

FAST has received valuable feedback from the first distribution of this newsletter and wants to ensure that all those we work with receive updates about this program. As such, you have been identified as a key stakeholder and someone we want to continue sharing information with.
If you do not want to receive future editions, please opt out [here](#).

October 30, 2025



FAST SPOTLIGHT

The FAST Spotlight newsletter is your go-to quarterly source for updates, insights and stories from the
Facilitated Access to Specialized Treatment (FAST) program.



On the radar

FAST news & updates

Momentum builds for Alberta Referral Action Plan

In our [July edition](#), we introduced the Alberta Referral Action Plan - a system-wide, cross-organizational roadmap to enhance access for patients referred from primary and community care to specialists. Grounded in patient-centered principles, the plan addresses long-standing inefficiencies, inconsistent processes and inequities in accessing specialists, and will improve patient safety. Building on existing programs like FAST, it introduces a phased, evidence-informed roadmap to create a standardized, transparent and digitally enabled referral program that supports timely, equitable and accountable access to specialist services.

Dr. Heidi Fell and Dr. Cinzia Gaudelli, co-chairs of the Provincial Specialty Access Steering Committee, endorsed the plan in a *Letter of Endorsement* and *Call to Action* issued on Sept. 16, 2025.

This endorsement reinforces the urgency and importance of building a more integrated, efficient referral system - and outlines three foundational enablers that must be prioritized:

- Governance: Clear leadership and accountability across all system partners
- Digital enablement: A unified, interoperable digital infrastructure to support seamless data exchange
- Funding: Sustainable resources to support programs and technology implementation

Dr. Fell and Dr. Gaudelli emphasized that these elements are essential to ensure the success of operational components like clinical triage. Prioritizing them will enhance provider engagement, align with Alberta's refocused healthcare system and promote transparency, safety and improved access for patients.

The Provincial Specialty Access Steering Committee (PSASC) is a joint clinical advisory and operational advisory committee between specialty and primary care that supports ongoing specialty access programs, including specialty advice, patient, clinical and referral pathways, central access and intake.

Ministerial briefings are underway as the Alberta Referral Action Plan is gaining traction. Stay tuned for more updates in future editions as we move from planning to action - together.

Expanding access: Meet the new surgeons joining FAST

Since the summer, FAST has partnered with twenty new surgeons who are now accepting referrals through the program. These additions strengthen the referral pool and support timely access to surgical expertise in:

North

- Dr. Mark Abou-Ghaida, Orthopedic Surgeon (Westlock)

Edmonton

- Dr. Mansour Abolghasemian, Orthopedic Surgeon
- Dr. Yibo Li, Orthopedic Surgeon
- Dr. Justin Pyne, Otolaryngologist
- Dr. Lisa Burnell, Otolaryngologist
- Dr. Jonathan Reid, Otolaryngologist

Central

- Dr. Uday Mann, Urologist (Red Deer)
- Dr. Hafeez Fatima Bhatti, Gynecologist (Camrose)

Calgary

- Dr. Justin Yeung, Plastic Surgeon
- Dr. Michael Laliberte, Plastic Surgeon
- Dr. Ann-Sophie Lafreniere, Plastic Surgeon
- Dr. Christine Nicholas, Plastic Surgeon
- Dr. Brent Benavides, Orthopedic Surgeon
- Dr. Murray Wong, Orthopedic Surgeon
- Dr. Tamara Gimon, General Surgeon
- Dr. Oliver Bathe, General Surgeon
- Dr. Daniel Meyer, General Surgeon
- Dr. Patrick Vallance, General Surgeon
- Dr. Humberto Vigil, Urologist

FAST team expands to better support you

The FAST team is growing to better support physicians across the province. We've added new Senior Consultants and Change Management Coordinators to help improve your experience with FAST:

- Our Change Management Coordinators work directly with surgeon offices to understand how the FAST program works for you. They help simplify how appointment data is shared, which supports more accurate wait time tracking.
- Our Senior Consultants bring deep knowledge of their zones and collaborate with both primary and specialty care to identify opportunities for continuous improvement and make the program work better for everyone.



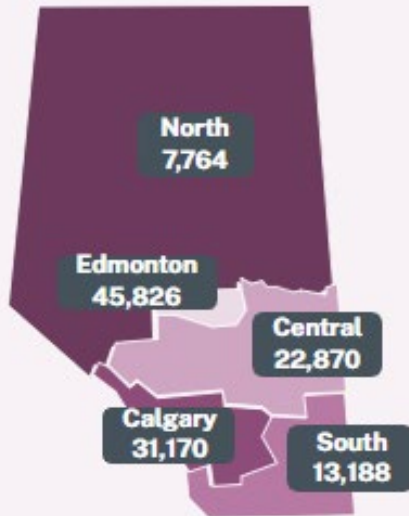
By the numbers

Data, results & performance metrics

BY THE NUMBERS

Jan.-Sept. 2025

Referrals received



120,818

referrals received



70%

of incomplete referrals were subsequently accepted

Top 5 reasons for referral

1. Orthopedics – Knee	15,408
2. Urology – Genitourinary disorders	12,279
3. Urology – Bladder	7,756
4. General Surgery – Hernia	6,981
5. General Surgery – Colorectal	6,773

1-833-553-FAST information line



16,000+

Calls received by the FAST information line



UPDATE...

3,000+

Patients and providers called FAST to request updates for FAST referrals since May 21

Referrals received by specialty



Orthopedics

38,529



Otolaryngology

15,485



Gynecology

5,065



Urology

26,616



Plastic Surgery

6,169



Oral Maxillo-

215



General Surgery

27,270



Vascular Surgery

1,226



Neuro-surgery

243

Survey results: Shaping future clinical pathways

The Provincial Pathways Unit (PPU) recently asked primary care providers to share what health conditions they would like to have clinical pathways for. They ran two surveys, one open-ended and one follow-up, to gather input and narrow down priorities.

Survey 1: Open feedback

Primary care providers highlighted a wide range of conditions, with a strong focus on complex medical issues. The top six out of 70 mentioned were:

1. Diabetes
2. Obesity
3. Dementia
4. Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
5. Chronic Fatigue
6. Heart Disease

Survey 2: Prioritizing needs

In the second survey, diabetes remained the top condition. Other frequently mentioned priorities included menopause, chronic pain, obesity, dementia, heart disease, depression, anxiety, COPD, insomnia, and chronic fatigue/ Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) / Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS).

What's next

The PPU will use this feedback to guide future pathway development. Thank you to all who took part in the survey. Your input is helping shape the future of care.



Your voice, your impact

Feedback, engagement opportunities & calls to action

Have you used FAST in your practice?

Has the FAST program made a difference in your clinical decision-making or patient outcomes? We want to hear from you!

Whether it's a smoother referral or a patient success story—your experience matters. Share how FAST has helped you or your patients by emailing us at ABFAST@primarycarealberta.ca.

As a thank you, you'll be entered into a draw to win a \$10 Tim Hortons gift card.



In practice

Stories, testimonials & real-word impact

Transforming referrals in Alberta: ERS project marks a major milestone

Most referrals from primary care providers to specialists are sent via fax because sending referrals from one Electronic Medical Record (EMR) to another is often not possible.

Until now.

Teams from across PCA, AHS and the Ministry of Primary and Preventative Health Services have been working on the *Electronic Referral Solution (ERS)* project. The ERS is being implemented to automate and optimize the referral process. It aims to replace faxes by intelligently routing referrals to a central hub, which then directs them to the most appropriate specialist based on wait times or patient/provider choice. In late August, the first electronic referral from the Healthquest EMR to Alberta Netcare was sent from the Wetaskiwin Family Medical Clinic to the Central Zone FAST team, marking a major milestone in this health innovation. Since then, 167 electronic referrals have been received by FAST.



"We are so proud to have been asked to be the first clinic in Alberta to submit an entirely electronic referral," says Louise Forth, Referral Coordinator from the Wetaskiwin Family Medical Clinic (pictured above). "I have been involved in this process for many years, transitioning from handwritten paper letters faxed with all the supporting documents to desktop faxing without printing and now electronic referrals that automatically send a confirmation back to us. It has been a passion of mine to be able to be a participant in helping patients get seen as soon as possible for whatever concerns they may have."

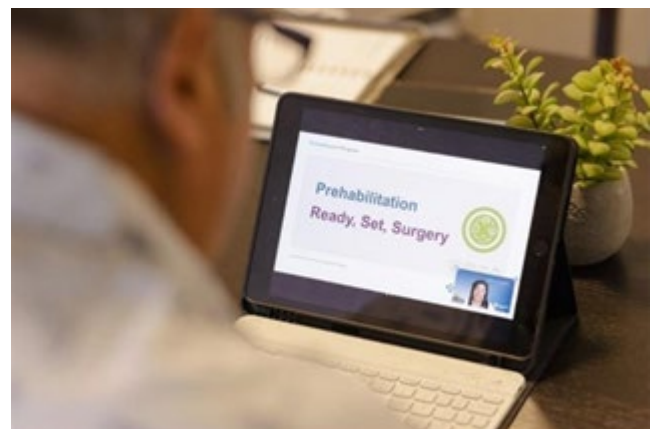
This successful implementation is a testament to the dedication and collaboration of all involved. On behalf of the ERS project team, we extend our sincere thanks to the Wetaskiwin Family Medical Clinic and the Central Zone FAST team for their leadership and support. Their contributions have been instrumental in reaching this milestone.

As we continue to expand ERS across Alberta, we look forward to working with more clinics and teams to enhance referral processes, improve patient outcomes, and support a more connected healthcare system.

Access Alberta Health Services' prehabilitation program

The AHS Prehabilitation (Prehab) Program is for Albertans 18 years and older who are waiting for surgery in Alberta and who would benefit from prehabilitation to address at least one of these areas:

1. Feeling Ready: Managing stress and daily routines before and after surgery
2. Being Active: Moving more, building strength and participating in activities you enjoy
3. Eating Well: Knowing what foods will help your body prepare and recover
4. Living Well: Developing habits you need to improve health and wellbeing



Providers can refer patients through the [Alberta Referral Directory](#) and on Connect Care (Ambulatory Referral – AHS PROV PREHABILITATION).

Please visit ahs.ca/Prehab to stay up to date on Prehabilitation offerings and resources.

Alberta Pathways Hub: User-friendly upgrades coming soon!

[Alberta Pathways Hub](#) is the provincial location for trusted, evidence-informed clinical, patient and referral pathways, and is currently hosting the following:

- 77 clinical pathways
- 22 referral pathways
- 31 patient pathways

Created here in Alberta, each pathway is developed in collaboration with primary and specialty care providers and patients. We are always interested in hearing feedback on our pathways from primary care providers. This can be done by visiting the [Alberta Pathways Hub](#).

The Provincial Pathways team has listened to feedback from primary care providers and is working to improve the look and feel of the Alberta Pathways Hub so that providers can find what resources they are looking for easily and quickly. Alberta Health has also provided grant funds to support these improvements.

We will keep you up to date on progress related to this important work!

Questions?

In addition to our phone information line (1-833-553-3278), you can reach out to your zone FAST teams via email:

- North: abfast.north@primarycarealberta.ca
- Edmonton: abfast.edmonton@primarycarealberta.ca
- Calgary: abfast.calgary@primarycarealberta.ca
- Central: abfast.central@primarycarealberta.ca
- South: abfast.south@primarycarealberta.ca
- General: abfast@primarycarealberta.ca

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**Primary Care
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