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AHS working to create more full-time nursing positions

Changes to nursing positions will benefit patients, will not mean job cuts

EDMONTON - Alberta Health Services (AHS) is working to create more full-time nursing positions, to ensure we can continue to provide the best possible care to Albertans, and that we have sufficient nursing staff to care for our growing and aging population.

AHS has started implementing changes to nursing rotations, creating more effective schedules so that nurses are on shift where and when patient care demands are highest.

The changes will ensure our nurses are where they are most needed, providing the most responsive care possible. The changes are aimed at creating more full-time nursing positions, which in turn allow for more consistent and regular time with patients.

Patients are at the heart of these changes. Every change we make to nursing schedules will be made to improve patient care.

Significantly, AHS and the United Nurses of Alberta have agreed on a process that will see adjustments made as nurses change positions or retire. This means no Registered Nursing jobs will be cut.

"We value the work of our nurses, and we are confident the changes will allow them to provide even better care to those who need them most," says Deb Gordon, Leader, Collaborative Practice, Nursing and Health Professions.

"These changes will not lead to a reduction in nurse numbers within AHS. We believe that every nurse who wants a job with AHS should be able to find one so we are going to be moving forward at a pace that ensures a respectful transition throughout the system. It's worth taking our time with this process - it's better for patients and for nurses."

The overall number of RNs working full time has increased to 31 per cent, from 28 per cent last year. Nationally, the rate of RNs working full time is about 59 per cent.

From April 1 to June 30 of this year, the largest increase in the clinical workforce was in Registered Nurses with 471 new nurses joining AHS. As of October 29, there were 281 job postings for nurses in Alberta, excluding casual positions. That includes 104 full-time vacancies and 177 part-time vacancies.

"Every year, about 500 nurses are expected to retire and recruitment alone will not help us keep pace with the demands of a growing and aging population. That's why we need to create more full-time positions and help meet the demand for nursing hours within the system.

"If we don't make changes now to improve schedules and create more full time positions, we won't have the nurses we need in the future. Increasing the percentage of full-time positions can help close the gap between supply and demand."

We will work with the United Nurses of Alberta to take a rational approach to increasing the number of nurses employed full-time. The union's willingness to look at changes is welcome – because at the end of the day, more nurses working full time is good for patients, for nurses and for the health system.

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Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than 4 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.

- 30 -

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