



Message from
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AHS Update: Health Canada authorizes COVID-19 vaccine for children five to 11 years old; QR codes required for proof of immunization

Please print and share with your teams as needed

Dear staff, physicians and volunteers,

 Today's Update

- **Health Canada Authorizes COVID-19 Vaccine for Children Five to 11**
- **COVID-19 Cases in Alberta**
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We would like to recognize that our work takes place on historical and contemporary Indigenous lands, including the territories of Treaties 6, 7 & 8, and the homeland of the Métis. We also acknowledge the many Indigenous communities that have been forged in urban centres across Alberta.

Health Canada Authorizes COVID-19 Vaccine for Children Five to 11 Years Old

Today, Health Canada approved the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for children five to 11 years of age.

As [announced by the Alberta Health today](#) (Nov. 19), vaccines are expected to arrive in the province the week of Nov. 22. Provided supply is delivered as expected, Alberta plans to begin administration by late next week. We will roll out the vaccine as quickly and safely as possible, and appointments will be made available for booking, once we receive supply. More information regarding bookings and appointments will be shared once they are available.

Until now, the Pfizer vaccine was approved for use in people 12 years and older. As we await decisions by Alberta Health, and supply of the vaccine, we are preparing our teams, as well as updating our policies, processes and resources, in order to rollout the vaccine in a child- and family-friendly manner.

We will roll out the vaccine as quickly and safely as possible, and appointments will be made available for booking, once we receive supply. We will share more information on these plans as soon as we have those details.

If parents haven't already, they can register their child online through the [Alberta Vaccine Booking System](#), in advance of appointments being available. Please note, registration does not mean you will get advanced notice or priority when vaccine is available.

This is the first COVID-19 vaccine authorized in Canada for use in children under 12 years of age.

To ensure parents, guardians and families have current, reliable information and resources to help them make an informed decision about immunizing their children, AHS has launched a new webpage at ahs.ca/vaccinekids. The webpage features:

- Videos with advice from top pediatric specialists;
- Strategies to [help children who are afraid of needles](#);

- [Frequently asked questions](#)
- And a [new interactive game](#) that teaches children the importance of getting the vaccine, while encouraging them to continue to wear a mask, physically distance, and wash their hands to protect themselves and their loved ones from COVID-19.



Visit ahs.ca/vaccinekids for more information.

COVID-19 Status

ICU Capacity Update

AHS continues to do all it can to ensure we have enough ICU capacity to meet patient demand.

With pressure easing slightly on our ICUs, we are reducing the available surge beds so that we can redeploy staff back to caring for non-COVID patients who need surgeries and procedures completed.

We will ensure that we maintain ICU capacity above daily demand to a planned maximum of 380 beds as long as staff and physician availability allows, and will readjust our plans as needed if COVID-19 cases rise again.

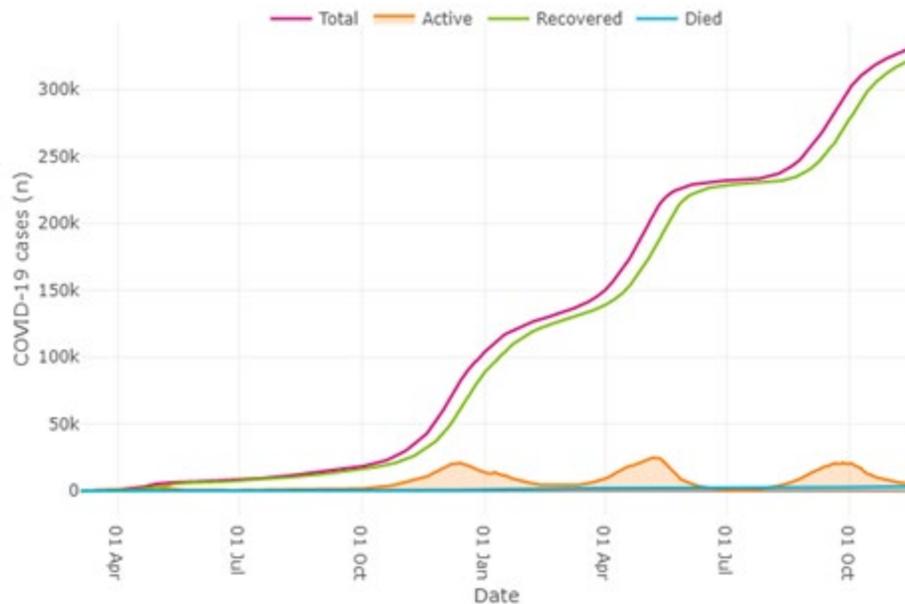
We currently have 262 general adult ICU beds open in Alberta, including 89 additional spaces above our baseline of 173 general adult ICU beds. There are currently 214 patients in ICU.

Provincially, ICU capacity (including additional surge beds) is currently at 82 per cent. Without the additional surge spaces, provincial ICU capacity would be at 124 per cent.

New and Active Cases

As of Nov. 17, there was a seven-day average of 370 new cases of COVID-19 per day, compared to 453 cases per day the previous week (Nov. 4 to Nov. 10), an 18.3 per cent decrease. All zones reported decreases in the number of new cases per day, ranging from a 4.3 per cent decrease in the Calgary Zone to a 33.3 per cent decrease in the North Zone. Over the past week, the Calgary Zone reported the highest total number of new cases with 943 (an average of 135 cases per day), compared to 990 new cases the previous week (an average of 141 cases per day).

As of Nov. 17, there are 5,384 active cases in Alberta, a 10.4 per cent decrease compared to Nov. 9*. Most zones reported a decrease in active cases: the zone with the largest reported decrease was the Central Zone, down 19.3 per cent from Nov. 9*. For the seventh week in a row, the Calgary Zone reported the most active cases with 1,817, and was the only zone that did not report a decrease in cases compared to the last report. (*This reporting date was affected by Remembrance Day.)

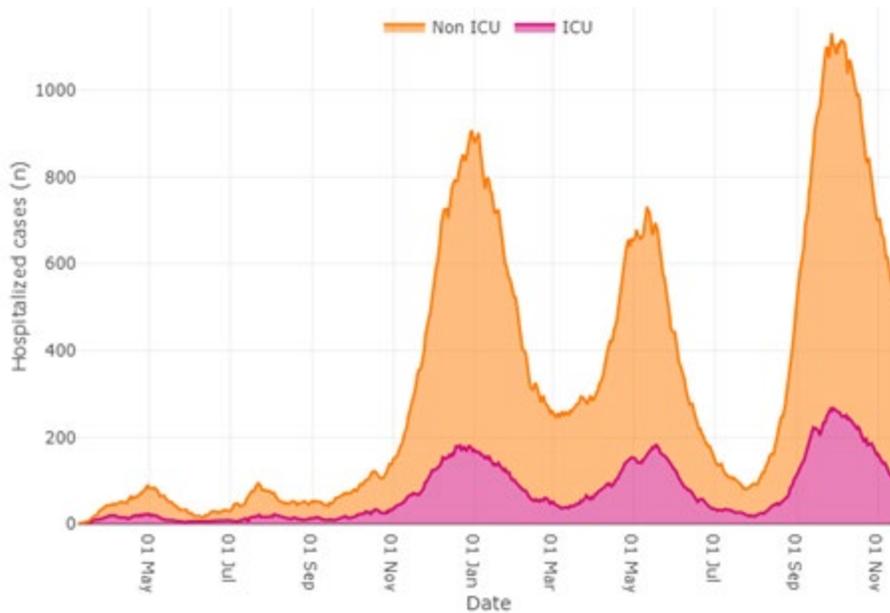


Hospitalizations

A total of 404 individuals were in non-ICU hospital beds for COVID-19 on Nov. 17, compared to 461 individuals in non-ICU hospital beds on Nov. 10, a 12.4 per cent decrease.

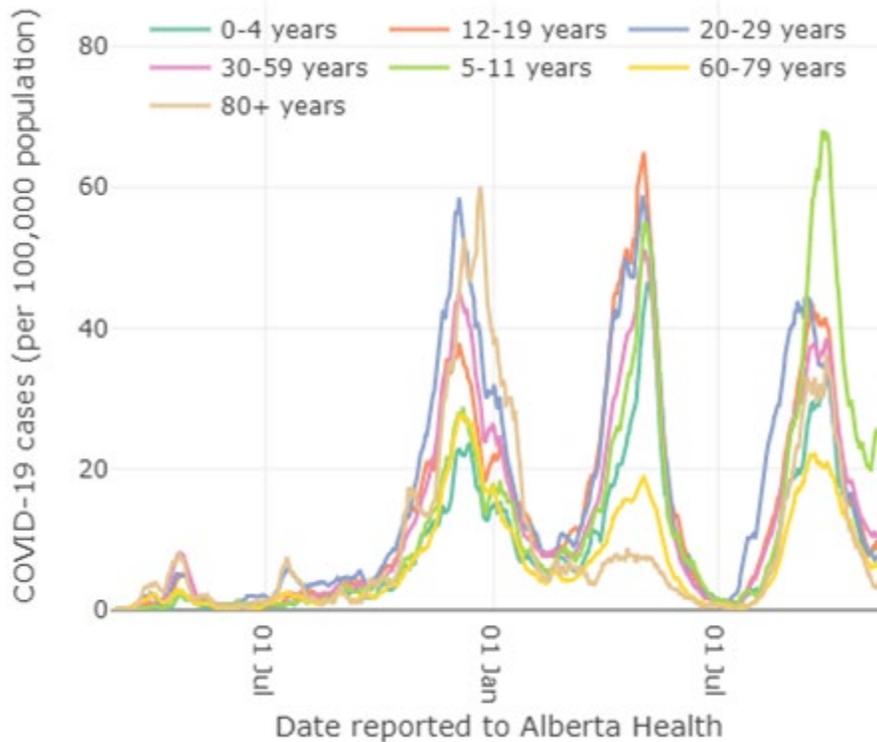
The breakdown of hospitalizations by zone as of Nov. 17 is as follows:

- 158 hospitalizations with 44 of those in ICUs in the Edmonton Zone
- 113 hospitalizations with 22 of those in ICUs in the Calgary Zone
- 111 hospitalizations with 9 of those in ICUs in the Central Zone
- 63 hospitalizations with 6 of those in ICUs in the North Zone
- 53 hospitalizations with 13 of those in ICUs in the South Zone



Cases by Age Group

As of Nov. 14, children aged five to 11 – who have been ineligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine – had the highest seven-day rolling average of new daily COVID-19 cases, with 20.57 cases per 100,000 children. Albertans aged 30 to 59 had the second-highest rate with 8.71 cases per 100,000 people. Trends in cases in Alberta by age group are shown below.



As of Nov. 17, 3,209 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 45 deaths since the last report. We extend our condolences to the families of these

individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones from any cause during this time.

Variants of Concern

For variants of concern, the lab is currently utilizing targeted screening of positive samples for strain-typing. From Nov. 9 to Nov. 15, the average of positive samples that were strain-typed was 46 per cent. Of those strain-typed the rolling average was 99.6 per cent Delta variant. The remaining 0.4 per cent was a wild variant. Strain-typing takes a number of days and these numbers may change as lab data becomes available.

Other notable COVID-19-related information:

- As of Nov. 17, a total of 331,214 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Alberta and a total of 14,808 individuals have ever been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.5 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 322,621 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19, meaning they are no longer considered contagious.
- From Nov. 11 to Nov. 17, 55,755 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 7,965 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 4.33 per cent to 5.62 per cent. As of Nov. 17, a total of 6,036,473 tests have been conducted and 2,564,912 individuals have ever been tested.
- The R value, also known as the reproduction number, describes the ability of a disease to spread. It tells us the average number of people that someone with COVID-19 will infect. An R value of 1 means an infected person will infect one other person on average. Values below 1 mean transmission is decreasing; above 1, transmission is increasing. The R value is updated every two weeks. From Nov. 1 to Nov. 14 the provincewide R value was 0.92 and the previously reported value was 0.87.
- Public reporting of outbreaks in schools continues and you can find more information, [here](#).

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 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 Nov. 17:

- 85,836 employees (AHS and APL combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 8,818 (or 10.27 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 6,499 employees who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 673 (or 10.36 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 2,319 employees who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.
- 6,055 physicians (AHS and APL combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 367 (or 6.06 per cent) have tested positive.

- Of the 271 physicians who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 23 (or 8.49 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 96 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.

Things You Need to Know

Physician Immunization Tops 99 Per Cent; staff close to 96

The response to our [Immunization of Workers for COVID-19 Policy](#) has proven very positive. We are pleased to share that almost 96 per cent of our full-time and part-time employees and more than 99 percent of physicians have submitted proof of immunization to date. Thank you for inspiring us to look out for one another.

This is an important milestone in our effort to keep our people, patients and all Albertans safe. We recognize your resilience and commitment to providing high-quality care. Thank you for your ongoing efforts to prevent COVID-19 outbreaks in AHS facilities, preserve workforce capacity, and protect vulnerable Albertans.

Valid Forms of Proof of Vaccination for R.E.P

As of Nov. 15, COVID-19 vaccine records must include a [QR code](#) in order for Albertans to enter any business or venue taking part in the [Restrictions Exemption Program](#).

Paper immunization records without a QR code will no longer be accepted, except for the following forms of proof of vaccination:

- Other [provincial and territorial vaccine records](#)
- First Nation vaccine records
- [ArriveCan app](#) and valid international travel identity document (for international travellers, visitors and international students)
- Canadian Armed Forces vaccine records
- U.S. Military proof of vaccination and ID card

Valid identification that matches the vaccine record is also required for adults 18 and over. Visit [Restrictions Exemption Program – Proof of vaccination](#) for more information.

AHS continues to receive a high volume of COVID-19 immunization records submitted to Public Health, immunization clinics and through the [online Alberta Immunization Record Self Submission Portal](#), which require further review and verification.

Following submission, verified submission information will display in your [MyHealth Records](#) account, but it may take two to three weeks for your information to show. The teams are doing everything they can to work through this recent surge in requests as quickly as possible.

Alberta Health is also receiving high volumes of requests for immunization records with a QR code. If you are experiencing issues getting your immunization record with a QR code, please visit alberta.ca/CovidRecordsHelp.

COVID-19 Immunization Update

Janssen (Johnson and Johnson) vaccine available to 18+

The Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) vaccine is now available for Albertans 18 years of age and older. At this time, only one dose of the Janssen vaccine is needed to be fully immunized. A booster dose of an mRNA vaccine is recommended after six months.

Due to limited supply, the vaccine will only be administered at AHS clinics in select locations across the province. People may have to travel outside their home community to get to a clinic providing this vaccine. Call Health Link at 811 to book an appointment. Appointments are available across the province.

At this time, the Janssen vaccine is only for people who haven't had any doses of the COVID-19 vaccines before. It will not be provided as a second dose or a booster dose.

The Janssen vaccine is a viral vector vaccine. For more information, see the [COVID-19 vaccines – viral vector-based info sheet](#) and [MyHealth Alberta](#).

Based on current evidence, the greatest level of protection comes from mRNA vaccines. However, all vaccines being used in Alberta have been determined to be safe and effective. It is much better to be immunized against COVID-19 than to get the disease itself. We encourage anyone who has not received a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine to book an appointment as soon as possible.

Other vaccine availability

Currently, there is no supply of the AstraZeneca vaccine in the province. Additional supply is expected later this year. More information will be available at that time.

Health Canada receives submission from Moderna to authorize the use COVID-19 vaccine in children aged six to 11

Health Canada received a [submission](#) on Nov. 16 from Moderna seeking authorization for the use of its COVID-19 vaccine in children 6 to 11 years of age.

This is the second submission Health Canada has received for the use of a COVID-19 vaccine in this younger age group. On Oct. 18, 2021, Health Canada received a submission for the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in children aged 5 to 11 years

of age, which was authorized today.

Health Canada will only authorize the use of Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine in children if its independent and thorough scientific review of the data in the submission shows that the benefits of the vaccine outweigh the risks in this age group. The assessment will include a detailed review of clinical trial results, as well as other evolving data and information about the health impacts of COVID-19 and variants of concern on children in Canada.

Third doses continue to be available for eligible populations

Third doses of COVID-19 vaccine continue to be available to eligible populations, including frontline healthcare workers who provide direct patient care and who had their first two doses of vaccine less than eight weeks apart.

For a full list of all groups that are eligible, visit alberta.ca/vaccine.

As per Alberta Health's guidance, the booster dose is not required to be considered fully immunized for the purpose of the AHS' Immunization of Workers for COVID 19 Policy.

Available evidence shows that overall protection from the vaccine is best when a booster dose is administered at least six months after the previous dose.

At this time, booster doses are not recommended or available for the general population. Vaccines continue to provide strong protection against severe outcomes for the general population. Alberta Health continues to monitor data and expert advice in this area.

Healthcare workers will not be contacted by AHS if/when they are eligible to receive an additional dose. Please book your own appointment if/when you are eligible.

Booking is based on the honour system and appointments can be made through the [online booking tool](#), at participating pharmacies and doctor's office, or by calling Health Link at 811. COVID-19 vaccines are also available by walk-in at [participating clinics](#) and pharmacies. Individuals who live on a First Nations reserve can access third doses through local public health clinics on-reserve.

Paid leave for healthcare workers for booster doses

Healthcare workers who are eligible to receive an additional dose and who have their vaccine appointment scheduled during a work shift are eligible for up to three consecutive hours of paid leave. This includes all AHS employees who are full-time, part-time or casual. This does not apply to vaccine appointments that occur off work time.

AHS strongly encourages eligible healthcare workers to get their additional dose as

soon as they are able. Employees and managers should work together when scheduling COVID-19 vaccination leaves. Employees are required to give their leader as much notice as possible before taking their leave.

The Government of Alberta introduced [job-protected paid leave](#) on Apr. 21 to allow Albertans to access their COVID-19 vaccine. Information on time coding for vaccine appointments can be found on the [Time Management Resources](#) page on Insite.

Sotrovimab Treatment Eligibility Expanded

COVID-19 positive patients who are aged 55 and older and are unvaccinated, are now eligible to receive sotrovimab, a new monoclonal antibody treatment recently approved by Health Canada.

It is the first treatment to be offered to outpatients in Alberta and is administered by intravenous infusion **within five days of symptom onset**.

In phase one of the AHS rollout, treatment will focus on COVID-19 patients who are either:

- aged 55 or older and have not received any doses of a COVID-19 vaccine
- OR
- solid organ transplant patients or stem cell transplant patients, regardless of vaccination status

Patients who have **tested positive for COVID-19 and whose symptoms began less than four days ago may call 1-844-343-0971 to find out if they qualify to receive sotrovimab**.

AHS is working to expand access in more areas of the province as quickly as possible. The program will be evolving over the next couple of weeks.

Sotrovimab is not a replacement for COVID-19 vaccination. Albertans are strongly encouraged to get fully vaccinated against COVID-19. This is a treatment that is available to those who are at a higher risk of worsening symptoms from the disease and who may require hospitalization.

For more information about sotrovimab, please visit ahs.ca/covidopt.

Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) Exemption Allowing COVID-19 Positive Designated Support Person Access in Maternity Rescinded

The [Exemption request from CMOH order 39-2021: designated family & support person for obstetrical patients](#) has been rescinded. Please refer to the [Designated Support Person and Visitor Access Guidance in Acute Care](#) for information regarding support person access in maternity services.

Sites will now follow the AHS policy regarding Designated Support Persons and

Visitors Exhibiting COVID-19 Core Symptoms, who are a Confirmed Case of COVID-19, or a Close Contact as outlined in section 3.0 of the [Designated Family/Support Access and Visitation Directive in Acute Care](#). The [Designated Support Person and Visitor Access Screening Form in Acute Care](#) has also been updated to reflect this rescinded exemption.

A new [frequently asked questions page](#) with information about designated support access in maternity services during COVID-19 is now available for patients and families. Please refer patients and their designated support persons to this page.

Learn more about designated support person and visitor access during COVID-19 at ahs.ca/visitation.

Government of Canada Adjusts Border Measures

Effective Nov. 30, 2021, the Government of Canada will expand its list of accepted vaccines for the purposes of entry into Canada and exemption from some testing and quarantine requirements, to include Sinopharm, Sinovac, and COVAXIN, matching the World Health Organization's (WHO) Emergency Use Listing (EUL).

Also on Nov. 30, [fully vaccinated](#) travellers with right of entry, who depart and re-enter Canada by land or by air within 72 hours of leaving the country, do not have to provide a pre-entry molecular test result.

This exemption is only for trips originating in Canada taken by Canadian citizens, permanent residents or individuals who depart and re-enter by land or by air and can demonstrate that they have been away from Canada for less than 72 hours.

Details about all of the changes being made by the federal government to border measures are available, [here](#).

Influenza Immunization Update

As Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. Deena Hinshaw said [Nov. 16](#), as we head into winter and more activities move indoors, we can expect to see a rise in the number of Albertans with respiratory symptoms and other illnesses, including seasonal influenza.

We need Albertans to stay vigilant.

Last year, we had our strongest influenza vaccine campaign with more than 1.1 million Albertans receiving influenza immunization.

So far this year, uptake has been slower. As of Nov. 13, 850,283 doses of influenza vaccine have been administered, which is about 19.2 per cent of the population. Please note, an issue was identified with last week's influenza immunization data, so the number of doses of influenza vaccine administered has dropped since last week.

One additional influenza case has been identified this past week, bringing the total to four confirmed cases of influenza, so far this season.

The influenza vaccine won't prevent COVID-19, but it will reduce your chances of getting sick with the flu and spreading it to others. The flu can be very serious, especially for the very young and the very elderly, and it can put additional pressure on our healthcare system.

By reducing your likelihood of getting influenza, you are reducing your likelihood of having any symptoms that may cause you to need to stay home or go for COVID-19 testing. You are also reducing the chance of spreading the virus to your loved ones.

If you still need to get a COVID-19 vaccine dose, you can even get the vaccine at the same time as your flu shot.

For more information on influenza, visit ahs.ca/influenza. Interactive aggregate data is available online at [Alberta influenza statistics](#).

Influenza immunization information for staff, physicians and volunteers
Staff, physicians and volunteers can choose to be immunized through a site champion at their facility or a roving cart at their site, as well as at a pharmacy, doctor's office or public health clinic (for children under five years of age and their family and household members).

Staff using these options are reminded to submit their [Got My Flu Shot form](#). See [Insite](#) for more on the staff immunization campaign.

Milestone for PPE Safety Coach Program

The Provincial Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Safety Coach Program is celebrating its one-year anniversary. 1,500 safety coaches across the province have been trained.

Coaches are making a difference and we would like to thank them and the leaders who support them for their commitment to keep our patients and staff safe.

The need for appropriate use of PPE remains ongoing. To reduce inappropriate use of PPE or incorrect compliance to PPE guidelines, AHS developed a peer-to-peer coaching program. This is a permanent program and will be supported beyond the pandemic response. The long-term outcome is to create a culture where staff are knowledgeable, skilled, and confident in selecting and using PPE, and ensure appropriate processes for donning and doffing are always followed.

The Provincial PPE Safety Coach Program is based on an environmental scan of all of the local improvement initiatives. The provincial program is not meant to replace,

but to complement these existing programs developed at the local level.

The program hosts monthly [Community of Practice](#) forums whereby coaches come together from across the province to discuss and learn from the experiences of others. Leaders are encouraged to support their safety coaches in attending these forums and to have a coach available and accessible on each shift for their unit or program area.

For more information go to ahs.ca/ppesafetycoach.

Verna's Weekly Video Message: National Philanthropy Day

On Monday, Nov. 15, many charities and non-profits celebrate National Philanthropy Day. This day recognizes the philanthropic individuals and organizations across North America, and their exceptional contributions to the charitable sector.

That includes our amazing [69 foundation partners](#) who raise approximately \$275 million each year to support the healthcare system, which includes equipment, programs and research across the province.

With me (Verna) today, to tell us more about the [work their foundations and how they have navigated the pandemic](#), are:

- Keith Curtis, Executive Director, Grande Prairie Regional Hospital Foundation
- Vicki Koersen, Fundraising Coordinator, Taber and District Health Foundation
- Saifa Koonar, President and CEO, Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation



Supports When You Need Them

Stay Healthy and Safe Working Shifts

Working outside typical business hours can bring challenges, such as getting enough sleep and maintaining balance with work, family and other commitments. The [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#) (EFAP) offers [Shift Worker Support](#) through the [Life Smart Coaching](#) services. When you call the intake line, you will be asked some questions to determine the most personalized support. A counsellor will reach out to explain the supports available to you, and continue to check in as you access resources. If you are feeling uncertain or overwhelmed about any issue, reach out for help. Counselling services are also offered through EFAP.

If you need immediate, personal support, call the EFAP intake line anytime at 1-877-273-3134. This is a confidential service and available 24/7/365.

Physicians can contact the [AMA Physician and Family Support Program](#), also a confidential 24/7 support line at 1-877-SOS-4MDS for options and support.

There are many ways we can support you through these challenging times no matter what your situation. Download the [Resilience app](#) to learn skills to proactively build your mental health. See the [Resilience, Wellness and Mental Health Resource Guide](#) for a comprehensive list of health and wellness supports. Questions? Contact wellness@ahs.ca.

Be Well - Be Kind

Sign up to be a Secret Santa by Dec. 3

AHS Secret Santa is back again to help spread holiday cheer, and you can [sign up today](#). Those who sign up will be randomly matched with another AHS employee. It could be a respiratory therapist in Calgary, a nurse in Taber, or even our President and CEO.

Once you receive your match, you will send them an ecard or print card by Dec. 10, and in return, you will receive a card from someone else.

It's a chance for you thank each other, and in return, receive thanks for the amazing work you do every day of the year.

Join this AHS holiday tradition and help share good will and appreciation throughout the AHS family. For more details, visit [Insite](#). The deadline to sign up is Friday, Dec. 3.

Gratitude from Albertans

Albertans notice what you are doing every day to provide safe, quality care across the province. Messages of gratitude keep coming in to let us know how appreciated you are. To see these encouraging submissions, please visit our [Sharing the Love webpage](#).

Wrapping Up

We have often talked about the challenges and pressure brought about by this pandemic, but the adversity of COVID-19 has also provided the opportunity for AHS teams to demonstrate innovation and resilience. Over the past 20 months, we have many accomplishments and milestones to celebrate from teams across the organization. Today, we want to recognize our lab teams who have now completed more than six million COVID-19 tests, since the virus was detected in Alberta in early 2020. Right from the start, your hard work and dedication were critical to the pandemic response in our province. You have made Alberta a world leader in testing and we are so proud of you. Testing continues to be one of our most important methods of managing COVID-19 and we thank you for the effort you put in every day to keep Albertans safe.

Vaccinations are another vital tactic in reducing the spread and severity of COVID-19. Today marks another major milestone in our pandemic response with the approval of COVID-19 vaccines for children aged five to 11 by Health Canada. AHS has been actively preparing our teams and infrastructure in anticipation of this decision and we can now move forward quickly with vaccinating children, once we receive the vaccine in our province. Providing immunizations to those aged five to 11 will further reduce the spread of the virus, while protecting these young Albertans.

Thank you to all who have been immunized to date — don't forget to get your flu shots as well. It is our responsibility to do all we can to keep our patients, each other and ourselves, safe from illness.

With enduring gratitude and appreciation,

Dr. Verna Yiu

AHS President & CEO

Dr. Laura McDougall

Senior Medical Officer of Health



Healthy Albertans.
Healthy Communities.
Together.



