

# Cancer Care Alberta, Supportive Care: Counselling Services

## *Information for Providers*

Psychosocial Oncology offers professional counselling to help patients and families with **cancer-related concerns** during the cancer experience. Patients and family members may seek support for emotional, psychological, social, and spiritual stressors resulting from cancer:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Uncertainty
- Loss
- Fear
- Loneliness
- Purpose, meaning, and hope
- Overall well-being
- Quality of life

Counselling may involve learning new ways to manage symptoms and distress, and adjusting to changes in relationships and sexual health. We offer guidance through the cancer care system, and referrals to community resources when needed. We offer counselling services in-person and via Virtual Health (phone/video/telehealth). Language interpretation services are available. For brochures and contact information, see website: [www.ahs.ca/cancersupportivecare](http://www.ahs.ca/cancersupportivecare) > Psychosocial Oncology.

### Terms of Service

Self-referrals and provider referrals are accepted. Waiting times for routine counselling referrals may range from 2 – 10 weeks depending on patient needs and provider availabilities. The patient/family member and counsellor will talk about needs and goals, how many sessions will be planned, and how often. Many people benefit from 1–6 sessions, which are typically 50 minutes long.

### Counsellor Qualifications

Counsellors include psychologists, social workers, spiritual care counsellors, psychiatrists, and are registered with their appropriate regulatory colleges. Counsellors may also include trainees under staff supervision.

### Support Groups, Classes, and Workshops

Trained counsellors lead all our support groups, classes, and workshops either in-person or online. To find available group programs visit: [www.cancercarealberta.ca](http://www.cancercarealberta.ca) > Patients & Families > [Classes, Groups and Events](#).

### Crisis Support & Resources

Psychosocial Oncology counselling services are not a substitute for mental health or crisis support services in the community. If a patient or family member is thinking about suicide, conduct a safety risk assessment and direct them toward crisis / emergency services including the Mental Health Help line: **1-877-303-2642** (from anywhere in Alberta, at any time). The [Help in Tough Times](#) webpage at [www.ahs.ca](http://www.ahs.ca) has a list of addiction and mental health services, stress management and grief resources. Cancer Care Alberta also has a one-page resource for Urgent / Non-urgent support: 'Getting Help' [bit.ly/ccagettinghelp](http://bit.ly/ccagettinghelp).

