



## Message from Dr. Verna Yiu & Dr. Laura McDougall

### *AHS Update: COVID-19 active cases down in all five zones, info on rescheduling second-dose appointments*

*Please print and share with your teams as needed*

Dear staff, physicians and volunteers,

#### **Today's Update**

- **COVID-19 Cases in Alberta**
- **COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers — The Latest Numbers**
- **COVID-19 Immunization Update — Update on Second-Dose Appointment Rebooking**
- **COVID-19 Variants**
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- **Staff Webinars on Patient Access to Lab Results in MyHealth Records**
- **Gratitude from Albertans**
- **Wrapping Up — Let's Talk ... Anytime**

## COVID-19 Status

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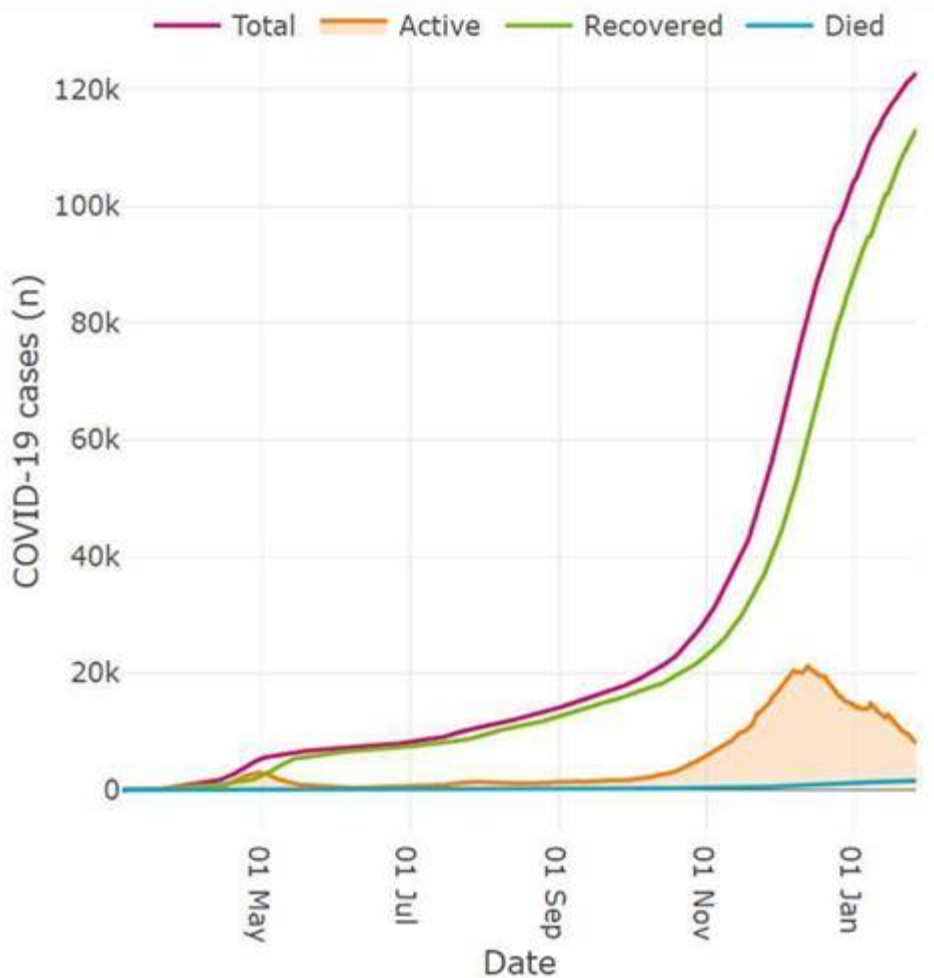
This week, the downward trend in most of our COVID-19 numbers continued, as the number of active cases decreased in all five zones of Alberta Health Services (AHS) over a seven-day period ending Jan. 28.

As of Jan. 27, there were 8,041 active cases in the province, the lowest number since Nov. 9, and 2,391 fewer active cases than on Jan. 20, a 22.9 per cent decrease.

The table below shows the number of active cases in each zone for the last two weeks.

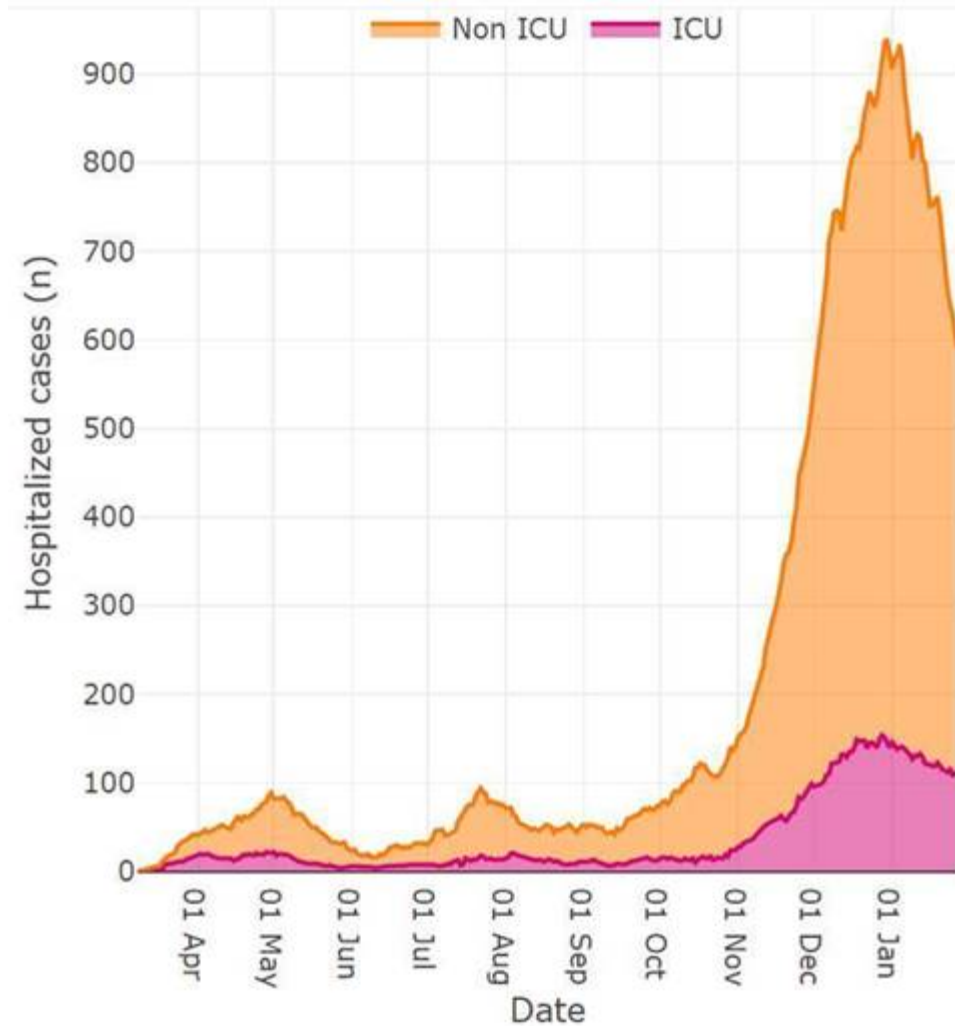
	Active Cases (as of Jan. 27)	Active Cases (as of Jan. 20)	Per Cent Change
Calgary	3,202	3,962	-19.2%
Edmonton	2,764	3,561	-22.4%
North	1,010	1,383	-27.0%
Central	710	931	-23.7%
South	336	405	-17.0%
Unknown	19	14	35.7%

There was an average of 480 daily new cases for the week ending Jan. 28, compared to 644 the previous week, a 25.5 per cent decrease. From Jan. 21 to Jan. 27, there were 1,613 cases among individuals aged 20 to 49 years, which is 48 per cent of all new cases during that time period. Also this week, 660 new cases were reported among school-aged children (5 to 19 years) and 539 new cases among older adults (ages 60 and older).



**Hospitalizations and ICU admissions**

Alberta reported another week-to-week decline in the number of individuals being treated in hospital for COVID-19. On Jan. 27, there were 591 individuals with COVID-19 in hospitals across the province, compared to 739 on Jan. 20, a 20 per cent decrease. Also on Jan. 27, there were 112 individuals in intensive care compared to 118 on Jan. 20, a 5.1 per cent decrease. While this decrease is positive, we must remember that the overall number of cases still continues to be a strain on the health system. The current numbers only return us to the levels of cases seen in early December, prior to the latest restrictions being put in place. The improvement is very welcome, but we must remain vigilant to maintain a decreasing trend.



The Edmonton and Central zones reported the largest per cent decrease in their total hospitalizations over the past week: 93 fewer patients in Edmonton Zone, a 26.7 per cent decrease, and 12 fewer patients in the Central Zone, a 26.1 per cent decrease.

The breakdown of hospitalizations by zone as of Jan. 27 is as follows:

	Hospitalizations	Patients in ICU
Edmonton	255	42
Calgary	191	46
North	68	8
Central	46	7
South	31	9

**Other notable COVID-19-related information:**

- As of Jan. 27, a total of 122,821 cases of COVID-19 have occurred in Alberta and a total of 5,326 individuals have been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.3

individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 113,174 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19.

- As of Jan. 27, 1,606 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 106 over the past seven days (Jan 21 to Jan. 27). We extend our condolences to the families of these individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones from any cause during this time.
- From Jan. 21 to Jan. 27, 74,851 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 10,693 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 3.67 per cent to 5.34 per cent. As of Jan. 28, a total of 3,142,545 tests have been conducted and 1,746,915 individuals have been tested, which is two out of every five Albertans.
- For the winter school term, as of Jan. 28, AHS has confirmed 603 individuals with COVID-19 were present at schools while infectious or acquired the disease in the school setting. A total of 310 of 2,415 schools (or 12.8 per cent) in the province have reported an individual has attended their school while infectious or had in-school transmission.

## Things You Need to Know

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### **COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers — The Latest Numbers**

We continue to update the testing data for healthcare workers in the [AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Testing dashboard](#). These statistics provide the total number of AHS, Covenant Health and Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) employees and physicians tested, including a breakdown of the number of positive tests and those who have been confirmed to have been exposed in the workplace.

As of Jan. 27:

- 75,621 employees (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 4,395 (or 5.8 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 1,421 employees who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 432 (or 30.4 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 2,974 employees who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.
- 4,876 physicians (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 191 (or 3.9 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 57 physicians who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, eight (or 14 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 134 physicians who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.

For more information, see the AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Testing [infographic](#) and [dashboard](#).

### **COVID-19 Vaccination Update — Update on Second-Dose Appointment Rebooking**

More than 40,000 notifications went out this past week to healthcare workers across the province informing them their second dose immunization appointments are being rescheduled. This is a result of depleted vaccine supply.

If you booked your appointment through the online booking tool, you need to rebook by going to your COVID-19 immunization confirmation email from *AHS Booking* and clicking on the link at the bottom of the email to **modify** your booking, or visit [ahs.ca/updatebooking](https://ahs.ca/updatebooking). You will still see your current appointment in the online booking tool but it will not be accommodated. It needs to be rescheduled to a later date.

Those who were booked in the early phase and were not booked through the online tool are being contacted by **text and automated phone call**, not email. You will be asked to contact Health Link or local public health directly using a special phone number provided, to arrange second dose appointment rebooking.

We appreciate your patience as these messages continue to be sent out over the weekend.

#### *Vaccine Sequencing for Healthcare Workers, Answers to Common Questions*

Since the rollout of COVID-19 vaccine began, we've been receiving questions from staff, physicians, partners and the public on immunization sequencing: who will be immunized when, in what order, and why some groups are chosen to go before others.

To help answer these questions, we've developed the following resources:

- [Vaccine Sequencing for Healthcare Workers webpage](#) outlines sequencing considerations and the role of the COVID-19 Vaccine Sequencing for Healthcare Workers Committee.
- The [pdf version](#), which can be printed and shared with your teams, includes more information on sequencing rationale, where we are now and where we are heading.
- [Top COVID-19 vaccine sequencing questions](#) document addressed questions staff may have about sequencing and eligibility.

#### **COVID-19 Variants**

COVID-19 is a virus, and like most viruses it mutates as it reproduces inside the cells of an infected person. The changed virus can then be spread to others and may continue to mutate as it moves from person to person. COVID-19 viruses that have changed or mutated are called variants.

Recently, new variant COVID-19 strains were identified in the United Kingdom, South Africa and Brazil. These strains are Variants of Concern because they appear to spread more easily than other strains. They have since also been identified in many other countries around the world.

Work is underway by the international scientific and public health communities to better understand the biological significance of these variant strains, including how the current vaccines may help protect against them.

So far, evidence suggests the Variants of Concern transmit more easily than the original strain, meaning they are more contagious. While early research is not clear whether these new variants don't appear to cause more severe illness in an individual, there is concern about the impact on our communities if such a COVID-19 variant virus became common. The increased spread of COVID-19 would result in more illness, hospitalizations and deaths.

Symptoms are the same as the usual COVID-19, including cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose, sore throat, or other symptoms. Please visit [Alberta.ca](#) for a full list of symptoms.

While the new COVID\_19 Variants of Concern seem to spread more easily, they are believed to spread in the same way as the usual virus. This means that the same types of preventive strategies will be effective. However, the new variants can more easily take advantage of any relaxation of those preventive measures.

Learn more [here](#).

### **Easing of some restrictions in Alberta to start Feb 8**

The Government of Alberta announced today that additional health measures will be eased for restaurants, indoor fitness and some children's activities, effective Feb. 8.

Step 1 of Alberta's four-step framework to ease restrictions is based on a COVID-19 hospitalization benchmark of 600, including intensive care patients. This benchmark was reached on Jan. 28. The full, four-step framework for easing restrictions can be viewed [here](#).

### **New Guidelines on International Travel**

Today, the Government of Canada announced further restrictions to non-essential international travel, including an agreement with airlines not to fly to some vacation destinations. The restrictions also outline mandatory quarantines and testing required if you have travelled outside the country, which airports in Canada are designated for specific international flights and the personal expenses associated with the restrictions related to international travel. More information is available [here](#).

AHS continues to strongly discourage all non-essential international travel while emergency measures and travel advisories from the Governments of [Canada](#) and [Alberta](#) are in place.

As healthcare workers, it is our responsibility to set a positive example in following current travel advisories. Recent agreements with all of our unions highlight that AHS and the unions strongly discourage healthcare workers from non-essential international travel. As well, all employees should ensure requests for time off incorporate any required quarantine periods and that appropriate arrangements are

made in advance for remote work, if possible. Managers should confirm if employees will need to quarantine after their requested time off and consider operational impacts when approving or denying time-off requests.

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to your leader.

### **Help Us Streamline Staff Scheduling by Downloading App**

We continue to see an increase in staffing pressures due to COVID-19 — and need your help. The increased staffing needs have more than tripled the number of shift offers sent to staff through SMS/text. This, along with networking issues, have caused SMS/text system performance problems. This means we are less effective in filling shifts, potentially leading to short staffing, increased overtime and staff fatigue.

Help us streamline processes and ensure you receive timely shift offer messages by downloading the Vocantas Communicate Mobile 4.0 App.

The app allows staff to:

- View and bid on Automated Shift Callout (ASC) shift offers.
- View ESP schedule (Environment for Scheduling Personnel).
- Access ASC Employee portal.
- Receive push notifications rather than text/SMS notifications.
- Reduce steps to notify when accepting a shift.

You can download the app [here](#).

- Prior to using the app, you must accept the terms of service in the [ASC Employee Portal](#). If you have not signed into the ASC Employee Portal since July 13, 2020, you will also need to accept the new terms of service to use it again.
- It is important to de-select the SMS/text communication option from the ASC portal once you download the app.

Please contact your [local service desk](#) if you need help setting up the app on your phone.

### **Verna's Weekly Video Message — Spotlight on Environmental Public Health**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the work of Environmental Public Health has grown exponentially and the role the team plays is vast and vital. We know, for many, the current COVID-19 restrictions can be difficult and this is a stressful time – mentally, emotionally and financially. Sometimes this leads to heated emotions.

In recent weeks, there have been instances in which our public health inspectors have been mistreated, verbally abused and disrespected while carrying out their duties. This is why we launched a public kindness campaign, reminding Albertans all of us are here for them but harassment is never OK.

Joining me (Verna) to talk more [about the great work of Environmental Public Health and the challenges they face](#) are:



- Dr. Kathryn Koliaska, Lead Medical Officer of Health for the North Zone and Safe Healthy Environments
- Mark Fehr, Executive Director, Safe Healthy Environments

Kathryn and Mark share how the pandemic has changed Environmental Public Health's role and how public health inspectors work with police and municipal partners.



### **Straight Talk from You — 'It's Not a Conspiracy'**

Straight Talk is a video series in which healthcare workers talk from the heart about what they're seeing and experiencing at work and in their communities as COVID-19 spreads across the province. AHS is posting new Straight Talk videos every week on YouTube and sharing it through our AHS accounts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Please feel free to share these with your networks and on your social platforms as you see appropriate.

This week, we highlight a video featuring Andy Clark, a bed placement co-ordinator at Foothills Medical Centre in Calgary.



“(COVID-19) is not a conspiracy. It’s not fake. It’s not a hoax. People are dying,” says Clark. “We need Albertans to continue to do what you can to curb the spread of this disease.”

You can see all of the [Straight Talk videos](#) on the AHS website.

### **Photo of the Week**

Every week, we highlight a photo in this space that illustrates your efforts, compassion and achievements as we respond to the pandemic and support Albertans who come to us for care.



Joyce Adams has reason to celebrate. The 78-year-old resident of Clifton Manor in Calgary received her second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine this week. She shared a moment of joy with registered nurse Emile Enongene, Director of Nursing at the facility.

To see all our AHS photos, visit our [Instagram Gallery](#) on the AHS website.

### **Brochures Now Available to Order in Print for Designated Support Persons**

Since June, AHS has implemented [Designated Family/Support and Visitation Guidance](#) to offer our staff direction on how to support family presence and visitation practices during COVID-19. As part of this guidance, we are providing brochures to order in print for designated support persons.

[Know Your Risk](#) and [Know Your Role](#) brochures help family and designated support persons understand their roles and responsibilities when entering AHS facilities. Sites are encouraged to use these brochures and provide printed copies at screening stations.

The brochures are available for order through the AHS signage page on DATA Communications' online ordering system. Sites are responsible for ordering and paying for their own brochures. Please work with your operations and BAS representatives to track as incremental COVID-19 costs. You can learn more and order the brochures [here](#).

### **Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation Radiothon On the Air Next Week; Congratulation to Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation**



COVID-19 has significantly impacted AHS' philanthropic partners and, over the past 10 months, health foundations across Alberta have had to seek out new ways to fundraise and connect with donors in a virtual world. We continue to be impressed by their creativity and their commitment to raising money in support of healthcare.

The Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation is an example of how foundations are meeting with success in a COVID-19 world. Next week, dozens of grateful families are

lined up to share how much they appreciate the care they've received from our healthcare providers. The 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Country 105 Caring for Kids Radiothon in support of the Alberta Children's Hospital will be on the air Feb. 3 to 5.

Although families are unable to gather at the hospital in person, they are eager to share their inspiring stories virtually. We encourage you to tune in for a boost of positive energy and invite your friends and family to do the same. This year, with fewer people commuting to work and listening in their cars, your help in building up the radiothon audience as much as possible would be greatly appreciated. You can donate and find out more [here](#).

Meanwhile, one of our other foundation partners proved that COVID-19 can't stop their good work. This past week marked the 22<sup>nd</sup> annual Corus Radiothon in support of the Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation and it was a record-setting event.

The two-day event began on Tuesday morning and featured stories from past and current Stollery families. When the event wound down on Wednesday night, it had successfully raised over \$1.7 million. Funds from the radiothon will support three projects including a renovation to the hospital's play area known as The Beach, funding to expand mental health care at the Stollery's emergency department and relocation of pediatric surgery suites to the Kaye Edmonton Clinic.

### **Influenza Immunization Update**

As of Jan. 23, 2021, 1,524,230 doses of influenza vaccine have been administered in Alberta. Immunizations are up by 189,052 compared to the same time last year.

For the 12<sup>th</sup> week in row, there are no reported cases of seasonal influenza in Alberta. The weekly influenza data report is available at [ahs.ca/influenza](https://ahs.ca/influenza).

Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) has tested 89,196 respiratory swabs for influenza, from Aug. 23, 2020, to Jan. 28, 2021.

Check [Insite](#) for options to get your influenza vaccine, [resources](#) to support this year's campaign and guidance on what to do if you experience [symptoms after immunization](#).

[Click here](#) for more information on the influenza immunization clinics for the public, including your families. And, if you got your influenza vaccine at a [public health clinic](#), pharmacy or doctor's office, please complete the [Got My Flu Shot Form](#).

### **Basic Life Support (BLS): Grace Period Extended**

COVID-19 continues to shape how in-person education is delivered in AHS, including basic life support (BLS) training. We recognize this has been frustrating for staff who are experiencing delays and barriers to renewing their certificates.

AHS staff are now permitted to work with expired BLS certificates until March 31, 2022. This direction takes precedence over Heart and Stroke certificate renewals. BLS

courses continue to be offered, with staff providing direct patient care a priority for renewal.

Over the next year, AHS will also begin exploring how BLS can be improved to safely and sustainably meet staff needs during and beyond the pandemic.

Visit [Insite](#) for updates on this work or contact [BLS@ahs.ca](mailto:BLS@ahs.ca).

### **Staff Webinars on Patient Access to Lab Results in MyHealth Records**

We want to remind you of upcoming changes to the access Albertans will have to lab test results in MyHealth Records (MHR), which will be viewable through the My Personal Records (MPR) application.

Over the coming months:

- About 95 per cent of the most commonly ordered (by volume) lab test results will be viewable by Feb 1, 2021.
- All remaining lab tests, including more complex results in microbiology, pathology and genetics, will be available in MPR by July 1, 2021.

Lab results ordered from all sites in Alberta, including labs ordered during inpatient, ambulatory and emergency visits, will be included in MPR. Once the changes are in place, new users will see an 18-month retrospective view of any lab results slated for release. Existing users will not have labs added retroactively but they will be able to see the expanded lab results moving forward.

After these changes are in place, patients will have immediate access to more of their own lab results. Operations staff and leaders may be approached by patients regarding the results. An FAQ document about these changes is available [here](#).

As these changes are rolled out by Alberta Health, AHS is offering a webinar to provide more information to our staff. The webinar will include a brief summary of the lab results release and a question-and-answer period. Staff are welcome to attend one of two sessions being offered:

Wednesday, Feb. 3, noon to 12:45 p.m.

Registration link:

<https://zoom.us/j/94155278663?pwd=d09DQURMeHFiTEJscHdMaTVpOExEUT09>

Meeting ID: 941 5527 8663

Passcode: 495125

Dial-in: +1 778 907 2071 or +1 587 328 1099

Friday, Feb. 5, noon to 12:45 p.m.

Registration link:

<https://zoom.us/j/91235932672?pwd=RTNGTkVWQlVabzhaOUkyTWVqYzR6QT09>

Meeting ID: 912 3593 2672

Passcode: 037595

Dial-in: +1 778 907 2071 or +1 587 328 1099



## Be Well - Be Kind

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### Where's Bernie: New Zoom Backgrounds

We all need a bit of light-heartedness to end the week, so AHS has joined the Bernie Sanders internet fun by adding a few new Zoom backgrounds to our library, which include cameos by cozy-mittened, Mr. Sanders. Please go to our [Zoom Backgrounds page on Insite](#) to include these and other backgrounds to your Zoom calls. Stay tuned, new backgrounds are also being developed for spring, because we know it must be just around the corner.



### Refresh Your Resiliency: Health Professions Strategy & Practice (HPSP) Annual Conference

Taking a moment to refresh our resiliency throughout our COVID-19 response can help us continue to navigate challenges and be there for those who need us most — patients, families and each other.

We've had an overwhelming response from healthcare providers to attend the HPSP annual conference. Live virtual sessions are now full, so we've added more spaces to register for access to the recordings-only option.

Don't miss out on your chance to hear from our amazing lineup of speakers who will challenge your thinking, get you laughing and leave you feeling the power of your own resiliency.

To register for access to the recordings, select the Waitlist – Online Sessions option on the [event page](#). Note: If you are already registered for the live sessions, you will already have access to the recordings.

### Gratitude from Albertans

Everything you and your colleagues do every day to provide safe quality care to all Albertans is being noticed. Messages of gratitude keep pouring in from across the province and beyond during the COVID-19 pandemic. We want to share a few recent messages of thanks with you — and you can see others on our [Sharing the Love webpage](#).

*Thank you for always being there ready to help. Thank you for being strong and resilient. Thank you for your compassion when all seems lost. You all remain professional in times when all seems hopeless. You are amazing, strong and appreciated.*

— David Garside

*All the nurses were very professional and yet with personal compassion. In the midst of this pandemic and their own concerns, they really put the care of others first. A big thank you to you all.*

— Craig Fisher

*Thanks a million for being present in patients' most difficult moments. Thank you so much for your unwavering compassion and commitment to nursing students learning. You are the most special people on earth who deserve the sincerest thank you for all you do. May you be safe now and always.*

— Anonymous

*Thank you for all the work that you are doing. I am grateful for the healthcare system that supports our most vulnerable citizens and cares for those who are suffering.*

— Anonymous

### **Wrapping Up — Let's Talk ... Anytime**

Thursday, Jan. 28 was Bell Let's Talk Day, an opportunity for all Canadians to add their voice to a national conversation about mental health. We're sure many of you took part in this worthwhile initiative. The annual event encourages discussions we need to have with ourselves and with others — yet it's also important to remember that mental wellness requires self-awareness and self-care each and every day of the year. Especially now. These are difficult times and it's been a long stretch for all of us; in fact, this week marks the one-year anniversary of the opening of our Emergency Coordination Centre in preparation for the COVID-19 pandemic. As an organization, we've never faced a public health crisis as enduring and consuming as this one.

So we end this week's all-staff with a request: please ask for help if you're struggling with your mental health. Reach out to your trusted loved ones, colleagues, work leaders, faith leaders or other confidants if you need to talk. Mental health supports are also available through the [Employee & Family Assistance Program](#) (EFAP). Try the [new EFAP Resilience App](#) to help you develop the skills you need to cope in tough times. The app is a resilience trainer and offers a personalized experience focused on proactively building your mental health to help you get ahead of adversity. Self-care is important for us all. See the [Resilience, Wellness and Mental Health Resource](#)

[Guide](#) to find the resources you need for your health and safety. If you have questions or feedback, contact [wellness@ahs.ca](mailto:wellness@ahs.ca).

However you opt to seek help, just make sure to do it — and please care for yourselves as you care for others.

With enduring gratitude and appreciation,

**Dr. Verna Yiu**

AHS President & CEO

**Dr. Laura McDougall**

Senior Medical Officer of Health

