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## AHS responds to OAG mental health recommendations

EDMONTON — The Office of the Auditor General (OAG) has released its followup audit on addiction and mental health service delivery in Alberta, replacing 11 previous recommendations with three new recommendations to Alberta Health Services (AHS).

The issues raised in this audit are significant and important. AHS understands the importance of providing Albertans affected by mental health and addictions with the care and services they require, when they need it. AHS has committed to continuing to improve the care it provides to patients, while working with other organizations to ensure clients receive the supports they need.

The recommendations are listed below, with AHS' response in italics.

### **Recommendation 1: Integration of mental health services and elimination of gaps in service:**

The OAG has recommended that AHS, for its own community and hospital mental health and addictions services:

- a) Work with physicians and other non-AHS providers to advance integrated care planning and use of interdisciplinary care teams where appropriate for clients with severe and persistent mental illness who need a comprehensive level of care.

*AHS agrees with this recommendation and will continue working to enhance care coordination with physicians and advance the initiatives with primary care networks already underway. AHS will require support from the Government to achieve this recommendation because of the regulatory implications with physicians.*

- b) Improve availability of mental health resources at hospital emergency departments.

*AHS agrees that mental health resources should be available to support hospital emergency departments. AHS will build upon current work and seek resources to enhance mental health resources in emergency departments.*

- c) Improve its process to monitor and ensure community addiction and mental health clinics comply with AHS' expectations for treatment planning and case management.

*AHS agrees with this recommendation and is continually monitoring compliance with treatment planning and case management expectations as required by Accreditation Canada and required standards of practice. We will continue to enhance these processes.*

- d) Improve its process to identify and evaluate good operational practices used by local mental health and addictions staff and deploy the best ones across the province.

*AHS agrees that it is important to have a process in place to share good practices across all zones and established the Addiction and Mental Health Strategic Clinical Network (SCN), in part, to do so. The SCN is expected to advance the use of evidence-based practices in AHS service delivery to clients.*

*While advancing evidence-based practices, we will need to balance the need for local autonomy and approaches due to the complexity and diversity of needs across the province to which services must respond.*

**Recommendation 2: Information management in mental health and addictions:**

The OAG has recommended that AHS makes the best use of its current mental health and addictions information systems by:

- a) Providing authorized health care workers within all AHS sites access to mental health and addictions clinical information systems.

*AHS agrees in principle. AHS will review and evaluate options to improve the access of AHS health care workers to the mental health and addictions information system. However, as AHS has committed significant resources to the development of a provincial Clinical Information System (CIS); cost-effective interim solutions will be considered.*

- b) Strengthening information management support for its mental health treatment outcomes measurement tools.

*AHS agrees in principle. Having effective health information systems supporting the use of outcome measurement tools is important. Again, as AHS has committed significant resources to the development of a CIS, cost-effective interim solutions will be considered.*

**Recommendation 3: Community housing supports for the mentally ill:**

We recommend that Alberta Health Services in supporting the work of the cross-ministry housing planning team established under the mandate of the Minister of Seniors:

- a) Complete its assessment and report on gaps between supply and demand for specialized community housing support services for mental health and addictions in the province.

*AHS agrees with this recommendation and will complete its gap assessment report in 2015.*

- b) Develop a waitlist management system to formally assess the housing support needs of AHS' mental health hospital and community patients and coordinate their placement into specialized community spaces funded by AHS.

*AHS agrees with this recommendation and will establish a waitlist management process for hospital and community mental health patients.*

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

**For media inquiries, contact:**

Haydon Dewes  
AHS Communications  
403-918-2290