



## **Sexual Orientation Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) Provincial Advisory Council (PAC) Meeting Summary** November 28, 2020 Online via Zoom

### **Introducing your SOGIE PAC members:**

**In attendance:** Jennifer Kneller (Chair), Rebecca Alley (Vice Chair), B Adair, J. Anderson, Jason Beck, Stephanie Booth, Renate Braul, Rachel Braeuer, Carla Grant, Jane Oxenbury, S. Stewart, Dr. Kristopher Wells  
**Alberta Health Services:** Dr. Ted Braun, Heather Cobb, Shahnaz Davachi, Lana Dunn, Andrea Jackson, Diane McNeil, Marni Panas, Bryan Peffers, Janine Sakatch  
**Regrets:** Kenyo Arujo, Murray Crawford, Terri Miller, Lori Roe, Shawn Singer, Jolene Wright  
**Public:** 7

### **AHS Presentations**

#### **Calgary Gender Clinic**

Dr. Philippa Brain, Gynecologist, OBGYN

Highlights include:

- The department of surgery submitted a proposal for a coordinated care clinic with multiple sub-specialties, to address a gap in care for gender confirmation patients in the Calgary Zone. It is hoped a clinic will open at South Health Campus in 2021.
- The recommendation is for the clinic to provide follow up to gender reassignment surgery, transitioning of adolescent patients to adult care and integration of services needed for multidisciplinary care for adult patients.
- It will work collaboratively with the existing Metta Clinic at the Alberta Children's Hospital.
- Alternately, it would be helpful to establish a navigator role. Someone to coordinate communication about surgeries so patients can be booked into clinic in a timely manner postop.
- The intent is to dedicate two afternoons a week on trans care and two afternoons a week on later-adolescent gynecology.

#### **Patient Rights Charter**

Paul Wright, Manager, Patient Family Centred Care  
Valrie Stewart, Clinical Facilitator, Patient Family Centred Care

Highlights include:

- In 2013 the Health Quality Council of Alberta (HQCA) published a report identifying needed system changes. One of these was to look at the rights of patients and families to understand how they can be brought forward in patient care.
- The Calgary Zone committed to ensuring patients are aware of their rights in care, and to ensuring the Zone supports them.



- After engaging over 100 patients and families in the Zone 48 rights were drafted. They also engaged physicians and the rights the two groups identified were nearly identical.
- The rights are narrowed down to 15, they are mapped to [AHS values](#) and are provincial in scope.
- The team awaits next steps as the document is with senior leaders for review.
- The PAC provided feedback on the use of terminology, how the statements resonated, if anything is missing and how it can be shared with communities and others.

### **STBBI Testing**

Lindsay Rathjen, Director, Provincial STI Program

Jennifer Gratrix, Manager, STI Centralized Services

Highlights include:

- Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) Services has been in operation since 1920. It's a centralized provincial program that provides treatment to all people with a positive, notifiable STI.
- Three STI specialty clinics in Alberta – Calgary, Edmonton, Fort McMurray.
- Infectious syphilis outbreaks are rising internationally; Alberta is in crisis at double the national rate. Gonorrhoea is also experiencing an outbreak in Alberta.
- In response to the rise in rates, AHS is working with community partners on things such as awareness, accessibility to testing and treatment, and collaboration.
- 2020 syphilis rates are anticipated to be at least the same as 2019, despite the pandemic.
- Data is available at the Alberta Government's [Interactive Health Data Application](#) (IHDA).
- The provincial STI program was deemed an essential service during the pandemic, so has maintained ambulatory care and partner notification service, throughout.
- Aptima swabs that test for chlamydia and gonorrhoea are the same swabs used to test for COVID-19, so there is currently a worldwide shortage of them. This is anticipated to last until spring-summer 2021. Practitioners in Alberta have been asked to be cognizant of the swabs used and how many.
- The team has studies underway: dual syphilis and HIV point of care testing; validation of self-collected swabs for chlamydia/gonorrhoea (on hold due to swab shortage).
- [Health Canada](#) approved the Insti HIV Self Test Kit in 2020. It will be available for purchase in December 2020. Self-testing will still require confirmation serology testing at a lab.
- Additional resources can be found at [ahs.ca/srh](https://ahs.ca/srh), and [ahs.ca/syphilis](https://ahs.ca/syphilis).

### **Subcommittee Updates and Work Plan Review**

As a part of Council's strategy to address the priorities in its work plan, members have formed three working groups/sub-committees to create space for focused efforts on specific priorities. Recognition that focus has been limited since the beginning of the pandemic.



**Community Engagement & Partnership Building** – B, Carla and Jenn are presenting to the Addition and Mental Health (AMH) PAC on December 4 about the work of the SOGIE PAC. In turn, the AMH PAC is invited to present to SOGIE on February 6.

## Council Member Roundtable

Council members and AHS representatives shared updates and information on work underway related to improving the healthcare experience of LGBTQ2S+ Albertans. Highlights from the discussion are below:

### AHS Permanent Resource People:

- With exponential growth of COVID-19 cases in Alberta the focus is on increasing capacity in ICUs.
- This may be achieved by reducing non-emergent surgeries, creating extra space in units that were decommissioned or closed or in our patient places.
- The number one concern is keeping staff and patients safe and reducing spread.
- Due to increased need for contact tracing, additional staff are being redeployed to meet demand.
- The psychological impact of the pandemic is rising and people are tired. Heartmath is a workshop that looks at ways to manage stress. See Help in Tough Times and other resources at [ahs.ca](https://ahs.ca).
- AHS' sexual and reproductive health team embarked on trans-reproductive health research in 2019, looking at the experiences of trans individuals with a uterus around contraception, pregnancy and abortion. Research was collected via a survey and the data is being analyzed.
- Sexual health services remain open for testing, with capacity limits in place. As well, comprehensive sexual health education in schools has occurred virtually to ensure teachers are supported.
- The MyHealth Record online assessment tool has added features inclusive of all gender options, and the capability to add one's affirmed name. Names can be changed in MyChart and is then changed everywhere that has Connect Care.
- Gender identity can also be changed and AHS is working on messaging for awareness that when this is done the information is used on wristbands, requisitions, prescriptions, etc.

### Community members:

- Beaumont is the latest municipality to move forward with a bylaw, and a corporate city policy in non-support of any organization that practices or promotes conversion therapy.
- November 20 was Trans Day of Remembrance, an important time to commemorate lives lost and impact to the community.
- Rainbowconnect.ca is a network for queer owned and supported businesses. It's similar to LinkedIn, a place to connect and share information.
- The Pride Centre of Edmonton revised its service delivery model to virtual for the time being.
- The UofA sexual and gender advocacy conference will take place virtually in March.
- Work is underway with Calgary Police Service to encourage more training in systemic racism.
- Kudos to AHS staff for its continued hard work during the pandemic!
- The Edmonton Men's Health Collective is looking to change the name of the organization to be more queer and trans inclusive.
- People at Calgary COVID testing sites can self-identify when online booking. When they get to the testing centre, however they identify is printed on their requisite. This catches people off-guard who are not already out. Lab has advised the information submitted on the requisite must match the



health card. If the health card hasn't been updated with the correct gender or name, testing site staff has to cross out the self-identifying information to align with what's on the health card.

The next meeting of the SOGIE PAC is scheduled for Saturday, February 6, 2021, 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., via Zoom.

Learn about the four organizational goals of AHS in the [2017-2020 AHS Health Plan and Business Plan](#).

Join us in changing the conversation from [illness to wellness](#).

Contact us at: [SOGIE.PAC@ahs.ca](mailto:SOGIE.PAC@ahs.ca)  
Call: 1-877-275-8830.