

Frequently Asked Questions:

Primary Care Alberta Stand-Up

The Government of Alberta is refocusing the health care system to provide consistent, timely access to care when and where Albertans need it. The new, unified provincial health care system will have four specialized areas of focus: primary care, acute care, continuing care and mental health and addiction. Primary Care Alberta (PCA) is the dedicated provincial health agency to oversee the coordination and delivery of primary health care services across the province.

The following frequently asked questions (FAQs) document has been created to answer questions about PCA raised by primary health care stakeholders and during the Communications and Change Management Sub-Committee meetings and the Modernizing Alberta's Primary Care System (MAPS) Assistant Deputy Minister November townhall meeting.

What is the PCA and what will it do?

The PCA is a dedicated provincial health agency to support the governance, coordination, and delivery of primary health care services in Alberta. As of November 18, 2024, the PCA became a legal entity under the leadership of CEO Kim Simmonds. The PCA will now work to implement its mandate, develop operational plans, and set PCA's vision and mission. It will work with Alberta Health and AHS over the coming months to fully establish its operational responsibilities. Further updates will be provided in the coming weeks and months.

The PCA will:

- Engage physicians and provide opportunities for physicians to lead their peers through the change process.
- Incentivize care models that improve health outcomes and patient experience.
- Provide tools to primary care providers that help improve access, continuity, and quality of care (e.g. Find a Doc).
- Develop and implement provincial service delivery and performance measurement frameworks, including implementing standards for primary care (e.g. after-hours care) so Albertans have consistent services and the system is patient-centred and accountable.
- Implement the transition to, and funding of, Regional Primary Health Care Networks that bring practitioners together to implement provincial initiatives and address regional needs.
- Develop a chronic disease management strategy and care models to reduce the burden of chronic disease on patients and the health care system.
- Develop virtual care and unattached patient strategies to enable timely access to primary care services.
- Engage multidisciplinary health professionals to address persistent service shortages, including identifying how to directly support underserved areas.

How will the transition to the PCA impact patient care?

Alberta Health is committed to a seamless transition to ensure patient care is not impacted. Access to primary health care services will not change. Albertans will still go to a family doctor, walk-in clinic or other primary care provider for checkups and help with general health concerns.

What are the imminent changes coming to Primary Care Networks (PCNs) and Zone PCN Committees with the PCA stand up?

With the PCA stand-up, there may be governance changes to PCNs and Zone PCN Committees. The governance structure of PCNs and Zone PCN Committees may be impacted by the departure of Alberta Health Services (AHS) from the joint venture agreement between non-profit corporations and AHS. Alberta Health is working to ensure change management supports are in place for PCNs and Zone PCN Committees to navigate through the governance changes associated with the PCA stand up.

What will happen to PCNs and Zone PCN Committees after March 2025?

PCN grants will be extended by one year and the joint venture agreement will be between the non-profit corporation and PCA, rather than Alberta Health Services. PCNs that have a Business Plan Renewal (BPR) expiring in 2025 would have received an extension for one year.

Though we are transitioning to corridors, the requirements for Zone PCN Committees remain the same with 2025-26 Zone PCN Service Plan amendments to be submitted in January 2025. In addition, templates will be shared with Zone PCN Committees to plan for the next fiscal year.

Will there be any impact on PCN funding due to the PCA stand up?

The stand-up of the PCA will not impact PCNs' current funding.

What will happen to AHS-operated programs and services such as Home to Hospital to Home, Transitions of Care and Alberta Surgical Initiative etc., after the PCA stand-up?

Alberta Health is focused on maintaining service continuity. Existing services offered by AHS at the PCN level will continue with the PCA stand-up. Programs and services currently offered by AHS will be maintained by the PCA or appropriate authority to ensure work is preserved, and patient care remains unimpacted.

Are clinicians involved in the PCA governance structure?

We have heard from stakeholders about the importance of maintaining physician leadership in the governance structure of the future Regional Primary Care Networks. Further details on these initiatives and themes will be provided during discussions on PCN governance in January 2025.

How were the health corridors designed? Is there a map to show the boundaries?

Alberta's government has adopted a regional approach to health system planning through the seven integrated health corridors. Factors considered in the design included travel patterns, access points and local population needs. It considered data on how Albertans access services and facilities as well as feedback from the health care refocusing public engagement sessions. A map detailing the corridor boundaries will be available on alberta.ca/healthcare in the near future.

What is the current status of the Regional Primary Health Care Network design?

No decision has been made about the design of Regional Primary Health Care Networks. Alberta Health is consolidating feedback from engagement sessions and will provide a summary of what we heard at the next town hall. The engagement in January will integrate stakeholder feedback and provide updated proposals on the regional design of PCNs. Stakeholders are invited to continue sharing their feedback on regional design through the MAPS mailbox (see below for address).

How can stakeholders stay informed on work underway to refocus the health system?

Alberta's government remains committed to maintaining open lines of communication with Albertans as it stands up the new provincial health agencies. Updates will continue to be provided as they become available.

Stay informed with the latest information about refocusing the health care system by visiting alberta.ca/lead-the-way to:

- Learn about upcoming engagement opportunities, including Minister telephone town halls.
- Subscribe to a dedicated refocusing newsletter for ongoing updates
- Submit questions directly to the System Refocus Division at Alberta Health.

- Brent McEwan, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister Primary Care and Rural Health Division can be reached at Brent.McEwan@gov.ab.ca; however, kindly direct all questions, comments or concerns to the MAPS mailbox at health.MAPS@gov.ab.ca.