



## PCA Frequently Asked Questions

### About Primary Care Alberta

#### 1. What is Primary Care Alberta (PCA)?

- PCA is one of the four planned provincial health agencies in Alberta designed to focus on four priority areas: primary care, acute care, continuing care, and mental health and addiction.
- PCA is the new provincial health agency responsible for primary care across the province. It is a made-in-Alberta solution to ensure Albertans can access the primary health services they rely on every day, throughout every stage of life and in every corner of the province.
- We know our current health care system makes it difficult to access the primary care Albertans need, like family doctors. That's why PCA has been created to solely focus on primary care, something that has never before been done in Alberta.
- PCA will create a modern, more responsive and unified health care system that prioritizes patients, empowers front-line health care professionals and gives Albertans improved access to key primary care services so they can avoid visiting the emergency department or be over-reliant on acute care service.

#### 2. Who is accountable for primary health care in Alberta under the new structure?

- The Government of Alberta Ministry of Health sets policy and direction to achieve a sustainable and accountable health system.
- Primary Care Alberta oversees the coordination and delivery of primary health care services across the province. Improved access to primary care will help Albertans avoid visiting the emergency department and reduce pressure on hospitals.
- Primary Care Alberta, and other provincial health agencies, are accountable to the Ministry of Health.
- This unified health care system will rely on the oversight of Alberta Health in areas such as integration, patient pathways, capital planning, and other areas that affect all of health care service delivery in the province.
- This improved governance will help the Government of Alberta better direct critical resources to the front lines to support workers and improve patient care.

#### 3. Why are acute and primary care services being set up as separate entities?

- The creation of Acute Care Alberta (ACA) and Primary Care Alberta will mean a greater focus and improved visibility for acute and primary care services. This reflects a strong commitment by the Government of Alberta to these vital areas of service.
- Alberta is refocusing the health care system with the goal of prioritizing patients and empowering front-line professionals. This refocus will result in the creation of dedicated health organizations, two of which are Acute Care Alberta and Primary Care Alberta.



**4. What is the first task at hand for Primary Care Alberta?**

- Primary Care Alberta will begin to develop a governance framework for primary care, and work with stakeholders in the primary care community as it begins its work.
- The agency will also be working to implement supports to reduce administrative burdens in clinics and develop patient and family navigation tools.

**5. Will this change the way Albertans access primary care services?**

- No. Where or how Albertans access primary health care services will not change.
- Patients will still go to a family doctor, walk-in clinic or other primary care provider for checkups and help with general health concerns.

**6. How will PCA benefit Albertans and service providers?**

- Primary Care Alberta will coordinate and deliver primary health care services across the province to give Albertans improved access to key primary care services so they can avoid visiting the emergency department or be over-reliant on acute care services.
- PCA will be tasked with ensuring every Albertan can be attached to a primary care provider and will help ensure Albertans and their families have access to high-quality services that support their day-to-day health needs through every stage of life.
- Over time, the agency will improve access to primary care services enabling providers to focus on health care delivery in a more modern, responsive, and unified health system.
- Primary Care Alberta will focus on achieving key outcomes, including:
  - ensuring every Albertan will be attached to a primary care provider team
  - supporting an integrated team of health professionals to provide comprehensive primary care, including family physicians, nurse practitioners and pharmacists, that has appropriate access to patient health information
  - providing timely access to high-quality primary care services, including after-hours, specifically in rural and remote areas in Alberta
  - improving access to virtual and digital health service
- Additional PCA priorities include:
  - Incentivizing care models to improve patient experience and health outcomes.
  - Setting primary care standards so Albertans have consistent services and the system is held accountable.
  - Developing models that reduce the burden of chronic disease on patients and the health care system.
  - Enabling physicians to lead their peers through change through engagement and leadership opportunities.
  - Providing tools to primary care providers, such as enhancing the current Find a Doctor website and e-Referral, to streamline processes for both providers and patients.



**7. Timeline-wise, when exactly do you hope Albertans will start to see real change in their primary care?**

- It will take time to build capacity in the system.
- Primary Care Alberta became a legal entity as of November 18, 2024, with the goal of having more Albertans' attached to a primary care provider.
- The transformation is ongoing, with efforts to improve access to primary care delivery in underserved communities, specifically rural and remote areas.
- PCA will be working with Alberta Health and AHS over the coming months to fully establish its operational responsibilities.
- Change has already started with the implementation of the MAPS recommendations such as: improving supports for vulnerable Albertans by investing \$30 million into four community health centres, creating a task force with the Alberta Medical Association to provide recommendations on a new payment model for family doctors, and establishing the PCN Nurse Practitioner Support Program.
- In Year 1, primary health care in Alberta will continue to improve and provide Albertans with additional attachment and access to primary health care.
- In Year 2, the organization will see continued improvements in the primary health care system in Alberta.

**8. How will PCA deal with patient feedback or complaints?**

- The Patient Relations Department in AHS will continue to provide services to Primary Care Alberta through a transition services agreement. This includes the operations and directly working with patients and families through the patient relations intake process, commendation management and concerns management.

## **Physicians and Clinics**

**9. How do primary care health programs, services, physicians and staff fit into PCA?**

- While there are no immediate impacts, over time, Primary Care Alberta will help streamline process and coordinate services so providers can focus on caring for Albertans.
- Primary Care Alberta will not assume ownership or management of existing independent family practices, set compensation for primary care practitioners or direct physicians on how they organize clinics or provide care.
- As needed, Primary Care Alberta will establish cooperation agreements with AHS to ensure that staff can be shared between sectors and that operations can be maintained.



## Primary Care Networks

### 10. How will PCA work with PCNs moving forward?

- Services and supports provided by PCNs now, and RPHCNs in the future, remain at the heart of how we will ensure Albertans get what they need from a primary health care system.
- Primary Care Alberta is committed to ongoing conversations and sharing the latest information, when appropriate, with PCNs. This includes looking into more consistent and formal ways to work together and ensure everyone has the most up to date information moving forward.

## Health Corridors

### 11. How do the new health corridors impact Primary Care Alberta?

- Seven new integrated health corridors are being established to support seamless patient journeys: North-West, North-East, Edmonton, Central, Calgary, South-West, and South-East. This change helps government gain a better regional understanding of the health system, determine current gaps, inform investments, and ensure decisions reflect the changing needs of Albertans.
- While the system is moving to the new corridors, AHS will retain its zones for organizational purposes during the transfer. Existing zones will ensure its services reflect priorities for the zones. Health and AHS will work to align the new expectations on corridors as AHS evolves to its new role as a service provider in the coming year.
- Primary Care Alberta was established to improve primary care access, with a strategic approach of addressing this need on a corridor-by-corridor basis.
- Alignment with the new corridors will be an important consideration in the design and implementation of RPHCNs. Discussions with PCNs and other primary care leaders will address this subject in further detail.
- More information can be found online here: [Health corridors map search | Alberta.ca](#)

## Engagement

### 12. The refocus initiative has done many engagement sessions with health care professionals – what are the top concerns that have been voiced?

- Many health professionals attended the first round of public engagement sessions from January through April 2024. Their concerns are included in the public feedback that Alberta's government received.
- A comprehensive [What We Heard report](#) is available at [alberta.ca/lead-the-way](http://alberta.ca/lead-the-way). The top themes that government heard from Albertans included:
  - access to care
  - ongoing communication and transparency
  - supporting and sustaining the health care workforce
  - unique needs in rural, remote and Indigenous communities



- local decision-making and empowerment
- accountability of the health care system
- system integration and coordination

**13. How have those concerns been addressed in the stand up of the provincial health agencies?**

- The stand up of the provincial health agencies provides the framework for clear accountabilities in the provision of health care to Albertans. It will take time for these frameworks to be implemented, but their establishment is a major step in the right direction.
- For instance, before the stand up of Primary Care Alberta, there was no direct accountability for ensure Albertans have access to primary care services.
- Primary Care Alberta is now specifically responsible for an unattached patient strategy – essentially creating a path to addressing the access challenges that currently exist.

**14. How can I stay up to date with refocusing news?**

- Engaging with health care professionals, patients and all Albertans is vital to refocus the health care system. The input, experiences and feedback Alberta’s government gathers will help create a more effective and efficient health care system.
- A second round of in-person public engagement is underway to share information and receive feedback about the refocusing work. Details on sessions are posted on [alberta.ca/leadtheway](http://alberta.ca/leadtheway).
- Those interested in keeping up to date on the health system refocusing work and new engagement opportunities can also sign up for an e-newsletter at [alberta.ca/health-care-refocusing-newsletter](http://alberta.ca/health-care-refocusing-newsletter).
- Questions about refocusing the health care system can be submitted directly to Alberta Health online here: [Refocusing health care in Alberta | Alberta Online Engagement](#)

## Refocusing Health Care Initiative

**15. What is the status of the refocusing health care initiative?**

- Since announcing plans to refocus Alberta’s health care system in November 2023, significant progress has been made in several key areas.
- Under Alberta’s refocused health care system, four fully integrated provincial health agencies will be created to oversee the priority sectors of primary care, acute care, continuing care, and mental health and addiction.
- Two of the provincial health agencies, Recovery Alberta and Primary Care Alberta, have been established with input from more than 30,000 health care professionals and Albertans.
  - **Primary Care Alberta** is the provincial health agency responsible for overseeing the coordination and delivery of primary health care services across the province. It is a legal entity under the leadership of CEO Kim Simmonds as of November 18, 2024 and



will work to implement its mandates, develop operational plans and set vision and mission. Goals include:

- Increasing Albertans' attachment to a care provider team through new models of care
  - Increasing after-hours services
  - Improving access to virtual and digital health services
  - Improving access to primary care delivery in underserved communities, specifically rural and remote areas
  - You can learn more by visiting [primarycarealberta.ca](https://primarycarealberta.ca).
- **Acute Care Alberta** is the provincial health agency responsible for acute care and will be a legal entity in early 2025, and begin operating in spring 2025. It will work closely with acute care providers to speed up access to quality-care and achieve key outcomes including:
    - Shorter wait times for emergency departments and surgeries.
    - Lower emergency medical services response time.
    - Higher-quality care across the province and enhanced access to care in rural areas.
    - The Acute Care Provincial Health Agency Executive Transition Team has been established to support standing up Acute Care Alberta.
  - **Recovery Alberta** is the provincial health agency responsible for recovery-oriented mental health and addiction services and correctional health services. It is operational as of September 1, 2024. Services are available through this provincial health agency. You can learn more by visiting [recoveryalberta.ca](https://recoveryalberta.ca). Recovery Alberta will focus on:
    - Ensuring every Albertan struggling with the disease of addiction and/or mental health challenges is supported in their pursuit of recovery.
    - Providing Albertans with access to a full continuum of recovery-oriented supports that help them improve overall well-being and sustain recovery.
    - Improving mental health and addiction care for Albertans by further expanding access to treatment and recovery supports across Alberta.
  - The **Centre of Recovery Excellence, CoRE** began operations in June 2024 and is leading recovery excellence by informing best practices, conducting program evaluation and analyzing data to support the development of objective and practical policy. CoRE's mission is to empower recovery through data and analysis with a focus on:
    - Research and evaluation
    - Data and analytics
    - Expert advice
    - Guidance and leadership collaboration



- The department of Mental Health and Addiction and Recovery Alberta will work closely with CoRE to advance the mental health and addiction system in Alberta.
- The Ministry of Health is working with the Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services towards the **standing up of the new continuing care provincial health agency**. The new continuing care provincial health agency will provide provincial oversight and coordination of continuing care service delivery. This will renew patient focus and create equitable, consistent and timely access to continuing care services. All operators, including Covenant Health, will continue to deliver services under contract with the new agency. The continuing care provincial health agency will ensure:
  - Equitable, consistent and timely access to continuing care services.
  - Increased number of beds to meet the needs of Albertans with a focus on equitable access across the province.
  - Improved team-based cross-sector care leveraging other health and social service.
- The agency will continue the work to add more continuing care spaces, attract and retain health care workers, advance innovative solutions and support you as you choose where and how you'd like to live.