

Health Action Plan

Status Report December 15, 2008

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The Alberta government announced a plan on April 16 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 the final status report on immediate, three-month, six-month and nine-month initiatives.

Status indicators:

↗ **In Progress**

✓ **Completed**

🕒 **Revised timeline**

IMMEDIATE INITIATIVES

Governance and Accountability

✓ **Completed**

Implement mandatory accreditation for all health authorities, facilities and programs

Accreditation is now required through a directive and a process to verify accreditation status is underway.

✓ **Completed**

Monitor and report on compliance with province-wide infection prevention and control standards

Monitoring for compliance began in April. Standards are now part of normal operations. A common audit process that identifies key risks for compliance with infection and prevention and control standards will be developed for implementation in 2009/2010.

✓ **Completed**

Monitor compliance with the Continuing Care Health Service Standards

Compliance audits of all regions have begun and standards are now part of normal operations. A province-wide incident reporting system has been implemented. A common audit process that identifies key risks for compliance with continuing care standards will be developed for implementation in 2009/2010.

Health Workforce

↗ **In Progress**

Address workforce-related issues and support for continuing care

Many of the initiatives aimed at improving Alberta's health workforce situation will impact continuing care. Strategies targeted at this sector will continue as required.

✓ **Completed**

Work with Advanced Education and Technology to create new education seats for physicians, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses and other health professionals

Funding for new education seats for physicians, registered nurses and licensed practical nurses was announced August 27. Alberta Health and Wellness and Advanced Education and Technology will continue to monitor the need to expand seats and adjust seats accordingly.

✓ **Completed**

Open Health Career Centres in Edmonton and Calgary

Edmonton's Bredin Institute Centre for Skilled and Internationally Trained Professionals in Edmonton and Calgary's Directions for Internationally Educated Health Professionals at Bow Valley College are now open and providing services and support. Recruitment initiatives to attract health care providers to Alberta continue.

✓ **Completed**

Work with Alberta Education and Advanced Education and Technology to promote health careers for high school students

Alberta Health and Wellness continues to collaborate with Alberta Education and Advanced Education and Technology to promote health careers for high school students. A funding proposal has been completed for a pilot project that provides dual certificates for high school students to become health care aides.

For more details on immediate initiatives, please refer to the June 20th and September 29th Health Action Plan Status Reports (www.health.alberta.ca/initiatives/health-action-plan.html)

Improving Access

✓ Completed

Implement a virtual campus and rural mentoring for medical students

An Integrated Clinical Clerkship program has been approved. This program provides eight-month rural rotations for medical students and forms the basis for virtual campus and rural mentoring.

✓ Completed

Implement a patient navigator system

Patient navigators are present in several areas of the health system, including cardiac care and breast cancer care. Vision 2020: The Future of Health Care in Alberta was announced December 1. One of the goals of the strategy is to improve the co-ordination of care, which includes patient navigation.

✓ Completed

Continue to expand the role of pharmacists in preventing disease and managing chronic diseases, particularly in rural communities

The Alberta Pharmacy Practice Models Initiative was launched in October 2008 and will explore new service models that focus on patients' health and drug therapy outcomes.

Healthy and Safe Communities

↗ In Progress

Parliamentary Assistant for Alberta Health and Wellness to lead strategies to promote healthy living, disease prevention and safe communities

Several strategies have been completed, others are ongoing. Please refer to three-month, six-month and nine-month updates under Healthy and Safe Communities for details.

THREE-MONTH ACTION ITEMS

For more details on three-month initiatives please refer to the June 20th and September 29th Health Action Plan Status Reports

Governance and Accountability

- ✓ **Completed** (transition and implementation underway)
Establish a new health system governance model with a focus on accountability, performance measures and capital planning
A new provincial governance board was announced on May 15.
- ✓ **Completed**
Perform regular service delivery reviews to increase efficiency and improve capital planning
Service delivery reviews were completed across Alberta that addressed ways to improve the efficiency of services and the appropriate use of health facilities. Recommendations from these reviews are being considered by Alberta Health and Wellness and Alberta Health Services.
- ✓ **Completed** (transition and implementation underway)
Announce a governance and funding model for ground emergency medical services
A health system-governed and funded ambulance service was announced May 29. Government will assume full responsibility for ambulance services, a consolidated emergency dispatch and a new medical services framework by April 1, 2009. The new governance structure lays the foundation for a more patient-focused system of emergency medical services.
- ✓ **Completed**
Develop a plan to register all Albertans in the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan to coincide with the plan to eliminate health care premiums
Health care premiums will be eliminated by January 2009. Albertans will continue to be required to register for publicly-funded health care under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan.

Health Workforce

- ✓ **Completed**
Implement a virtual campus and rural mentoring for medical students
An Integrated Clinical Clerkship program has been approved. This program provides eight-month rural rotations for medical students and forms the basis for virtual campus and rural mentoring.
- ✓ **Completed**
Announce additional seats for respiratory therapists and medical laboratory technologists
Funding for new education seats for physicians, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses and other health professionals, including medical laboratory technologists was announced August 27. Alberta Health and Wellness and Advanced Education and Technology will continue to monitor the need to expand seats and adjust seats accordingly.
- **In Progress**
Implement actions to recruit more foreign-trained health professionals and work with other provinces on a recruitment strategy for western Canada
A recruitment strategy for Western Canada has been drafted and will be brought forward to the Western Ministers for consideration.

Improving Access

✓ Completed

Improve co-ordination and access to cancer services in acute and community settings including looking at ways to provide chemotherapy at home

At the sod-turning ceremony on June 25, Alberta Health and Wellness announced \$33.7 million for the Lethbridge Cancer Radiation Therapy Centre, which forms part of the Cancer Radiation Therapy Corridor.

Planning is now underway for the second radiation therapy site in Red Deer.

✓ Completed

Set targets to improve access to primary health care

Alberta Health and Wellness has completed a Primary Care Network evaluation. The evaluation as well as the first draft of the Provincial Primary Care Framework is under consideration.

✓ Completed

Expand facility space and community care services for seniors

A provincial continuing care strategy to improve health and personal care service options for seniors and persons with disabilities was announced on December 15. The strategy will enhance supports to help individuals live in the community and provide incentives for renovations to long-term care facilities and new supportive living spaces.

Sustainability

↗ 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

Alberta Health and Wellness is working with the Alberta Health Services Board to develop a procurement strategy and implementation plan by the spring of 2009.

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

Nutrition guidelines for children and youth were released on June 3. *Catch Health*, a new phase of Create a Movement, was launched on September 30.

✓ Completed

Support infection prevention and control by implementing a blood-borne pathogen strategy

The Blood Borne Pathogens and Sexually Transmitted Infections Action Plan was released in June and a province-wide HPV vaccine program is underway.

✓ Completed

Expand cancer screening and awareness programs

The Tour for the Cure, an interactive educational exhibit to expand awareness of cancer prevention and screening was launched in May and was completed in September.

✓ Completed

Launch the Children's Mental Health Plan

A three-year, \$50 million action plan was announced August 29 to increase access to children's mental health services and address the mental health needs of children and youth at risk.

Governance and Accountability

✓ Completed

Report on the implementation progress of the new provincial governance model.

On November 20, a 15-member permanent Alberta Health Services board was announced. Effective December 1, 2008 eight new individuals joined the seven interim board members to form the 15-member board. Bill 42: *Health Governance Transition Act* received Royal Assent December 2.

Health Workforce

↗ In Progress

Develop a policy and initiate action to introduce and support the role of physician assistants in the health care system.

Alberta Health Services and the department are working to streamline and co-ordinate policies for current clinical assistant programs which are directly funded by the department. These clinical assistants work under physician supervision and provide assistant to physicians in providing clinical and surgical services. Further discussions are underway regarding regulation of physician assistants

Improving Access

✓ Completed

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.

The Alberta pharmaceutical strategy was announced December 8. The strategy will improve drug coverage for seniors, adjust non-group coverage premiums to reflect current market rates, establish a single government sponsored drug plan with a common drug list, introduce a program to cover catastrophic drug costs for Albertans with extremely rare diseases resulting from genetic disorders, and create a more timely and transparent drug review process.

✓ Completed

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.

A provincial continuing care strategy to improve health and personal care service options for seniors and persons with disabilities was announced on December 15. The strategy will enhance supports to help individuals live in the community and provide incentives for renovations to long-term care facilities and new supportive living spaces.

↗ In Progress

Develop home telehealth pilot projects to help patients manage their chronic diseases.

Pilot projects for home telehealth are to begin this fall. A pilot project for home chemotherapy is being implemented with the support of home telehealth.

✓ Completed

Announce the plan to develop a provincial patient portal to allow Albertans to access their health information online.

Alberta Health and Wellness has completed the strategy for the provincial Personal Health Portal (PHP). The strategy included consultation with Albertans and clinicians. The first phase of the PHP will provide new ways for Albertans to access trusted health information. Later phases will provide innovative ways for Albertans to access their personal health information and health services.

Improving Access (continued)

✓ **Completed**

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.

Vision 2020: The Future of Health Care in Alberta was announced December 1 to improve health system efficiency. The strategy identifies actions to provide more health care in community settings; integrate the skills of emergency medical technicians more fully into the health-care system; and review existing, planned and approved hospitals to ensure they meet local needs. The report also identifies actions to improve the flow of patient information to allow for more effective use of resources.

↗ **In Progress**

Pursue co-ordinated access to services in Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan.

Discussions between the three provinces are on-going.

Healthy and Safe Communities

↗ **In Progress**

Expand beds for addictions treatment and mental health services.

In spring 2009, an additional 20 addiction treatment beds for young adults will be opened in two contracted programs (one at the Shunda Creek facility near Nordegg and the other dependent on the call for submissions). Additional addiction prevention staff have been hired and are working with schools in Grande Prairie, Edmonton, Wainwright and Lethbridge to implement prevention programs and to assist schools in developing and implementing school policies and strategies related to substance abuse.

↗ **In Progress**

Support nutrition and physical activities by implementing the Healthy Kids Alberta strategy.

As part of Healthy Kids Alberta! Alberta Health and Wellness is working on a plan to improve health outcomes for babies and mothers.

✓ **Completed**

Implement public posting of restaurant inspections.

Restaurant inspections have been posted online since July.

↗ **In Progress**

Proclaim the Mental Health Amendment Act and consult on regulations to ensure those requiring treatment receive it.

Regulations have been developed to support the *Mental Health Amendment Act*. Stakeholder consultation on the regulations has been completed and is currently being reviewed. Proclamation of the new legislation is anticipated in April 2009.

↗ **In Progress**

Work with Alberta industries to address the stigma of mental health illness in the workplace.

An action plan is being developed to address stigma related to mental health issues and addictions in the workplace.

NINE-MONTH ACTION ITEMS

Governance and Accountability

✓ Completed

Develop and deliver provincial health services model to make them more efficient and effective.

A provincial health services optimization review and final report was completed in November. Vision 2020: The Future of Health Care in Alberta was shaped by the optimization review and announced December 1 to improve health system efficiency. The report identifies actions to provide more health care in community settings; integrate the skills of emergency medical technicians more fully into the health-care system; and review existing, planned and approved hospitals to ensure they meet local needs.

Health Workforce

↗ In Progress

Implement plan to increase rural residencies for international medical graduates.

Analysis of rural preceptor capacity and preceptor payment structures is underway. Recommendations on preceptor remuneration schemes, which would include incentives for preceptorships in rural Alberta, are anticipated in February 2009. An analysis of potential rural preceptoring capacity will be complete in April 2009.

↗ In Progress

Implement technologies to reduce health workforce injuries and increase efficiency.

Alberta Health and Wellness continues to work with Alberta Health Services to look at ways to reduce health workforce injuries and increase efficiency.

↗ In Progress

Align training and curriculum for nursing to meet health system needs.

A review to align nursing education with health system needs has been completed. Recommendations by nurse educators and clinical leaders are now under review.

Improving Access

↗ In Progress

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.

New enhancements to the electronic health record (EHR) are projected to add another 10,000 users in Calgary and an additional 115 users in Chinook. A goal of adding more than 1,000 physicians who have not implemented an EHR has been set for June 2010.

✓ Completed

Establish a plan for improved access to ambulatory, urgent, continuing and acute care.

Vision 2020: The Future of Health Care in Alberta was announced December 1. This report includes actions to improve ambulatory, urgent, continuing and acute care. Alberta Health and Wellness and Alberta Health Services will collaborate in implementing these actions.

Sustainability

✓ Completed

Table a long-term health system sustainability plan.

Vision 2020: The Future of Health Care in Alberta was announced December 1 to improve access, efficiency and ultimately long-term sustainability for Alberta's health system. While nine-month targets have been met or are in progress, new targets under Vision 2020 will be developed to make the health system more sustainable.

↗ In Progress

Develop a plan to adopt new technologies and therapeutics.

A Health Technology and Services Policy document has been developed.

Healthy and Safe Communities

↗ In Progress

Launch a new “Framework for a Healthy Alberta” that sets targets to reduce disease and injury rates.

Healthy Living targets are being defined in preparation for stakeholder review of the new document, Toward a Healthy Alberta.

↗ In Progress

Extend the ban of trans fats in restaurants and eliminate junk food in schools.

Consultations on the proposed Processed Trans Fat Control Strategy for the province are currently underway. The next stakeholder consultations will take place early in 2009.

Alberta Health and Wellness and Alberta Education are exploring options for encouraging school authorities to develop nutrition policies and eliminate the sale of junk food in schools.

✓ Completed

Extend influenza vaccine coverage.

Influenza vaccine coverage was extended in October 2008 to include healthy children aged two to four years and healthy adults aged 50 to 64 years. In the past, only children aged six months to under two years, and adults 65 years of age and older were covered.