be automatically deducted from the provider's solo Remittance Advice.

This will report as a deduction on the Remittance Advice under Accounting Transactions, as follows: 'EMERG ADVANCE (COVID19) RECOVERY'

Negative Balances

If a provider does not have sufficient earnings on their solo Remittance Advice to set off the loan repayment, the Remittance Advice will show a negative balance (amount owing).

Negative balances will not accumulate interest and cannot be deducted directly from the provider's bank account. When a negative balance is generated on the solo Remittance Advice, it will carry over to the following month's Remittance Advice and any payments on that Remittance Advice will automatically be applied against the negative balance. This will continue until the negative balance has been repaid.

A provider in a negative balance at the end of the loan repayment period may send a cheque to return the remaining balance owing to the ministry.

Once loan repayments have started in August 2023, providers are asked to wait for the July 2024 Remittance Advice before sending a cheque to ensure that it reflects the correct repayment amount.

Any cheques received for COVID-19 advance repayments before the July 2024 Remittance Advice is issued will not be processed by the ministry.

Further instructions regarding cheque repayments will be communicated prior to July 2024.

No further action will be required by a provider who is not in a negative balance at the end of the loan repayment period.

Providers with Group Earnings

Providers who anticipate that they will not have sufficient earnings on their solo Remittance Advice in the months of August 2023 to July 2024, but anticipate having earnings through a group source and would like the loan repayments made from their group earnings can have their group administrator contact the ministry's Service Support Contact Centre (<mailto:SSContactCentre.MOH@ontario.ca>) or call 1-800-262-6524

Automated loan repayments will only be made from a provider's solo Remittance Advice; however, requests for loan repayments from a group source made by the group's administrator will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Requests must be made by the group administrator, not an individual group member, in order to qualify for consideration.

Once they have contacted the ministry, the group administrator will be sent an indemnification form that they will need to complete in order to allow the ministry to process the request. Administrators may request repayment on behalf of all or some group members.

If a request for a group repayment was previously made in 2021, group administrators will need to contact the ministry again to renew this request for the months of August 2023 to July 2024.

Providers with questions related to their individual circumstances and repayment schedule may email the Service Support Contact Centre (<mailto:SSContactCentre.MOH@ontario.ca>) or call 1-800-262-6524

Keywords/Tags

COVID-19; Advance Payment Program; APP; EMERG ADVANCE; negative balance

Contact information

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