



## Message from Dr. Verna Yiu & Dr. Laura McDougall

*AHS Update: Another weekly spike in new and active cases, please sign up for immunization if you are eligible*

*Please print and share with your teams as needed*

**Dear staff, physicians and volunteers,**

### **Today's Update**

- **COVID-19 Cases in Alberta**
- **COVID-19 Vaccination Update**
- **Take Care, Be Kind and Stay Safe**
- **COVID-19 Fact of Fiction: Myth-Busting Tool**
- **COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers — The Latest Numbers**
- **Stay Vigilant, Follow Safety Measures Even When Vaccinated**
- **Verna's Weekly Video Message — Impact of COVID-19 on AHS Finances**
- **PPE Question of the Week — Why We Are Grateful to AHS, Covenant Health Staff**
- **Know the Guidance for PPE Protection**
- **CCHL Awards AMH Team for Decision Support Tool Implementation**
- **It's National Advance Care Planning Day**
- **Gratitude from Albertans**
- **Wrapping Up — More Healthcare Workers Eligible for COVID-19 Vaccine**

## COVID-19 Status

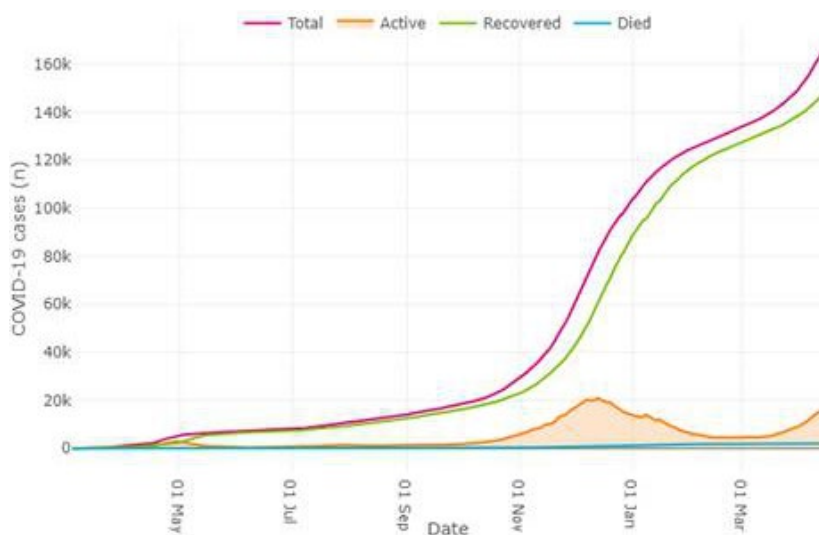
---

This past week Alberta reported another spike in new and active cases of COVID-19, driven by the rapid spread of variants of concern across the province, including an increase of more than 550 per cent for the P.1 variant that originated in Brazil.

There was an average of 1,332 new daily cases of COVID-19 in the province for the seven-day period ending April 14, compared to 1,102 for the previous seven-day period, a 20.9 per cent increase.

While all zones reported increases in their new cases this week, the Calgary Zone reported the largest: 4,071 (an average of 582 per day) this week compared to 3,636 (an average of 519 per day) the previous week, a 12 per cent increase. The largest change in new cases this week occurred in the Central Zone, with 980 new cases compared to 592 the previous week, a 65.5 per cent increase.

Overall individuals aged 10 to 49 accounted for about 70 per cent of new cases.



As of April 14, there were 16,223 active cases of COVID-19 in the province, which is a third more cases (4,036) than the previous week. All zones reported increases in active cases, with Central Zone reporting a 61.2 per cent increase, as you can see in the table below.

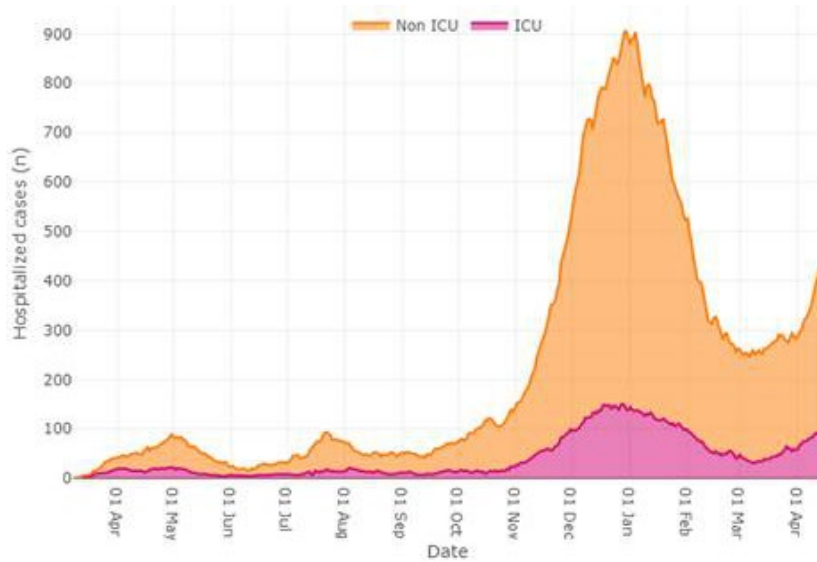
	Active Cases (as of April 14)	Active Cases (as of April 7)	Per cent Change
<b>Calgary</b>	7,329	5,709	+28.4%
<b>Edmonton</b>	4,201	2,916	+44.1%
<b>North</b>	2,174	1,614	+34.7%
<b>South</b>	930	915	+1.6%
<b>Central</b>	1,515	940	+61.2%
<b>Unknown</b>	74	93	-20.4%

For the 14th week in a row, the Calgary Zone has the most active cases.

### Hospitalizations and ICU admissions

As we would expect, the recent spikes in new and active cases are adding to our hospitalization and ICU numbers. On April 14, there were 86 individuals in ICUs with COVID-19 compared to 80 on April 8, a 7.5 per cent increase. A total of 330 individuals were in non-ICU hospital beds with COVID-19 on April 14 compared to

256 on April 8, a 28.9 per cent increase.



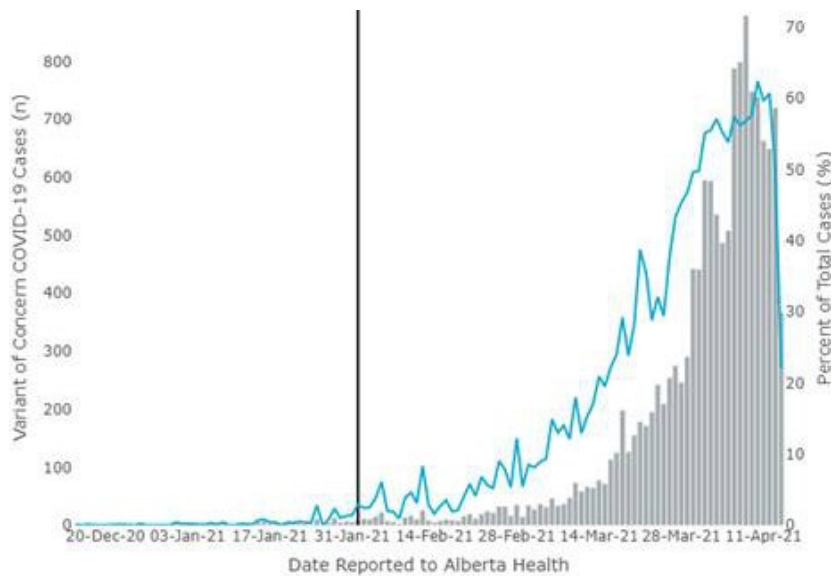
The breakdown of hospitalizations by zone as of April 14 is as follows:

	Hospitalizations	ICUs
<b>Calgary</b>	166	39
<b>Edmonton</b>	147	29
<b>Central</b>	37	5
<b>South</b>	33	7
<b>North</b>	33	6

### Variants of concern

Alberta Health has now reported 13,952 cases of COVID-19 variants of concern (VOC), an increase of 68.5 per cent since April 7: 13,770 are the B.1.1.7 variant (originating in the U.K.), 29 are the B.1.351 variant (originating in South Africa) and 153 are the P.1 variant (originating in Brazil). On April 7, there were 23 P.1 cases reported; this week's number represents an increase of 565 per cent. Of the 13,952 VOC cases, 8,682 are active (53.5 per cent of total active cases), 5,222 people have recovered and 48 people have died.

The figure below shows new VOC cases (grey bars) and the percentage of VOC cases identified compared to other cases of COVID-19 (blue line). Between April 6 and April 12, the percentage of VOC cases ranged from 56.2 per cent to 62.4 per cent.



### Other notable COVID-19-related information

- As of April 14, a total of 166,177 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Alberta and a total of 7,048 individuals have been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.2 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 147,920 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19.
- As of April 14, 2,034 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 29 deaths from April 8 to April 14. We extend our condolences to the families of these individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones from any cause during this time.
- From April 8 to April 14, 102,806 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 14,584 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 8.02 per cent to 9.93 per cent. As of April 14, a total of 3.9 million tests have been conducted and 1.97 million individuals have been tested.
- The R value, also known as the reproduction number, describes the ability of a disease to spread. It tells us the average number of people that someone with COVID-19 will infect. An R value of 1 means an infected person will infect one other person on average. Values below 1 mean transmission is decreasing; above 1, transmission is increasing. The provincewide R value from April 5 to April 11 was 1.12, compared to 1.17 the previous week.
- For the winter school term, as of April 14, AHS has confirmed 4,203 individuals with COVID-19 were present at schools while infectious or acquired the disease in the school setting. A total of 959 out of 2,415 schools (roughly two of five) in the province have reported an individual has attended their school while infectious or had in-school transmission.

## Things You Need to Know

---

### COVID-19 Vaccination Update

#### *By the Numbers*

As of 10 a.m. today (April 16), more than 1 million total doses of COVID-19 vaccine

have been administered by AHS. More than 645,700 Albertans have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine and more than 209,600 have received both Dose 1 and Dose 2.

#### *Phase 2C healthcare worker immunization continues*

All staff working in a patient care facility or who provide services directly to patients or clients in the community are now eligible to book a COVID-19 immunization appointment.

In addition to those who provide patient care, this eligibility includes anyone working within an acute care site or any other patient care facility. All eligible individuals can book their appointment today via the [AHS online booking tool](#), or through a [participating pharmacy](#). Appointments are available in every zone across the province. We encourage everyone eligible in this cohort to book their immunization appointment as soon as possible.

Letters have been provided to all eligible individuals. Anyone who feels they are eligible but has not received their letter is encouraged to reach out to their manager to confirm eligibility. Those who are determined to be eligible can proceed with booking their appointment in advance of receiving the letter. Once a person becomes eligible, they remain eligible.

Healthcare teams from across the province have worked together over the past 14 months to help ensure the safety of our patients, families and one another. Please take care of yourself and consider getting immunized.

For more information about healthcare workers eligible in Phase 2C and how to book an appointment, please see our [FAQ](#).

#### *AHS staff COVID-19 immunization rates*

Check out the latest COVID-19 staff immunization rates available on [Insite](#). Everyone is encouraged to review the immunization rates for each zone to support team members to get immunized.

#### *Other eligibility criteria*

As a reminder, any staff eligible in Phase 1, 2A or 2B of Alberta's vaccine rollout who haven't yet received the vaccine are encouraged to book their appointment through a [participating pharmacy](#) or [AHS](#).

Phase 2B includes individuals with at least one of the identified underlying conditions born in or before 2005. The criteria can be found [online](#) and were recommended by the Alberta Advisory Committee on Immunization and affirmed by the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

A doctor's note or other proof of a condition is not required to be immunized as a part of Phase 2B. You may want to consult your healthcare provider prior to booking your appointment if you need clarification on whether or not your condition is on the list, but this is not required.

All Albertans aged 55 and older can also receive the AstraZeneca/Covishield vaccine.

All eligible individuals can book their appointment today via the [AHS online booking tool](#), by calling 811 or through a [participating pharmacy](#). Walk-in appointments are also available starting April 17 in both [Calgary and Edmonton](#).

Vaccine supply can be unpredictable and we are working diligently to immunize as many people as possible as quickly as possible, with available product. Please do not wait to book your appointment.

#### *AstraZeneca/Covishield available on a walk-in basis in Edmonton and Calgary*

For a limited time, walk-in appointments for AstraZeneca/Covishield will be available for eligible Albertans in Edmonton and Calgary beginning tomorrow (April 17). Albertans aged 55 and older are currently eligible to receive AstraZeneca/Covishield.

The AHS walk-in clinics will run for five days to start. The clinics will be extended subject to available supply.

- The Calgary site will be located at the Southport location, 10301 Southport Lane S.W.
- The Edmonton site will be located at the Edmonton Expo Centre, 7515 118 Avenue N.W.

Any Albertan 55 and older, regardless of where they live, can receive the AstraZeneca/Covishield vaccine. Albertans aged 65 and older are also eligible for Pfizer and Moderna vaccines via the [AHS online booking tool](#), by calling 811 or through a [participating pharmacy](#).

Each AHS site has capacity for 500 AstraZeneca/ Covishield drop-ins to start. Capacity will be adjusted based on demand.

We'd like to thank our staff for helping to make this work possible. The hope is that offering walk-in clinics will help increase the number of Albertans who will be able to be immunized, helping to protect our healthcare system and our communities.

Please visit [ahs.ca/covidvaccine](https://ahs.ca/covidvaccine) for more information, including clinic hours.

Meanwhile, 26 pharmacies are also accepting walk-ins, as well as those taking appointment-based bookings. Visit the [Alberta Blue Cross website](#) for more information.

Any eligible Albertan can also continue to book appointments through the AHS online booking tool or by calling 811 to receive the AstraZeneca/Covishield vaccine.

There have been no confirmed cases of the rare blood clots — known as vaccine-induced prothrombotic immune thrombocytopenia (VIPIT) — in Alberta, and only one case in all of Canada. The risk of VIPIT for Albertans is exceedingly rare. However, the risk of a severe outcome from COVID-19 infection is much higher, especially with increasing age.

#### *COVID-19 immunization offered to long-stay acute care patients*

Over the coming weeks, AHS and Covenant Health will be working on expanding our COVID-19 immunization services to eligible, long-stay acute care patients across the province. This means patients who are eligible will be able to receive their COVID-19

immunization on site, while in hospital, if they wish.

Eligibility will be based on the Government of Alberta's phased immunization approach, the length of the patient's stay in acute care, and the patient's medical condition.

A long acute care stay can be defined as approximately 21 days in hospital or more, although ultimately it will be up to the patient's care team to determine if the patient is well enough to be immunized, and to determine how their immunization in hospital can be coordinated with second-dose requirements in the community, if needed.

The program will not include emergency patients, those attending outpatient clinics, and those admitted for short-stay procedures.

Immunization will first be made available to patients eligible in Phase 1 and 2A and 2B. The program will expand to other age groups as they become eligible in future phases.

We expect this program to be available at all acute care sites across the province within the next few weeks. Options may vary from site to site and we appreciate everyone's patience and understanding as we roll out this new program.

Staff who have questions about the COVID-19 acute care immunization program are asked to please reach out to their supervisor, manager or leader at this time.

#### *Booking your second-dose appointment*

AHS continues to offer second doses of the COVID-19 vaccine within four months (16 weeks) after the first dose.

This will allow all adult Albertans to receive their first dose of the vaccine in by June. This aligns with the approach recommended by the [National Advisory Committee on Immunization](#) (NACI). Emerging evidence shows first doses of the vaccine are at least 80 per cent effective at preventing severe illness and longer spacing between doses does not reduce the protection or duration of immunity for multi-dose products.

This data includes studies in healthcare workers, long-term care residents, elderly populations and the general public. Real-world vaccine effectiveness is typically lower than what you would see in clinical trials, which report 92 per cent protection from symptomatic disease two weeks after a single dose.

Second doses are necessary to ensure you're protected for as long as possible. Anyone who received their first dose prior to March 10 will still receive their second dose within 42 days. All existing appointments for second doses will be honoured.

From March 10 onwards, first and second dose appointments will be booked separately. Individuals will receive a reminder from AHS at a later date, by text message, email or automated call, of when to book their second-dose appointment.

#### *Socialize your immunization*

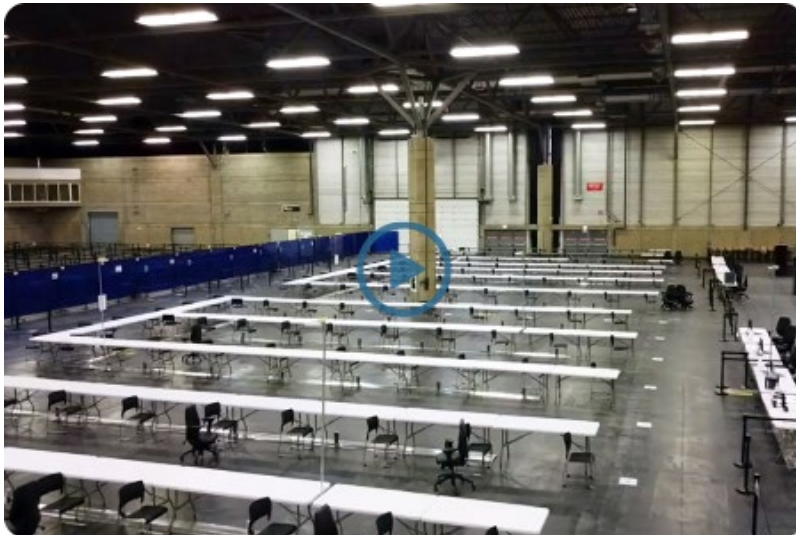
Celebrate your immunization and encourage others to sign up for theirs when

eligible. The Government of Alberta has new social frames available that can be added to your Facebook profile pic.

1. Go to [facebook.com/profilepicframes](https://facebook.com/profilepicframes)
2. Click on your profile picture on the bottom left and select your page
3. Search “AlbertaVaccinates”
4. Choose the frame you wish to use
5. Click ‘Use as Profile Picture’
6. Show others that you ‘got the shot.’

#### *A view of Edmonton’s Expo Centre immunization site*

Earlier this week, AHS activated large-scale, easily accessible COVID-19 immunization sites across the province — including one within Hall C of the Edmonton Expo Centre. Cameras were at Expo Centre before the immunization site opened and the [video](#) below gives you an idea of how much work has gone into creating a site that can be used to immunize a large number of Albertans every day.



#### **Take Care, Be Kind and Stay Safe**

It’s important to prioritize our own mental, emotional and physical health. [Self-care](#) can be as simple as calling a friend, setting aside [time to be active](#), or practising gratitude.

If you are [struggling](#), reach out to your co-workers, friends and family to [support each other’s well-being](#). Now more than ever, it’s important to remember that part of self-care is asking for help if you need it. Make a difference during these stressful times by checking in with each other, asking questions, listening, [being kind to yourself](#) and showing each other respect.

Take a look at the [Self-Care and Safe Communication Strategies](#) to support you in staying safe when interacting with others. Keep yourself safe and familiarize yourself with these [general personal safety practices](#) from our Protective Services team. Other resources are available on the [Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention](#) Insite page or through your [WHS Business Partner](#).

You can also use the [Safe Care, Together Posters](#) and [Please Be Kind to Us Poster](#) to



encourage compassion and respect from our patients and families.

Confidential supports are always available through the [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#) (EFAP) at 1-877-273-3134, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There are many other resources in the [Resilience, Wellness and Mental Health Resource Guide](#).

If you have questions or feedback on the resources above, contact [wellness@ahs.ca](mailto:wellness@ahs.ca).

### **COVID-19 Fact or Fiction: Myth-Busting Tool**

AHS has launched a new myth-busting tool on the Together4Health website to dispel myths you may be hearing about COVID-19. Click [here](#) to join the conversation today. Use the “COVID-19 Fact or Fiction” tab to post your comment. AHS experts will be happy to respond.

### **COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers — The Latest Numbers**

We continue to update the testing data for healthcare workers in the AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Testing dashboard. Starting this week, these statistics provide the total number of AHS and Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) employees and physicians tested, including a breakdown of the number of positive tests and those who have been confirmed to have been exposed in the workplace. Covenant Health data will no longer be included moving forward, as they will begin to report their testing information within their own organization. This will result in the drop of the total numbers from last week’s report.

As of April 14:

- 74,367 employees (AHS and APL combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 4,666 (or 6.3 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 2,430 employees who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 457 (or 18.8 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 2,103 employees who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.
- 5,179 physicians (AHS and APL combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 215 (or 4.2 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 119 physicians who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 11 (or 9.2 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 96 physicians who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.

For more information, see the AHS Healthcare Worker [COVID-19 Testing infographic](#) and [dashboard](#).

### **Stay Vigilant, Follow Safety Measures Even When Vaccinated**

As more employees get their COVID-19 vaccine, it’s still extremely important to take the necessary precautions to reduce the spread of COVID-19. This includes simple actions — such as completing your daily [fit for work screening](#) and adhering to all [personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#) measures (including [continuous masking and eye protection](#)), [washing your hands](#) regularly and [physically distancing](#).

We cannot overstate the importance of staying home when sick. If you have new

symptoms, or if your usual symptoms get worse, stay home, minimize contact with others and complete the [Self-Assessment Tool](#) to determine if you need COVID-19 testing. We each have a role to play in protecting each other — patients, staff, physicians, volunteers and visitors. We must all be diligent in modelling safe work practices.

Please talk to your leader if you have questions or if you are unsure if your symptoms should require you to stay home.

### **Verna's Weekly Video Message — Impact of COVID-19 on AHS Finances**

As we wrap up the 2020-21 fiscal year and continue to respond to COVID-19, we are reviewing how the ongoing pandemic has impacted AHS financially. We're working diligently to ensure we have financial sustainability now and into the future. It is critical we monitor the financial impacts created by COVID-19, and continue to work with both the provincial and federal governments on how to address these costs.

Joining me (Verna) [to provide a financial update](#), and talk about how our response to COVID-19 has impacted AHS financially, our financial stability and indicators, are:

- Colleen Purdy, Vice President, Corporate Services & CFO.
- Anderson Chuck, Senior Program Officer, Financial Planning.
- Michael Lam, Chief Program Officer, Financial Operations.

As mentioned in the vlog, please take the opportunity to watch [Andy's webinar](#) on National Health Expenditures, Cost Drivers and Levers for Change to learn more about the national health expenditures and how AHS differs from comparative provinces.

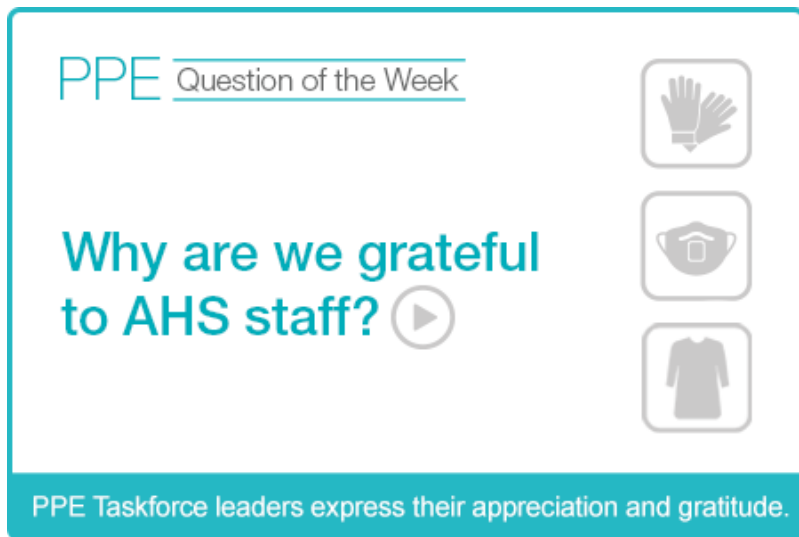


### **PPE Question of the Week — Why We Are Grateful to AHS, Covenant Health Staff**

In the latest instalment of the PPE Question video series, AHS and Covenant staff like you are thanked for your efforts for adhering to the changing PPE items and guidelines, which helps keep yourself, your colleagues and patients safe.

Sharing their gratitude are (in order of appearance): Rod Kaliel, Executive Director of Workplace Health and Safety; Dr. Stephanie Smith, Director of Infection Prevention and Control at the University of Alberta Hospital; Dr. Stephen Tsekrekos, Medical

Director of Workplace Health and Safety; Dr. Curtiss Boyington, an infectious disease physician with Covenant Health and AHS; and Dr. Mark Joffe, the chair of the PPE Task Force.



Previous videos in the PPE Question of the Week series are available on the PPE webpage as well at [ahs.ca/covidppe](https://ahs.ca/covidppe).

#### **Know the Guidance for PPE Eye Protection**

As we strive to keep our patients, families and each other safe through the remainder of our COVID-19 journey, we want to remind all front-line healthcare workers of the importance of ensuring proper PPE is worn during each patient interaction.

Facial (mask and eye) protection is PPE to protect the mucous membranes of our eyes, nose and mouth. Together with masks, [eye protection](#), such as face shields, prevents exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. While AHS continues to ensure a stable supply of eye protection, including face shields, is available at all sites across the province, guidance for cleaning and reuse of eye protection has been provided as a strategy to help reduce the environmental impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

AHS encourages all staff to ensure that eye protection is cleaned or discarded whenever their mask is changed. In addition, eye protection should be discarded when visibly soiled or damaged.

If staff choose to clean and reuse eye protection, the following guidance must be followed [Use and Reuse of Eye Protection during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). To learn more, visit [Personal Protective Equipment on the AHS website](#).

[PPE safety coaches](#) are available to provide peer-to-peer support to help increase the proper selection and use of PPE, including the proper use of eye protection. PPE coaches are available on most units during each shift. To contact a PPE safety coach, reach out to your unit leadership.

As the pandemic continues, working together to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in

our facilities through the use of PPE remains critical. Thank you for continuing to ensure the safety our patients and one another, and for all you do, every day, for Albertans.

### **CCHL Awards AMH Team for Decision Support Tool Implementation**

Congratulations to our Addiction and Mental Health LOCUS implementation team in the Edmonton Zone for being named recipient of the 2021 Award of Excellence in Mental Health Quality Improvement by the Canadian College of Health Leaders earlier this week.

LOCUS — which stands for Level of Care Utilization System — is a decision support tool that organizes AMH services in a systemic way. The tool supports clinical judgment, provides a common language, and encourages standardization of decisions about appropriate services by providing information that is used to match services with a client's needs, while also ensuring client choice.

The Award of Excellence in Mental Health and Quality Improvement honours a hospital, health authority, community-based mental health and addictions program/service, or a leader in the field that demonstrates evidence-informed and sustained quality improvements in the area of mental health and addictions. This award is part of the CCHL National Awards Program.

### **It's National Advance Care Planning Day**

As we noted in last week's message, today (April 16) is National Advance Care Planning Day. Alas, last week's message had an incorrect hyperlink to a story and video that address advance care planning from the perspective of a former Alberta Health Services palliative care nurse living with cancer. You can read and see her story [here](#).

## Be Well - Be Kind

---

### **Gratitude from Albertans**

Everything you and your colleagues do every day to provide safe quality care to all Albertans is being noticed. Messages of gratitude keep coming in from across the province and beyond during the COVID-19 pandemic. We want to share some recent messages of gratitude with you — and you can see others on our [Sharing the Love webpage](#).

*Thank you to all the AHS workers, especially those enforcing public health orders. I personally am very, very grateful for your courage, sacrifice and determination to protect all of us, in the face of resistance and even abuse. You are fighting the good fight, saving lives not only from COVID-19, but by ensuring our community has access to health resources when required for everything from chronic illness to auto (collisions). Your work is heroic and I appreciate you.*

— Anonymous

*To the staff at Carnat Centre Services (a Calgary day program that cares for people with schizophrenia or other psychotic illnesses) — Your love, respect and caring for clients is always awesome. During the pandemic when*

*everything has changed, clients are struggling more than ever yet you continue to go above and beyond to meet clients where they're at. Your grassroots care addressing everything from housing, medication, social needs and isolation, financial stressors, relationships, and anything else you can think of (whether it's in your job description or not) gets done because you care enough to do it. Bless you all and your incredible spirit and attitude of care and respect.*

— Angela

*To all of the staff who work countless hours to keep us safe and healthy, thank you for all you do and all that you continue to do. You are all such superheroes and make our world a wonderful place. Thank you for helping us all get through this.*

— Kelcie Ell

*Thank you to all the front-line workers and nurses working in the hospital. Through these tough times, you have continued to work so hard every day. We all truly appreciate everything you do.*

— Anonymous

### **Wrapping Up — More Healthcare Workers Eligible for COVID-19 Vaccine**

We'd like to wrap up this week's message with a big thank you for your ongoing efforts, as well as for the sacrifices you and your families have made to care for Albertans during this ongoing global health emergency. We know this has surely been the most difficult and challenging time of your healthcare careers, and still much work lies ahead of us all.

However, unlike last spring, when there was no end to the pandemic in sight, we're now on a path to put this pandemic behind us thanks to the continued rollout of the COVID-19 vaccines. As mentioned earlier, more healthcare workers are now eligible for COVID-19 immunization with the launch of the [Government Phase 2C group](#) earlier this week. We strongly encourage all eligible healthcare workers to book an appointment as soon as you can get vaccinated, and please urge other eligible Albertans — family members, friends, colleagues, neighbours — to get vaccinated as soon as they are eligible. See the COVID-19 Vaccination Update item above for details.

The faster we can get Albertans immunized, the faster our lives can return to a semblance of normalcy. And won't that be nice?

With enduring gratitude and appreciation,

**Dr. Verna Yiu**

AHS President & CEO

**Dr. Laura McDougall**

Senior Medical Officer of Health

