



Compassionate Alberta

Impact Report (2020-2025)

January 2026



Covenant Health
Palliative Institute

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Acknowledgements

Covenant Health acknowledges that what we refer to as Alberta is the traditional ancestral territory of a diversity of Indigenous peoples and home to Treaty 6, 7 and 8. We recognize and give thanks to the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit who have lived on and cared for these lands for generations, all who continue to grace these lands and all future generations. We make this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation and gratitude.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who helped make the Compassionate Alberta initiative a success, including but not limited to:

- our Advisory Committee members who shared their wisdom and experience, guided our activities, and championed the project in their own circles;
- the many individuals who completed our surveys or participated in focus groups or key informant interviews;
- the frontline providers and professionals who contributed their expertise to our tool working groups;
- our public panel members who provided feedback on everything from our tools to our surveys to our website;
- our community partners who have used and shared our tools;
- the many Albertans who attended our events and education sessions and provided feedback on our resources and activities.

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Executive Summary

In 2020, the Covenant Health Palliative Institute embarked on a multi-year, multi-sector public awareness initiative to improve public awareness and understanding of palliative care and engagement in advance care planning. Referred to as “Compassionate Alberta”, the initiative ran from August 1, 2020 to September 30, 2025 and drew on the compassionate communities model, engaging with and leveraging the strengths of community partners to support people who are ill, dying, caregiving or grieving.

Several resources were developed and/or adapted for the Alberta context:

1. **Resources for Alberta Death Cafe facilitators** to support conversations around death and dying;
2. **Understanding Palliative Care e-module** to improve public understanding of palliative care;
3. **PalliLearn community education series** to increase community support for people living with serious illness;
4. **My Wishes Alberta fillable workbook** to help people identify their values and wishes for care, as part of the process of advance care planning;
5. **Plan Ahead Toolkit** for facilitating public education on health, financial and estate planning;
6. **Alberta Medical-Legal Joint Practice Principles on Advance Care Planning** and accompanying *Recommendations for Legal Practice in Alberta* guide.

These resources were launched in 2023-2024 and disseminated widely in collaboration with community partners. The resources are housed on the [Compassionate Alberta](#) website.

Our evaluation shows **the Compassionate Alberta initiative reached 800,000+ people and engaged more than 400 community organizations, and improved awareness of and attitudes toward palliative care and advance care planning**. Users of our resources reported increased understanding of palliative care, advance care planning, and compassionate communities. Our 2025 provincial poll showed **9% and 15% increases in awareness of advance care planning and palliative care, respectively**, over pre-initiative levels.

The Compassionate Alberta initiative successfully raised awareness of palliative care and advance care planning, but perhaps more importantly, engaged a large number of community partners with a shared interest in and passion for caring for people facing serious illness. Many of these partners are continuing to carry this work forward, ensuring that awareness and engagement continue to grow well beyond the end of our formal funding. This initiative provides a framework for others interested in multisectoral collaboration that bridges health and community services to build more compassionate, supportive communities.

“We can all be part of a compassionate community - we don't need to think BIG. Small neighbourly acts of kindness and compassion will go a long way.”

- PalliLearn course participant

Background

In 2020, the Covenant Health Palliative Institute embarked on a multi-year, multi-sector public awareness initiative referred to as “Compassionate Alberta” to improve public awareness and understanding of palliative care and engagement in advance care planning.



The Compassionate Alberta initiative ran from August 1, 2020 to September 30, 2025, and drew on the compassionate communities model. The term “compassionate communities” was coined by Allan Kellehear who asserted that “care for one another at times of health crisis and personal loss is not simply a task solely for health and social services but is everyone’s responsibility”.^{1,2} Communities are recognized as playing an integral role in supporting people who are ill, dying, caregiving or grieving.³ Community-based organizations are uniquely positioned to connect with people where they live to complement health services in caring for people facing serious illness.

The Compassionate Alberta initiative began with extensive community engagement to both inform the work and identify community partners. Engagement activities included surveys, focus groups, advisory committees, nominal group technique, working groups, webinars, and public forums. As the initiative sought to reach the public upstream of a serious illness diagnosis, we engaged community partners from diverse sectors with a shared interest in encouraging people to plan for their health and personal care.

An important innovation of the Compassionate Alberta initiative was a group concept mapping exercise to conceptualize individual components of good public awareness of palliative care. The concept mapping exercise resulted in seven clusters, or themes, characteristic of good palliative care public awareness.

Four clusters were prioritized for the Compassionate Alberta initiative:

- 1) comfort talking about death and dying;
- 2) understanding palliative care;
- 3) community support for people living with serious illness; and
- 4) planning ahead.



Components of good palliative care public awareness prioritized for the Compassionate Alberta initiative

Resources were subsequently developed and/or adapted for the Alberta context to support each of the four priority areas:



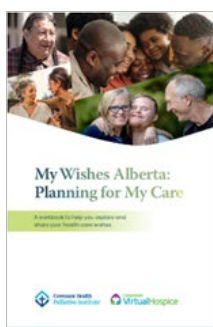
Resources on
Death Cafe to
support
conversations
around death and
dying



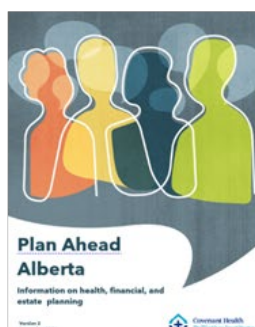
*Understanding
Palliative Care*
e-module to
improve public
understanding of
palliative care



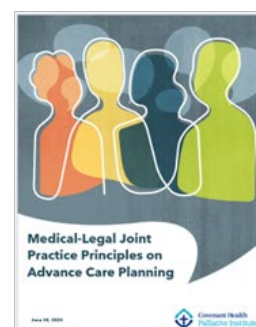
PalliLearn community
education courses to
increase community
support for people
living with serious
illness



My Wishes Alberta
fillable workbook
to help people
identify their
values and wishes
for care



Plan Ahead Toolkit
for facilitating
public education
on health, financial
and estate
planning



*Medical-Legal Joint
Practice Principles on
Advance Care Planning
and Recommendations
for Legal Practice in
Alberta*

These resources were launched in 2023-2024 and are housed on the [Compassionate Alberta](#) website. From 2023-2025, community partners from five key sectors were engaged and supported to use and share the Compassionate Alberta tools: hospice/palliative care societies; libraries; senior-serving groups; legal, financial and business professionals; and faith and cultural organizations.

Evaluation Framework

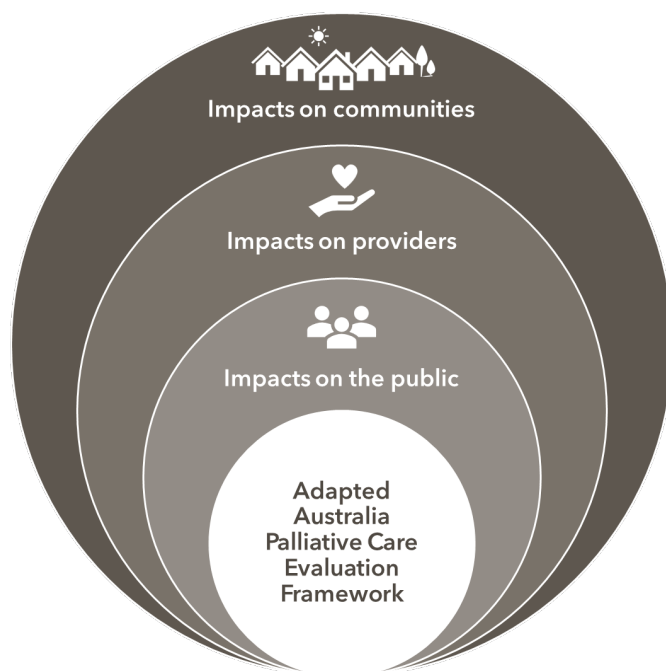
A comprehensive evaluation framework was developed to assess the activities and impacts of the Compassionate Alberta initiative (**Appendix**). A brief summary is provided here for context.

Process evaluation measures how a program is implemented and what activities are taking place; it helps to answer the question “are we doing the things we think will lead to change?” We adapted the Healthy End of Life Program (HELP) Evaluation Framework^{4,5} to guide our process evaluation. The HELP framework includes eight Community Development Action Areas (“the eight Ps”) and emphasizes working across all areas to produce sustainable change in community beliefs and practices.



Outcome evaluation measures whether a program was successful in changing knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviors, or conditions. We adapted the Australia Palliative Care Evaluation framework⁶ to guide our outcome evaluation. We measured impacts at three levels: 1) members of the public, 2) providers (e.g., professionals, volunteers, organizations), and 3) communities.

Evaluation surveys were developed for each Compassionate Alberta resource (*Death Cafe* participant and facilitator surveys, *Understanding Palliative Care* e-module user survey, *PalliLearn* participant and facilitator surveys, *My Wishes Alberta* workbook user survey, *Plan Ahead* participant and facilitator surveys). An end-of-project survey was developed to capture impacts on community partners. A public awareness poll was conducted by Ipsos in August 2025 to assess Albertans’ awareness of palliative care and advance care planning.



Key Findings: Process Evaluation

The Compassionate Alberta initiative created change in **seven of the eight** HELP framework domains: People, Participation, Programs, Practice & Practitioners, Place, Partnerships, and Planning.

PEOPLE: How did the Project foster community member engagement in palliative care and/or advance care planning?

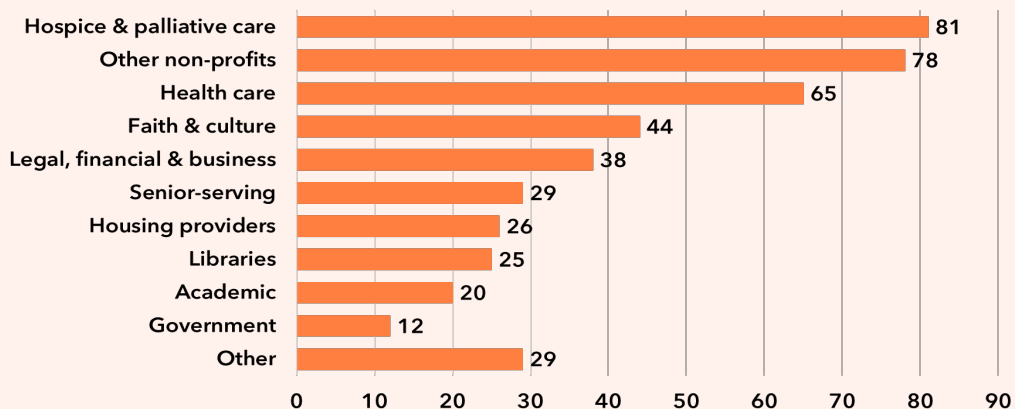
People reached by Compassionate Alberta activities*



People engaged in Compassionate Alberta activities*



Organizations engaged in Compassionate Alberta activities, by sector, n=447



* Reach was a composite measure of the numbers of people reached or potentially reached through Compassionate Alberta activities. Reach included passive recipients of information. Engagement was a composite measure of the numbers of people who actively engaged in some way with Compassionate Alberta activities. There is overlap between reach and engagement in that all 'engaged' individuals would be counted as 'reached', but not all individuals 'reached' were necessarily 'engaged'.

PARTICIPATION: How did the Project enable participation of people from all parts of the community?

Diversity of stakeholders engaged in Compassionate Alberta activities

Demographics of tool users (i.e., *Understanding Palliative Care* module users, *PalliLearn* course participants, *My Wishes Alberta* workbook users, and *Plan Ahead* session participants)

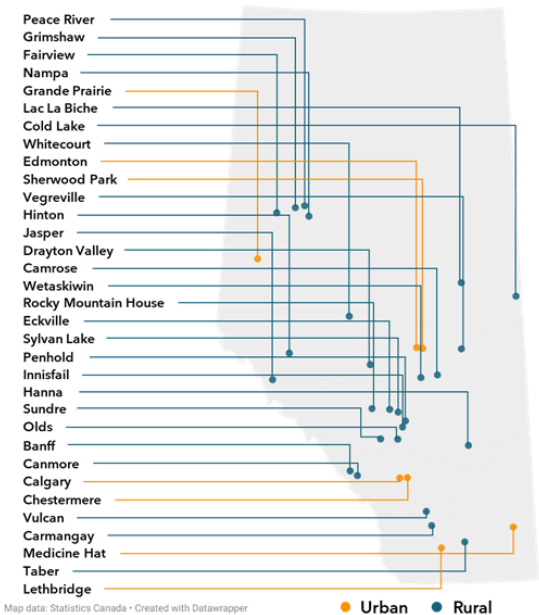


Rural reach

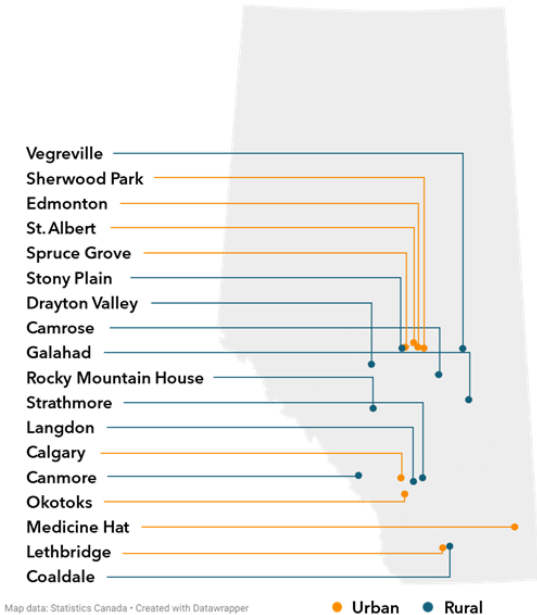
36%
of Albertan visitors to
Compassionate Alberta website
were from outside Edmonton and Calgary

27%
of event attendees were
rurally based (where data available)

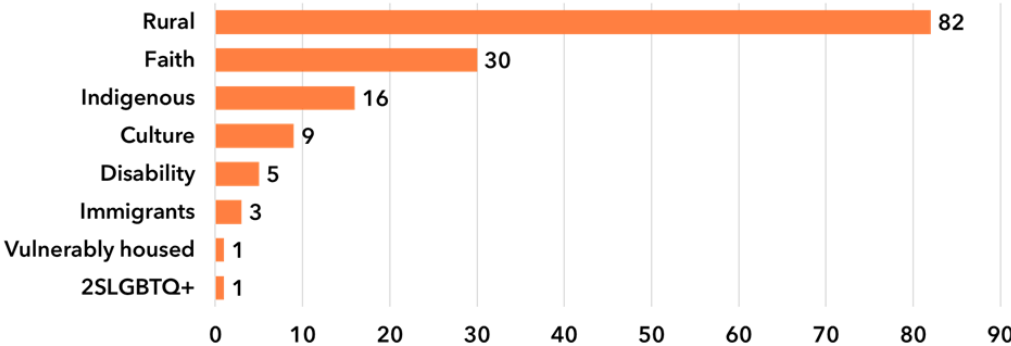
*Death Cafes were offered in
26 rural Alberta communities*



*PalliLearn facilitators were trained in
10 rural Alberta communities*



Organizations
engaged in
Compassionate
Alberta
activities who
serve diverse or
underserved
populations,
n=147



Resources or supports adapted or created for diverse groups

Website designed to comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2



Closed-captioning added to videos, online presentations recorded for wider accessibility

Resources translated into Arabic, French, Punjabi and Spanish



Organizations offering free or low-cost estate and future planning legal services or referrals:

Calgary
 Aboriginal Friendship Centre - Legal Clinic
<https://www.afccalgary.org/>
 Calgary Chinese Community Services Association - Legal Clinic
<https://www.dimensional.org/>
 Calgary Legal Guidance
<https://clg.ab.ca/>
 Kirby Elder Law Clinic
<https://www.kirbyelderlaw.ca/>
 Women's Centre Calgary
<https://www.womenscentreincalgary.org/>

Southern Alberta
 Lethbridge Legal Guidance
<https://www.lethbridgelegalguidance.ca/>
 Community Legal Clinic - Medicine Hat
<https://communitylegalclinic.medhatclinic.net/>
Central Alberta
 Community Legal Clinic - Lloydminster
<https://communitylegalclinic.net/>
 Community Legal Clinic - Central Alberta (Red Deer)
<https://communitylegalclinic.net/>

Repository of organizations offering free or low-cost legal services to support low-income Albertans

Tools and resources promote positive role models and do not perpetuate stereotypes



Images (e.g., in *My Wishes Alberta* workbook, *Understanding Palliative Care* e-module) represent diverse populations in a variety of roles and settings. Many images were obtained from an age-positive image library to help challenge stereotypes of older adults.

Additional highlights

300+ Calgarians experiencing systemic vulnerabilities (e.g., poverty, homelessness, addiction, mental health issues, language and cultural barriers) received advance care planning information and resources at the 2023, 2024 and 2025 Calgary Pop-Up Care Village events.

PRACTICE & PRACTITIONERS: How did the Project promote palliative care and/or advance care planning practice and build capability?

Educational activities offered

48 presentations for healthcare professionals	29 ECHO sessions hosted by the Palliative Institute's ECHO Hub	1 professional development day for clergy
15 presentations for community organizations & social service providers	5 presentations for lawyers	1 advance care planning curriculum for lawyers (90 mins, online)
3 presentations for librarians	9 medical-legal joint practice principles on advance care planning	1 "Recommendations for Legal Practice in Alberta" best practice guide for advance care planning
1 interprofessional symposium on advance care planning		

People trained to use tools or lead initiatives

 49 Death Cafe facilitators in Facebook community of practice	 40 PalliLearn facilitators trained across Alberta & community of practice created
 5 organizations offering Plan Ahead sessions	 1 senior-serving organization using My Wishes Alberta workbook in staff onboarding

"I really enjoyed the training session today. The information was good and both presenters did an excellent job of presenting it. I think the practice facilitating is a very worthwhile part of the training. I enjoyed all the participants and what they had to offer. I'm looking forward to facilitating the PalliLearn series in my community."

- PalliLearn facilitator

PROGRAMS: How did the Project foster creative community palliative care and/or advance care planning initiatives based on local strengths and interests?

Creative community activities or programs undertaken

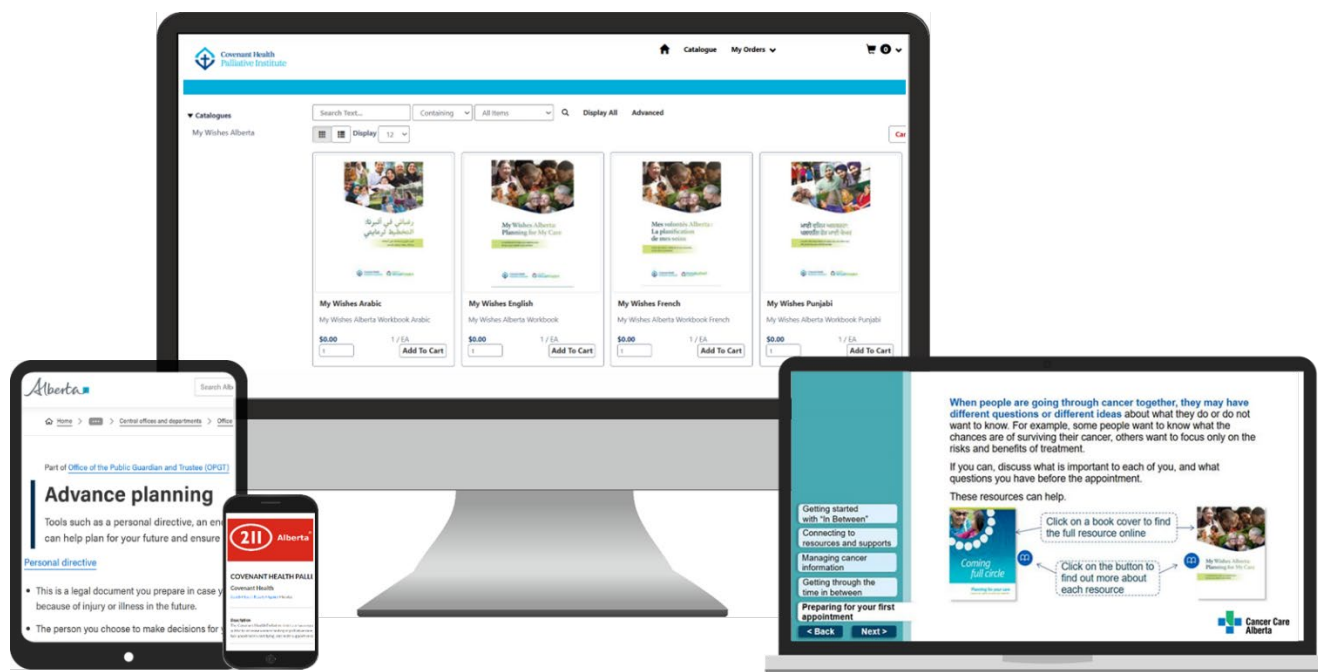


* AIMGA, Alberta International Medical Graduate Association

[†] Reported via end-of-project survey

PLACE: How did the Project incorporate palliative care and/or advance care planning supports into existing social and community structures and settings to meet local need?

Organizations embedding palliative care and/or advance care planning supports and resources into existing structures (physical or virtual)



- 40+ organizations added new information on palliative care and/or advance care planning to their website and/or linked to the Compassionate Alberta website
- *My Wishes Alberta* workbook added to DATAOnline resource repository (<https://dol.datacm.com>) for ordering by Alberta healthcare organizations and the public
- Compassionate Alberta resources added to the Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton's Compassionate Parish resources
- *My Wishes Alberta* workbook added to the package of resources distributed by University of Alberta Student Legal Services at public education sessions
- Compassionate Alberta resources incorporated into post-secondary nursing courses in Alberta
- 5400+ copies of the *My Wishes Alberta* workbook and other print materials have been distributed by our community partners
- *My Wishes Alberta* workbook incorporated into Cancer Care Alberta's 'In Between Getting a Cancer Diagnosis and Your First Cancer Care Appointment' online module
- Information on advance care planning added to the Government of Alberta's Emergency Preparedness toolkits
- Compassionate Alberta resources added to the Center for Public Legal Education Alberta's 'Estate Planning 101' resource
- Learnings from advance care planning medical-legal collaboration incorporated into medical resident education in Alberta

PARTNERSHIPS: How did the Project increase collaborations between health and community sectors, organizations, communities and individuals?

Partnerships created with the Palliative Institute

The Covenant Health Palliative Institute developed several formal partnerships as a result of the Compassionate Alberta initiative:



In addition to these formal partnerships, **40+ organizations have been identified as “sustainers”** of Compassionate Alberta tools and resources. These organizations continue to run *Death Cafes*, to deliver *PalliLearn* courses and/or *Plan Ahead* sessions, to order and disseminate *My Wishes Alberta* workbooks, or to link to the *Understanding Palliative Care* e-module and/or the Compassionate Alberta website from their website, brochures or other resources.

Partnerships created amongst stakeholders

We assessed partnerships created amongst our partners through our end-of-project survey, discussions with partners, and observations made by our project team. We conservatively estimate that **17 organizations developed new partnerships** as a result of the Compassionate Alberta initiative. Examples include partnerships between hospice societies, public libraries and *PalliLearn* facilitators to deliver *PalliLearn* courses, and between legal professionals, Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee staff and senior-serving organizations to deliver *Plan Ahead* sessions.

PLANNING: How did the Project improve community-level and individual-level planning?

Planning documents incorporating aspects of palliative care and/or advance care planning

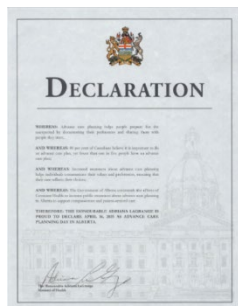
We have limited data on influences of the Compassionate Alberta initiative on planning documents. However, the Project had other influences on community-level and individual-level planning. Respondents to our end-of-project survey indicated impacts on planning related to offering more advance care planning education for the public, and that “members’ advance planning interest level has increased significantly as a result of our collaboration”. One senior-serving organization has integrated the *My Wishes Alberta* workbook into their staff onboarding, encouraging new staff to engage in their own advance care planning as part of their orientation.

POLICY: How did the Project influence policy?

Organizations making policy changes (e.g., embedding palliative care and/or advance care planning information or principles into policies or guidance documents, or removing unhelpful policies)

The Compassionate Alberta initiative has meaningfully advanced awareness among elected officials and policy-makers. This increased visibility represents an important foundation for future policy development. Key engagements are described below.

Provincial recognition of advance care planning



On April 16, 2025, Minister Adriana LaGrange officially declared Advance Care Planning Day in Alberta. This declaration aligns Alberta with national efforts to promote advance care planning and highlights the government’s commitment to increasing public awareness and encouraging conversations about health and personal care wishes.

Legislative engagement

The Palliative Institute was invited by Camrose MLA Jackie Lovely to visit the Alberta Legislature on May 5, 2025. Project staff were formally introduced to the Legislature and had the opportunity to discuss the importance of palliative care and advance care planning with MLA Lovely and her staff. We consider this an important step that may lead to more engagement and broader impact on government policies.



Policymaker engagement through medical-legal collaboration on advance care planning

The Compassionate Alberta initiative’s medical-legal collaboration on advance care planning brought together advance care planning professionals with policymakers such as the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee and Alberta Health Services. These decision-makers were active participants in developing the Alberta Medical-Legal Joint Practice Principles on advance care planning; they exchanged learnings with frontline professionals who support people with advance care planning and professional organizations, and are in a position to recommend changes to policy, legislation and practice. This collaboration has also led to invitations to join provincial and national meetings of researchers and policymakers.

Together, these activities demonstrate how Compassionate Alberta has elevated advance care planning and palliative care on the provincial agenda. While immediate policy shifts have not yet occurred, the initiative has laid important groundwork for future dialogue and potential impact.

Key Findings: Outcome Evaluation

The Compassionate Alberta initiative achieved substantive impacts on the public, providers (i.e., professionals, volunteers, organizations) and the broader care delivery system (i.e., communities).

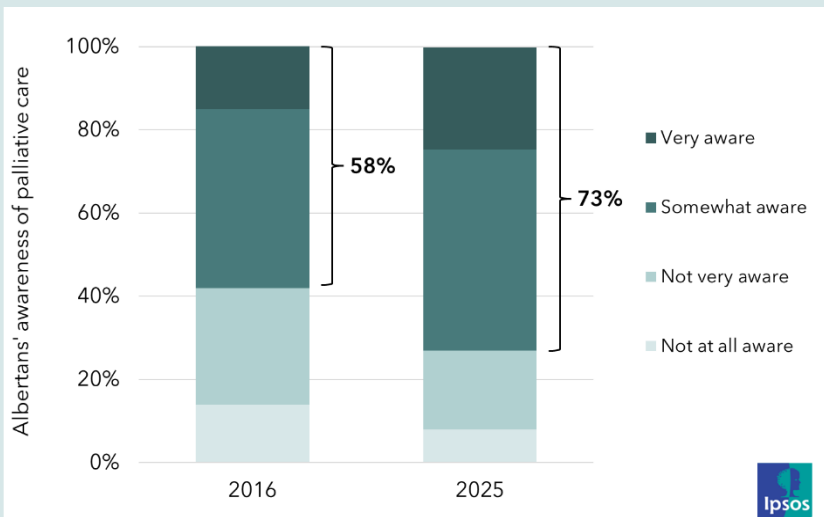
Impacts on the public

Albertans' awareness of palliative care and advance care planning

We commissioned a public awareness poll that was conducted by Ipsos in August 2025 to assess Albertans' awareness of palliative care and advance care planning at the end of the Compassionate Alberta initiative.⁷

At the population level, **73% of Albertans reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' aware of palliative care**

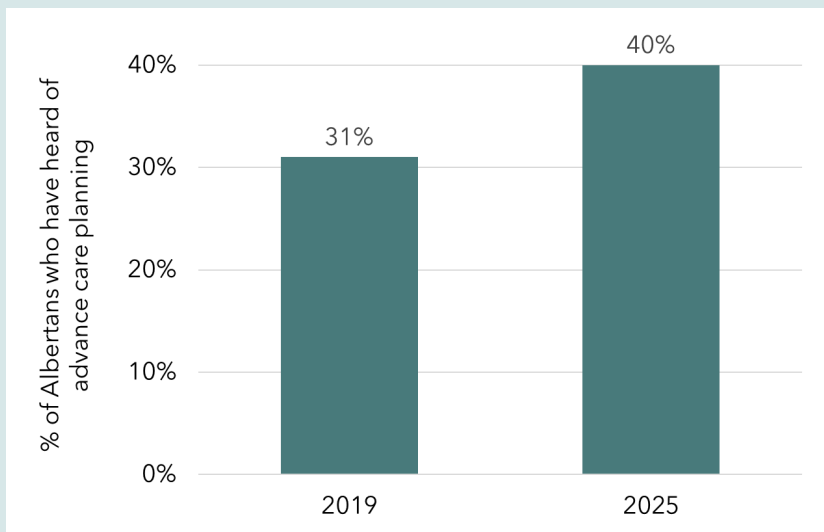
This is a **15% increase in awareness** since 2016 (the last public poll assessing palliative care awareness in Canada)⁸



Public awareness of palliative care in Alberta, 2016-2025. Results of the 2025 Ipsos poll (n=800 Albertans) are compared to the 2016 Ipsos poll (n=1,540 Canadians; Albertans' views were representative).

At the population level, **40% of Albertans reported having heard of the term 'advance care planning'**

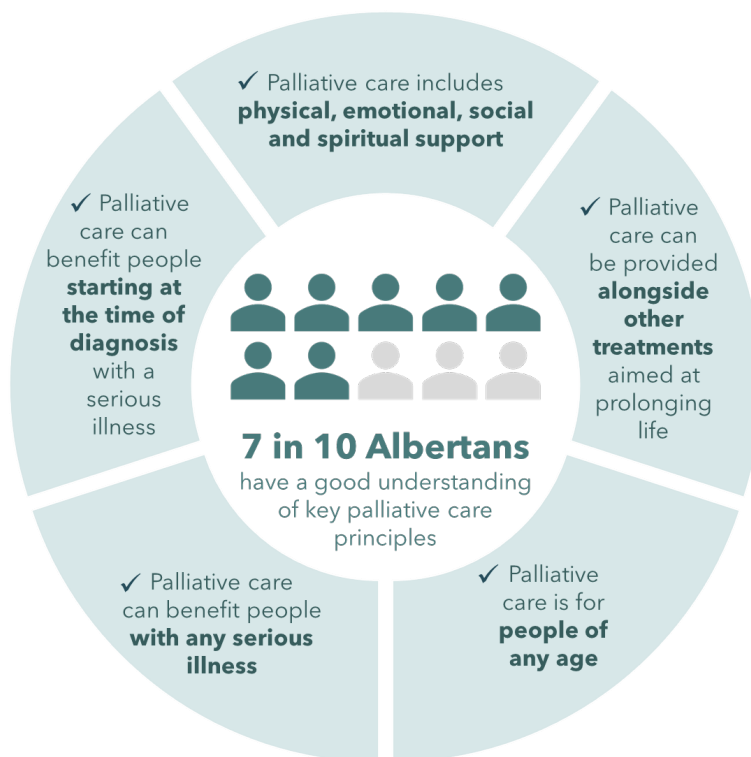
This is a **9% increase** since 2019 (the last public poll assessing advance care planning awareness in Alberta)⁹



Public awareness of advance care planning in Alberta, 2019-2025. Results of the 2025 Ipsos poll (n=800 Albertans) are compared to the 2019 poll (n=1,055 Albertans) conducted by the Lethbridge College Citizen Society Research Lab on behalf of the Advance Care Planning Collaborative Research and Innovation Opportunities research program (www.acpcrio.org).

Albertans' understanding of palliative care

The 2025 Ipsos public awareness poll indicated that, at a population level, **~7 in 10 Albertans have a good understanding of key palliative care principles**



The *Understanding Palliative Care* e-module and the "What is Palliative Care?" *PalliLearn* course were our primary interventions (tools) for increasing palliative care understanding

87%

of *Understanding Palliative Care* survey respondents* reported an **improved understanding of palliative care** after completing the module

96%

of *PalliLearn* survey respondents† reported an **improved understanding of palliative care** after participating in the "What is Palliative Care?" course

"Palliative care encompasses a lot more than I thought, and can be accessed much sooner than I thought."

- *PalliLearn* course participant

Albertans' awareness of palliative care resources and services

The "What is Palliative Care?" *PalliLearn* course was our primary intervention (tool) for increasing awareness of palliative care resources and services

94%

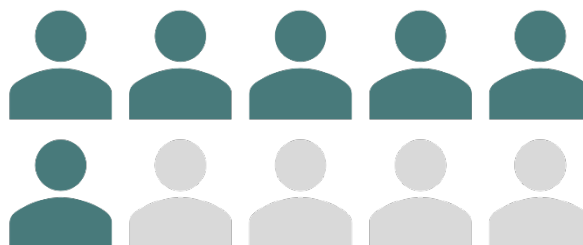
of *PalliLearn* survey respondents† reported the course is effective at increasing awareness of palliative care supports in Alberta

* 55 completed evaluations.

† Since September 2023, there have been 25 offerings of the "What is Palliative Care?" *PalliLearn* course in Alberta, with 387 participants and 211 completed evaluations.

Albertans' comfort talking about death and dying

The 2025 Ipsos public awareness poll asked Albertans about their comfort talking about death and dying. This was the first time this question has been asked in Alberta and thus adds to the knowledge base in this area. About **6 in 10 Albertans** reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' comfortable talking about death and dying.



Death Cafe and the *PalliLearn* course "How to Have Conversations about Dying and Grief" were our primary interventions (tools) for increasing comfort talking about death and dying

160+

Death Cafes offered across Alberta since January 2023. Evaluation survey uptake was limited, but the research literature provides some evidence that participation in *Death Cafes* increases comfort talking about death.

96%

of *PalliLearn* survey respondents* agreed that the "How to Have Conversations about Dying and Grief" course **increased their confidence to start conversations about serious illness, death and grief**

"Don't be afraid to have conversations. It is likely others want to have them too."

- *PalliLearn* course participant

Albertans' readiness and confidence to engage in advance care planning

Plan Ahead sessions and the *My Wishes Alberta* workbook were our primary interventions (tools) for increasing readiness and confidence to participate in advance care planning

100%

of *Plan Ahead* session survey respondents† reported **increased readiness and confidence** to plan ahead after participating in the session

83%

of *My Wishes Alberta* workbook survey respondents‡ **felt more confident and planned to talk about their wishes for care** with people close to them after using the workbook

"I am getting a will, [enduring] power of attorney, and personal directive completed!"

- *Plan Ahead* session attendee

* Since September 2023, there have been 21 offerings of the "How to Have Conversations about Dying and Grief" *PalliLearn* course in Alberta, with 400+ participants and 115 evaluations.

† 23 completed evaluations.

‡ Despite over 5400 workbooks distributed, only 12 completed evaluations were received.

Albertans having advance care planning conversations with those close to them and their healthcare providers

The 2025 Ipsos public awareness poll asked Albertans who they had talked to regarding their wishes for health and personal care.

About half of Albertans (51%) indicated they had talked with family, and about one in five (21%) had talked with friends.*

Fewer Albertans (12%) had talked about their wishes for health and personal care with a healthcare provider.

The percentage of Albertans reporting conversations with healthcare providers (12%) is lower than that reported in the 2019 public poll (20%). The explanation for this difference is likely due to subtle differences in the survey questions as well as differences in the samples themselves. The 2019 poll sampled Albertans through a random sample of landline and mobile telephone numbers, whereas the 2025 Ipsos poll was conducted via online panel. We note that 41% of Albertans in the 2025 poll had attained high school education or less, vs. 24% of Albertans in the 2019 poll, indicating a more highly educated sample in the 2019 poll. As education is significantly correlated with awareness of and engagement in advance care planning, it's likely that this difference in education level explains the differences in advance care planning conversations.

Albertans' completion of planning documentation (e.g., personal directive, will, enduring power of attorney)

The 2025 Ipsos public awareness poll asked Albertans if they had completed a will, personal directive, and enduring power of attorney.

Just under one-third of Albertans (28%) reported having both a personal directive and enduring power of attorney, whereas 41% reported having a will.

The 2019 poll only asked about personal directives, in which 41% of respondents indicated they had a personal directive. Again, we suspect this discrepancy is related to differences in the two samples as previously described.

The image shows a sample of the 'Personal Directive' form from the Government of Alberta. The form is titled 'Personal Directive' and includes sections for '1. Revocation of previous personal directive', '2. Designation of agent', and '3. Areas of authority'. It contains checkboxes for 'Option One', 'Option Two', and 'Option Three' under each section. The form is dated 'OPG5521 Rev. 2020-05' and is labeled 'Page 1 of 4'.

* We are unable to compare these data to the 2019 poll of Albertans due to survey question differences.

Impacts on providers

Providers' confidence/ability to support members' palliative care and advance care planning needs

Our end-of-project survey asked partners about their confidence/ability to support members' palliative care and advance care planning needs:

Partner testimonials:

"Our volunteers learned more about palliative care, better enabling them to correctly answer members' questions."

"I have used tools and resources from the Compassionate Alberta initiative in my work with volunteer groups for their training and support."

"I revised the information I provide to clients to include a values-based approach to writing Personal Directives, and I revised my form of Personal Directive that I use with my clients."

72%

of survey respondents reported that the Compassionate Alberta initiative **increased their confidence or ability to better support people with their palliative care needs**

64%

of survey respondents reported that the Compassionate Alberta initiative **increased their confidence or ability to better support people with planning ahead/advance care planning**

Provider confidence was also explored among individuals completing *PalliLearn* facilitator training. Among those who completed the post-training evaluation survey*,

100% felt the training prepared them to become a *PalliLearn* facilitator,
and

100% felt ready to offer *PalliLearn* courses in the community.

Organizations' awareness of palliative care and advance care planning resources and services

Our end-of-project survey asked partners about their awareness of palliative care and advance care planning resources and services:

Partner testimonials:

"We were given resources to support seniors and information about [the] Plan Ahead Toolkit."

"The Compassionate Alberta initiative provided much needed support and resources to Alberta patients/families, clinical staff, and community members."

"The Compassionate Alberta website is user friendly and has a lot of great information. I have referred many individuals and groups to utilize the website as a resource."

81%

of survey respondents reported that the Compassionate Alberta initiative **increased their awareness of palliative care resources and services**

69%

of survey respondents reported that the Compassionate Alberta initiative **increased their awareness of advance care planning resources and services**

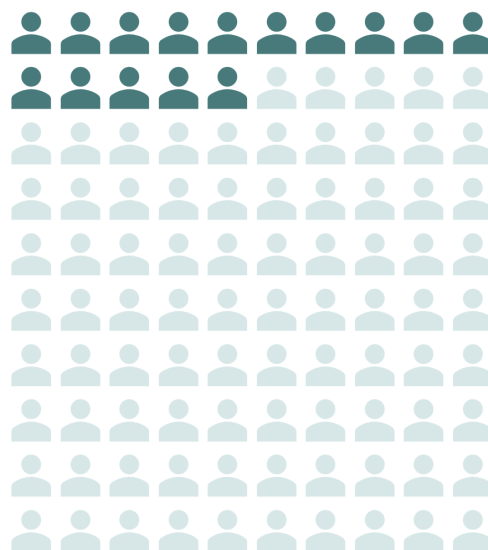
* 18 completed evaluations

Impacts on communities

Community supports for people living with life-limiting illnesses/compassionate community indicator(s)

The 2025 Ipsos public awareness poll was designed to assess concepts related to compassionate communities. These are new data that have not been collected through previous polls of Albertans or Canadians and thus add to the knowledge base around compassionate communities indicators.

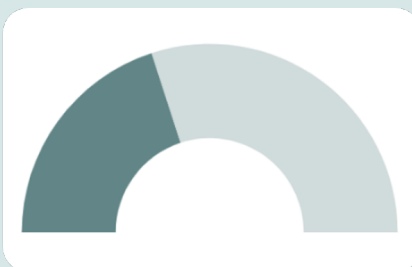
The 2025 poll indicated that, at the population level, **15% of Albertans had heard of the term "Compassionate Communities"**.



The 2025 Ipsos poll also indicated that about **6 in 10 Albertans agreed with the compassionate communities' philosophy that caring for people with serious illness is everyone's responsibility**, but only about one-third of Albertans were aware of supports in their communities for people living with serious illness.



62%
of Albertans agree that
**caring for people with
serious illness is everyone's
responsibility**



37%
of Albertans **would
know how to support**
someone living with
a serious illness



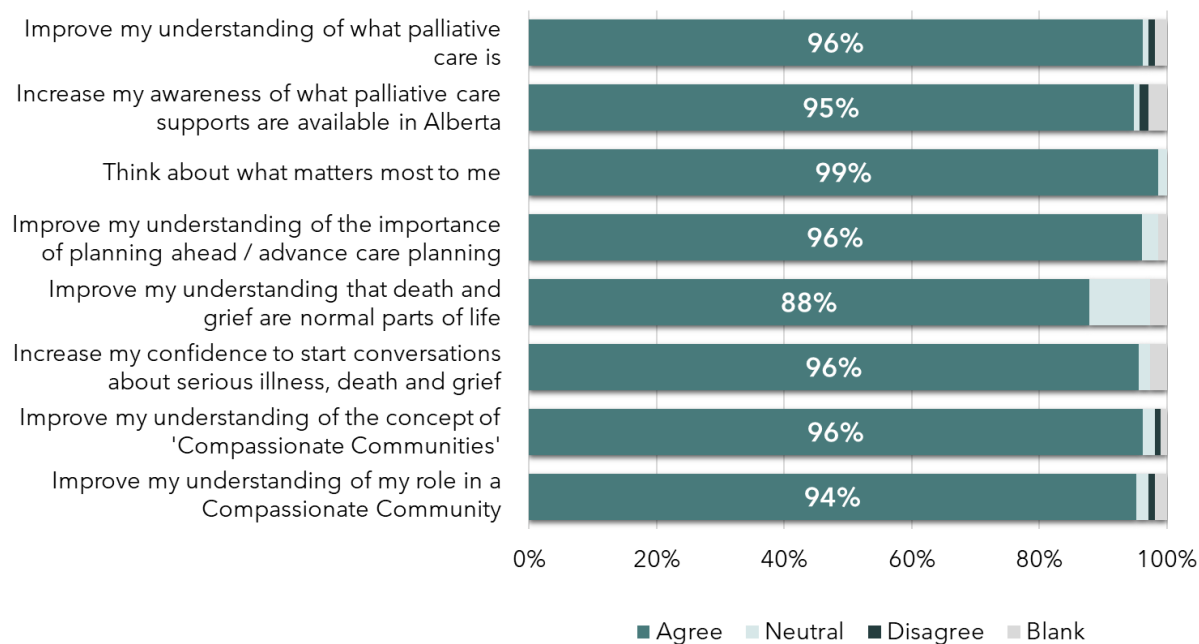
33%
of Albertans are **aware of
community supports**
for people living with serious
illness

The *PalliLearn* series of community education courses was our primary intervention (tool) to build community support for people living with serious illness. We offered four courses in the series, each with its own objectives:

What is palliative care?	What Matters Most?	How to have conversations about dying and grief	Your Role in a Compassionate Community
<p>Palliative care is more than you think.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand what palliative care is (and isn't), why it's important, and how to access palliative care in Alberta. 	<p>How to keep what matters most at the centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn how to communicate with others about what matters most. Take steps to identify priorities and what would matter most if unwell. Learn how to communicate with others about what matters most. 	<p>Conversations about dying and grief are important but can be hard.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand why it's important to talk about dying and grieving. Gain knowledge and confidence about how to engage in compassionate conversations with people who are dying or grieving. 	<p>Compassionate Communities are networks of support around people experiencing serious illness, death and grief.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand what it means to be part of a compassionate community. Gain confidence to respond compassionately to people who are sick, dying, caregiving or grieving, and identify ways to offer meaningful support.

Since September 2023, more than 80 *PalliLearn* courses have been offered across Alberta, with over 1400 participants. Data from *PalliLearn* participant evaluations indicate that the *PalliLearn* courses are successfully meeting their objectives (88-99% agreement).

This course helped to...



PalliLearn participant evaluations, 2023-2025. n=508 completed evaluations (76-211 per course).

Conclusion and Key Learnings

The Compassionate Alberta initiative successfully raised awareness of palliative care and advance care planning, but perhaps more importantly, engaged a large number of community partners with a shared interest in and passion for caring for people facing serious illness. With their support, we expanded access to information and support in community settings, and increased community capacity to support conversations and education around serious illness and dying, which are foundational to helping more Albertans receive timely, high-quality palliative and end-of-life care in their setting of choice. Many of these partners are continuing to carry this work forward, ensuring that awareness and engagement continue to grow well beyond the end of our formal funding.



Our key learnings related to engaging community partners are:

- Developing shared understanding and complementary “mutually reinforcing activities” with community partners was essential for obtaining buy-in. Relationship building is essential, and building trust takes time.
- A two-pronged approach was effective at reaching and engaging a large number of community partners: we collaborated with provincial/regional umbrella organizations who gave us a platform to share our tools and resources with their members, and then supported those local frontline organizations who were interested in implementing and sustaining the ongoing use of our tools and resources.
- Leveraging existing conferences or communities of practice was more efficient and effective at engaging partners as opposed to asking them to attend separate events hosted by the Palliative Institute.
- Key sectors demonstrating interest/capacity to collaborate were: palliative care/hospice societies; public libraries; seniors’ organizations; legal professionals; faith & cultural communities; other community non-profits (especially caregiver and disease-specific organizations).

Our key learnings related to developing public education resources are:

- Start by identifying gaps and best practices; complement, don’t compete with existing resources.
- Different tools work for different people – offer variety (e.g., of focal areas, delivery formats).
- Engage people where they’re at. People have different interests, readiness and needs.
- Use plain language – it works for everyone.
- Embrace positive messaging and aspirational images. Focus on the benefits of palliative care and advance care planning to help people live well.
- Connect through stories.
- Represent diversity (e.g., of ages, illnesses, settings, abilities, cultures, languages) to help everyone feel seen.

Recommendations and Next Steps

The Compassionate Alberta initiative made great strides in terms of improving Albertans' awareness and understanding of palliative care, engagement in advance care planning, and strengthening community capacity to support people living with serious illness. To maintain this momentum, our recommendations for community partners include:

1

“Stay on message” with palliative care and advance care planning.¹⁰

Examine all your resources, programs and websites to ensure they focus on the benefits of palliative care and advance care planning, that they don't conflate palliative care or advance care planning with end-of-life care, and that images are aspirational and show people living well, connecting with others and engaging in everyday activities.

2

Consider integrating the Covenant Health Palliative Institute's tools and resources into your resources, programs and websites.

For example, add the *Understanding Palliative Care* e-module, the *My Wishes Alberta* workbook, or one of our recorded ECHO sessions to your staff onboarding or training; host a *PalliLearn* course with a trained facilitator or train one or more of your staff or volunteers to become *PalliLearn* facilitators; offer a *Plan Ahead* session in your community; and/or add a link to the Compassionate Alberta website to your brochures, websites or documents.

The following commitments have been made by the Covenant Health Palliative Institute to maintain the Compassionate Alberta tools and resources:

- Resources to support *Death Cafes* will remain available on the Compassionate Alberta website, and administration of the Facebook group for Alberta *Death Cafe* facilitators has been transitioned to a current *Death Cafe* facilitator.
- The *Understanding Palliative Care* module and companion handout will remain freely accessible on the Compassionate Alberta website. The module will be reviewed periodically to ensure that it remains accurate, relevant and functional.
- The Palliative Institute has committed to continuing coordination of *PalliLearn* courses in Alberta and to act as the point of contact for other Canadian adaptations. The slide decks and workbooks will be reviewed periodically to ensure the content remains accurate and links are functional. The Palliative Institute will continue to offer *PalliLearn* facilitator training annually, and to host a gathering of Alberta *PalliLearn* facilitators (community of practice) on a bi-annual basis.
- The *My Wishes Alberta* workbook will remain available on the Compassionate Alberta website in a fillable electronic format, as well as a non-fillable, printable format. Professionally printed copies of the workbook (in English, French, Arabic, Punjabi and Spanish) are available to the public to order for free (while quantities last) through DATAOnline, an Alberta print service widely used in health care.
- The *Plan Ahead Toolkit* (content, facilitator guide, starter kit, and slide deck) will remain freely available on the Compassionate Alberta website and will be updated as appropriate. The starter kit has been translated into French, Arabic, Punjabi and Spanish.

3

Lawyers and other legal professionals are encouraged to take our continuing education course on advance care planning.

Our continuing education course “Aligning Practice to Reality: Understanding Advance Care Planning” is accessible to Alberta lawyers and articling students through the Legal Education Society of Alberta. Legal professionals are also encouraged to review the Alberta Medical-Legal Joint Practice Principles on advance care planning and accompanying Recommendations for Legal Practice in Alberta best practice guide, which will remain freely available on the Palliative Institute’s website.

4

Continue multi-sectoral collaboration on advance care planning.

We encourage groups to continue joint education activities, practice review and clinics to amplify advance care planning messages, support navigation and address gaps in advance care planning.

5

Continue engaging with diverse communities.

Consider:

- Involving leaders from diverse communities, including newcomers, to build on understanding and respond to specific needs and perspectives.
- Incorporating a person-centered approach to advance care planning, one that prioritizes individual values, wishes, and beliefs over cultural norms or standard practices. This means embracing and promoting alternative viewpoints and delivery methods to ensure knowledge and resources are accessible and relevant to specific communities across Alberta.
- Adapting the *Plan Ahead Toolkit* for diverse audiences, and peer-led education models that include cultural experts or facilitators.



Appendix: Evaluation Methodology

A comprehensive evaluation plan was developed to assess the activities and impacts of the Compassionate Alberta initiative. A literature review was conducted to identify relevant frameworks to guide our process and outcome evaluation. We selected the Healthy End of Life Program (HELP) Evaluation Framework to guide our process evaluation, as it was designed to capture data around project processes, and takes a public health palliative care approach to evaluation – the Framework acknowledges that changing human attitudes and behaviors around end of life is complex and requires change at individual and community levels.

The HELP framework has evolved over time to encompass eight Community Development Action Areas (“the eight Ps”; **Table 1**) and asserts that working across all these areas is important for population impact; efforts in one area alone will not produce sustainable change in community beliefs and practices. **Table 1** highlights our application of the HELP framework to the Compassionate Alberta initiative.

Table 1. Application of the Healthy End of Life Program (HELP) Evaluation Framework to the Compassionate Alberta initiative

HELP domain	Compassionate Alberta metric(s)
PEOPLE: How did the Project foster community member engagement in palliative care and/or advance care planning?	People reached by Compassionate Alberta activities People engaged in Compassionate Alberta activities Organizations engaged in Compassionate Alberta activities
PARTICIPATION: How did the Project enable participation of people from all parts of the community?	Diversity of people engaged Resources/supports adapted/created for diverse groups Tools and resources promote positive role models and do not perpetuate stereotypes
PRACTICE & PRACTITIONERS: How did the Project promote palliative care and/or advance care planning practice and build capability?	Educational activities offered People trained to use tools or lead initiatives
PROGRAMS: How did the Project foster creative community initiatives related to palliative care and/or advance care planning based on local strengths and interests?	Creative community activities or programs undertaken
PLACE: How did the Project incorporate palliative care and/or advance care planning supports into existing social and community structures and settings to meet local need?	Organizations embedding palliative care and/or advance care planning supports and resources into existing structures (physical or virtual)
PARTNERSHIPS: How did the Project increase collaborations between health and community sectors, organizations, communities and individuals?	Partnerships created with the Palliative Institute Partnerships created amongst our partners
PLANNING: How did the Project improve community-level and individual-level planning?	Planning documents incorporating aspects of palliative care and/or advance care planning
POLICY: How did the Project influence policy?	Organizations making policy changes (e.g., embedding palliative care and/or advance care planning information or principles into policies or guidance documents, or removing unhelpful policies)

We selected the Australia Palliative Care Evaluation framework¹¹ to guide our outcome evaluation. This framework is organized around three categories, to determine the extent to which the initiative had an impact on: 1) consumers (i.e., patients, families, carers, friends, communities), 2) providers (i.e., professionals, volunteers, organizations) and 3) the broader care delivery system (i.e., communities; **Table 2**). Key informant interviews and/or focus group discussions were held to solicit feedback on our proposed evaluation frameworks and measures. The outcomes in **Table 2** reflect their input and priorities. Outcomes were classified as in-scope if they were deemed feasible within the life of the initiative. The out-of-scope outcomes were not expected to be observed within the life of the initiative but were important to our partners to consider for future monitoring/measurement.

Table 2. Application of the Australia Palliative Care Evaluation framework to the Compassionate Alberta initiative

	IN-SCOPE	OUT-OF-SCOPE
	Short-term outcomes	Mid- to long-term outcomes
Impacts on consumers (i.e., members of the public)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Albertans' awareness of palliative care and advance care planning • Albertans' understanding of palliative care • Albertans' awareness of palliative care and advance care planning resources and services • Albertans' comfort talking about death and dying • Albertans' readiness to engage in advance care planning • Albertans' self-efficacy (confidence) to engage in advance care planning • Albertans having advance care planning conversations with those close to them and their healthcare providers • Albertans' completion of planning documentation (e.g., personal directive, will, enduring power of attorney) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palliative care referrals/service use • Symptoms e.g., pain, fatigue, anxiety, depression • Quality of life • Satisfaction with care • Satisfaction with decision-making • Satisfaction with communication • Goal-concordant care • Preferred place of death • Quality of death • Bereavement outcomes
Impacts on providers (i.e., professionals, volunteers, organizations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers' confidence/ability to support members' palliative care and advance care planning needs • Organizations' awareness of palliative care and advance care planning resources and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of providing care • Confidence/self-efficacy to support caregivers • Usefulness of advance care planning documents
Impacts on the broader care delivery system (i.e., communities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community supports for people living with life-limiting illnesses/compassionate community indicator(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palliative care referrals/service use • Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee referrals • Guardianship and trustee orders • Complaints under the Alberta Guardianship and Trustee and Personal Directives Act requesting investigations • Emergency department visits, hospital admissions, hospital lengths of stay at end of life (e.g., last 30 days) • Costs of end-of-life care • Albertans dying intestate

Measures for assessing each outcome were adopted or adapted from validated tools where available and appropriate; in some cases, new measures were developed to assess domains lacking validated tools.

Evaluation surveys were developed for each Compassionate Alberta resource (*Death Cafe* participant and facilitator surveys, *Understanding Palliative Care* e-module user survey, *PalliLearn* participant and facilitator surveys, *My Wishes Alberta* workbook user survey, *Plan Ahead* participant and facilitator surveys). An end-of-project survey was developed to capture impacts on community partners. A public awareness poll was conducted by Ipsos in August 2025 to assess Albertans' awareness of palliative care and advance care planning.

PalliLearn Participant Survey: Your Role in a Compassionate Community

Congratulations on completing this PalliLearn course! We know that your time is precious, so we sincerely appreciate you taking the time to complete this survey. Your feedback will help us better understand the impact of PalliLearn courses, and how they can be improved. This survey should take about five minutes to complete.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary, and you may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. Completion and submission of this survey indicates that you consent to participate. For more information, please contact palli@palli.ca.

Thank you!

1) Please provide the date you attended this course: _____

2) Name of facilitator(s): _____

3) How did you hear about this PalliLearn course?

- ☐ Compassionate Alberta website (www.compassionatealberta.ca)
- ☐ Organization offering the course
- ☐ Newsletter/mailling list
- ☐ Poster/flyer
- ☐ Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram)
- ☐ Friends/family
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

4) Please rate your agreement with the following:

Today's PalliLearn course helped to...	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Improve my understanding of the concept of 'Compassionate Communities'	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improve my understanding of my role in a Compassionate Community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Evaluation Survey for Plan Ahead Event Participants

Thank you for participating in this Plan Ahead event. Please share your experience with us. Your feedback is very important to us and will help us improve future sessions.

About the event

Date of event: _____

Location of event: _____

Please rate how much you agree/disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
Event improved my understanding of the planning ahead	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advance care planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Final directives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ported decision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
End tissue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Power of	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
to plan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
not in my how	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
nted	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
as	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Improved?

Comments about this event?

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