

Addiction & Mental Health

2020-21 Annual Report





Message from Alberta Health Services Board of Directors



Vicki Yellow Old Woman

Since my appointment to the AHS Board in the fall of 2020, it has been my pleasure to become familiar with the work of the Advisory Councils. By all accounts, Councils have persevered through the COVID-19 pandemic and have found success in connecting with stakeholders as they adapted to virtual meetings well through 2021.

Advisory Councils continue to be tremendous partners in health. They have been instrumental as a conduit of information from AHS to local communities, a task of particular importance during an extraordinary period of time. Through innovation and determination, each Council has remained committed to its role of advising AHS, and to bringing forward the voices of their communities.

I look forward to working with Advisory Councils in the years ahead and watching as they continue to evolve. Thank you to each member for your ongoing dedication to improving health services for all Albertans.

Sincerely,

Vicki Yellow Old Woman,
Chair, Community Engagement Committee, AHS Board



Message from the Chair, Addiction & Mental Health Provincial Advisory Council



Terry O'Riordan

2020-21 was a significant year of change for the Council with seven founding members, including our long-term Chair, completing their respective terms on Council. Thank you to our past members for your thoughtful service, and welcome to our new members.

These membership changes did not hamper our ability to carry on our work. Council members continue to bring lived experience to local advisory councils, the Provincial Addiction & Mental Health (AMH) Program committees and working groups, and AMH Strategic Clinical Network activities.

The pandemic has focused the need for a functioning addiction and mental health care system. We're mindful of the long-term effects of the pandemic as we advise on a well-rounded system that considers individuals and their need for services both coming out of the pandemic and due to the ongoing mental health challenges Albertans face.

Sincerely,

Terry O'Riordan
Chair, Addiction and Mental Health Provincial Health Advisory Council



Who we are

The Addiction & Mental Health (AMH) Provincial Advisory Council (PAC) is comprised of 15 volunteer members with lived addiction and mental healthcare system experience who are passionate about improving service quality, access and availability for Albertans experiencing mental health challenges and addiction.



*L-R top: Sandra Sjogren, Rhonda Robinson, Terry O’Riordan, Diane MacNaughton, Ariel Haubrich
L-R bottom:: Sandra Badry, Lindy Fors, Tyla Savard, Kristi Edwards, Ed Brown
Missing: Alan Carter, Candice Horne, Emily Macphail, Kaj Korvela, Kym Porter*



Key achievements of 2020-21

The AMH PAC, in an advisory capacity, considers existing and emerging issues from the addiction and mental health community service-user's perspective. We make recommendations to the AHS Board, CEO and Executive Leadership on system-level opportunities to improve AMH service provision and access for all Albertans. We strive to capture lived patient experience and ensure patients and families are at the centre of all health care activities, decisions, and teams. Our key achievements include:



Participated in a variety of COVID-19-related activities including:

- Canadian Mental Health Association survey on the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of Albertans.
- Research application regarding impact of COVID-19 on immigrant populations in Alberta.
- AHS visitation and family presences through COVID-19.
- AHS review of provision of inpatient passes through COVID-19 pandemic.
- Statistics Canada survey on the impact of COVID-19 on Canadians with long-term conditions or disabilities.
- COVID-19 in Mental Health and Substance Use: Key findings from CIHR's Knowledge Synthesis Grant Recipients.
- Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction Delivery Community-based Supports for Alcohol Use Disorder During the COVID-19 Pandemic.



Represented addiction mental health system-access perspective at tables including:

- AHS AMH Strategic Clinical Network Core Committee
- AHS Provincial Addiction Counselling Practice Group
- AHS Provincial Youth Addiction & Mental Health Advisory Council
- AHS Provincial Addiction Curricula & Experiential Skills (PACES) Training Initiative
- South Health Campus Citizen Advisory Team
- Ad hoc groups participation as requested/required.



Presentations:

- Assisted AMH Strategic Clinical Network with review of grant applications providing system-access perspective.
- SOGIE PAC provided an overview of their Council, their goal for a safer and more inclusive healthcare system for LGBTQ2S+, and shared priorities across Councils.
- Calgary Zone ACCESS Mental Health regarding available services.



Engagement:

- Participated in Town Hall with Chief Medical Officer of Health re Alberta's Visitor Policy in response to COVID-19.
- Participated in Community Conversations with Wood Buffalo and Oldman River Health Advisory Councils.
- Attended the Mental Health and Addiction Virtual Town Hall hosted by the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.
- Provided COVID-19 experiences and impacts to CMHA Alberta Division Rural Mental Health Project.



Successfully shifted to virtual meeting platform.



A look ahead

The AHS Addiction & Mental Health Provincial Advisory Council encountered a 'new COVID reality' in 2020, in which members – both new and existing – had to learn to function using virtual tools in lieu of in-person meetings. Presentations, initially suspended, have now resumed and members are settling into a new way to work together.

In the coming year Council will seek to increase the perspectives it represents to best promote equity and accessibility to appropriate care settings where Albertans can have their needs met in a safe and supportive environment.

Council members will share their lived experiences with AHS to shift the narrative on addiction and mental health to address stigmatizing policies and procedures and improve trauma informed care within the organization.

Council will continue to participate in and provide input to AHS projects and initiatives and support Addiction & Mental Health teams, endeavor to further engage and collaborate with other AHS Advisory Councils, gain insight at the community level and share to improve understanding of addiction and mental health programs and supports.

In 2021, the AMH PAC expects to recruit two new members, one from Central and one from South Zone. Interested in [applying](#)? Visit www.ahs.ca/advisorycouncils.



The Addiction & Mental Health Provincial Advisory Council continue to provide AHS with the vital perspective of people with lived experience with addiction and mental health issues and treatment in Alberta. They have strengthened multiple projects from input into policy creation to becoming members of AMH research projects over the past year.

Dr. Kay Rittenbach

Assistant Scientific Director, AHS Provincial Addiction & Mental Health Services

Advisory Council members share advice and feedback from their communities with AHS. Councils hold public meetings and engagement activities virtually or in locations throughout their geographic area that further contribute to improving healthcare services in Alberta.



Get involved

You can make a difference to the health and well-being of your family, friends, neighbours and community by sharing your thoughts and ideas with AHS. You can get involved by:

- Attending an [upcoming meeting](#). Agendas and notices are posted on the Advisory Council webpage: ahs.ca/advisorycouncils.
- Delivering a presentation at a Council meeting on a health area of interest.
- Providing input on various healthcare topics online, at [Together4Health](#).
- Applying to [become a member](#). Members are appointed for two- or three-year terms.

Learn more

Visit ahs.ca/advisorycouncils

✉ pac.amh@ahs.ca

☎ 1.877.275.8830

Check us out on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) or by searching AHS Advisory Councils.

