

Continuing the Conversation

Working together to shape health care



Refocusing Alberta's health care system means moving to a unified provincial sector-based model. The system is shifting away from **Alberta Health Services** as the single organization providing health care toward **Provincial Health Agencies**.

The **Ministry of Health** is responsible for **Primary Care Alberta** and **Acute Care Alberta**. The Ministry of Health will also be responsible for more in the health system, including System Planning, Capital Planning, Analytics, and Procurement, etc.

The **Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction** is responsible for **Recovery Alberta**, while the **Ministry of Seniors, Community, and Social Services** will be responsible for **Assisted Living Alberta**.

Ministries and provincial health agencies will **coordinate** to **integrate** services and plans to support **seamless patient care**.

Refocusing will:

- Support patients accessing **the right health care**, especially in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities.
- **Reduce pressure on acute care** and increase focus in other areas to create a **more sustainable** system.
- Better **support health care workers** and improve leadership to create **better outcomes** for workers and patients.

Provincial Health Agencies

Recovery Alberta

Lead department: Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction

As the mental health and addiction provincial health agency, Recovery Alberta provides services across **inpatient** and **outpatient** settings, including acute care, standalone psychiatric hospitals, community mental health beds, treatment and detoxification facilities, provincial correctional settings, and through community outreach.

Goals:

- Continue supporting Albertans facing addiction and/or mental health challenges
- Provide comprehensive and accessible recovery-oriented mental health and addiction services, and correctional health services
- Improve mental health and addiction care for Albertans through access to treatment and recovery supports

Recovery Alberta was legally established on July 1, 2024, under the leadership of CEO Kerry Bales.

Primary Care Alberta

Lead department: Ministry of Health

As the primary care provincial health agency, Primary Care Alberta oversees the **coordination and delivery of primary health care** services across the province.

Goals:

- Make sure every person in Alberta is attached to a primary care provider
- Support patients as they move between primary care and other healthcare services
- Make sure healthcare services are based on the best information and follow best practices
- Increase after-hours services and improve access to virtual and digital health services
- Improve access to primary care in communities that need it most, specifically in rural and remote communities

Primary Care Alberta was legally established on November 18, 2024, under the leadership of CEO Kim Simmonds.

Acute Care Alberta

Lead department: Ministry of Health

As the acute care provincial health agency, Acute Care Alberta will work with all acute care providers, including **Alberta Health Services** and **Covenant Health**, to ensure they are delivering **excellent acute care** services.

Emergency health services will move out of AHS to report directly to **Acute Care Alberta** in 2025. This move will ensure emergency services are well supported within the refocused health care system.

Goals:

- Shorter wait times for emergency departments and surgeries
- Lower emergency medical services response time
- Higher-quality care across the province and enhance access to care in rural areas

Acute Care Alberta was legally established on February 1, 2025, under the leadership of interim president and CEO Dr. Chris Eagle.

Assisted Living Alberta

Lead department: Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services

Assisted Living Alberta will be responsible for overseeing a **comprehensive system** of care and **wraparound services**, including **medical** and **non-medical supports**, home care, community care and social services.

Goals:

- Fair, timely, and consistent access
- More beds in the places where Albertans need them most
- Better long-term care for patients through improved access to other health and social service supports
- Accelerate transformation of care in home and community care settings, through implementation of innovative approaches and holistic set of services
- Ensure seniors, people with disabilities and other vulnerable Albertans are supported with comprehensive, wraparound services that meet both their medical and non-medical needs

Assisted Living Alberta will be legally established on April 1, 2025.

Alberta Health Services

Alberta Health Services (AHS) will shift from a health authority to a **hospital service delivery provider**, alongside Covenant Health. AHS will continue operating its 90+ hospitals with a renewed **focus on shorter wait times** and supporting **high-quality hospital care** for patients in communities across Alberta.

As a hospital service delivery provider, AHS will be **accountable to Acute Care Alberta**, the provincial health agency for acute care. In some rural health centres, AHS will continue delivering all pillars of care to support streamlined care delivery. Covenant Health, Lamont Health Care Centre and chartered surgical facilities will also be accountable to Acute Care Alberta.

Shared Services

A new **shared services entity** is being created to promote **integration** by providing corporate and support services to **provincial health agencies** and service providers, like AHS. This entity will be operational in Summer 2025. It will focus on ensuring patients have a **seamless journey** and that health care workers have **system-wide access** to critical patient information.

Advisory Councils

Regional Advisory Councils will reflect **local voices** and community perspectives by:

- **Advising** the government and the new provincial health agencies on workforce, capital, and clinical service planning.
- **Collaborating** with community partners to identify local health system issues and potential solutions.
- Identifying **opportunities** for the health system to better support local decision-making.

The **Indigenous Advisory Council** will provide **advice** on priorities and ways to improve health care for Indigenous Peoples by:

- Bringing **Indigenous perspectives** to directly advise the government and the new provincial health agencies on workforce, capital, and clinical service planning.
- Informing the design and delivery of **culturally appropriate health care** programs and services and explore opportunities to integrate traditional Indigenous practices and teachings.

What We Heard

The “What we Heard” report was released in October 2024, aligning with Alberta Health’s commitment to two-way conversations throughout system refocusing. This report summarizes feedback from more than 30,000 health care workers, patients, families and caregivers across Alberta during the 65 in-person engagement sessions, targeted engagement, telephone town halls and online feedback forms.

The considerations that consistently arose throughout the engagement have been organized into **seven major themes**:

1. Access to care

- Frustration due to lack of providers and long wait times and the impact on access to primary care
- Inability to access acute care services including surgeries, EMS and specialist treatments

2. Ongoing communication and transparency

- Lack of communication negatively impacts patient outcomes
- Mistrust in how decisions are made without frontline input across the health system

3. Supporting and sustaining the health care work force

- Providers feel they are treated as a number and not as people and lack appropriate support
- Lack of meaningful recognition and appropriate leadership

4. Unique needs in rural, remote and Indigenous communities

- Rural and remote patients face barriers to care
- Travel costs add to other challenges

5. Local decision-making and empowerment

- AHS culture and complex structure drive significant frustration
- Decision-making at the community/facility level will improve outcomes/responsiveness/efficiency

6. Accountability of the health care system

- Lack of accountability for services/outcomes across the system
- Two-way accountability should be a top priority

7. System integration and coordination

- Patients want their providers to have access to all their information and health records
- Concerns around navigation across provincial health agencies

What We Are Doing

Each major theme in the "What We Heard" report was broken down into **actionable steps** the **public** identified as **suggestions** for the government to **consider**.

Those suggestions were shared with government departments to **assess their feasibility**.

The departments have reported back on where **action is being taken** to address these suggestions, including programs put in place and those still being designed.

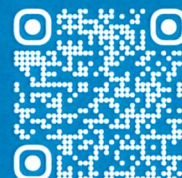
A **sample** of the actions taken includes:

- Launching the **Nurse Practitioner Program** in April 2024, expanding access to a primary care provider to an additional 30,000 Albertans.
- Developing the **Rural Health Action Plan**, which includes the **Rural and Remote Family Medicine Resident Physician Bursary Pilot Program** (\$16M and supporting up to 40 physicians), the **Underserved Grant Program** (\$30M over two years), and other measures to attract and retain health care workers in rural communities, providing improved access to care.
- Creating the **Modernizing Alberta's Primary Health Care System (MAPS) dashboard** in June, providing quarterly updates on the status of 30 action items highlighted in the MAPS 2-Year Implementation Plan, meaning Albertans can track the progress of the MAPS initiative to help hold program accountable.
- Making it possible for medical schools to train **100+ additional new physicians annually**, expanding pool of trained physicians in Alberta.
- Developing the **Indigenous Primary Health Care Innovation Fund** (\$20M over two years) to support new clinics and transportation options for Indigenous Peoples required to travel for care.
- Expanding access to **Connect Care** for front-line paramedics, allowing them to view the most up-to-date health information so they can make informed clinical decisions.

Notes

Stay Involved

Scan the QR code to visit alberta.ca/leadtheway where you'll find the latest information on health care system refocusing and ways to stay involved.



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Actions Being Taken



Access to care

Improving Surgery Capacity and Timelines

- On track to complete a record number of surgeries in 2025 (310,000)
- Committed to delivering surgeries within clinically recommended timelines
- Alberta Surgical Initiative Capital Program (\$313 million) added new and expanded existing operating rooms across the province

Nurse Practitioner Program

- Launched in April 2024
- 58 approved applications
- 33 nurse practitioners providing independent care, including in rural communities
- 30,000 more Albertans will have access to primary care with 41 nurse practitioners participating

New Primary Care Compensation Model

- Will make Alberta's primary care physicians the strongest paid and most patient-focused in the country
- The new model is structured to encourage physicians to grow the number of patients they care for and encourage full-time practice
- The model recognizes and pays for the critically important work of physicians, including the number of patients seen and patient complexity, as well as time spent providing direct and indirect care

Rural Health Action Plan

- Aims to improve health equity for rural and remote Albertans
- Rural and Remote Family Medicine Resident Physician Bursary Pilot Program (\$16 million to support up to 40 physicians)
- Underserved Grant Program (\$30 million over two years)

Alberta Midwifery Strategy

- Aims to ensure Albertans can access high-quality maternal health care anywhere in the province (\$10 million over three years)
- The strategy will enhance care for Indigenous populations through provider and community engagement, address midwifery attrition and sustain the workforce and formalize guidelines and processes to integrate midwifery practice



Ongoing communication and transparency

Second Round of Comprehensive Engagement

- Returning to regions visited
- Online engagement tools, including feedback forms, Q&A tool and the Refocusing Updates Newsletter, available at alberta.ca/leadtheway
- Virtual engagement opportunities, including telephone town halls
- Feedback from comprehensive engagement guides design and implementation of refocused system

Targeted Health Care Worker Engagement

- Improves transparency and maintains open lines of communication
- Recovery Alberta engagement ongoing
- Engagement planned by Primary Care Alberta and Acute Care Alberta

Modernizing Alberta's Primary Health Care System (MAPS) Dashboard

- Launched June 28, 2024 at alberta.ca/primary-health-care
- Reports quarterly on status of 30 action items highlighted in the MAPS 2-Year Implementation Plan
- Albertans can track the progress of the MAPS initiative to help hold the program accountable



Supporting and sustaining the health care work force

Recruitment and Retention

- Municipality Supported Clinics Grant improves patient access to primary health care through team-based care
- Review of travel nursing program underway to support improved stability for staff nurses
- Bridging programs, including for internationally educated nurses, to hire more qualified nurses
- Physician Assistant Program increasing access to primary care

Accessible Education

- Bursaries for Health Care Aide students committed to working 2000 hours in continuing care to improve access to long-term care supports (\$9,000 per student)
- Rural Medical Education Training Centres in Lethbridge and Grande Prairie help rural students study and work closer to home
- Funding provided to the Ministry of Education for dual credit high school Health Care Aide programs since September 2024 (\$555,000 annually for three years)

Training

- Grants provided to two Indigenous colleges for Health Care Aide programs to support more access to health care education and supports within Indigenous communities
- New entry-level education programs for Nurse Practitioners beginning 2026



Unique needs in rural, remote and Indigenous communities

Rural Health Professionals Action Plan

- Plan aims to work with municipalities to attract health care workers and their families to strengthen rural access to care (\$6 million over two years)
- Plan supports housing for rural students and residents for positive rural experience to increase health care workers in rural areas
- High school rural health care experience program increases interest in health care among rural residents, expanding the number of rural health care workers

Indigenous Health

- Indigenous patient navigator program to support culturally-sensitive care and improve patient experiences
- Traditional foods initiative will integrate traditional First Nations, Métis, and Inuit foods within Alberta Health facilities
- Indigenous Primary Health Care Innovation Fund supports new clinics and transportation options (\$20 million over two years)
- Anti-racism engagement to develop a culturally informed training toolkit

Emergency Medical Responder Education Grant

- Provides emergency medical responder training opportunities through organizations based in rural and remote communities, as well as First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, where there are existing or nearby emergency medical services (EMS) stations (\$600,000)
- Aims to increase the number of EMS practitioners in Alberta by supporting staff training needs in their local communities (up to \$24,000 per community)
- Increases access to health care services for Albertans and supports critical workforce improvements in Alberta's EMS

Rural Access

- Expand telehealth options for surgery follow-up appointments and as part of the virtual hospital initiative
- Rural Surgery Initiative will expand access to surgeries in rural communities based on identified needs
- Rural and Remote Health Facility Capital Plan will compile an inventory of health care activities, services, and infrastructure to identify opportunities to enhance access and outcomes
- Health Corridors better reflect how Albertans access care to support system planning across all corners of the province



Local decision-making and empowerment

Regional Advisory Council Boundaries

- Regional Advisory Councils are aligned to health corridors, regional needs, and local geographic areas
- The boundaries reflect how Albertans access health care and the unique needs of different areas of the province
- Two additional Regional Advisory Councils were created to increase local representation for the communities surrounding both Edmonton and Calgary
- Community representation was considered to ensure more voices are brought to the decision-making table

Regional Advisory Council and Indigenous Advisory Council Recruitment

- Intentional and extensive recruitment ensures the right voices, representing different perspectives, are included
- Local voices will be more involved in providing input on community-based health care matters
- Work is under way to determine the length and number of terms members will serve on Regional Advisory Councils and Indigenous Advisory Council
- Councils will launch in 2025

Indigenous Advisory Council Alignment

- The Indigenous Advisory Council will represent the entire province to ensure all people's voices are captured
- Members of the Indigenous Advisory Council will also sit on the Regional Advisory Councils to ensure Indigenous representation across all councils
- Efforts have been made to ensure representation across First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples

Health Foundations Engagement

- Conducted in the fall of 2024 with board and staff leadership of foundations province-wide
- Helped to better understand considerations for their roles in a refocused system
- Will support the development of policy changes to better empower foundations in the work they do to support the health care system, patients, families, and communities



Accountability of the health care system

Reporting

- Regular reporting on emergency medical services (EMS) performance and coverage from province to municipalities
- Routine audits of long-term and continuing care facilities to assess compliance
- Release of the What We Heard Report to the public and commitment to report again when the second round of engagement concludes in Spring 2025
- Commitment to provide regular progress updates

Oversight

- The Minister of Health is the Oversight Minister responsible for the entire health care system
- Government will have direct oversight for provincial health agencies through the Ministries of Health, Mental Health and Addiction, and Seniors, Community and Social Services
- Performance metrics are in place to monitor patient outcomes

Data Sharing and Records

- Providing view-only access to Connect Care for front-line paramedics, allowing them to look up the most up-to-date health information and empowering them to make informed clinical decisions and improve patient outcomes during critical moments.
- Planning to expand Connect Care access to primary care providers so these providers have all the information they need to care for their patients.
- Indigenous communities need access to data about their populations to empower local decision-making and the province is working to develop non-identifiable, population-specific data to meet this need



System integration and coordination

Integrated System Planning

- System Planning is now the responsibility of Alberta Health, providing a unified approach to decision-making at a system-wide level
- Ensures all entities are aligned with provincial health priorities
- Brings together different areas across all ministries, provincial health agencies, and service delivery organizations, as well as sectors supporting health care, like foundations

Integration Council

- Membership includes the Ministers of Health, Mental Health and Addiction, Seniors, Community and Social Services and other senior leaders in health system, including the leadership of the provincial health agencies
- Collaboration across these sectors supports a unified health care system
- Aligns health system goals, identifies efficiencies, and removes barriers to health system integration

Patient Navigation

- Alberta Health's Electronic Referral Solution allows doctors and nurse practitioners to send referral requests electronically, meaning faster specialist appointments, fewer referral delays, and quicker diagnosis and treatment
- *Continuing Care Act* mandates the development of programs to support and protect the health and well-being of caregivers supporting friends or family members