



Covenant Health Ethics & Discernment Centre
Summary of Activities

2025-26

We acknowledge that lands upon which Covenant Health facilities are situated is the traditional ancestral territory of a diversity of Indigenous peoples and home to Treaty 4, 6, 7, and 8.

We honor the Blackfoot Confederacy - Kainai, Piikani, and Siksika, the Cree, Dene, Saulteaux, Nakota Sioux, Stoney Nakoda, the Tsuu T'ina Nation and the Métis People of Alberta.

This includes the six Métis Settlements and the twenty-two Districts of the Otipemisiwak government within the Métis Nation of Alberta, that reside within the historical Northwest Métis Homeland.

We recognize and give thanks to the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit who have lived in and cared for these lands for generations, all who continue to grace these lands, and all future generations.

We are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers, Matriarchs and Elders who are still with us today and those who have gone before us.

We make this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we reside on or are visiting.



Covenant Health Ethics & Discernment Centre

Summary of Activities

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From the Chief Mission and Ethics Officer

As health care in Alberta continues to refocus our provincial health system: to align with the 4 pillars, Acute Care Alberta, Primary Care Alberta, Recovery Alberta (mental health/addictions), and Assisted Living Alberta (continuing care), the Ethics and Discernment Centre has provided a visible expression of our mission and values.

I am delighted to present the Covenant Ethics and Discernment Centre's annual report for 2025-2026. During a time of significant change in the healthcare system in Alberta, Covenant is well-positioned to pursue new opportunities and innovate in ways that improve care and community well-being with a steadfast focus on those we serve.

The Ethics and Discernment Centre's commitment to living our mission and using value-based decision-making during times of change is evident in engagement with complex issues and a thoughtful, steady expression of our mission and values.

The Centre continues to respond to requests for ethics consultations and tailored education across the province. This year, they provided every rural site with a day of ethics education, where relationships were developed, skills and knowledge were expanded and team members were inspired to continue living our mission and values.

The Centre offered extensive online education during this year that included sessions on Indigenous teachings, diversity

and inclusion issues and ethical transformation focused on engaging and empowering point of care staff. Sessions were attended by people from across the province and around the country, and the feedback was very positive.

I am proud of the new and dynamic ways the team has encouraged interest in ethical value-based service, encouraging all to lead with compassion, respect and hospitality. An invitation to be part of the Simulation Labs, for example, has given the team a new place to support skill development to respond to ethically challenging situations in the moment.

I invite you to look through this report to learn more. If you see something that interests you or might be helpful, please contact the Ethics and Discernment Centre to have a conversation. The team is always ready to find innovative ways to meet the diverse needs of our organization.

Bonnie Tejada
Chief Mission and Ethics Officer



In Focus

Over the past 2 years The Ethics & Discernment Centre staff have been supporting the staff, physicians, and health care leaders in the rural areas by providing education regarding ethical/value-based decision making.

We were joined by Amber Ruben who provided workshops on many topics relevant to health equality for Indigenous people. Spiritual Care Leaders, Vera Atkinson, Rachael Charles and Lynn Beddoes alternately traveled to the sites with us and provided a session on Hope.

Healthcare in Alberta communities has become increasingly complex and challenging to navigate. In the rural context, the additional layer of being less resourced compounds operational and, by consequence, ethical complexity. The ability for staff to access education can be difficult due to lack of time, cost and/or staffing to cover shift while others attend education sessions. To support the staff's education and make it as accessible as possible we applied for a grant through the Sister's Legacy Foundation which would provide funds for us to travel to and provide the session at the sites. The grant application was successful, and our 2-year

adventure began.

We traveled to Banff, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Bonnyville, Camrose, Vegreville, Bonnyville, Castor, Trochu, and Killam. Luckily road conditions were excellent, and speeding was kept to a minimum, so we all travelled safely. Our focus was to equip staff with tools to use when presented with challenging situations that create tensions between values held by staff, patients/residents, families, organizational values, resources allocation and many other contentious issues that are witnessed in healthcare.

The workshops offered were as follows:

Amber's Workshops

Initial Engagement with Indigenous Peoples

1. Treaty Talk: The Ethics of Treaty Obligations in Healthcare for First Nations Patients

2. Initial Concepts of Trauma-Informed Care
3. Cultural Safety: An Indigenous Lens
4. Indigenous Health: Resilience following colonization
5. Strength-based vs. Deficit-based Approaches to Healthcare and Research

Ethics Workshops

1. Moral Distress
2. Complex cases Presenter
3. Substitute Decision
4. Resource Allocation through the lens of Distributive Justice
5. "Ask Me Anything"
6. MAiD in Covenant Health
7. "Living at Risk"
8. Microaggressions

The sites chose the workshops they thought were relevant to their staff's interests, and we also developed new presentations when requested. The workshops were well attended by staff, community board members, and doctors.

The workshops provided knowledge, tools for ethical decision making, and opportunities for rich conversation. The Health Ethics Guide and other materials were provided to the sites. Relationships were built and connections with the staff at the Ethics and Discernment centre were forged. The day after we left one of the sites a staff phoned the Ethics and Discernment Centre for support and remarked "thank goodness you were just here and now I know who to call for support".

Evaluations were completed at the end of each session. Below are some of the comments given by the attendees and the overall results of the responses collected.

"Short, to the point and informative, glad to be discussing "living at risk", Brings attention to biases and reminder to advocate for pts and weigh risk vs benefit"

"It was very good. Lots of open discussion"

"You touched on great strategies to incorporate trauma informed care in our work"

It was a wonderful experience to travel to each site and experience the uniqueness of each community. We could feel the pride the staff take in their work and most importantly we could feel the care and compassion of the staff. We left each site filled with gratitude for the welcoming spirit we were treated with and for the commitment and dedication of the staff. We are thankful for the Sister's Legacy Grant which allowed the idea to come alive.

We are thankful to Ogechukwu Ezech, our Program Coordinator who organized all the details for the travel and workshop promotion and registration. We are thankful to our partners Amber Ruben, Rasheal Charles, Vera Atkinson, and Lyn Beddoes for joining us to visit the sites and share their knowledge and spirits. It was an awesome experience, and we look forward to heading out on the road to connect with our rural sites again soon.

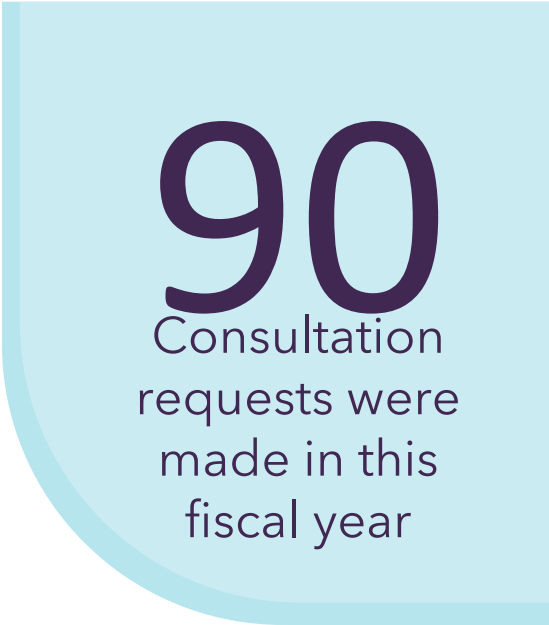
Ethics Consultation

The Ethics & Discernment Centre's consultation service remains a cornerstone of our commitment to fostering ethically grounded decision-making across the organization. During the 2025–26 fiscal year, the Centre continued to provide timely, structured, and values-informed ethics support to clinicians, staff, leadership, clients, and families navigating complex situations.

This year's consultation data reflects both the evolving nature of ethical challenges and the growing awareness and trust in the Centre's services. Consultations addressed a wide spectrum of issues, including goals of care, consent and capacity, resource allocation, professional boundaries, moral distress and many others. Notably, there was an increase in early-stage consultations, indicating a shift toward proactive engagement and preventative ethics support rather than crisis-driven requests.

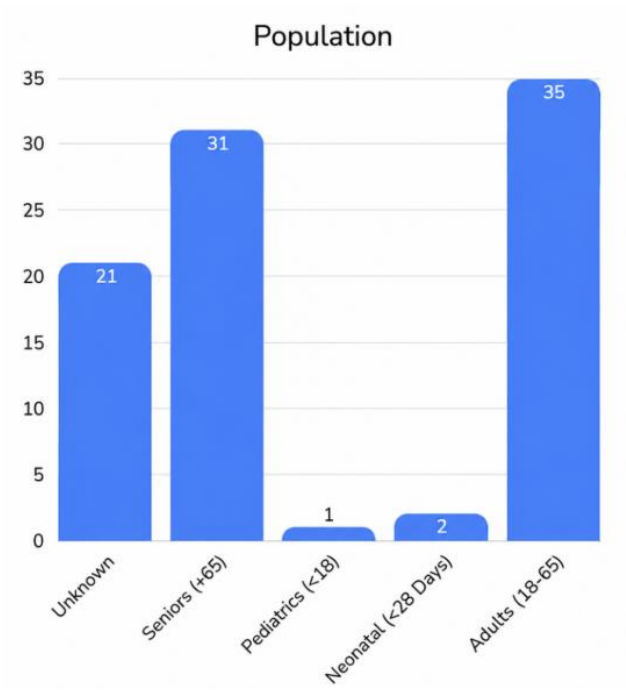
The data also highlights patterns in service utilization across departments and care settings, offering insight into areas of recurring ethical complexity. Interdisciplinary collaboration remained central to the consultation process, ensuring that diverse perspectives informed recommendations and, that decisions were aligned with organizational values, professional standards, and the needs and dignity of those served.

In addition to quantitative trends, qualitative feedback underscores the value of ethics consultations in enhancing clarity, reducing conflict, and supporting staff confidence in difficult decisions. The findings presented in this section not only summarize the scope and impact of our consultation services over the past year but also inform ongoing quality improvement, education initiatives, and strategic planning for the future.

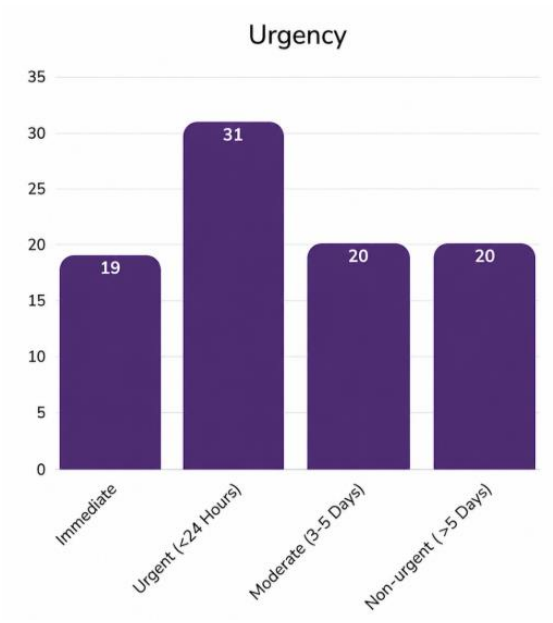


90
Consultation
requests were
made in this
fiscal year

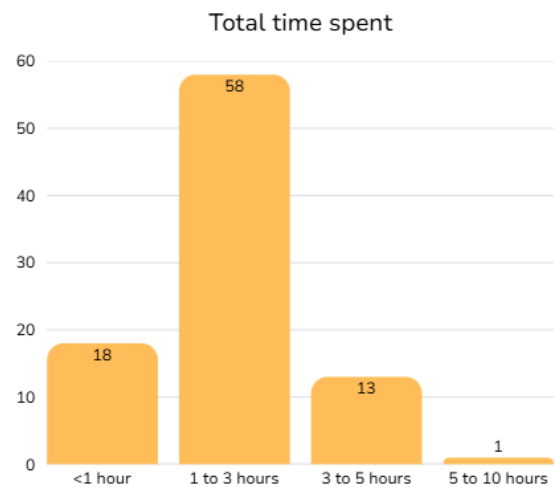
Consultation requests by population



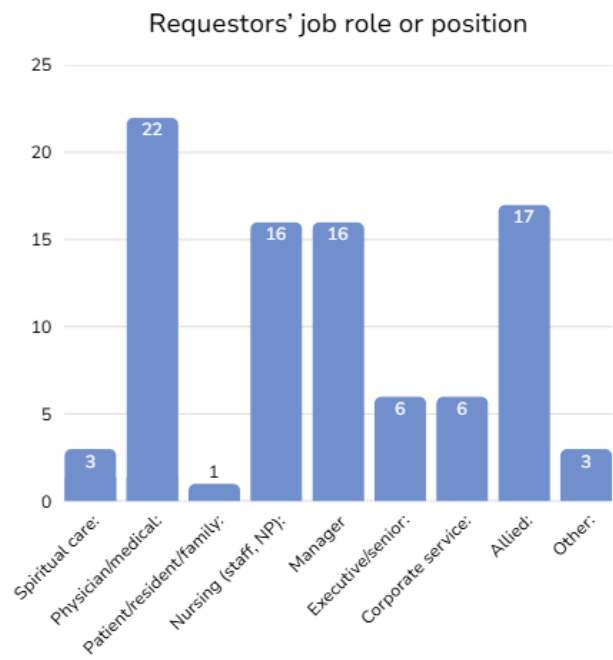
Consultation requests by urgency



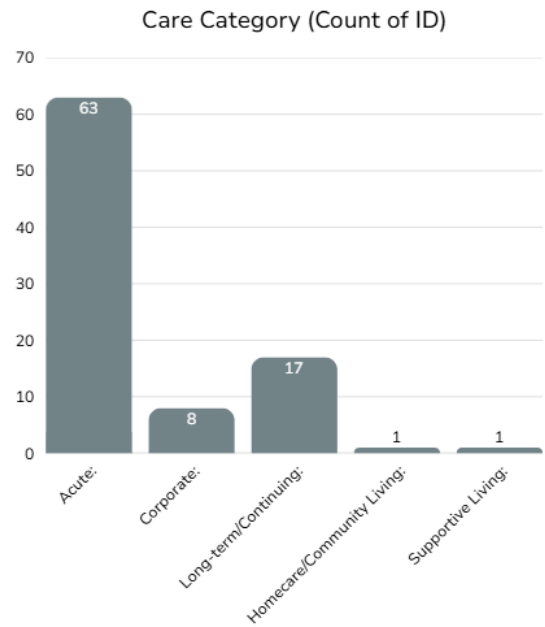
Consultation requests by total time spent



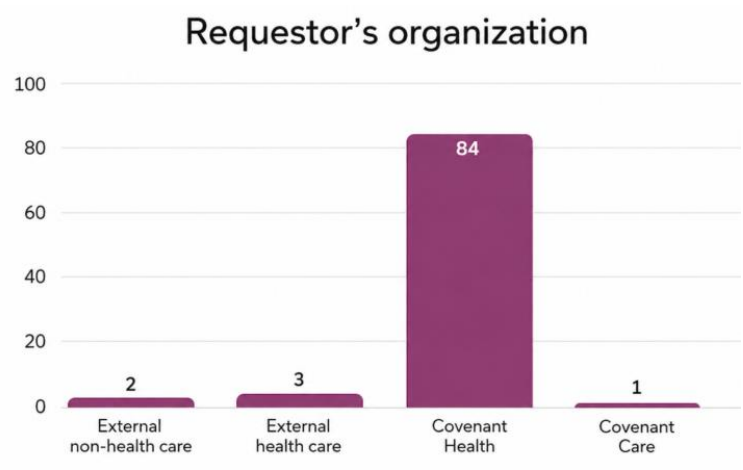
Consultation requests by requestor's job role or position



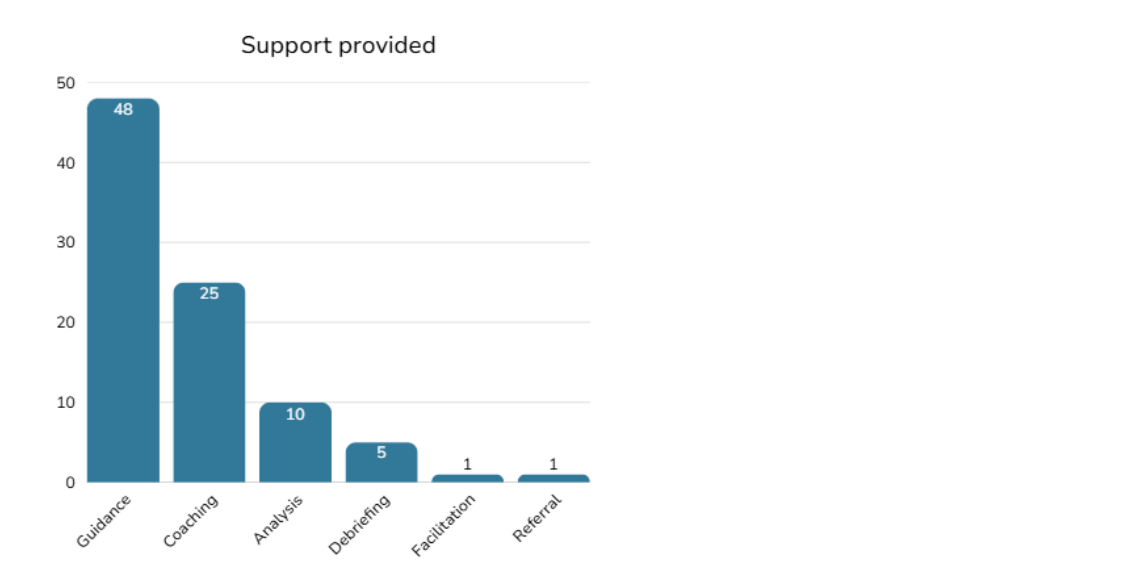
Consultation requests by care category



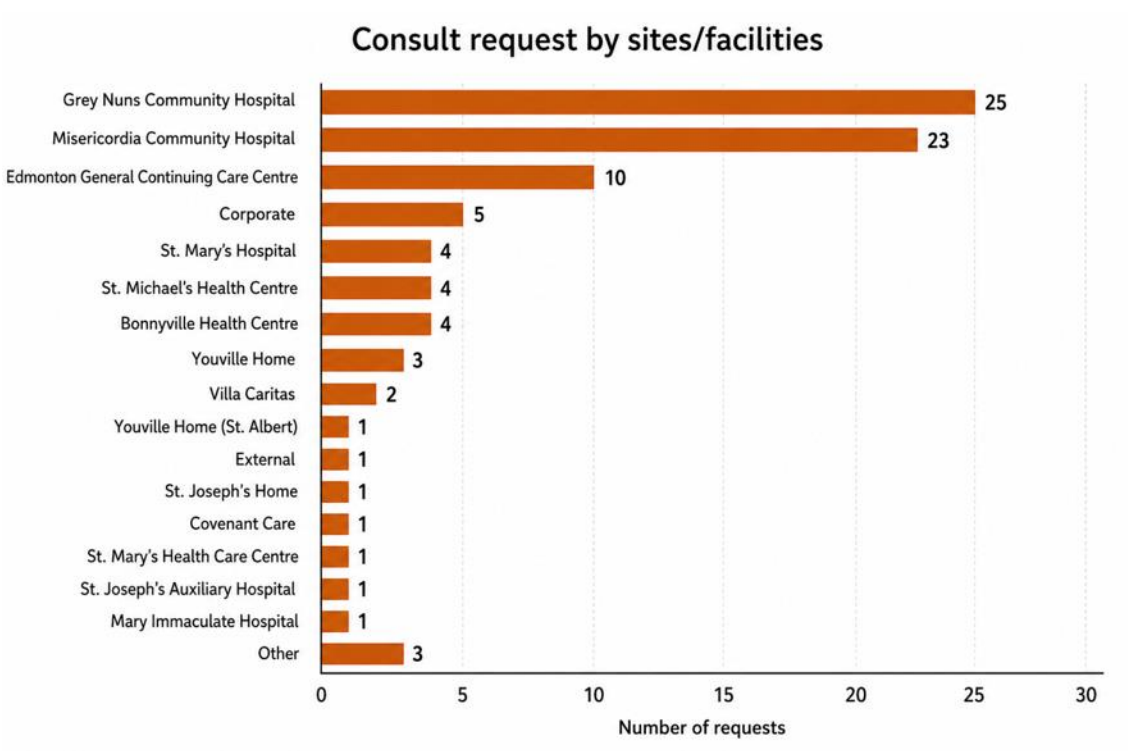
Consultation requests by organization



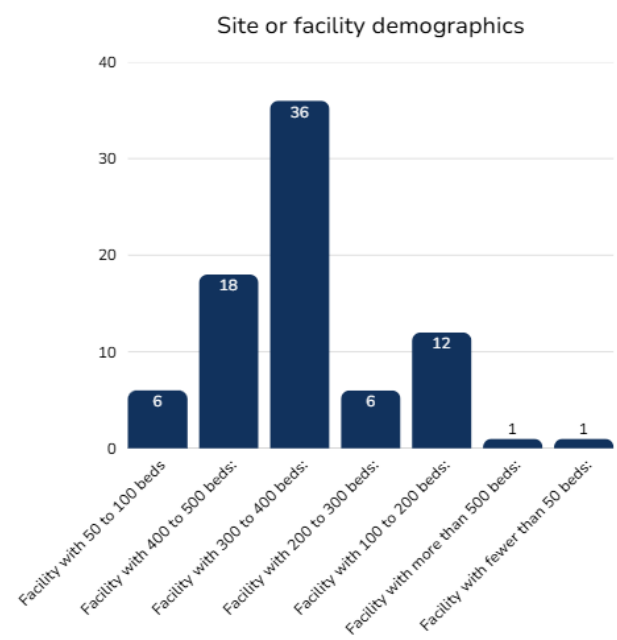
Consultation request by type of support provided



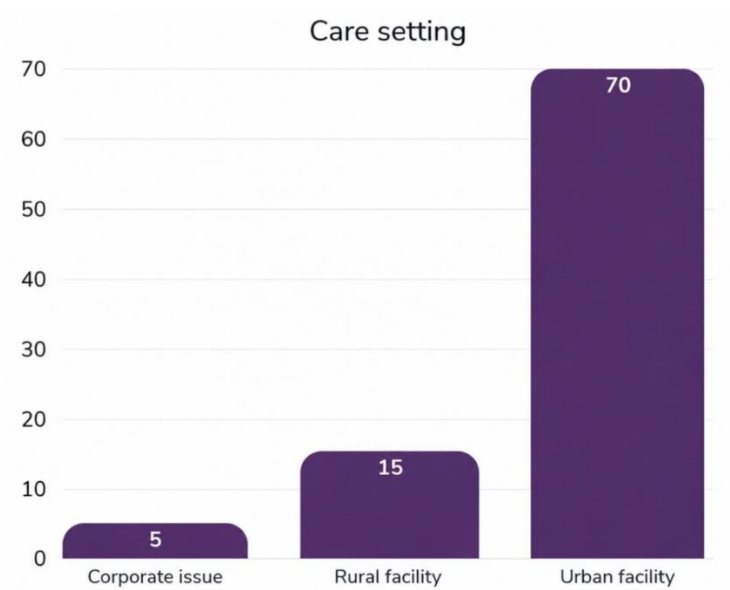
Consultation requests by site



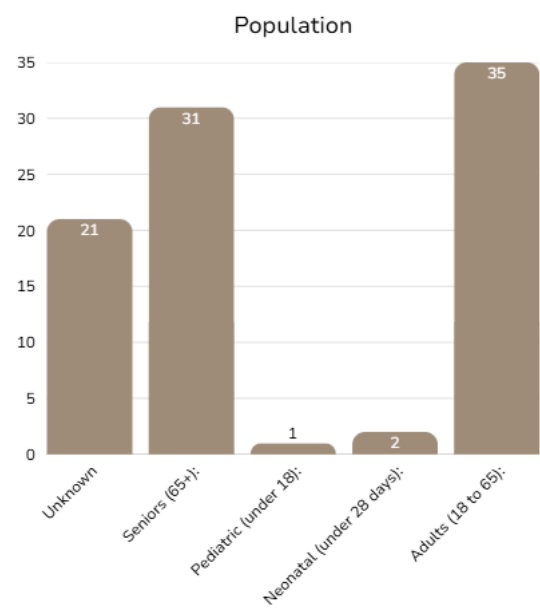
Consultation requests by site/facility demographics



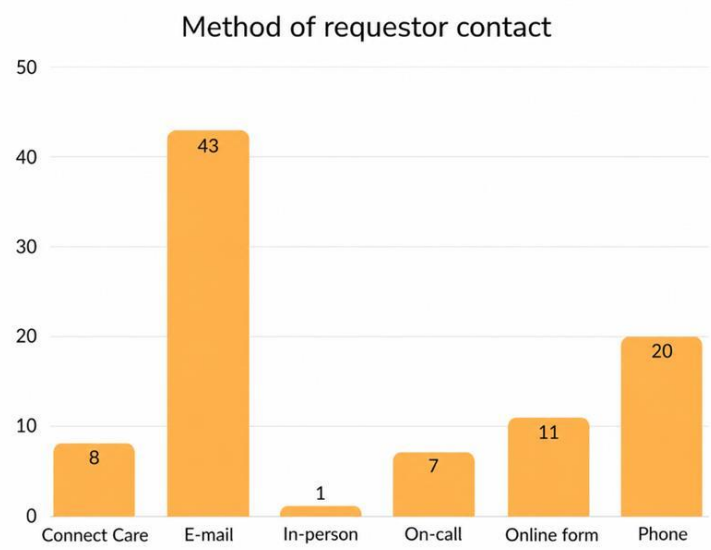
Consultation requests by care setting



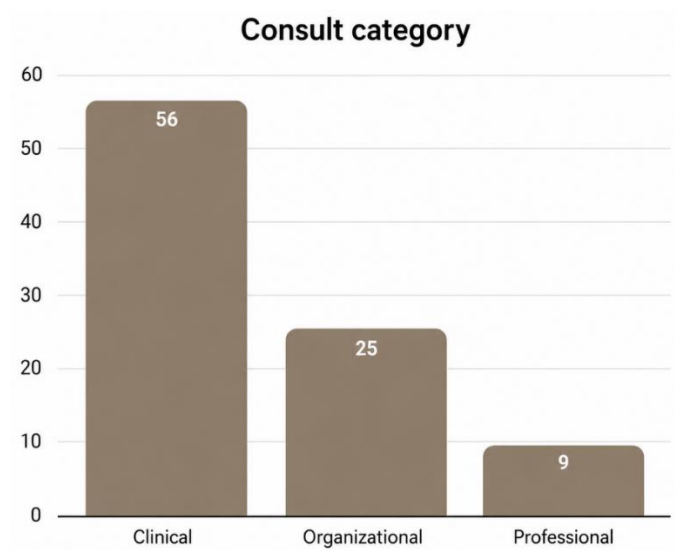
Consultation requests by population



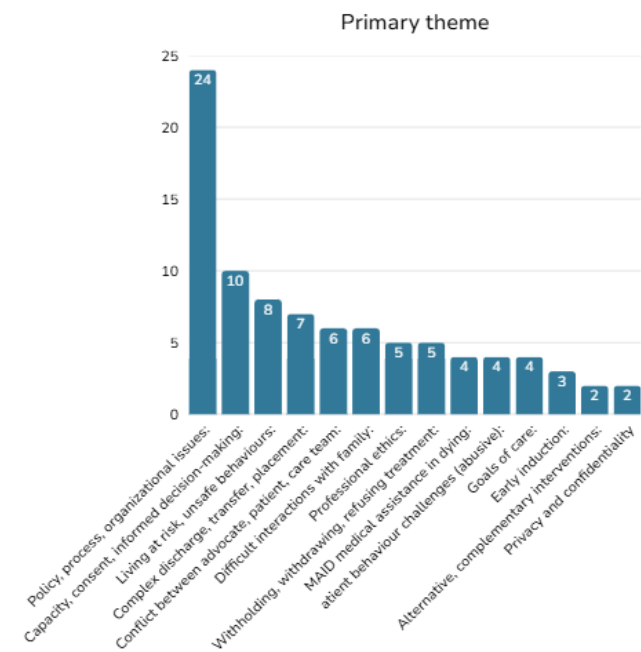
Consultation requests by method of request



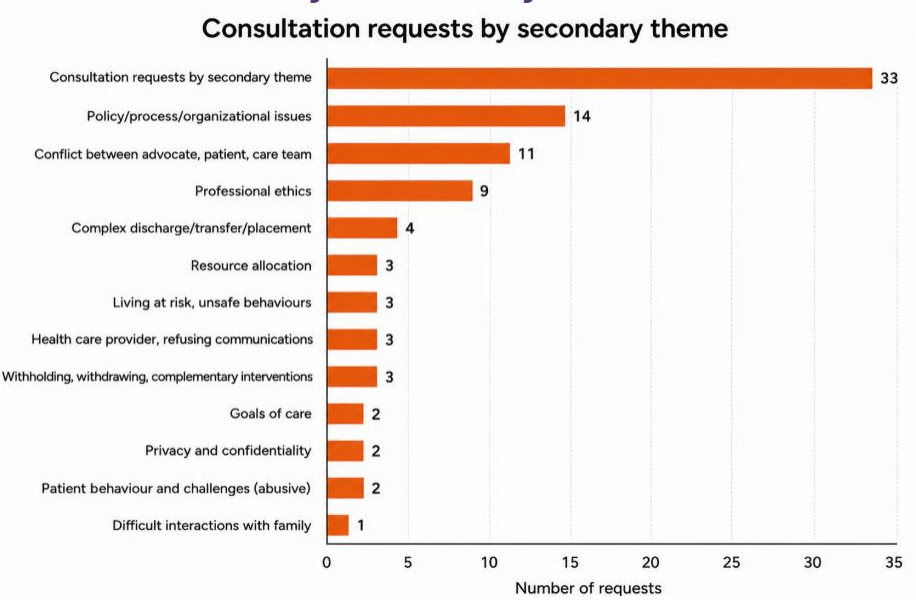
Consultation requests by consult category



Consultations by primary theme



Consultations by secondary theme



Strategic Plan Highlights

This time of year, our “report writing season”, is a special moment in our year and mirrors that of the seasonal calendar. It is a time of reflecting on the initiatives and relationships that have evolved over the year (even when work appears to be ‘wintering’, growth is underway). The year 2025-2026 has been full of life and we are proud of the many ways that we have been invited to support values-based decision-making, to enrich our culture of discernment, and to foster spiritually rich and inclusive care environments.

This season is also a time of looking ahead with anticipation and a sense of purpose regarding the opportunities that are unfolding before us. At the time of writing, while reflecting on what was and is, we are also looking forward to the initiatives we will be launching in the fall. In keeping with our strategic approach, our initiatives this year will challenge our team to build on our commitment to quality service, expand our network of collaborative relationships, and develop the resources that will enable Covenant to carry out its mission of service to the most vulnerable.

Examples of the work that began this year that will carry forward into the next is the creative collaborations with teams such as professional practice, simulation learning, and Indigenous health education and reconciliation. Refreshing our year-long education plan is already underway, and the feedback we have received from this year’s participants is validation for the work to continue. We also look forward in the coming year to strengthening the alignment between our work and the Accreditation Canada’s best practice standards for principle-based decision-making, cultural and psychological safety, and environmental stewardship.

Engage

The Ethics and Discernment Centre remains committed to fostering a culture of ethical awareness, critical reflection, and values-based decision-making across the organization. This year, we implemented a Comprehensive Education Plan that outlined a structured and responsive approach to learning, designed to meet the evolving needs of staff, leaders, and partners. Through a thoughtfully developed schedule of workshops, seminars, and engagement opportunities, the Centre continues to equip participants with practical tools and frameworks to navigate complex ethical situations with confidence and integrity.

Seminar Series - Health Ethics Guide Focused

We continued our quarterly ethics seminars offering participants an opportunity to delve more deeply into the ideas that animate Catholic health care. Every seminar begins with a presentation on the topic, followed by guiding questions for the breakout discussion groups, and lastly, an open discussion wherein all participants share reflections and ask questions of our speakers. Our seminar topics were: "Solidarity", "Flourishing", and "The Love Ethic". The first seminar, "Solidarity", featured Rasheal Charles, Covenant Corporate Director, Spirituality, who along with our moderator, Dr. Eleanor Stewart, clinical ethicist, spoke on this theme within Catholic Social Teaching. Our second seminar, "Flourishing", unpacked notions of what it means to flourish especially in the face of chronic illness. Our featured speaker, Dillon Hausauer, generously offered insights on living well with challenging health. Lastly, "The Love Ethic" featured Professor Meghan Sullivan, Notre Dame University, Indiana, whose philosophical work pursues a deep analysis of the story of the Good Samaritan that exemplifies love for vulnerable others.

Transforming Ethics Workshop Series

We continued our Pursuit of Healing and Wholeness Workshop Series by bringing together an outstanding group of presenters who shared their experiences and knowledge and renewed the connection of our hearts to hands. The workshops challenged each participant to find their "why". We hoped the workshops would renew participants' awareness of why we do the work we do, what brought each of us to this work, and bring a sense grounding or foundation from which we can continue the caring and healing work we do. We also wanted to acknowledge that each of us are all on parallel journeys of healing whether that is physical, emotional, psychological or spiritual and which requires each of us to care for ourselves and our colleagues.

Healthcare continues to be resource challenged to the point where there never seems to be enough time to provide the care we want to so that we can become disheartened and lose touch with why we came here in the first place.

We have heard from staff how they are constantly weighing the benefits and burdens of their care decisions. From complex discharges to patients who are choosing care options that are seen as not sound by the care team. At the end of each day, they leave carrying the weight of these decisions and require some healing and care. Our hope was that the sessions would bring some healing and time to explore new ideas, new perspectives.

We offered these workshops with the intent of bringing care, compassion and a renewed sense of mission or calling. We hoped each person who attended the workshops found something new or maybe was reminded of something they had known and forgotten, something that will help them to see the opportunity to heal and grow even through struggles, to be healthy, and to be present to care for others and ourselves.

This past year's outstanding group of speakers and topics are listed below.

Dr. Landon Berger

- ◆ Focusing on the feminine: finding joy in tough patients

Dr. Quentin Genius

- ◆ Addiction, Ethics, and the Human Person

Sheila Killoran

- ◆ Exploring Healing and Wholeness

Panel Discussion with Covenant Senior Leaders: Ryan Hastman, Rosa Rudelich, Jon Popowich

- ◆ Leading in Challenging Times, Staying True to Covenant's Mission and Values

Dr. Bernie Pauly

- ◆ The Health Equity Curse: Systemic Caring during Seismic Shifts

Kienan Williams MPH, Amber Ruben

- ◆ Heart Knowledge Conversations

Corporate orientation - Internal Engagement

The Ethics & Discernment Centre continued to strengthen its internal presence through active participation in Covenant Health's Corporate Orientation program. This forum remains a vital touchpoint for engaging new employees, physicians, and leaders, offering an early introduction to the ethical foundations that guide our organization's mission and care delivery.

The Centre's contributions to Corporate Orientation focused on fostering ethical awareness, encouraging reflective practice, and equipping participants with practical tools for navigating complex situations. Through interactive presentations and case-based discussions, attendees were introduced to key ethical concepts, the organization's values-based decision-making framework, and the role of the Ethics & Discernment Centre as a supportive resource.

In orientation, particular emphasis was placed on normalizing early engagement with ethics services and demystifying the consultation process. Participants were encouraged to view ethics not as a last resort, but as an integral part of everyday practice—supporting thoughtful decision-making, respectful dialogue, and compassionate care. The sessions also highlighted common ethical tensions encountered across care settings, helping new staff anticipate and respond to challenges with greater confidence.

Feedback from participants indicated that the Centre's involvement enhanced their understanding of how ethical considerations intersect with clinical, operational, and relational aspects of care. Many expressed increased confidence in identifying ethical issues and a greater willingness to seek guidance when needed.

Through its ongoing presence in Corporate Orientation, the Ethics & Discernment Centre continues to cultivate a culture of ethical attentiveness, reinforce organizational values, and build meaningful connections with staff from the outset of their journey within Covenant Health.

Launch of the New EDC Quarterly Newsletter - External Engagement

Late last year, the Ethics & Discernment Centre undertook a strategic redesign of its official Newsletter, marking an important shift in how we communicate with our community. After careful review and stakeholder consultation, the publication transitioned from a monthly to a quarterly format—an intentional move aimed at enhancing depth, quality, and connection with our community.

Rationale for Change

While the monthly edition enabled regular engagement, feedback from stakeholders indicated a desire for more substantive analysis, thematic coherence, and practical

resources. At the same time, the Centre's expanding portfolio of programs, initiatives, and partnerships called for a more integrated storytelling approach. The shift to a quarterly cycle allows the editorial team to:

- ◆ Curate more comprehensive and reflective content
- ◆ Align each issue with key institutional milestones and themes
- ◆ Strengthen thought leadership
- ◆ Improve design, readability, and digital accessibility

What's New

The revamped Newsletter features a refreshed visual identity and a more structured editorial framework. Each quarterly issue now includes:

- ◆ Feature Articles exploring emerging ethical questions and contemporary dilemmas
- ◆ Program Highlights showcasing organizational ethics contents
- ◆ Voices from the Community including reflections from our ethicists, Diversity and Inclusion team and personal reflections from the team
- ◆ Upcoming Events & Opportunities to foster continued engagement

The longer production timeline has also enabled stronger editorial review, improved graphic design, and enhanced digital distribution analytics, allowing us to better understand and serve our readership.

The transition from monthly to quarterly production reflects our commitment not simply to communicate more, but to communicate more meaningfully. Through this renewed platform, the Ethics & Discernment Centre continues to foster informed engagement and cultivate a community grounded in ethical clarity and discernment.

Ethics Book Club

We continue to gather every other month to share our thoughts, ideas, and moments of insights during our noon hour Book Club meetings. This season we discussed six books: *The emptiness of our hands: 47 days on the street* by Phyllis Cole-Dai and James Murray, *Coexistence* by Billy Ray Belcourt, *The Riveter* by Jack Wang, *Unshrinking: how to face fatphobia* by philosopher Kate Mann, *Jenny's Boy* by Wayne Johnston, and *The Last Human Job: the work of connecting in a disconnected world* by Allison Pugh. These fiction and non-fiction selections explored themes of reconciliation, racism, compassion, human connection, family relations and illness as well as mistrust in societal institutions such as health care.

The Ethics and Discernment Centre Book Club invitation is widely circulated to include people both within the Covenant family and others working in health care and social services in Alberta and beyond. We meet with administrators, clinicians, spiritual care providers, and fellow ethicists. We look forward to upcoming books including, in June, *Pick a Colour* by Souvankham Thammavongsa and will announce a new reading list for the September to December season at the beginning of summer 2026.

Ethics Committees

The Ethics and Discernment Centre receives valuable input from our ethics committee members across Covenant Health. It is a genuine pleasure to work with caring professionals and community members who share an interest in building and sustaining the ethical culture in Covenant Health. We rely on our members to update us on local conditions and tensions, as well as innovative solutions to meeting the ethical challenges we face in turbulent times.

The Edmonton and Area Ethics Committee

The EDC is proud to share that the Edmonton and Area Clinical Ethics Committee has been operating for more than 20 years, and it continues to contribute to the ethical culture of this organization. The Committee meets ten times per year to discuss clinical ethics consultations, to share knowledge about topics of interest, and to further the ethical education of members. This year, several interested individuals from a variety of disciplines have joined the Committee, whose membership well-represents the diversity from within Covenant. The EDC looks forward to the Committee's continued work to promote ethical reflection and practice in our metro Edmonton facilities and across the organization.

Banff Mineral Springs Hospital

Our ethicists always look forward with anticipation and excitement to the Banff Ethics meetings due to the high engagement of this committee. In addition to sharing our learnings from ethics consults across Covenant Health, we gain insights from the perspective of a rural hospital with a unique mix of residents and visitors. Committee chair, Richard Kline (Spiritual Care) demonstrated thoughtful planning with EDC to extend discussions about ethics education sessions such as "Solidarity", "Flourishing", and "Indigenous strengths-based approaches" as well as topics relevant to local concerns such as aging with co-morbid illness and mental health concerns, coercion, artificial intelligence, and Bill 53-*The Compassionate Intervention Act*.

The Rural Ethics Network

We planned meetings every 2nd month with a break during the summer. We had 5 meetings and topics of education were: Obligations to Report, Unconscious Bias, MAiD, Dying with Hope, Aging Patients with Chronic Mental illness, Deciding with Others, and a review of an article on Work Arounds Nurses use and If They Are Ethical. The review of ethics consultations during the meetings was always followed by robust value-based conversation and often provided an opportunity for members to discuss other issues that are ethically challenging. We had new members joined us and were supported by the Site Administrators, Lindsay Rypien, Shelly Franklin, Stacy Lynn Brewster, Michelle Hart and the Senior Directors of Operations, Carol Lajoie, and Brenda Poole. Staffing challenges

continued to make it difficult to meet the needs of the rural communities, and the reduction of other community resources also meant people came to the health centres for support that they cannot always provide. The staff work relentlessly to build helpful solutions for complex care situations. We are thankful for the staff who attended the Rural Ethics Committee meetings and willingly engaged in the learning opportunities and in the sometimes-challenging honest conversations that true ethical reflection requires. We look forward to continuing with our regular committee meetings and hope we continue to see increased involvement.

Engaging other Covenant departments

The Ethics & Discernment Centre staff engage with other Covenant departments by bringing an ethical as well as diversity and inclusive perspective to the work of other committees and councils including:

- Palliative End of life Quality Council
- Patient Safety Advisory Council
- Monthly Learning and Governance Committee
- Site Management Meetings
- Stewardship Accountabilities Committee Advisory Committee
- Diversity and Inclusion Council
- Black, Indigenous, & LGBTQ2S+ Advisory Bodies
- Alberta Palliative Care Competencies and Education
- Advance Care Planning Alberta Project Psychological Health & Wellness
- Patient Relations Advisory Committee
- Enterprise Risk Management Committee
- Mission Inspired Culture Collaborative
- Exceptional Situations Protocol Committee
- Environmental Sustainability Committee
- COV Exceptional Situation Protocol Committee (Ad-Hoc)
- Diversity and Inclusion
- EDI Working Group for Removing Systemic Barriers
- Palliative Education Working Group
- Site Management Meetings

Equip

Launch of the Revamped Ethics CLiC Module

Late last year marked a significant milestone for the Ethics & Discernment Centre with the successful relaunch of our flagship Ethics CLiC Module. This revitalized module reflects the Centre's continued commitment to forming ethically grounded, critically aware, and socially responsible leaders in an increasingly complex world. The goal of the revamp was to refresh the module and reduce the module's length from over thirty minutes to ten minutes of interactive, engaging and animated content that speaks to what to do when faced with an ethical dilemma.

Why the Revamp Was Needed

Over the past few years, social, digital, and institutional landscapes have evolved rapidly. Emerging ethical dilemmas—ranging from artificial intelligence and digital misinformation to sustainability, governance, and professional accountability—have reshaped the contexts in which our participants live and work.

In response, the Centre undertook a comprehensive review of the CLiC curriculum with help from the Learning and Development team to ensure that its content, pedagogy, and delivery methods remain relevant, rigorous, and responsive to contemporary challenges.

What's New in the CLiC Module

The revamped CLiC Module introduces several key enhancements:

- ◆ Updated Curriculum Content
- ◆ New case studies and scenario-based learning exercises address real-world ethical tensions healthcare
- ◆ Interactive & Reflective Learning Design
- ◆ The module now integrates facilitated dialogue circles that encourage participants to move beyond theoretical discussion toward practical ethical decision-making.
- ◆ Digital Integration: a blended learning format allows for both in-person engagement and online participation, broadening accessibility while maintaining the depth of reflective practice.

Looking Ahead

The renewed CLiC Module positions the Ethics & Discernment Centre at the forefront of ethical formation. As we move forward, we remain committed to:

- ◆ Ongoing curriculum review and adaptation

- ◆ Expanding partnerships across sectors
- ◆ Measuring long-term impact on employees

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Learning and Development team whose collaboration made this transformation possible. Together, we continue to advance a culture of thoughtful engagement, ethical clarity, and responsible action.

Stakeholder Specific Education

April 28, 2025:

Presented to St. Joseph's Auxiliary Hospital Leadership Team - "Substitute Decision Maker"

May 8, 2025:

Presented at the Banff Mental Health Week "More Than Healing the Body"

June 2025:

The ethical considerations of VSED (Voluntarily Stopping Eating & Drinking) and VSPeC (Voluntarily Stopping Personal Care)

Walking the Walk: Allyship with the 2SLGBTQIA+ Community and Beyond

Reclaiming Our Selves: Two-Spirit (2S) and Indigiqueer People in Health Care

Trauma-Informed Care = Inclusive Care

July 2025:

Languages in the Workplace

September 2025:

An Intro to LGBTQ2S+ Clients in Healthcare

Languages in the Workplace

October 2025:

A Long Way to Go: Confronting Hate & Violence against LGBTQ2S+ Peoples

Working Towards Safety, Inclusion & Quality Care for LGBTQ2S+ Clients (Inclusive Language)

Languages in the Workplace

November 2025:

Microaggression/Upstander Intervention (X4)

Languages in the Workplace

Gender-Affirming Care

Intimacy & Sexuality in Residential Care Environments

January 2026:

Intimacy & Sexuality in Residential Care Environments

Trauma-Informed Data Collection & Consent

February 12, 2026:

Presented to Diagnostic Imaging Staff “Languages in The Workplace”

Policy Updates

Team members were involved in the review and updates of the following policies:

- Request for MAiD: reviewed and updated
- Advanced Care Planning: annual review
- Personal Directive: Policy retired; PSD created and now being reviewed
- Early Management of Complicated Pregnancies: Policy reviewed and approved with no changes; related PSDs being reviewed by physicians
- Medical Cannabis: PSD approved

Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD)

The Ethics and Discernment Centre continues to monitor legal and policy developments concerning Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) in Canada. On March 18, 2026, the Government of Alberta introduced the *Safeguards for Last Resort Termination of Life Act (Bill 18)*. This legislation proposes restrictions beyond the federal MAiD framework, including limiting eligibility to situations in which natural death is reasonably foreseeable within 12 months and permanently prohibiting MAiD where mental illness is the sole underlying medical condition. Bill 18 also proposes to formally permit healthcare providers and facilities to decline involvement in MAiD. In parallel, the Centre monitored a B.C. Supreme Court case challenging a faith-based health care provider organization’s refusal to provide on-site MAiD. In legal tension are the plaintiff’s assertion of Charter rights to dignity, autonomy, and security of the person, and the organization’s contended institutional conscience rights. This case has become an issue of national interest with implications for faith-based health-care facilities across the country.

Nationally, the status of MAiD for mental illness as a sole underlying condition remains in a state of deliberate delay and ongoing evaluation. Although Parliament passed Bill C-62 in 2024 to allow MAiD for this category of patients, the federal government has twice postponed implementation, with the current eligibility date set for March 17, 2027. Federal committees and Health Canada have emphasized the need for robust safeguards, practitioner training, oversight mechanisms, and further consultation before any expansion proceeds. Recent policy debates, including federal Bill C-218, seek to permanently pause MD-SUMC eligibility due to persistent concerns about vulnerability, suicidality, and health system readiness. As of 2026, individuals whose sole underlying condition is a mental illness remain ineligible for MAiD across Canada, while governments continue to weigh ethical,

clinical, and legal implications of potential future expansion.

Covenant continues to respond to people in our care who request medically assisted death. Teams seek to understand the nature of the person's request while appropriately addressing their pain and symptom management needs.

Empower

Launch of Ethics Consultation Program Review and Evaluation

In the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the Ethics and Discernment Centre reached a significant milestone with the formal launch of its Ethics Consultation Program Evaluation. This initiative represents a deliberate step forward in strengthening the quality, consistency, and impact of ethics services across the organization. As demand for ethics consultation continued to grow in complexity and scope, the need for a structured and evidence-informed approach to evaluating these services became increasingly essential.

The program evaluation was designed to assess how effectively ethics consultations support patients, families, staff, and leadership in navigating complex ethical situations. Grounded in best practices and guided by principles of accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement, the evaluation framework examines key dimensions of the consultation process, including accessibility, timeliness, stakeholder satisfaction, quality of ethical analysis, and outcomes.

Mission Integration

Over the past year, the following issues required attention from the EDC to ensure alignment with our mission, vision and values:

- Maternal health
- Free birthing
- Indigenous midwifery
- Complex discharge
- The Compassionate Intervention Act

Diversity and Inclusion

The Centre's commitment to fostering psychologically and culturally safe care environments is rooted in the fundamental calls of Catholic Health Care in Canada: to respect human dignity, foster trust in care, and promote justice. This year Covenant took key steps to integrate, in tangible ways, these commitments into our daily practice. The Centre is privileged to support a range of initiatives that translate these three calls into tangible

benefit for our patients, residents, and staff.

Working Groups:

The 2025-26 fiscal year marked a significant milestone as Covenant's working groups –The Removing Systemic Barriers Working Group and the Learning and Behavior Change Working Group – completed their 18-month mandates. Key progress includes recommending the adoption of multi-language signage across our various sites adapted to local community contexts and compositions. Additionally, curriculum for Trauma Informed Care was identified and three staff have received 'train-the-trainer' education to bring the learning and curriculum to our clinical teams.

Education:

The Ethics Centre formally integrated the delivery of Diversity and Inclusion education and facilitated learning into its education plan. Topics were identified through contributions of staff and leaders at the 2025 Diversity and Inclusion Planning Day in June. This year's range of topics fostered awareness of microaggressions, unconscious biases, and effective collaboration with language interpreters. Additionally, subject matter expertise and experience was offered through guest presenters to enhance learning related to Truth and Reconciliation, Disabilities, Neurodivergence, Deaf culture, health concerns impacting Black community members, and care for those experiencing addiction and mental illness. These sessions have been well attended and are part of the Centre's contributions to fostering a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all who receive and provide care at Covenant.

Support Networks:

The advancements made this year are a testament to the enduring relationships and networks of dedicated staff and community members committed to social justice and equity within Covenant. Our organization continues to be enriched by the guidance of three staff-based Advisory Bodies (Black, Indigenous, and LGBTQ2S+). The year is marked by the contributions of Advisory Body members through the sharing of subject matter expertise and experience, relationships and network building, and wisdom essential to the development of welcoming care environments.

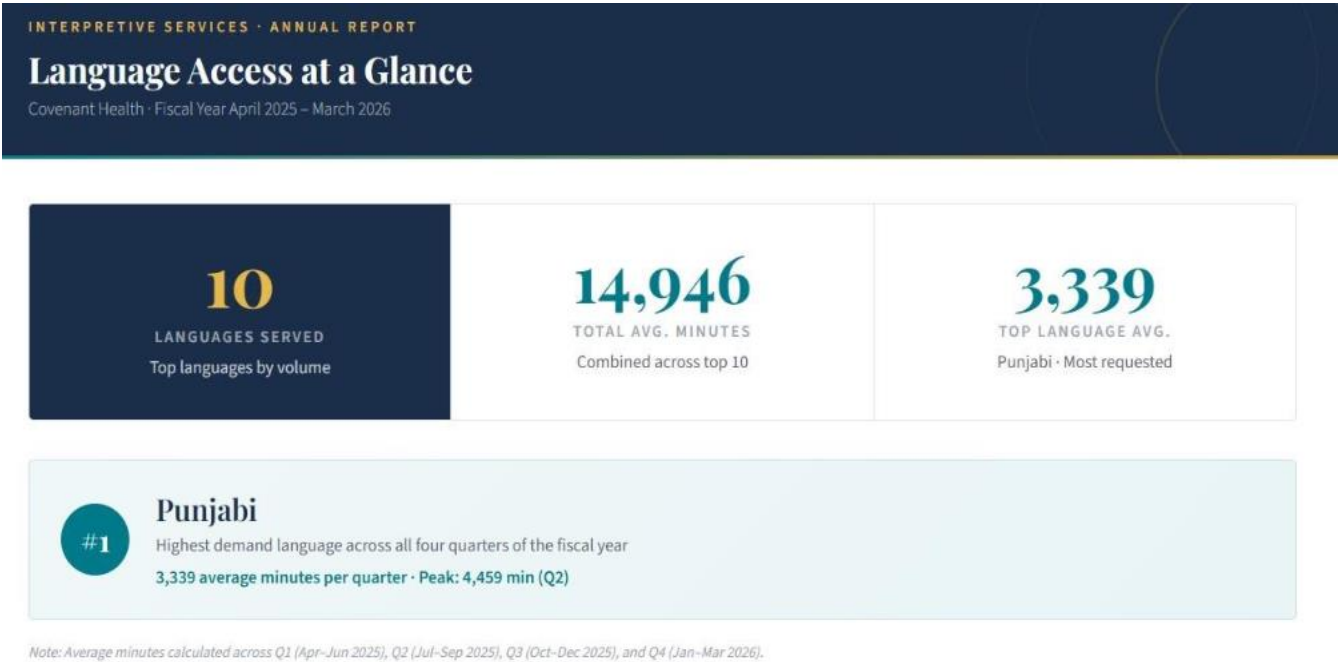
Structure:

Collective efforts to integrate principles of diversity and inclusion have matured significantly over the past three and a half years. We have moved beyond the initial establishment of frameworks toward a structure that more deeply recognizes the unique contributions of all who answer the call to care. Building on the previous year's momentum, Covenant has bolstered the structural supports that ensure safer care environments through the

integration of a Human Resources Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Consultant.

Interpreter Services Summary

As Alberta continues to attract new people to the province, the diversity of language needs to provide care grows. Interpretive and translation services have become a vital component of safe and equitable care. This year, the structural improvements we implemented, including the expanded use of the LanguageLine app and specialized job aids (Interpreter on Wheels) have resulted in a consistent and robust response to our community's diverse linguistic needs. Efforts are ongoing to find a viable solution that will enable healthcare providers to access interpreter services directly from patient records.

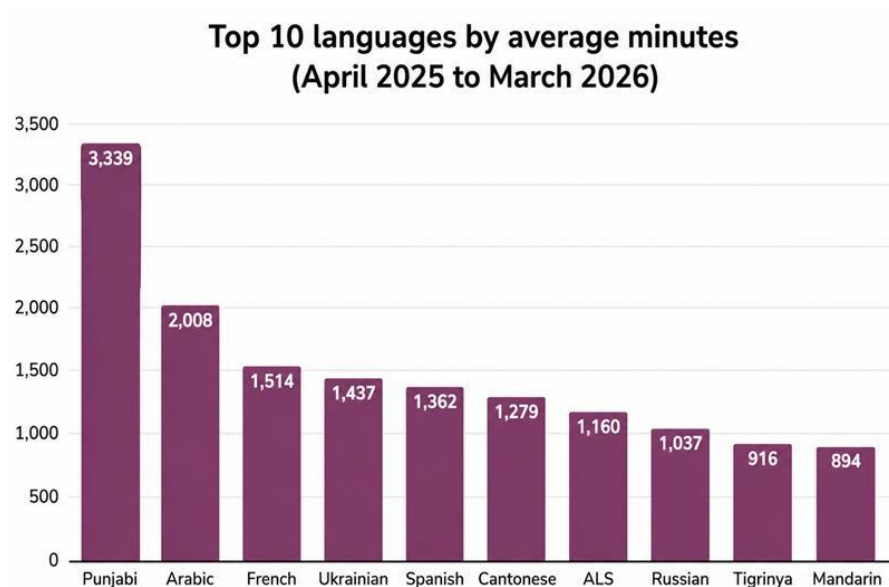


Linguistic Diversity: We provided support in 57 distinct languages, reflecting the rich and evolving demographics of the communities we serve.

Top 10 Requested Languages: The highest demand for services continues to be in Punjabi and Arabic followed by French, Ukrainian, Spanish, Cantonese, ASL, Russian, Tigrigna and Mandarin.



Top 10 Languages Requested



Total Interpretive Encounters: Our team processed **7242 calls**

Total Minutes of Support: Staff utilized **107, 257 minutes** of professional interpretation, ensuring nuanced and accurate communication during clinical and administrative interactions.

In-Person ASL Support: We successfully fulfilled **21 requests** for in-person American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation, maintaining our commitment to accessibility for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community.

Service Volume by Language & Quarter



- A few things worth noting:
- **Punjabi** is by far the most-used language, nearly double Arabic in second place.
 - **Q3 (Oct-Dec 2025)** shows notably lower minutes across most languages.
 - **ASL** has an interesting spike in Q3, which may reflect a specific patient situation or data capture change.
 - **Russian** dropped significantly in Q3-Q4 compared to Q1-Q2.

Acknowledgments

We were honoured this year, once again, by the many hours and efforts contributed to the work of the Centre by dozens of volunteers. Our report is, if nothing else, an acknowledgment of the commitment and support of both Covenant Health's staff and physicians as well as our gracious, dedicated community. We acknowledge the significant contributions to the Ethics and Discernment Centre of the following groups and individuals.

Banff Mineral Springs Hospital Ethics Committee Members

Martin Durand
Bonny Geyer
Brenda Poole
Kristin Lenarduzzi
Minnie Holloway
Cecilia Marion
Madison Chisholm
Ogechukwu Ezeh
Dr. Eleanor Stewart
Marie Stephanie Tremblay
Richard Kline
Margie Smith
Margarette Moar-Bell
Lori Thorburn

Covenant Health Rural Ethics Network Members

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Sherry Lucas
Anita Layh
Nicholas Wasylowich
Thomas Metlin
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Carol Lajoie
Dwayne Buhler
Lindsay Rypien
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Shelley Franklin
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Dr. Eleanor Stewart
Scott Stewart
Jon Gilchrist
Racheal Charles
Linda Chow-Turner

Edmonton Area Ethics Committee Members

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Andre Michael
Bonnie Tejada
Cecilia Marion
Charlotte Oostveen
Claire Johnson
Danean Millard
David Cheung
Dr. Eleanor Stewart
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Natalie Houseman
Ogechukwu Ezeh
Sandy Ayre
Scott Stewart
Roshant Vig
Rosemary Malowany
Lisette Guajardo Araya
Garry Engler

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Quarterly Seminar presenters and contributors

Cecilia Marion
Joby Scaria
Dr. Eleanor Stewart
Michelle Hart
Scott Stewart
Jon Gilchrist
Racheal Charles
Linda Chow-Turner

Trochu

Amber Ruben
Kasie Brewster
Heather Pascal
Nick Wasylowich

Vegreville

Brenda Poole
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Lyndsay Rypien
Wendy Thostenon

Rural Roadshow Planning Committee

Lethbridge and Medicine Hat

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Tammy Rossing

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