

Frequently Asked Questions - Aged Care On-site Pharmacist (ACOP)

Participation

1. Do aged care homes have to take part in the ACOP program?

Participation in the ACOP program is completely voluntary. Your facility can choose whether or not to engage an on-site pharmacist.

2. Can an aged care home hire an On-site pharmacist directly?

Before hiring an on-site pharmacist directly, your facility should first try to engage one through a community pharmacy of your choice. This step helps ensure good collaboration and options are considered. Please keep a record of this attempt for your records.

3. Is it necessary to have the electronic National Residential Medication Chart (eNRMC) to participate?

No, you don't need to have the eNRMC in place to start. However, your facility should commit to implementing it within 12 months, and your on-site pharmacist can assist with this process.

4. How is the amount of ACOP funding determined for our facility?

Funding is based on your aged care home's total bed capacity, reflecting the number of residents you care for. This determines the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) of an on-site pharmacist.

5. Can we continue to receive pharmacist services through the RMMR or Quality Use of Medicines (QUM) programs if we have an on-site pharmacist?

No. The ACOP program is designed to provide more comprehensive on-site pharmacist services. If you have a government-funded on-site pharmacist, you cannot also receive separate government-funded visiting pharmacist services through RMMR or QUM programs.

Payments & Employment

1. Who receives the salary payments for the on-site pharmacist?

Salary payments are made directly to the on-site pharmacist's employer, which can be either your aged care home or a partnering community pharmacy.

2. How does our facility claim payments for the on-site pharmacist's salary?

Claims are submitted through the PPA portal for the days the pharmacist works on-site at your aged care home.

3. Can claims be made before our facility is registered and approved in the PPA portal?

No. Your aged care home must be registered and approved in the PPA portal before you can claim salary payments under the program.

4. Can we employ an on-site pharmacist as casual, permanent, or contract staff?

Yes. You can employ an on-site pharmacist as casual, permanent, or contract staff, as long as the arrangement meets the requirements of the Fair Work Act, any applicable industrial award or agreement, and other relevant employment laws.

If the pharmacist works regular, ongoing hours at the aged care home, the role will usually need to be permanent (full-time or part-time) under the Fair Work Act. Casual arrangements are generally suited to irregular or ad-hoc hours.

5. Is it possible to have more than one on-site pharmacist?

Yes. If your funding entitles you to more than 0.2 full-time equivalent (FTE), you can engage multiple pharmacists to share the on-site hours.

The ACOP Role

1. What tasks does an on-site pharmacist perform?

While specific duties may vary depending on your facility, all on-site pharmacists follow a standard role description. They maintain a weekly timesheet and activity log to document their work, which your aged care home should keep for auditing purposes.

2. Does travel time to the facility count as working hours?

No. Only the time the pharmacist spends physically on-site counts toward funded hours. Travel time is not included.

3. Can the on-site pharmacist provide services via telehealth?

Most activities must be done on-site. However, the pharmacist may participate in Medication Advisory Committee (MAC) meetings held virtually.

4. Can the on-site pharmacist administer vaccines?

This depends on state or territory laws. In some states, pharmacists are allowed to vaccinate residents directly in aged care homes, while in others, vaccinations must be given in a community pharmacy setting. It's important to check local regulations before planning vaccination services with your on-site pharmacist.

General Practitioners

1. Can GPs still claim for RMMRs?

Yes — if criteria are met. The on-site pharmacist will often do in-depth reviews which meets the criteria for a GP to claim the relevant Medicare item for a medication review.