Partnerships Strategy
2016-2021

September 1, 2016
1. Executive Summary

Every interaction, every moment of care, and every decision builds relationships and understanding, and helps us improve quality. This calls for a thoughtful and intentional approach to engagement, leveraging and fostering the unique roles of our partners and partnerships in supporting patients, residents and families.

The purpose of this strategy is to outline goals and actions Covenant (Covenant Health, Covenant Care, and Covenant Living) will pursue to enhance key partnerships and create true Communities of Care for those we serve, focused on three key groups: (1) patients, residents and families; (2) communities; and (3) provincial-level leaders in Alberta’s health system. At the same time, this strategy is not about a series of projects with start and end dates: it is about building shared capacity across Covenant, and our partners, to understand our impact on those we serve, and to consistently make responsible and ethical decisions that optimize care quality.

Implementation of this strategy will be coordinated closely with related strategies, including People and Culture Strategy and Covenant’s Advocacy Strategy – both of which address significant components of the integrated, patient-centred partnership model included in this document.

- Respect;
- Quality focus;
- Participation;
- Build from our strengths;
- Keeping the patient in the centre;
- Partnership as a shared ethic; and
- Responsiveness.

The patient and family experience of care is the core of what our founding congregations built and fostered and what our mission and values continue to call on us to create every day. By continuing to build and strengthen our relationships with key partners, we will sustain and enhance the unique contribution Covenant Health makes to our province’s health system now and in the future.

Given this focus, Partnerships Strategy aims to achieve the following three goals.

1. We will partner with those we serve in the design, delivery and evaluation of care and service.
2. Build strong, productive work relationships with Alberta Health Services and Government of Alberta.
3. Build organizational capacity to nurture and grow strategic partnerships.
2. Introduction

Covenant (Covenant Health, Covenant Care, and Covenant Living) has an established legacy of serving those most in need, delivering the highest quality care and service, working as a valued partner, and being at the forefront of innovation in the health care system. To ensure we are best able to carry out our mission and meet the health needs of Albertans, we recently renewed our Strategic Plan, including our organizational vision:

Inspired by our mission of service, we will be leaders and partners in transforming health care and creating vibrant communities of health and healing.

The Strategic Plan is oriented around four core strategic directions, as follows.

- **Serve** – We will strengthen our mission and live our values to meet the needs of those we serve through excellence in care, an engaged team and wise use of our resources.
- **Contribute** – We will leverage our legacy to maximize the strategic contribution of Catholic health care.
- **Grow** – We will seek out and respond to the needs of our communities, especially vulnerable and marginalized populations.
- **Transform** – We will create systems of care that enable people and communities to be healthy.

Within each strategic direction are several strategic objectives that will shape our priorities and guide our actions as we move forward.

This Partnerships Strategy aligns with the strategic direction to “Contribute,” and is focused on helping us realize the following Strategic Objective:

“We will partner with patients, residents, families, communities and key contributors to achieve health and healing.”

3. Purpose

Every interaction, every moment of care, and every decision builds relationships and understanding, and helps us improve quality. This calls for a thoughtful and intentional approach to engagement, leveraging and fostering the unique roles of our partners and partnerships in supporting patients, residents and families.

The following diagram depicts Covenant’s integrated, person-centred partnership model, consisting of five key groups with whom we work in partnership to deliver quality care. At the centre of the diagram are those we serve; while the outer four rings include our partners in service.
Building on this model, the purpose of this strategy is to outline goals and actions Covenant will pursue to enhance key partnerships, to create true Communities of Care for those we serve. At the same time, this strategy is not about a series of projects with start and end dates: it is about building shared capacity across Covenant, and our partners, to understand our impact on those we serve, and to consistently make responsible and ethical decisions about how we work together to optimize care quality.

4. Current State Analysis

The following analysis identifies the strategic opportunities that exist for Covenant to strengthen our partnerships with three key groups: (1) patients, residents and families (the centre of the partnership model), (2) communities (included in the third ring of the model), and (3) provincial-level leaders in Alberta’s health system (the fourth ring from the centre of the model).

Patient Partnership Opportunities

Patient engagement has been shown to lead to better clinical outcomes, safer care, and improved satisfaction and experience. There is increasing recognition of the valuable perspective patients and family members have of their healthcare experiences, and the importance of reflecting this in immediate care delivery as well as system planning. Seeing our work as service and partnership with those we serve is a cornerstone in values-based, responsive, informed, and safe healthcare delivery.
In the United States, many European countries, and Australia, positive patient experience and patient engagement are considered central indicators of health care system performance. This emerging trend is reflected in 2016 Accreditation Canada standards, which include a strong client-centered focus from the point of service to leadership and governance. Accreditation Canada states that such an approach should guide “all aspects of planning, delivering and evaluating services, with the foundation being mutually-beneficial partnerships between patients, families and service providers.”

Patient, resident and family satisfaction is also an increasingly prominent provincial government performance measure. Dedicated resources within government and through the Health Quality Council of Alberta have been mandated to measure and report on patient, resident and family experience. This has raised the accountability of healthcare providers and facilitated public discourse around acceptable standards of care. The Alberta Health Act, Health Charter and Regulations also encourage patients to become more involved in their care and informed as to their rights and obligations.

Community Partnership Opportunities

Community-level partnerships are proven in their ability to build strong and integrated systems around the needs of individuals and families, ensuring they are supported in their homes and in their communities to achieve wellness at all stages of life, and across the care continuum.

Covenant maintains a strong community presence. This includes 22 health care sites across the province, operated in partnership with many health providers, organizations and agencies. Our governance structure also ensures a strong connection to the communities we serve. Over 100 Community and Foundation Board members in 14 locations are an important voice for their communities, participating in strategic planning and engaging their fellow residents in identifying needs and building support.

Provincial and Strategic Partnership Opportunities

Covenant works in close partnership with Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services to respond head-on to the challenges and opportunities presented by changing demographics, technology and consumer expectations. Increasingly, these trends call for transformational change to drive new models of care that are more sustainable and effective. This depends on collaborative partnerships to nimbly solve problems as new needs, opportunities, and challenges arise; and create synergies as we pursue opportunities to lead and support transformational change.
5. Strategic Alignment

The patient partnerships dimension of this strategy is closely linked to Covenant’s Quality Strategy and Framework. As depicted in the diagram below, “Engaged With Those We Serve” is one of the three core principles of the Quality Framework. The development of a Patient Engagement Framework is a common project under both strategies.

More broadly, it is critical for the Partnerships Strategy to be well coordinated and aligned with other strategies and initiatives to be successfully implemented and achieve its goals. The strategies listed below are of particular importance, many addressing components of the partnership model that are not addressed here – such as Covenant’s People and Culture Strategy, which focuses on the role of Covenant staff, physicians, and volunteers in shaping patient experiences.

- People and Culture Strategy;
- Government of Alberta Collaboration Plan
- Alberta Health Services Partnership Plan
- Palliative and End of Life Care Strategy;
- Care that Honours Seniors Strategy;
- Advocacy Strategy; and
- External and partner initiatives, including:
  - The Alberta Health Services People First Strategy;
  - Catholic Health Alliance of Canada strategies;
  - Catholic Community Engagement Strategy; and
  - The Providence Health Care Patient Engagement Strategy (through a partnership arrangement).

![Diagram]

- Achieving Quality
- Organized for Quality & Safety
- Engaged with Those we Serve
- Supported by Information
6. Strategy Goals and Measures

This section identifies the principal goals to be pursued under the Partnerships Strategy, along with the key milestones that will indicate progress towards each, given the strategic partnership opportunities outlined above.

The strategy aims to achieve the following four goals.

1. We will partner with those we serve in the design, delivery and evaluation of care and service.

2. Build strong, productive work relationships with Alberta Health Services and Government of Alberta.

3. Build organizational capacity to nurture and grow strategic partnerships.

The table below outlines the key measures and milestones that will be used to indicate progress towards the above goals.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Measures</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. We will partner with those we serve in the design, delivery and evaluation of care and service.</td>
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7. Guiding Principles

This strategy is firmly anchored by the values of Covenant and the calling of Catholic health care providers to respect dignity, foster trust in care and promote justice. The following principles will guide implementation of the strategy.

- **Respect**: Believing that all people are made in the likeness of God and have intrinsic worth and dignity, we are committed to treating all people with profound respect, regardless of their circumstances, physical and cognitive ability, race, religion, gender, or socio-economic status. We respect patients, residents, family and staff, and promote patient and resident choices in a spirit of hospitality and service, including honouring diverse cultural practices and informed choices. Respectful relationships are fundamental to engagement. They are relationships in which dignity is preserved by sharing of information, participation and informed decision making.

- **Quality focus**: Quality improvement will be informed by the lived experience of those we serve. Quality will also be informed by health care provider paradigms such as the Covenant Quality Framework, Health Quality Council of Alberta Matrix for Health and other leading quality models.

- **Participation**: We are committed to ensuring residents, families and staff are empowered to use their voice through mutual engagement and participatory decision-making, to promote shared ownership of the mission and an unwavering commitment to quality and safety. We welcome residents, patients and their families as participants in care who best understand their goals and choices. Each of us brings unique perspectives, experience and wisdom. No one person has the whole definition for how we can best journey together as a community. As each person brings their gifts, together we create a healing community. Each member of the community has a different function, bringing different gifts.

- **Build from our strengths**: Where possible, this strategy will build on and expand and existing processes within the organization and leverage alliances with other partner organizations.

- **Keeping the patient in the centre**: The ultimate beneficiaries of our partnerships are those we serve, even as we pursue strategic partnerships across multiple levels and subjects, from the front lines to the Board.

- **Partnership as a shared ethic**: This strategy will guide us as we develop foundational capacity to work as partners at all levels of the organization. This will include increased capacity across Covenant’s leadership team to coordinate communication efforts, better enabling all leaders to work with a range of partners outside the organization.

- **Responsiveness**: Create and foster a health care and service delivery system that is responsive to the evolving needs of those we serve and of the community.
8. Risk

If there is insufficient focus on engagement and partnerships, the following risks may be realized.

- Lack of a coordinated, corporate approach to engaging patients and families, leading to variability in practice and inconsistency in care experience for patients, residents and family members;
- Various sites, programs and units implementing their own strategies and activities (e.g. patient surveys), leading to duplicated efforts and inconsistent information being collected;
- Failure to meet new Accreditation Required Organizational Practices and Standards related to client-centered care;
- Misalignment with emerging priorities of Alberta Health Services and other health system partners;
- Missed opportunity to learn from and engage patients, residents and their families in the care journey;
- Missed opportunity to collect additional data (numerical and narrative) concerning the quality of our care and the patient/resident/family experience of that care;
- Internal transformation efforts may be disconnected from needs in the broader community and provincial health systems without effective engagement with strategic partners;
- Solutions to complex or new and emerging problems may not be identified, or have their intended impact, without the involvement of key partners; and
- A lack of awareness among strategic partners regarding Covenant’s unique contribution and value-add in the broader health system may limit the scope and scale of our ability to contribute to the health system of the future.

“Our distinctive vocation in Christian health care is not so much to heal better or more efficiently than anyone else; it is to bring comfort to people by giving them an experience that will strengthen their confidence in life. The ultimate goal of our care is to give those who are ill, though our care, a reason to hope.”

*Health Ethics Guide*
9. Conclusion

Partnership with patients must shape and inform all that we do, from the bedside delivery of care throughout the care journey to broader-scale program planning and system reform. The patient and family experience of care is fundamental to who we are at Covenant. It is what our founding congregations built and fostered and what our mission and values continue to call on us to create every day. To do this successfully, we must be willing – and well prepared – to be good partners at all levels of the system, and to all who come through our doors.

Moreover, strategic partnerships are fundamental to our ability to support and lead transformation in the health care system. By continuing to build and strengthen our relationships with key partners, we will sustain and enhance the unique contribution Covenant makes to our province’s health system.

Reference material:


1The word “patient” refers to anyone who receives care or services through Covenant Health. The terms patient, resident or client are used interchangeably, and include family members or supporters.
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Strategic Direction
CONTRIBUTE

Strategic Objectives
We will give voice to those who are vulnerable or voiceless through public engagement and advocacy.

We will deepen the understanding of the strategic contribution of Catholic health care in Alberta and across Canada.

Why this matters
To fulfill our mission, we must influence and shape health policy and address pressing social issues.

Goals
• We will partner with those we serve in the design, delivery and evaluation of care and service.
• Build strong, productive work relationships with Alberta Health Services and Government of Alberta.
• Build organizational capacity to nurture and grow strategic partnerships.