

Patient & Family-Centred Care in Harm Reduction

The harm reduction approach is based on a foundation of patient and family-centred care. Patient and family-centred care is about putting patients' and families' experiences, priorities, and trust first. This aligns with Alberta Health Services values.

Key elements of patient and family-centred care

Patient and family-centred care models include several key messages:

- Welcoming patients and families as full partners in care
- Sharing power and decision-making between the patients, their families (as desired by patient), and the healthcare providers
- Recognizing the impact of psychological influences on health
- Respecting the patient's and family's values, experiences, and perspectives regarding their healthcare needs
- Communicating effectively with mutual trust and understanding between the healthcare provider, the patient, and the family
- Acknowledging and responding to inequities based on sexuality, gender identity, race, and socio-economic status due to policies and power imbalances in an organization

Healthcare providers can help

Some steps healthcare providers may take to be more patient-centred include:

- Active listening
- Patient-centred goal-setting
- Culturally-safe care
- Respect for patient and family decisions and choices

Harm reduction interventions

Harm reduction interventions can create an environment that promotes patient-centred care for people using psychoactive substances.

Such interventions focus on:

- Providing low-threshold services that are flexible and remove barriers to care
- Patient and family engagement
- Strengthening patient and healthcare provider relationships
- Care retention
- Reducing harm

Examples include:

- Syringe or supply distribution and recovery programs
- Supervised consumption services
- Opioid dependency treatments

Who counts as family?

- People identified by the patient as an important support, and who the patient wishes to be included in any encounters with the healthcare system.
- These people may include family members, legal guardians, friends, informal caregivers, and others.

A harm reduction approach reorients the care to acknowledge each patient's symptoms and needs, and ensures that their "personhood" takes priority.

Principles of patient and family-centred care

Alberta Health Services has adopted four principles of patient and family-centred care:

Respect and Dignity

- We listen to and honour patient and family perspectives and choices.
- We incorporate patient and family knowledge, values, beliefs and cultural background into planning and delivery of care.

Information Sharing

- We communicate and share complete unbiased information with patients and families in ways that are positive and useful.
- We give patients and families timely, complete, and accurate information to support their decision-making process.

Participation

- We encourage patients and families to participate in care and decision-making at the level they choose.

Collaboration

- We include patients and families on an institution-wide basis.
- Healthcare leaders collaborate with patients and families on policy and program development, healthcare facility design, professional education, and delivery of care.

Questions or comments?

Please email patient.engagement@ahs.ca if you have:

- Questions about the AHS Patient First strategy
- Suggestions for patient and family-centred care resources
- Patient and family-centred care success stories you'd like to share

References

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