

# Physician Locum Vacation Program

Attracting physicians to address critical family medicine and emergency care needs in rural NL

Summer 2024

## Overview

The physician locum vacation program provides a unique blend of work and leisure, enabling physicians to bring their families to Newfoundland and Labrador while they temporarily fill essential roles in communities throughout the province. In addition to delivering much-needed medical services, participating physicians can enjoy the natural beauty and rich culture of the region.

The innovative initiative aims to make these temporary assignments memorable by allowing families to explore scenic landscapes, vibrant local communities, and various outdoor activities. By ensuring continuous health-care coverage in rural areas, the program also promotes Newfoundland and Labrador as a desirable destination for health professionals seeking a balanced work-life experience.

### Our People



## Benefits

The Medical Services Program is dedicated to advancing NL Health Services' vision of "Health and Well-Being. Every Person. Every Community" by improving health outcomes. This innovative program also aligns with the organization's Strategic Plan priority of Our People, which aims to ensure a healthy workplace that is inclusive, psychologically and physically safe, optimally staffed, and closely connected to a high-quality patient experience. The initiative seeks to reduce physician vacancies in category B emergency rooms and other areas.

Medical Services has also examined the quintuple aim for health care improvement, focusing on enhancing the patient experience by improving population health, reducing costs, enhancing the work life of health-care providers, and achieving health equity. Ensuring continuity of care in hard-to-fill areas helps avoid the costly impact of service closures or diversions and reduces burnout among permanent physicians.



## Outcomes



17 locums availed of this program to provide coverage throughout the province. The areas supported included family medicine, emergency medicine, hospitalist services, and medical officers of health.

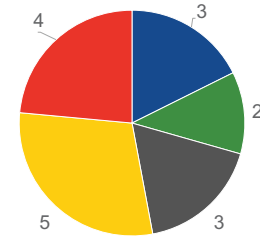
Many locums who visited the province for the first time are now seeking future locum opportunities, and some are exploring permanent roles due to their exposure to the area. They are sharing their positive experiences on social media and with their colleagues.

Phase two of this program is now being developed for 2024–25, and the plan is to expand the program into a travelling vacation locum program. This would involve rotating physicians in locum-type roles across the province over the course of a year through four separate rural zones.

This program also allowed NL Health Services' physicians to take summer leave and spend time with their families while care continued to be provided to residents of NL.

## Locums Per Zone

- Western
- Lab Grenfell
- Central
- Eastern Rural
- Eastern Urban



## Goal

The goal of the program is to boost physician participation in locum opportunities in rural areas of Newfoundland and Labrador, with a particular focus on family and emergency medicine. This new initiative targeted physician needs for summer 2024, aiming to attract and retain highly talented professionals for challenging and hard-to-fill roles. This approach supported and provided relief to physicians working with NL Health Services. The long-term objective is to encourage locum physicians to return to Newfoundland and Labrador for both locum and permanent positions.

## Activities



To identify the need for physician locums in rural areas and effectively promote these opportunities, the following steps were undertaken:

- Needs Assessment:** Identified areas with the highest physician shortages and increased risk, particularly in family medicine and emergency care.
- Program Development:** Collaborated with high-need areas to place locums, used the Atlantic registry to source physicians, streamlined the credentialing process to facilitate movement between zones, and explored cost-effective ways to bring families to Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Promotion and Marketing:** Developed materials to promote locum opportunities at recruitment events, medical schools, on NL Health Services' website, and across social media platforms.
- Engagement:** Connected with NL Health Services' physicians and community groups to assist with onboarding and welcoming locum physicians to the community.
- Evaluation:** Reviewing the program to provide feedback and plan for expansion into 2025.



Sample Social Media Post

## Opportunities

- Plan to continue the program into 2024–25 and increase the number of locum vacations.
- Partner with the Department of Health and Community Services' Office of Recruitment and Retention to attract candidates through their new locum program.
- Phase 2: Explore a Travelling Vacation Locum Program.

“ I just wanted to pass along my immense gratitude for all of your help in making this locum a reality. Working in a new province had its challenges but it also came with a lot of rewarding days. My partner and I are so appreciative of the opportunity to explore and get to know Newfoundland and Labrador in more depth than most. ”

- Locum physician

