

Practice Incentives Program (PIP)

After Hours Incentive

As much as possible, patients should be encouraged and supported to receive care from their regular GP.

However, when a patient's regular GP or practice is not available, they should be encouraged to access a service provider who has an agreement with the practice to provide care during the after-hours period.

This supports safe and high-quality patient care by facilitating continuity of care and timely handover of clinical patient information.

The Practice Incentives Program (PIP) After Hours Incentive supports GPs to provide their patients with appropriate access to after-hours care.

Participating practices receive payments for ensuring that their patients have access to care during after-hours periods. There are five payment levels available, depending on the level of after-hours care being provided and the arrangements in place.

PIP After Hours Incentive periods

The complete after-hours period:

- outside 8am to 6pm weekdays
- outside 8am to 12pm on Saturdays
- all day on Sunday and public holidays.

The sociable after-hours period:

- 6pm to 11pm weeknights.

The unsociable after-hours period:

- 11pm to 8am weekdays
- outside 8am to 12pm on Saturdays
- all day Sunday and public holidays.

Formal arrangements

Some payment levels for the PIP After Hours Incentive do not require practices 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)
- 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 outlined 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.

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) has developed [a guide to establishing an agreement between your general practice and an after-hours service provider](#).

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. GPs 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 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.

Medical Deputising Services

Medical Deputising Services (MDS) 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.

An MDS is not eligible to receive the PIP After Hours Incentive because it is not considered to be a general practice.

PIP After Hours Incentive payments

The PIP After Hours Incentive payments are paid quarterly.

Payments are based on the Standardised Whole Patient Equivalent (SWPE), which 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 payment, practices must:

- 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 (the last day of the month before the next payment quarter) to be eligible for the quarterly payment
- clearly communicate after-hours arrangements to patients with information on display in the practice, visible when the practice is closed, played through a telephone answering machine and outlined on the practice website if they have one.
- have their arrangements registered and clearly communicated in the [National Health Services Directory](#) (NHSD).

Added 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.

Obligations

In addition to meeting the eligibility requirements for the PIP After Hours Incentive, practices must:

- nominate an authorised contact person to confirm, on the practice's behalf, changes to information for PIP claims and payments
- ensure the information in the [National Health Services Directory](#) (NHSD) is current at all times
- keep documentary evidence, including evidence of after-hours arrangements, to support claims for payment
- provide information to the Department of Health as part of the ongoing audit process to prove that they have met eligibility requirements
- ensure provided information is correct and inform the Department of Health about any changes to practice arrangements at least 7 days before the relevant point-in-time date.

Practices can update their details:

- using [Health Professional Online Services](#) (HPOS) - changes in HPOS are immediate and can be made up to, and on, the relevant point-in-time date
- by completing the [Practice Incentives change of practice details form](#)
- by informing the Department of Health in writing at least 7 days before the relevant point-in-time date.

Applying for the PIP After Hours Incentive

Practices can apply for the PIP After Hours Incentive:

- using [Health Professional Online Services](#) (HPOS)
- 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.

PIP After Hours Incentive Payment Schedule

Eligible practices may be entitled to one of the following payment levels.

Practices don't need to remain physically open to provide care during the after-hours periods. Where clinically appropriate, and when deemed safe and reasonable, face-to-face contact between the GP and patient is expected to occur.

Payment Level	Care Provider	Practice Incentives Payment
After-hours Level 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete after-hours coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practices must have formal arrangements in place to ensure that practice patients have access to care in the complete after-hours period. The practice doesn't have to provide the care itself if it has formal arrangements in place for patients to access care through a third party. 	\$1 per SWPE
After-hours Level 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sociable after-hours cooperative coverage* <p>*Minimum hourly participation requirements apply (see next page)</p>	Practices must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> participate in a cooperative arrangement with other general practices that provide after-hours care to practice patients in the sociable after hours period ensure formal arrangements are in place to cover the unsociable after hours period. 	\$4 per SWPE
After-hours Level 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sociable after-hours practice coverage 	Practices must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide after-hours care to practice patients directly through the practice in the sociable after-hours period ensure formal arrangements are in place to cover the unsociable after hours period. 	\$5.50 per SWPE
After-hours Level 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete after-hours cooperative coverage* <p>*Minimum hourly participation requirements apply (see next page)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participating general practices in cooperative arrangement with other general practices. 	\$5.50 per SWPE
After-hours Level 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete after-hours practice coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practices must provide after-hours care to practice patients in the complete after-hours period. Practices cannot participate in a cooperative to be eligible for this payment. In RRMA 5 to 7, localised or practice based nurse triaging by telephone or face-to-face by a registered nurse or nurse practitioner is also acceptable, as long as practice patients have access to a practice GP where clinically appropriate. 	\$11 per SWPE

After-hours Level 2 – minimum levels of care requirements

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

After-hours Level 4 – minimum levels of care requirements

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

More information about the PIP After Hours Incentive

To find out more about the Practice Incentives Program (PIP) After Hours Incentive, call 1800 222 032, email pip@servicesaustralia.gov.au or visit servicesaustralia.gov.au/pip

References

- Services Australia website – [Practice Incentives Program \(PIP\)](#)
- [PIP After Hours Incentive Guidelines](#), effective November 2016
- [RACGP Standards for after-hours and medical deputising services](#)
- [RACGP Supporting continuity and access – A guide to establishing an agreement between your general practice and an after-hours service provider](#)

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

WWW.PRACTICEASSIST.COM.AU