



# Practice Incentives Program After-Hours Incentive

The Practice Incentives Program (PIP) After-Hours Incentive is to support general practitioners to provide their patients with appropriate access to after-hours care.

## After-hours periods

For the purposes of the PIP After-Hours Incentive, the complete after-hours period is:

- Outside 8.00am to 6.00pm weekdays;
- Outside 8.00am to 12.00noon on Saturdays; and
- All day on Sunday and public holidays.

The complete after-hours period is further broken into:

### Sociable after-hours period

- 6.00pm to 11.00pm weeknights

### Unsociable after-hours period

- Weekdays between 11.00pm and 8.00am;
- Saturdays hours outside 8.00am and 12.00noon; and
- All day Sunday and public holidays.

## Formal arrangements

Some payment levels do not require the practice to provide care themselves if formal arrangements exist for patients to access care through a third party. Third party formal arrangements may include:

- other practices
- after-hours services
- medical deputising services (MDS), and
- after-hours cooperatives

Formal arrangements between a practice and a third party must be outlined in a formal document which is agreed to and signed by all practices participating in the arrangement. All details of this arrangement must be included in the document including what level of after-hours service will be provided by the third party. This document must be produced on request.

Formal arrangements must make sure consultation notes and information about the care provided are sent back to the practice, with patient consent, by the next day. Patients digital health records in the My Health Record system may be used to transfer this information through an event summary.

## Cooperative arrangements

An after-hours cooperative is defined as general practices working together to provide care to patients outside the normal opening hours of their practices. General practitioners from the participating practices must provide all of the care for the cooperative.

Eligible cooperative arrangements must make sure consultation notes and information about the care provided are sent back to the patient's regular practice. This must occur in a timely manner that is suitable to both parties, where patient consent has been obtained.

## Medical Deputising Services

Medical Deputising Services are organisations which directly arrange for medical practitioners to provide after-hours medical services to patients of practice principals during the absence of, and at the request of, the practice principals.

For the purposes of the PIP a Medical Deputising Service is not considered to be a general practice.

Whilst all care has been taken in preparing this document, this information is a guide only and subject to change without notice.

## Payments

Payments are based on the Standardised Whole Patient Equivalent (SWPE). This is a measure of practice size and includes a weighing factor for the age and gender of patients. As a guide, the average full-time general practitioner has a SWPE value of 1,000 annually.

Practices can only qualify for one payment level. The levels are not cumulative. Payments for each level are capped at a maximum of 20,000 SWPE per eligible practice annually.

## Eligibility

### Requirements for all payment levels

To be eligible for the PIP After-Hours Incentive, practices must meet the following eligibility requirements regardless of the payment level claimed:

- Be registered for the PIP.
- Provide after-hours care for patients in accordance with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) Standards for general practices.
- Maintain eligibility for the entire preceding payment quarter, including the point-in-time date to be eligible for the quarterly payment. The point-in-time date is the last day of the month before the next payment quarter.
- Practices must clearly communicate after-hours arrangements to patients with information on display in the practice and visible to patients when the practice is closed. Practices must also advise patients of the after-hours arrangements through a telephone answering machine and on the practice website if they have one.
- The arrangements must also be clearly communicated and registered in the [National Health Services Directory](#). Practices may also elect to update state and territory or other local health service directories.

### Additional requirements for payment levels 1-4

Where a cooperative or formal third-party care arrangement is applicable, practices must also meet the following requirements:

- The practice arrangements must make sure notes of consultations and information about the care provided are sent back to the practice, with patient consent, by the next day. Patients digital health records in the My Health Record system may be used to transfer this information through an event summary.

- Practice arrangements must be outlined in a formal document which is agreed to and signed by all parties participating in the arrangement.
- All details of the arrangement, including third party after-hours care providers and the level of after-hours service that will be provided, must be included in the signed document. This document must be produced on request.

## Applying

Practices can apply for the PIP After-Hours Incentive when they apply for the PIP:

- Through HPOS; or
- By completing the Practice Incentives application form.

Practices already participating in the PIP can apply for the After-Hours Incentive;

- Through (HPOS); or
- By completing the Practice Incentives Program After-Hours Incentive application form signed by the practice's authorised contact person.

Practices with a non-prescribed circumstance for a localised nurse triaging arrangement can apply for the Level 5 Complete After-hours Practice Coverage Payment in writing to be considered as part of an eligible model of care. Applications are considered on an individual basis.

Applications and requests for consideration of an after-hours localised nurse triage arrangement can be faxed to 1300 587 696.

## After-Hours Incentive Payment Schedule

Payment level	Care provider	Practice Incentives Payment
<b>After-Hours Level 1 – participation payment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete after-hours coverage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal arrangements in place with other providers, including Medical Deputising Services, to ensure access for practice patients.</li> <li>The practice does not have to provide the care itself if it has formal arrangements in place for patients to access care through a third party.</li> </ul>	\$1 per SWPE
<b>After-Hours Level 2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sociable after-hours cooperative coverage payment*</li> </ul> <p><i>*Minimum levels of care requirements apply (see table below)</i></p>	<b>Sociable after-hours period:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participating general practice in a cooperative arrangement, including minimum hourly participation requirements.</li> </ul>	\$4 per SWPE
	<b>Unsociable after-hours period:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal arrangements in place with other providers, including Medical Deputising Services, to ensure access for practice patients.</li> </ul>	
<b>After-Hours Level 3</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sociable after-hours practice coverage payment</li> </ul>	<b>Sociable after-hours period:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide after-hours care to patients directly through the practice.</li> </ul>	\$5.50 per SWPE
	<b>Unsociable after-hours period:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have formal arrangements in place, such as a local hospital.</li> </ul>	
<b>After-Hours Level 4</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete after-hours cooperative coverage payment*</li> </ul> <p><i>* Minimum hourly participation requirements apply (see on next page)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participating general practices in cooperative arrangement with other general practices.</li> </ul>	\$5.50 per SWPE
<b>After-Hours Level 5</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete after-hours practice coverage payment</li> </ul>	After-hours services are provided to practice patients: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By a participating general practice; and</li> <li>For the complete after-hours period.</li> <li>Practices cannot participate in a cooperative to be eligible for this payment.</li> </ul>	\$11 per SWPE

## Minimum level of care requirements for after-hours Level 2

Average annual SWPE level of practice	Minimum number of GP hours that must be provided to the cooperative
0 to 2,000	5 hours per week
2,001 to 5,000	10 hours per week
5,001 and above	15 hours per week

## Minimum levels of care requirements for after-hours Level 4

Average annual SWPE level of practice	Minimum number of GP hours that must be provided to the cooperative
0 to 2,000	18 hours per week
2,001 to 5,000	36 hours per week
5,001 and above	54 hours per week

## References

### Medicare Benefits Schedule

[www.mbsonline.gov.au/internet/mbsonline/publishing.nsf/Content/Home](http://www.mbsonline.gov.au/internet/mbsonline/publishing.nsf/Content/Home)

### Practice Incentives Program Guidelines

[www.humanservices.gov.au/health-professionals/services/medicare/practice-incentives-program](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/health-professionals/services/medicare/practice-incentives-program)

## More information

PIP Enquiry Line: 1800 222 032  
Email: [pip@humanservices.gov.au](mailto:pip@humanservices.gov.au)  
Fax: 1300 587 696

Practice Incentives Program  
Department of Human Services  
GPO Box 2572  
ADELAIDE SA 5001

## See also

Practice Assist Fact Sheets and Resources:

- Asthma Incentive
- Cervical Screening Incentive
- Diabetes Incentive
- eHealth Incentive
- GP Aged Care Incentive
- Indigenous Health Incentive
- Procedural GP Payment
- Quality Prescribing Initiative
- Rural Loading Incentive
- Teaching Payment
- Practice Nurse Incentive Program
- What is the Practice Incentives Program?
- Practice Incentives Program Overview