

RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON SURVEY FINDINGS

01

Employers provide a compensation package and communication that clearly outlines rates of pay, how and when increases happen, overtime and on-call rates during the employment life cycle. It is anticipated this would increase recruitment and retention.

02

Employers provide a comprehensive benefits statement that summarizes all benefits provided (employer and employee paid) during the employment life cycle. It is anticipated this would increase recruitment and retention.

03

Employers pay for training including training in specialty areas of practice and enter into Return of Service (ROS) Agreements with RVTs to both increase the accessibility and affordability of the training, as well as, realize the investment in the practice and create and enhance the capacity to deliver more specialized services.

04

All provinces have reported a minimum hourly starting rate of pay for graduates below the minimum per respective provincial Employment Standards Codes. All employees should be paid a rate that, at minimum, meets the standards in the Code. Further to this, it is recommended that graduates should be provided a starting rate of pay above the provincial minimum as per Employment Standards, regardless of province of employment. Given that the overall hourly average rate of pay provided by survey participants was \$19.77 is recommended that new graduates be provided a starting wage of \$ 20.00 per hour at a minimum and this minimum be adjusted to maintain a \$5.00 difference to the minimum wages established by each provinces respective Employment Standards Code. This will provide a consistent and attractive rate of pay to ensure the stability of the RVT profession.

Further to this, rates of pay should be reviewed and increased as graduates gain experience versus offering a high rate of pay and providing the little to no raises as they hone their skills. It is noted that some newly graduated RVTs stated their starting rate of pay was \$25.00 to \$38.00 per hour. It is also noted that the average hourly rate of pay for those RVTs with 11 to 15 years of practice is \$ 27.25 and those with 16 to 20 years of practice is \$ 26.78 suggesting that recent grads with little experience are making the same or more than those RVTs with significant years of practice. These instances should be closely reviewed by employers with an understanding that rates of pay should be closely aligned with experience to avoid significant retention issues. Further to this there should be no difference in compensation between RVTs practicing in rural and urban populations if the work is the same.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED

05

All rates of pay/salary ranges should be reviewed on an annual basis by the employer to recognize Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) or general wage increase (GWI) should be provided to RVTs separate from any performance reviews and associated merit increments. If organizations have established salary scales or ranges the GWI would be applied to these pay structures. If there are no formal pay structures GWI can be provided in addition to merit increase. COLA is published by Statistics Canada annually.

06

Employers and RVTs should be familiar with provincial Employment Standards as it relates to overtime. Overtime should be compensated in accordance with respective Employment Standards and applies to both salary and hourly employees as it is unlikely that RVTs satisfy any overtime requirements under the Employment Standard Codes.

07

The overall average hourly rate of pay for RVTs is \$25.75. The analysis of the data shows there is no clear pattern or correlation between years of practice and rates of pay.

Good compensation practices would see a more significant increase in line with the years of service. It is recommended that RVTs receive a minimum of a 3.5% merit increase with every year of satisfactory service. This would be separate and apart from recommendation 5 that speaks to a general wage increase. Significant consideration should be given to how RVTs with several years of experience are paid and it is noted that the highest paid RVT receives \$52.52 in Alberta, \$48.00 in Manitoba and \$45.00 in Saskatchewan. However, these are the exceptions with only 30 survey participants indicating that they earned more than \$35.00 per hour. It is also noted that the average years of experience is 9.78 years. To retain RVTs with more than 10 years' experience it is expected that they would make well over the average established in this report of \$25.75. Employers should think strategically when contemplating salaries for experienced staff by making the increases exponentially larger with each year of service. The rate of compensation should be relative to experience, where-as experience increases, so should the hourly rate of pay with no differentiation in compensation between RVTs practicing in rural and urban populations. Employers should recognize, and RVTs advocate for, compensation as it relates to years of experience in the profession overall, not employer specific experience. Responsibilities requiring specialty training should be compensated as a percent of hourly rate of pay in addition to years of experience.

It is noted according to the 2020 Canadian Veterinary Medical Association Workforce Study that over half of that survey's respondents indicated their practice was currently looking to hire a Veterinary Technologist to be able to maintain the clients they have. The study continues to state that the dog population alone has almost doubled since 2007. As such one of the study's recommendations was to look for long-term strategies to address the shortage of veterinary technologists. The study does not provide much insight on what a long-term strategy might look like. However, one of the key components will have to be compensation, if salaries are not appealing it will be difficult to attract people into the industry and even more difficult to retain staff. The data gathered in this review demonstrates there is already a significant shortage of experienced RVTs.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED

08

Employee performance should be based on job requirements and RVTs should be made aware of their performance both positive and in areas requiring improvement. Merit increases should be considered annually, and be based on employee performance throughout the review period.

09

Vacation leave needs to adhere to Employment Standards at the minimum. Vacation leave needs to be offered commensurate with years of experience in the profession, not just with the current employer, and may exceed legislated minimums. This should apply across rural and urban populations.

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Paid sick leave is not regulated but should be provided as part of a comprehensive compensation package at a rate of five days of paid sick leave annually, aligning to what was established during the COVID-19 pandemic.

11

Paid personal leave is not regulated but should be provided as part of a comprehensive compensation package at a rate of five days of paid personal leave annually. This can be used to offset the reported flexibility provided for family commitments, resulting in more consistent utilization in employees, and promoting work life balance.

12

For recruitment and retention purposes, it would be beneficial for employers to provide a comprehensive benefits program for RVTs and their families inclusive of employer paid health benefits including wellness benefits or a health wellness spending account, disability insurance and group life insurance. This promotes employee wellness and demonstrates an investment by the employer in the wellness of their employees. Wellness benefits and health wellness spending accounts provide support to employees to combat elements of the job that are physically and psychologically demanding, potentially increasing tenure in the profession and employee engagement.

13

For recruitment and retention purposes, profit sharing and bonus programs may present an opportunity to fully engage employees and align their level of service to ownership and success of the practice. It is expected that this approach would aid in the attraction of experienced professionals. Contribution matching levels could align to profit sharing or bonus programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED

14

Based on the predominantly female demographic of RVTs, paid time off for flexibility for family commitments can be formalized and equalized across those with or without a spouse and children, by providing an established number of paid personal days annually for all RVTs. This approach is easier to manage for employers and is easier for employees to understand and support. Flexibility in the form of schedule changes, shift swaps, etc. is an effective way to support employee work-life balance while meeting the needs of the employer in the provision of services.

15

Several employers provide additional benefits such as discounted pet food and services, etc. It is recommended that this practice continue with those that are providing it and be extended to those that are not. Further, this benefit should be monetized as part of a total compensation package and communicated to staff through a benefit statement.

16

All provinces are under-represented with regards to visible minorities. There is the potential to reach out to educational institutions for more focused program recruitment and enrollment that is more representative of the communities they provide services to.

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The Provincial Association should send a brief survey with annual renewals at the same time every year. Questions should be consistent from year to year and based on 5 specific metrics that each association is concerned with such as rate of pay, age, etc. This will allow better comparisons year to year.

