

Health Action Plan

Annual Report April 2009

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The Alberta government announced a plan on April 16, 2008 to take action on a wide range of initiatives aimed at making the province's health care system more efficient and effective. The following is a 12-month progress report on the initiatives.

Status indicators:

↗ In Progress

✓ Completed

🕒 Revised timeline

Governance and Accountability

✓ Completed

- Implement mandatory accreditation for all health authorities, facilities and programs.
- Monitor and report on compliance with province-wide infection prevention and control standards.
- Monitor compliance with the Continuing Care Health Service Standards.
- Establish a new health system governance model with a focus on accountability, performance measures and capital planning.
- Perform regular service delivery reviews to increase efficiency and improve capital planning.
- Announce a governance and funding model for ground emergency medical services.
- Develop a plan to register all Albertans in the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan to coincide with the plan to eliminate health care premiums.
- Report on the implementation progress of the new provincial governance model.
- Develop and deliver provincial health services model to make them more efficient and effective.

All Governance and Accountability initiatives have been completed.

Further developments since Dec. 15, 2008:

- As of April 1, 2009, Albertans can register or update their health registration information at 20 registry agent offices throughout Alberta.

Health Workforce

✓ Completed

- Work with Advanced Education and Technology to create new education seats for physicians, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses and other health professionals.
- Open Health Career Centres in Edmonton and Calgary.
- Work with Alberta Education and Advanced Education and Technology to promote health careers for high school students.
- Implement a virtual campus and rural mentoring for medical students.
- Announce additional seats for respiratory therapists and medical laboratory technologists.

↗ In Progress

- Address workforce-related issues and support for continuing care.
- Implement actions to recruit more foreign-trained health professionals and work with other provinces on a recruitment strategy for western Canada.
- Develop a policy for the role of physician assistants in the health care system.
- Implement plan to increase rural residencies for international medical graduates.
- Implement technologies to reduce health workforce injuries and increase efficiency.
- Align training and curriculum for nursing to meet health system needs.

Further developments since Dec. 15, 2008:

- Alberta Health Services and Alberta Health and Wellness are working to develop policies for physician assistants.
- A recruitment strategy for western Canada has been drafted and will be brought forward to the Western Ministers for consideration.

Improving Access

✓ Completed

- Implement a virtual campus and rural mentoring for medical students.
- Implement a patient navigator system.
- Continue to expand the role of pharmacists in preventing disease and managing chronic diseases, particularly in rural communities.
- Improve co-ordination and access to cancer services in acute and community settings including looking at ways to provide chemotherapy at home.
- Set targets to improve access to primary health care
- Expand facility space and community care services for seniors.
- Implement a new Alberta pharmaceutical strategy to address the cost of pharmaceuticals and support the effective use of drugs. This will include collaboration with other government ministries.
- Develop a new continuing care services strategy to address the needs of an aging population and provide more options for home care and community care.
- Announce the plan to develop a provincial patient portal to allow Albertans to access their health information online.
- Develop a provincial health services strategy to increase capacity to admit emergency department and elective surgery patients to existing beds, improve access to primary care and improve overall health system efficiency.
- Establish a plan for improved access to ambulatory, urgent, continuing and acute care.

↗ In Progress

- Develop home telehealth pilot projects to help patients manage their chronic diseases.
- Pursue co-ordinated access to services in Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan.
- Introduce strategies that will result in greater adoption and use of the provincial electronic health record system and expand access to all core health care providers.

Further developments since Dec. 15, 2008:

- 13 cardiac patient navigators have been hired across the province. Two full-time breast cancer patient navigators are now guiding patients from diagnosis to recovery.
- Six pharmacies participated in a pilot project to examine ways to improve patient care, appropriate drug therapy and health outcomes; this practice model is being rolled out to 10 per cent of Alberta pharmacies.
- Patients have been enrolled in the home chemo program, with an evaluation expected in spring 2010.

- A revised seniors' drug plan was released April 23, 2009.
- The *Drug Program Act* passed first reading April 29. The proposed legislation will establish a single, government-sponsored drug plan, improve the drug approval process, introduce a program to help Albertans with rare diseases, adjust premiums for the government's non-group program and redesign drug coverage for low-income seniors.
- The *Health Information Act* received second reading and was referred to the Standing Committee on Health March 17. The proposed legislation sets out new requirements to protect the confidentiality and security of Albertans' health information.

Healthy and Safe Communities

✓ Completed

- Release new nutrition guidelines for children and youth and launch a new phase of the Create a Movement campaign www.createamovement.ca
- Support infection prevention and control by implementing a blood-borne pathogen strategy.
- Expand cancer screening and awareness programs.
- Launch the Children's Mental Health Plan.
- Implement public posting of restaurant inspections.
- Extend influenza vaccine coverage.

↗ In Progress

- Parliamentary Assistant for Alberta Health and Wellness to lead strategies to promote healthy living, disease prevention and safe communities.
- Expand beds for addictions treatment and mental health services.
- Support nutrition and physical activities by implementing the Healthy Kids Alberta strategy.
- Proclaim the Mental Health Amendment Act and consult on regulations to ensure those requiring treatment receive it.
- Work with Alberta industries to address the stigma of mental health illness in the workplace.
- Launch a new "Framework for a Healthy Alberta" that sets targets to reduce disease and injury rates.
- Extend the ban of trans fats in restaurants and eliminate junk food in schools.

Healthy and Safe Communities cont'd.

Further developments since Dec. 15, 2008:

- Seventy beds for addictions treatment and mental health services have been opened. By spring 2009, 10 more will be added for a total of 80 beds.
- Healthy birth outcomes will be a key focus in the three-year Healthy Kids Alberta! Action Plan.
- Following extensive stakeholder consultations, Alberta will advocate for a national trans fat strategy. Alberta Health and Wellness and Alberta Education are exploring options to encourage school authorities to make healthier food choices available in schools.
- The new Chief Medical Officer of Health has expanded powers to act in the event of the public health emergency, and advise on public health policy related to chronic diseases, communicable diseases and injury prevention. The *Public Health Amendment Act*, which defines public health roles and responsibilities, passed third reading April 29.
- The *Mental Health Amendment Act* has been proposed for implementation in two phases: Sept. 30 for broader mental health treatment admission criteria and Jan. 1, 2010 for regulations governing community treatment orders.
- The *Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Amendment Act* passed third reading on April 29. The proposed legislation will improve services for children who abuse alcohol or drugs, including increasing the length of time minors can be confined to a safe house from five to 10 days.

Sustainability

✓ Completed

- Table a long-term health system sustainability plan (Vision 2020).

↗ In Progress

- Establish a bulk-buy policy for equipment, drugs and supplies to be implemented province-wide. and develop a strategy for all western provinces
- Develop a plan to adopt new technologies and therapeutics.

Further developments since Dec. 15, 2008:

- Alberta Health and Wellness is working with Alberta Health Services to develop a procurement strategy and implementation plan for equipment, drugs and supplies.