

# Message from Central Zone Leadership

Central Zone Executive Leadership believes the development of relationships and collaboration among multiple teams and sites during the pandemic response will strengthen the zone post-COVID-19.



*Sandra Comer has been volunteering at the Olds Hospital and Care Centre for almost 19 years.  
Photo by Leah Hennel/AHS.*

Chief Zone Officer Janice Stewart says as leaders have stepped up to take a turn helping the Zone Emergency Operations Centre, teams have become more familiar with one another and have collaborated in new ways that will set them up for increased success in the future.

“You could not ask for a better team-building exercise with an ongoing opportunity to practice,” Stewart says, wryly.

She points to the management of outbreaks as an example of how the zone pulled together: hospitals would help nearby sites by taking their patients or supplying needed staff when positive cases or staff exclusions became a significant challenge.

“That collaboration demonstrates how we are more than a collection of sites and communities. We have worked together as a cohesive zone,” says Stewart.

Zone Medical Director Dr. Jennie Bestard agrees that the pandemic has helped teams develop a true zone identity. She says prior to COVID-19, they would activate over-capacity protocols as needed on more of a crisis management basis; now during the pandemic, those pathways have proved even more helpful with teams coming together more proactively to manage capacity challenges – including the development of a short-stay protocol, which sends medically appropriate patients out to rural sites to improve zone flow.

Bestard says more frequent opportunities for connection between associate zone medical directors, facility medical directors and clinical department heads provides them with the opportunity to share updates, voice concerns, ask questions and share ideas.

“There is such respect for the various facilities and their leaders. We know each other and our sites’ challenges so much better now, and it makes it easier to help one another even more,” Bestard says.

Janice Stewart  
Chief Zone Officer, Central Zone

Dr. Jennie Bestard  
Zone Medical Director, Central Zone

