



# **Alberta Health Services Code of Conduct**

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## **Message from the Alberta Health Services Board Chair and the President and Chief Executive Officer**

Albertans look to us for health services, information and advice for themselves and for those they care for. They entrust us with their lives and the lives of the people they love. They share their most personal information with us. They collaborate and work with us.

How we interact with Albertans – and how we interact with each other – has a huge impact on their lives and our own.

Alberta Health Services' (AHS') reputation is shaped by our actions, choices and decisions each day. Together, we must:

- Work in the best interests of our patients and clients
- Act fairly and objectively
- Recognize and address conflicts of interest
- Think about how our actions may impact our patients, co-workers, clients and community partners
- Exercise our best judgment
- Protect the confidentiality of the information entrusted to us
- Raise our hands if we see something we think is not best for our patients or our organization
- Have the courage to stand up for what is right

The AHS Code of Conduct (Code) outlines the values, principles and standards of conduct that guide our actions and interactions. It is at the heart of the AHS bylaws, policies, procedures, standards, guidelines, regulations and directives that set out how we conduct ourselves as we carry out our work on behalf of Albertans.

We are proud to be part of AHS and look forward to working with you as we fulfill our mission:

**To provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.**

Officially signed on December 3, 2009 by:

Mr. Ken Hughes

Dr. Stephen Duckett



## A Guide to the Code of Conduct

At Alberta Health Services, we work in a complex environment and serve a multicultural population. We often have very different backgrounds, training and education. What we share is a commitment to improve the health and quality of life for our patients, each other and the public. Our ability to provide high quality care has been, and will continue to be possible due to the quality and integrity of the people who are part of AHS.

That's why a Code is so important. It can help us to better understand each other and the people we serve and assist us in working together.

Our Code is principles-based. It anchors all of the specific AHS bylaws, policies, procedures, standards, guidelines, regulations and directives that set out the rules by which we govern ourselves (see Appendix A) and the steps we take should we fall short.

Our Code is based on both rights and responsibilities. It protects and guides equally all of those who are part of, or work within, our health system. It recognizes the challenges we face, the high standards expected and needed of us, and the paramount importance of our shared duty to the people we serve.

Regardless of where we are working - in one of the AHS facilities, on the road or at home - our actions should always be guided by the Code. Each of us needs to make sure that we understand the Code and know who we should talk to when we find ourselves in a challenging situation.

## Our Values

Our values, which were first outlined in the AHS Strategic Directions, 2009-2012, create a shared understanding about how we relate to our

patients, each other and the public and are at the centre of all that we do. Our values are:

- Respect
- Accountability
- Transparency
- Engagement

Together, these four values form the basis of our strategic foundation and guide our actions under the Code. (See Appendix B.)

## Our Code of Conduct Principles

Principles set out how we live our values. Principles are less specific than policy or rules. They guide us in the grey areas and help us answer the question: What is the right thing to do?

We can't create policies or rules to cover all possible situations. However, we can build a foundation based on trust and respect where our principles guide us and can help us to do the right thing.

### Our five principles are:

#### 1. Treat people with respect, compassion, dignity and fairness

Treating people with respect, compassion, dignity and fairness includes:

- Showing empathy and understanding
- Being sensitive to diversity and the unique needs of individuals and groups
- Listening to and considering ideas and concerns of others
- Fostering healthy relationships with colleagues and others



## 2. Be open, honest and loyal

Being open, honest and loyal is fundamental to fostering an atmosphere of trust where people share and learn from each other and work together to achieve common goals. Being open, honest and loyal includes:

- Communicating in a timely and appropriate manner
- Coming forward if you think you have been treated unfairly, and supporting others to do the same
- Taking responsibility for, correcting and learning from mistakes
- Considering how what we say or do may impact our own reputation or that of AHS
- Building trust and being trustworthy

## 3. Act ethically and uphold professional standards

Acting ethically and upholding professional standards includes:

- Always striving to behave in an honourable fashion
- Displaying integrity and ethical behaviour
- Upholding all standards, codes of conduct and codes of ethics that apply to us
- Upholding applicable laws, regulations, bylaws, principles, policies, procedures, standards and any other applicable guidelines, directives or regulations
- Recognizing and addressing real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest

## 4. Take responsibility for our own actions and expect the same of others

Taking responsibility for our own actions means being accountable to our patients and clients, AHS as an organization, ourselves and to the public. This includes:

- Doing what we say we are going to do
- Evaluating and improving the quality, safety and effectiveness of our services and the outcomes of our decisions
- Promoting excellence, innovation and continuous improvement
- Recognizing our limitations and seeking help and guidance when needed

## 5. Respect confidentiality and privacy

Respecting confidentiality and privacy means we will protect all confidential health and personal information of our patients, co-workers, the public and AHS business information. This includes understanding and complying with the provisions of the Health Information Act and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, along with their respective regulations and any other applicable privacy legislation.

Respecting confidentiality and privacy also includes:

- Collecting, using, accessing, disclosing and storing the minimum amount of information necessary to do our work
- Protecting patient, client, co-worker and other personal information, as well as AHS business information
- Not engaging in public discussions or comments about confidential information, whether it concerns patients, clients, employees or AHS business



## Our Responsibilities

Each one of us is responsible for:

- Ensuring that we act in ways that are in keeping with this Code
- Reading and understanding the Code and staying current with updates
- Understanding, staying current and complying with applicable AHS bylaws, principles, policies, procedures, standards and any other applicable guidelines, directives or regulations

## What to do if you have Questions or Concerns

If you have questions or concerns about the Code or what to do in a particular situation, you should first consider consulting with your colleagues or professional practice leader or speaking to the person or persons involved. If this is inappropriate, or if you are unable to resolve your concern, you have three options:

1. You can speak to your manager (the person you report to, the next highest level, or the physician leader);
2. You can speak to the Ethics and Compliance Officer if you are uncomfortable raising your concern with your manager or if it is impractical to do so; or,
3. You can call the External Confidential Reporting and Disclosure Service.

**Their roles are as follows:**

### Your manager:

- Responds to questions and concerns and takes action to resolve them as soon as practical

- Utilizes the appropriate expertise within AHS to help resolve issues (such as Human Resources)
- If appropriate, refers the issue to their manager or alternatively to the Ethics and Compliance Officer
- Documents and reports issues and how they were addressed to the Ethics and Compliance Officer

### The Ethics and Compliance Officer:

- Provides guidance and direction on the Code
- Assesses, reviews, and may investigate or direct an investigation of questions and concerns
- Has discretion to determine if matters raised warrant an investigation
- Determines whether there has been a breach of the Code of Conduct, Conflict of Interest Bylaw or Safe Disclosure Policy
- Advises appropriate decision makers that a breach has occurred in order that appropriate action can be taken
- Takes any other actions that the Ethics and Compliance Officer deems appropriate
- Reports to committees of the Board

The Ethics and Compliance Officer is not an appeal body for operational or policy decisions of AHS.

### The External Confidential Reporting and Disclosure Service:

- Receives anonymous confidential questions and concerns
- Acts upon questions and concerns in a confidential manner and forwards them to the Ethics and Compliance Officer.



The Governance Committee of the Board has an oversight role and overall responsibility for the Code. As part of its mandate, the committee receives reports from the Ethics and Compliance Officer.

## Who is Covered by the Code

The Code applies to everyone who provides care or services or who acts on behalf of AHS. This includes:

- AHS Board members
- All levels of AHS administration and management including the President and Chief Executive Officer and other members of Senior Executive
- Employees of AHS and its subsidiaries including permanent and probationary full time and part time employees, term employees, casual employees, and individuals employed under an individual consulting or service contract
- Physicians, dentists, podiatrists, midwives and other allied health professionals with an AHS appointment and privileges, who provide care or services on behalf of AHS
- Subsidiaries
- Researchers working with AHS or studying AHS staff or patients
- Students, trainees and educators
- Volunteers
- Consultants, contractors, agents or other representatives of AHS

## How the Code fits with the AHS Governance Framework

Our Code is part of the AHS governance framework which also includes:

- Bylaws such as Conflict of Interest Bylaw and Medical Staff Bylaws which, where inconsistencies exist, take priority over the Code
- Governance, corporate and clinical policies such as the Safe Disclosure Policy
- Procedures that provide the detail needed to meet policy requirements
- Standards, guidelines, regulations and directives

Everyone who provides care or services on behalf of AHS must familiarize themselves with the bylaws and policies that apply across all of AHS, as well the procedures, standards, guidelines and directives applicable to their own position or activities. Please see your manager for more information or if you have any questions.

## Responsibilities and Consequences

It is important to be aware of your responsibilities under the Code and to ask questions if you are in doubt or want to understand the Code more clearly.

Everyone covered by this Code is expected to abide by it. Breaches of the Code are considered to be a serious matter. If you are found to have contravened the Code, the consequences are as set out in the terms of your employment or other relationship with AHS and may result in discipline up to and including termination of your employment or other relationship with AHS.



## Conclusion

In summary, the Code is based on five principles:

- Treat people with respect, compassion, dignity and fairness
- Be open, honest and loyal
- Act ethically and uphold professional standards
- Take responsibility for our own actions and expect the same of others
- Respect confidentiality and privacy

These principles reflect our values, guide our actions and serve as a compass when we have to decide what course to take in a challenging situation. If you have questions or need help or advice, please talk to your manager or contact the Ethics and Compliance Officer at [complianceofficer@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:complianceofficer@albertahealthservices.ca).



## Appendix A: Getting Help and Advice

The following list is provided for information only. AHS employees may access specific policy information through Insite, Alberta Health Services' intranet.

| If you have Questions About...                             | Please see this Reference under Corporate Policies & Procedures   |
|--|---|
| Conflict of Interest Bylaw                                 | See under Bylaws & Code of Conduct <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict of Interest Bylaw</li> </ul>   |
| Safe Disclosure  | See under Ethical Conduct <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe Disclosure</li> </ul>   |
| Board Governance   | See under Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delegation of Authority and Establishment of Controls for Commitments</li> </ul>  |
| AHS Governance   | See under Corporate Governance Documents and Bylaws <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic Governance Document Framework</li> <li>• General Bylaws</li> </ul>   |
| Privacy and Confidentiality                                | See under Information & Technology Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delegation of Authority and Responsibilities for Compliance with FOIPP and the HIA</li> <li>• Protection and Privacy of Health and Personal Information</li> <li>• Contractor Requirements for Security of Information and Information Technology Resources</li> </ul> |
| Occupational Health and Safety                             | See under Supportive Work Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibilities for Occupational Health and Safety</li> <li>• Occupational Exposure to Blood and Body Fluids</li> </ul>   |
| Financial Management                                       | See under Corporate Accountability & Financial Stewardship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contracts</li> <li>• Delegation of Authority for Financial Commitments</li> </ul>   |
| Information Technology Telecommunications Use and Security | See under Information & Technology Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to Information (Physical, Electronic, Remote)</li> <li>• Information Technology Acceptable Use</li> <li>• Transmission of Information by Facsimile and Electronic Mail</li> </ul>   |
| External Communications and Media Relations                | See under Corporate Accountability & Financial Stewardship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications (Internal and External)</li> </ul>   |
| Abuse and Harassment                                       | See under Supportive Work Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workplace Abuse and Harassment</li> </ul>  |
| Human Resources  | See under Employee & Associate Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delegation of Human Resources Authority</li> <li>• Recruitment and Employment Practices</li> </ul>  |
| Procurement  | See under Corporate Accountability & Financial Stewardship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultant Engagement</li> </ul>  |

**NOTE:** The above is not an exhaustive list of policies and procedures. Policies and procedures are added and updated on an ongoing basis. To ensure you have the most up-to-date information, you should check the AHS website.



## **Contacts**

In addition to your manager, the following are available to discuss any ethical questions or concerns.

### **Ethics and Compliance Office**

Ethics & Compliance Officer  
E-mail: [complianceofficer@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:complianceofficer@albertahealthservices.ca)

Mailing address:  
Suite 1220  
Standard Life Centre  
10405 Jasper Avenue  
Edmonton, AB  
T5J 3N4

Fax: 780-643-4559

### **External Confidential Reporting and Disclosure Service**

AHS representatives as well as the public can report improper activity or alleged breaches using an independent third party 24/7 (live operator) external reporting line by calling 1-800-661-9675.



## Appendix B

### Alberta Health Services - Our Values

#### Respect means...

- Valuing each other and each patient/family/client we interact with as individuals
- Being compassionate
- As staff, treating people with dignity, fairness and respecting confidentiality
- As patients, treating staff with dignity, fairness and respect
- Being sensitive to diversity
- Being inclusive and recognizing contributions

#### Accountability means...

- Displaying integrity and ethical behaviour
- Being honest
- Doing what we say we are going to do
- Taking responsibility for our own decisions and actions, and holding each other responsible for theirs
- Building trust and being trustworthy
- Evaluating and improving the quality, safety and effectiveness of our services and the outcome of our decisions
- Promoting excellence, innovation and continuous improvement through using best evidence/best practice

#### Transparency means...

- Being open, honest and having timely communication
- Disclosing information to help learn from mistakes
- Providing accessible, understandable information about system and financial performance

- Providing clearly defined expectations
- Being clear about what and how decisions are made

#### Engagement means...

- Collaborating with patients and their families, health care providers, research and education institutions, government and the community
- Involving community, clinicians and colleagues in meaningful ways
- Listening to and considering ideas and concerns of others in the decision making process
- Facilitating people to understand choices and take responsibility for their own health

AHS Strategic Direction, 2009 – 2012,  
released June 30, 2009