

Q&A

Automated Shift Callout (ASC)



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Background

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What is ASC?

Automated Shift Callout is a new process that will work cohesively with current scheduling procedures. The new ASC system automates the scheduling process by calling out to relief pool employees at the same time. ASC will also give PHC employees the freedom and flexibility to reply to shift offers from staff scheduling where, when and how they want. ASC will callout shifts by voice call, email and text message.

ASC will be utilized for short-call shifts within 0-48 hours (0-2 days). ASC is expected to increase the PHC Staff Scheduling Office's ability to offer and fill shifts in a more efficient manner. Additionally, Staff Scheduling will be able to modify short-call from 0-48 hours to 0-168 hours (0-7 days).

Staff will have up to 15 minutes to respond to shift offers of 0-48 hours and up to 120 minutes to respond to shift offers on those shifts more than 48 hours in advance.

Why did PHC switch to ASC?

In a typical year, PHC's Staff Scheduling Office logs approximately 450,000 outbound phone calls. The current process requires schedulers to manually dial and call employees to fill shift vacancies. This is a tedious and exhaustive process as a result, not all shifts are filled and employees are given a very brief window to reply to shift offers.

How do I know if ASC applies to me?

If you currently receive shift offers (straight time or overtime) by telephone from the Providence Health Care Centralized Staffing office, ASC applies to you.

How are people selected to receive shift offers?

Before ASC, a Staff Scheduling scheduler manually called out relief shift employees based on collective agreement rules and seniority. ASC will select employees for shift offers the same way they were selected before ASC. ASC is simply a communications tool and only how shifts offers are made to employees.

Will ASC be used for booking more than 1 week in advance?

Not initially. ASC will be used by the Staff Scheduling short-call teams for short-notice shifts but this may be expanded at a later date to include advance booking. You will be notified if the ASC program is expanded to include bookings more than 1 week in advance.

In the meantime, your program booking clerk will continue to call you and offer advance bookings shifts. They will contact you on the primary voice phone number you have identified in ASC.

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Will ASC be used to offer overtime shifts?

Yes. ASC will be used to offer both straight-time and overtime shifts.

Are all scheduling offices at Providence Health Care using the automated call out system?

PHC's Centralized Staff Scheduling Office is using ASC. Some PHC units do their own scheduling and may or may not be using ASC. Check with your manager or supervisor for more information.

Will the person with the most seniority always receive the shift?

It depends on the exact situation and the collective agreement that applies to the shift. Collective agreement scheduling rules will be followed for all shift awards.

How does it connect with EARL? If someone calls in sick does it automatically start calling in people, or is there still a need for a human to initiate the callout process?

Employees that are unable to attend work must notify EARL. That message will go to a staffing clerk who will then identify the shift vacancy and load the shift into ASC. The shift will then be offered to employees through ASC.

Setting up the employee portal

What do I need to set up my employee profile?

All you need is about 5 minutes, a computer with internet access and your unique network ID. This is the same username you use to log into your work computers. Generic unit login IDs are not accepted. Staff must have an active network ID and email account. For more information on activating your network ID and email account, visit asc.providencehealthcare.org.

How do I reactivate my network ID and email account?

It is vital that all employees have an active network ID and email account. Without these crucial pieces, staff will be unable to log into the employee portal that gives them access to update their communication preferences (ie. text message, email, voice call), bid on shift offers, and view their bid history.

To activate or reactivate your network ID and email account, please call your Program Clerk before your site's designated ASC go-live date. If you would like to activate or reactivate your account after the go-live date, please call your IT Help Desk.

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Can I use my old phone number?

Yes. Employees can continue to use their old phone number. However, each employee needs their own unique phone number as the ASC system cannot differentiate within the system if one phone number belongs to two people.

Should I check the green box under Notification Options if I want to opt-out of receiving all shift offers until the end of the day, but I want to pick up shifts for the rest of the week?

No, checking this box means that you are opting out of receiving all shift offers for any new shifts that day as well as in the future until 23:59. Keep in mind that short-call will be filling shifts up to 7 days in advance. Do not check this box if you want to receive future shift offers.

What happens when I text message or email ASC using the “U + reference #” response format?

The “U + reference #” response format will stop all shift offers until 23:59. This includes any new shifts for today or for the future. Keep in mind that short-call will be filling shifts up to 7 days in advance so do not use this response if you want to receive shift offers up to 7 days in advance.

How do I set up my employee profile?

To set up your employee profile, log onto phcshifts.vocantasonline.com. Visit asc.providencehealthcare.org for training videos and manuals.

Can I choose to be notified via more than one channel?

Yes. You can choose to receive a voice call, a text message, and an email for every offer, or you can choose only one channel or any combination of 2. To ensure you always receive a shift offer, even during system errors, PHC's Staff Scheduling Office suggests you use all three methods of communication.

Set your preferences online in the employee portal at phcshifts.vocantasonline.com. Employees can also bid for available shifts in the employee portal.

Why does it tell me that I have to enter a voice number on the contact preference page?

You must enter a primary phone number so that Staff Scheduling can manually contact you about important scheduling matters such as vacation or other leave requests. It will also be used to offer

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shifts in the event of an ASC system failure. If you do not wish to receive voice calls from ASC, you can enter the primary phone number but then disable that communication channel option.

Using ASC

What determines who is awarded the shift?

Employees are awarded shifts based on collective agreement rules and seniority.

How long do I have to respond to a shift offer?

This depends on how far away the shift is and whether others respond, but you will always have at least 15 minutes. For shifts beginning in less than 48 hours, you will have 15 minutes. For shifts beginning in 48 hours or more, you will have 120 minutes.

Please visit asc.providencehealthcare.org for more details.

What is a priority window?

A “priority window” is a period of time during which bids for a shift offer are guaranteed to be considered. The priority window for any given offer begins from the time the offer was made and lasts for 15 or 120 minutes depending on how far away the shift is. If a shift is imminent (begins less than 48 hours from the offer time), the priority window is 15 minutes. If the shift begins in 48 hours or more from the offer time, the priority window is 120 minutes.

The table below illustrates this concept:

Time of shift offer	Time shift begins	Length of priority window
Jan 01 at 12:00	Jan 2 @ 12:00 (< 48hrs)	15 minutes (Imminent)
Jan 01 at 12:00	Jan 3 @ 12:00 (>= 48hrs)	120 minutes

You are encouraged to bid on shifts even if the priority window is closed and the shift has not been awarded.

How will I know if a shift offer has an “imminent” status?

If a shift offer has a 15 minute priority window, then it will contain the keyword “imminent.” For example, a text message shift offer with a 15 minute priority window will begin with “Imminent Providence Health Care shift offer.”

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What happens when the priority window ends?

At the end of the shift offer's priority window, all bids for the shift will be compared and the shift will be awarded per the appropriate collective agreement language. If the priority window has closed, you can still submit a bid for the shift, however it will only be considered if no other eligible employee submitted a bid within the priority window.

If the most senior employee bids on the shift immediately, will the priority window close early?

No. The priority window will never close early. Even in a situation where the shift should be awarded by seniority and the most senior employee responds within 30 seconds, the window will remain open. This is important because the most senior employee is allowed to cancel their bid before the window closes.

How do I know if I've been awarded a shift?

If you are awarded a shift, then you will receive an award notification on the same communications channels that you received the original shift offer.

Will ASC be used to offer blocks of shifts?

Yes. You will receive offers of single shifts and blocks of shifts from ASC. When bidding on a block of shifts, you are bidding on the entire block, meaning you must be willing to work all of the shifts.

Can I tell ASC that I'm only available to work part of the shift?

Yes. When replying by text or email, enter "P" for partial plus the reference number, plus the hours you are available. When replying via an interactive voice call, there is a menu that will walk you through the process. Visit asc.providencehealthcare.org for more info.

Will I receive shift offers while I'm at work?

Yes. When you are at work, shift offers will still be sent to you based on the contact preferences you set in the employee portal.

I cannot use my smartphone while on the job due to infection control protocol. How will I get shift offers while at work?

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For shifts that begin more than 48 hours out from the time of the offer, you will be given a 120 minute (2 hour) priority window so that there will be an opportunity to check shift offers and respond during one of your breaks.

How many calls, texts, or emails will I receive?

You will receive one call, text, and email for each shift offer that you are eligible for if you have all three communications channels enabled in the employee portal. It is possible that you will receive more calls than before the implementation of ASC because ASC calls all eligible employees at the same time. You can cut down on the number of calls you receive by submitting up-to-date unavailability information to Staff Scheduling.

If I receive two offers, can I respond to the second offer before the first has been awarded?

Yes. You can respond to as many open offers as you receive without needing to wait for the previous offer to close, however once you are awarded a shift you will be expected to work that shift. The Staff Scheduling Office will ensure that you are not double-booked.

If I receive multiple offers, can I indicate preference for one over the other when responding?

No. There is no way to indicate preference for one shift over another when responding to multiple offers.

Can I cancel my bid for an offer after I have received the award notification?

No. If you receive an award notification, this means that the shift/block is already in your schedule and you are expected to work it.

If I change my phone number or email address in ASC online, is it updated in real time?

Yes. If you change your phone number in ASC and save, and then one second later an offer is sent to you, it will be sent to your new phone number.

How long does it take to award a shift after the priority window closes?

The goal is to award callouts within 30 minutes of the priority window end.

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If I miss a voice call from ASC, will it leave me a message?

ASC will attempt to leave a message on your voicemail machine. It is recommended that you also enable text messages or email to increase your opportunities to receive the offer.

I received a voice call from ASC, but why did it not give me the option to bid through the phone?

ASC did not recognize that there is a person on the other line and left a message instead. Please note that ASC is voice activated so it must recognize that there is a person on the other line. To ensure that you will be receiving shift offers through the phone, please say “hello” when you pick up a voice call from ASC.

What happens if the priority window closes and nobody has bid on the shift?

The offer remains open and will be awarded to the next employee to submit a bid. You are encouraged to bid on shifts even if the priority window has closed.

What happens if I bid on a shift after the priority window has closed?

If the shift has not had any bids yet, then you will be awarded the shift within 30 minutes. If the shift has already been awarded, you will receive a notification that the shift is no longer available.

What happens if a shift is cancelled after I've already bid on it?

You will receive a notification that the shift is no longer available.

What happens if a shift is cancelled after I've been awarded it?

You will receive a notification that the shift is no longer available and a scheduler will follow-up manually to confirm.

Can you put a pause on notifications while you're away?

PHC asks that you continue to provide the Staff Scheduling Office of your unavailability. Employees who wish to turn off notifications can do so in the employee portal at phcshifts.vocantasonline.com. If you deactivate notifications you will not receive shifts until you have reactivated notifications.

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Visit asc.providencehealthcare.org to learn how you can update your employee portal profile. Please note that you are responsible for reactivating your notifications once you've returned from vacation or leave.

If I no longer wish to receive text or email notifications, can I reply with the words “cancel”, “stop”, or “arrêt”?

No. Due to Canada's anti-spam legislation (CASL), if you text or email the words “cancel”, “stop”, “arrêt” or similar words the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission will then block the text/email provider and you will no longer receive any shift offers. To turn off text or email shift offers, please go to the employee portal and mark those modes of communication as “Inactive”.

To reactivate the ASC text message offers, and be removed from the sms (text message) blacklist, you must send one of following keywords start, commence, ouvre, begin or open to any ASC SMS number from your mobile device.

Learning and Support

Where can I find learning materials?

Employees can find training videos, manuals and cheat sheets by visiting asc.providencehealthcare.org.

How can new employees learn about ASC?

New employees receive an ASC poster and wallet card in their new employee package. Additionally, an Introduction to ASC is included in the PHC New Employee Orientation (Online) through the CCRS. They will also be directed to asc.providencehealthcare.org to find more information on ASC.

Troubleshooting

What happens if the ASC system breaks or goes down?

In the event of a system downtime, the Staff Scheduling Office will temporarily revert back to the manual callout process. Staff Scheduling will use the primary contact number the employee listed in ASC in the case of a system problem. Employees are expected to ensure this number is up to date.

Can my email responses include additional information like a signature block? Will this change my response?

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Yes, your emails can include additional information like a signature block and this will not change your response. As long as the response code is the first thing in your email, ASC will read it correctly.

How do I ask a question or get more information about ASC?

If you require more information about ASC visit: asc.providencehealthcare.org.

If you require further assistance, please contact your Union representative or email asc@providencehealth.bc.ca for further information.