

CARE FOR STAFF

Program Overview & Frequently Asked Questions

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

What is the Care for Staff Program?

Care for Staff is a grant program designed to support staff working within continuing care facilities and home and community care environments in Alberta. Eligible organizations may apply for funding to implement wellness projects that directly impact staff mental health and/or make improvements to the workplace to better support staff wellbeing and improve staff retention for the sector.

What is a Wellness Project?

A wellness project is an operator-delivered, Care for Staff-approved and funded project that aligns with one of ACCA's care for staff program outcomes. These projects are intended to address a need that staff have helped to identify, while contributing to the development of psychologically healthy and safe leaders, organizational cultures, work environments and/or individuals. Wellness projects are typically completed within six months after approval, although larger, organization-wide projects that span multiple sites, may take up to 12 months to complete.

What are the Care for Staff Program's Intended Outcomes?

The Care for Staff Program supports evidence-based wellness projects that contribute to meaningful improvements in leadership, workplace culture, and individual well-being. The following outcomes guide the focus and impact of funded initiatives:

Leadership Development and Organizational Culture

Wellness projects and leadership development initiatives build and sustain systems, practices, and organizational cultures that promote psychologically healthy and safe environments.

Workplace Well-Being

Wellness projects strengthen cultures of safety and inclusion—where employees' voices are valued, harmful stressors are reduced, and both physical and psychological well-being are protected. Staff have the supports they need to feel safe, respected, and included in their day-to-day work.

Personal Health and Wellness

Initiatives provide direct supports to staff that enhance their physical and psychological well-being, build their capacity, and foster personal and professional growth.

What kinds of projects does the grant support?

Grant funds may be used to support the following types of projects:

- **Education and training:** Training and professional development opportunities for leaders and/or frontline staff
- **Resources, programs or supports:** Resources, programs or services that support psychological health and safety
- **Staff recognition and appreciation:** Items or activities for staff recognition and appreciation
- **Team-building experiences:** Such as retreats or workplace events
- **Enhancements to physical spaces:** that create psychologically healthy and safe work environments (e.g., furniture, décor, wellness rooms)
- **Innovation and technology:** Innovation and technology to improve workplace practices or staff experience
- **Policy and prevention strategies:** Policy and prevention strategies to eliminate or mitigate risks

Who can participate in a Wellness Project?

Any staff member working at the site can participate in the project. It is not limited only to clinical staff members.

What's new this year?

This is the second year of the **Care for Staff grant**. After a successful pilot, ACCA is working with Christian Health Association of Alberta (CHAA), Alberta Seniors and Community Housing Association (ASCHA) and Continuing Care Safety Association (CCSA) to build on lessons learned and launch an enhanced **Care for Staff 2.0** program. The updated Care for Staff program is designed to better reflect the needs of Alberta's continuing care workforce, align with sector realities, and focus on creating impact.

Key changes this year:

- **One application**, more flexibility
 - Organizations can apply for multiple sites within **one application**
 - Support for site-based and/or organization-wide initiatives – giving organizations greater flexibility on how dollars can be used
 - Coordinated funding requests Applications must be submitted through the **lead/parent organization**, not by individual sites.
- Support for backfill – Grant funds can be used to offset replacement costs so front line staff can participate in wellness projects.

- Fixed intake window – With set open/close dates, organizations have more time to consult staff and design meaningful initiatives.
- Organizations can apply for 6 month or one year project terms for completion.

PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

Who can apply for Care for Staff program funding?

- Alberta Health Services (AHS) contracted:
 - Continuing care home operators (Type A and B)
 - Hospice operators (Type C)
 - Home and community care providers (Type 2)
- Ministry of Assisted Living and Social Services (ALSS) may add providers/operators to the eligible list should any new contracted providers become eligible.

Membership with ACCA is **not** required.

What are the eligibility requirements for Care for Staff program funding?

To be eligible, your application must demonstrate that:

- **Your organization qualifies** (you are an AHS-contracted supportive living, continuing care home operator, hospice operator, (Type A, B, C or Type 2 home and community care provider)
- **Staff were involved** (employees were consulted or had input into identifying the need and shaping the wellness project)
- **The project is evidence-based** (it is supported by research or proven practices)
- **The budget fits the project** (requested funds are reasonable for the size and scope of the project)
- **The project aligns with outcomes** (your wellness project connects to at least one of ACCA's Care for Staff grant program outcomes)

Still not sure, use this Eligibility Checklist:

Before you apply, make sure you can answer **YES** to all of the following:

- Our organization is an **AHS-contracted continuing care home operator, hospice operator, or home and community care provider.**
- **Staff were consulted** and had a voice in identifying the need and/or shaping the wellness project.
- The project is **evidence-based** (supported by research, best practice, or proven approaches).
- The **budget is realistic** and matches the size and scope of the project.

- The project aligns with **at least one of ACCA's Care for Staff program outcomes.**

If you cannot check **all boxes**, your project may not be eligible for funding.

What makes a project “evidence-based”?

A resource list of potential projects with demonstrated success in contributing to improved staff well-being available here. Resources on the list will be deemed evidence-based. New ideas not on the list will also be considered

How do I involve staff in selecting the project?

Operators can involve staff in selecting its wellness project(s) in different ways, including, but not limited to:

- Staff meetings or townhalls where staff input is gathered
- Staff surveys and polls
- Suggestion boxes
- Feedback from 1:1, performance reviews, exit interviews, etc.
- Activities where participants are engaged in the project's design

HOW TO APPLY

Who should apply?

- **Applications must be submitted by the lead/parent organization** (e.g., head office, corporate office, or central administration).
- Individual sites should not apply directly.
- The lead organization will decide whether to apply for a single site, multiple sites, or an organization-wide project.
- The lead/parent organization submits one application on behalf of the site(s) or the full organization

When should we apply?

- Applications can only be submitted during the program's **fixed intake window** from **October 15, 2025 to December 15, 2025.**
- The intake window gives you time to consult with staff, gather input, and design a meaningful project.

Timelines

- ACCA will open the portal for grant applications on October 15, 2025

- ACCA will close the portal for grant applications on December 15, 2025
- Notifications on application status will be issued in January, 2026
- Successful Applicants will sign grant agreements January – February, 2026
- Successful applicants for 6-month projects will receive funding in February 2026
- Successful applicants for 12-month projects will receive funding in April – May 2026
- Wellness projects complete – reporting and staff surveys are completed
- 6-month projects are implemented February – July 2027
- 12-month projects are implemented April 2026 – April 2027
- Upon project completion, sites will be requested to participate in evaluation activities

FUNDING ELIGIBILITY

Our organization has multiple sites. Is there a limit to how much money we can apply for?

Yes. Organizations may apply for Care for Staff funding for every eligible site. Funding eligibility for each organization will be determined by the number of sites included in the application and the expected participants number of participants from each site.

Every organization's total funding eligibility will be different and is determined by the cumulative total of funding eligibility for each site.

How much funding can each site receive?

Funding eligibility is determined by the number of staff from each site expected to participate in the wellness project.

If the site has:

- Fewer than 25 participants: Eligible for up to \$12,000
- 25–50 participants: Eligible for up to \$18,000
- 51+ participants: Eligible for up to \$24,000

Determining your organization's total funding eligibility

Your organization's total funding eligibility depends on the number of sites included in the grant application, and the number of participants expected from each site.

Here's a step-by-step guide to determining your **Total Funding Eligibility**:

Step 1: Identify how much each individual site is eligible to receive

If the site has:

- Fewer than 25 participants: Eligible for up to \$12,000
- 25–50 participants: Eligible for up to \$18,000

- 51+ participants: Eligible for up to \$24,000

Repeat this step for every site included in your application.

Step 2: Add up the funding eligibility for all sites included in the application

If there are 3 sites, and:

- Site A = has 15 expected participants, they are eligible for up to \$12,000
- Site B = has 42 expected participants, they are eligible for up to \$18,000
- Site C = has 73 expected participants, they are eligible for up to \$24,000

The organization's total funding eligibility = up to \$54,000

Is there a limit to how much money our organization can apply for?

Yes, the total amount requested must not exceed:

- The combined estimated costs of all projects included in this application, and
- Your organization's maximum funding eligibility, based on the number of participating sites and expected number of participants.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

How can we use the money?

Care for Staff Grant funding can be used to support site-level Wellness Projects, organizational-level Wellness projects or a mixture of both. The list of eligible expenses is very broad. It is easier to tell you what is not eligible.

What are ineligible expenses?

- Computer hardware
- Staffing (new hires)
- Core training programs, services, equipment and operations
- Routine maintenance or renovations not associated with a larger project or strategy
- Ongoing operational cost of the initiative

Can we use the grant for backfill support?

Yes. Sometimes staff need to step away from their regular work to participate in project activities (such as training or planning). To ensure services continue running smoothly, this grant allows organizations to allocate part of their funds to help cover the cost of backfilling

those positions. Organizations must outline expected backfill use in their grant application, including estimated costs and rationale.

When is backfill allowed?

- Staff are away for **approved Care for Staff project activities** (training, planning, evaluation, implementation).
- The staff member's role is **frontline or service delivery**, and their absence would leave a gap.
- The backfill is temporary, for specific hours or shifts to participate in Care for Staff initiatives.

When is backfill not allowed?

- Covering **vacation, sick leave, or turnover**.
- Replacing **management or admin staff** who can shift duties internally.
- Paying **overtime, shift premiums, or extra benefits** (unless approved in advance).

Is there a limit to how much of the grant can be used to support backfill?

No. We understand that one of the biggest barriers to staff participation in wellness projects is ensuring coverage. Backfill allows organizations to maintain a high level of quality care for patients, clients, or residents while giving staff the opportunity to take part in a wellness project during work time. Organizations may allocate as much of their Care for Staff grant funds as needed to cover backfill costs, providing it is only used to allow front line staff to participate in Care for Staff projects specifically. All backfill costs must be included as a line item in the total project budget. No additional funds beyond the grant amount will be provided for backfill.

Who can backfill?

Casual, part-time, or agency staff are allowed if this is normal practice in your organization.

What documentation do you need to keep on file?

A record of who was away, who covered, dates, and hours worked and payroll or payment records to show the costs.

Quick Backfill Checklist

Before you request backfill costs, ask yourself:

- Is this person away to work on the project (not vacation, sick leave, or turnover)?
- Is their regular role frontline or service delivery?
- Am I only claiming the actual hours they're away?
- Do I have simple records (who was covered, by whom, when, and cost)?
- Is the total within the grant's backfill limit?
- If the amount is big, have I checked with the Care for Staff program team first?

ABOUT THE CARE FOR STAFF GRANT

Why did the name change from Quick Intervention Projects (QIPs) to Wellness Projects?

The name was changed to better reflect the long-term and creative nature of workplace mental health initiatives. "Quick Intervention" suggested that complex issues like psychological safety and well-being could be resolved rapidly, which isn't realistic. The new name emphasizes sustained cultural change, ongoing support, and the ripple effect of thoughtful, inclusive actions. It also moves away from clinical language, focusing instead on building acceptance, knowledge, and healthier work environments over time.

Where does the Care for Staff funding come from?

The Care for Staff program is funded by the Government of Alberta, Ministry of Assisted Living and Social Services, Continuing Care Staff Mental Health Supports (CCSMHS) portfolio. The Care for Staff grant was announced in 2023. In its first year, the program reached over 12,400 continuing care staff and distributed \$2.5 million across 126 sites (not organizations). The Government of Alberta has committed an additional \$7.5 million over the next two years (2025-2027) to further support continuing care staff mental health and workplace well-being.

REPORTING AND EVALUATION

1. **Financial Accountability:** At the end of the grant cycle, organizations will be responsible for preparing a final report outlining how the funds were used, including a detailed account of how many staff benefited from the project. A standardized reporting template will be shared with successful grant recipients.
2. **Site-level Operator Feedback:** Each funded site will be required to complete a standardized feedback form to share lessons learned about what worked well, what could be improved, and the perceived impact of their project on participants. (One form per site; form to be provided by ACCA).
3. **Organizational-level Feedback:** Similarly, each organization will be required to complete a standardized feedback form to share lessons learned about what worked well, what could be improved, and the perceived impact of their project on participants (One form per organization; form to be provided by ACCA).
4. **Participant Feedback:** Each funded site will be asked to distribute a brief electronic survey to all staff who participated in and/or benefited from their project. The survey will be developed by ACCA and shared with successful grant recipients.

QUESTIONS AND SUPPORT

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions or require support.
We are here to help!

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