

Building Compassionate Communities

2022 Forum Action Planning Report Addendum

April 2024

BUILDING COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITIES:
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Background

On March 19, 2022, the Covenant Health Palliative Institute hosted their inaugural Compassionate Communities Forum with the theme of ***Building Compassionate Communities***.

The full-day virtual event's goals were to bring together stakeholders with an interest in supporting Albertans through serious illness, dying, caregiving and grief, raise awareness of the Compassionate Communities movement, and invite feedback on the resources under development by the Palliative Institute. These resources include the [My Wishes Alberta Workbook](#) and the [Plan Ahead Toolkit](#) that support Albertans to plan for the future, the [Understanding Palliative Care](#) online module for those who wish to learn more about what palliative care is and the support it offers, the [PalliLearn](#) series of short online courses that equip people to be compassionate community members, and our efforts to elevate [Death Cafes](#) in Alberta so that individuals can grow more comfortable talk about death and dying.

The program included workshops designed to welcome suggestions and comment on the adoption, adaptation and promotion of these resources across Alberta, World Café-style discussions on opportunities, challenges and recommendations from the perspective of key communities, and a panel discussion with three leaders of innovative Compassionate Communities programs from across Canada. Forum attendees also heard from international leaders in the Compassionate Communities movement: Dr. Allan Kellehear, Dr. Cathy Payne from the All-Ireland Institute for Hospice and Palliative Care, and Shyla Mills from Palliative Care Queensland.

An [action planning report](#) was completed following the event to summarize learnings, considerations, and next steps. This report includes 11 recommendations that have guided the work of the Covenant Health Palliative Institute since that time. As an addendum to this report, the following will document our progress on each of those recommendations as of March 2024.

Progress Report

The action planning report developed after the 2022 forum contained 11 recommendations that guided the work of the Covenant Health Palliative Institute for the subsequent two years and beyond. Below is an assessment on the progress made relative to each recommendation.

Recommendation #1: Encourage the use of five resource and educational tools by legal, financial planning and insurance sector professionals.

Since 2022, the Covenant Health Palliative Institute has been engaged in disseminating our tools to these priority professions. This has included direct outreach to local, provincial, and national industry and member associations representing these professionals, as well as organizations that help connect Albertans with these professional services.

We have attended and showcased our tools at an annual conference hosted by a member association for financial planners and have worked with legal aid and legal education organizations in Alberta to support their professionals by making these tools available to them. We have learned from these interactions that the **Plan Ahead Toolkit** and, in particular, the **My Wishes Workbook**, are two tools that are useful for these professionals. In addition to being available online, both tools are also available in print and the Compassionate Alberta website has a [dedicated page](#) for professionals and organizations to order these materials.

Recommendation #2: Promote the benefits of having conversations about wishes, values and beliefs between Albertans and legal, financial planning and insurance sector professionals.

In our engagement with stakeholders representing health professions, community organizations, and other groups, the Covenant Health Palliative Institute has continually emphasized the important role of lawyers, financial planners, and other similar professions in advance care planning (ACP). Albertans' interactions with these professionals are often a touchpoint for beginning to think about health, legal, personal, and financial planning—those many processes that comprise ACP. For use by these professionals as well as all Albertans, we have developed a [one-page brief](#) that summarizes each of our five tools and links to relevant web pages on the Compassionate Alberta website that provide further information.

We have maintained a strategy of outreach to these professionals and the Alberta-based organizations that represent them, including inviting them to subscribe to our bi-monthly [Compassionate Alberta newsletter](#) and inviting them to opportunities to engage with us further.

Recommendation #3: Clarify what is essential advance care planning documentation in Alberta.

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In Alberta, there are five documents that are considered essential to support a good advance care plan:

- a [personal directive](#) that outlines a person's health and personal care instructions as well as the person they want to make decisions for them if they cannot;
- a [Goals of Care Designation \(GCD\) order](#), provided a discussion why the person's physician has resulted in a recommendation to create one;
- a [Green Sleeve](#) to store the person's personal directive and GCD order;
- a [will](#) that identifies how to distribute a person's possessions and property when they die and who will be responsible for carrying out these instructions;
- an [enduring power of attorney](#) that records a person's financial instructions and who they want to make decisions for them should that become necessary.

The distinction of what constitutes essential ACP documentation, and how realities in Alberta may be different than elsewhere, was an important consideration when finalizing the Palliative Institute's **Plan Ahead Toolkit**. This toolkit contains comprehensive, Alberta-specific information on health, personal, financial and estate planning, and is supplemented by an [online resource directory](#).

The toolkit aims to empower community organizations and other associations to bring people together around the topic of planning ahead. By providing education and resources on these important topics in one concise yet comprehensive document, this toolkit can help organizations provide clarity, address misconceptions, and empower their community members to feel more comfortable about planning ahead.

The [Plan Ahead Checklist](#) was developed out of the Plan Ahead Toolkit as a means for Albertans to better understand what constitutes essential ACP documentation in Alberta while providing a concise means for tracking each of the individual steps that support good financial planning, estate planning, and health and personal planning.

Recommendation #4: Move discussions of advance care planning and legal documentation upstream.

The **My Wishes Workbook** is a tool that has helped move the ACP discussions upstream from the health care system. It is an accessible, easy-to-understand resource that walks the reader through a series of questions that encourages them to think about and record their values, wishes, and goals. For professionals with public and client interactions that touch on these sensitive topics, but who themselves may not have the time, resources, or confidence to have these discussions, the My Wishes Workbook is a helpful tool that a client or member of the public can take with them to complete on their own and/or with family, friends, or others close to them.

Published in May 2023, the **My Wishes Workbook** has been downloaded more than 200 times from the Compassionate Alberta website and more than 800 printed copies have been

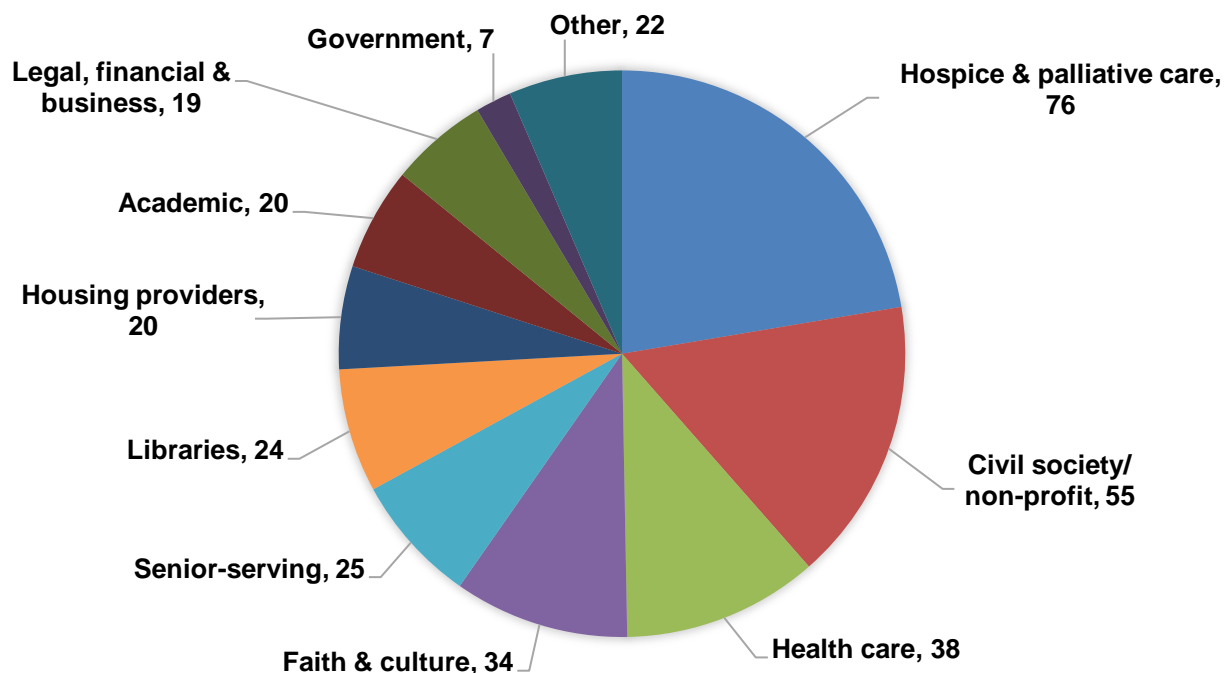
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distributed as of March 2024. The Palliative Institute continues to respond to requests for this and other printed materials produced to move the conversation upstream. In addition to the workbook, these materials include a brochure on ACP in Alberta as well as bookmarks for each of our five tools with QR codes that direct individuals to the tools' dedicated pages on the Compassionate Alberta website.

To streamline the process, we created [a web page](#) that provides details on the print materials we have available and instructions on how to request or order them.

Our efforts to engage sectors from outside of healthcare to discuss and promote ACP education and resources with Albertans have resulted in us connecting and partnering with 340 organizations, more than 300 of which are not directly healthcare related.

PARTNERING ORGANIZATION BY SECTOR (N=340)



Recommendation #5: Amplify information and resources to allied professionals.

The Palliative Institute has established a strong relationship with the Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) network that exists across the province. This has resulted in a webinar presentation on our five tools hosted by the Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta (FCSSAA) for FCSS staff from across Alberta, hosting a booth at the Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta's annual conference, and Plan Ahead presentations hosted at some local FCSS offices. We have also engaged other

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community organizations with a similar goal of educating their teams and members about our tools, such as local seniors associations.

Recognizing the important role of the funeral planning industry within this space, we have partnered with the Cooperative Memorial Society and Alberta-based funeral celebrants to share our tools with their team, their members, and the Albertans who seek their services. We have also continued to work closely with other organizations who are active in the space of growing community support such as Healthy Aging Alberta.

Recommendation #6: Engage broader stakeholder groups involved in palliative care and advance care planning.

Groups recommended by participants as part of this recommendation included end-of-life doulas, mental health groups, caregiver associations, and similar organizations that support Albertans receiving palliative, end-of-life, and hospice care.



We were fortunate to have a significant number of end-of-life doulas at our 2022 forum and have remained engaged with these individuals through our Compassionate Alberta newsletter and targeted e-blasts that aim to share important updates on our tools and activities as well as relevant initiatives championed by other organizations across Alberta. We have also increased our engagement with caregivers and groups that support them, including Caregivers Alberta

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and the Alzheimer Society of Alberta & Northwest Territories. We have maintained our engagement with local hospice societies from across the province and have a close working relationship with the Alberta Hospice Palliative Care Association.

Recommendation #7: Cross-community elevation of existing initiatives and events to promote and foster the Compassionate Communities movement

This recommendation informed our decision to include the Compassionate Communities Showcase as part of the [2023 Compassionate Communities Forum](#). A request for submissions was issued in advance of the event, inviting local and provincial organizations from across Alberta to showcase at our event a program or initiative that exemplifies Compassionate Communities. A total of 21 submissions were received and 12 were chosen to participate in the Compassionate Communities Showcase.

The Compassionate Alberta newsletter has been a means for elevating the great work that other Alberta-based groups are engaged in, with a section dedicated to community news and initiatives. We have also connected with numerous Alberta-based organizations to amplify our message by having our tools included in their communications such as newsletters, blogs, and online magazines.

Recommendation #8: Leverage the role of libraries as community hubs and librarians as community facilitators.

In May 2023, we attended the Edmonton Public Library (EPL) professional development day to introduce their team to our five tools and discuss how libraries' roles as community hubs aligns well with the Compassionate Communities approach. EPL has subsequently included our tools and resources in a number of blog posts and reading lists they manage, and have hosted one of the [PalliLearn](#) courses. EPL also hosts a *Conversations about Death and Dying Book Club* with book selections that focus on topics of death and dying.

Understanding the reach that libraries have, including in rural and remote communities, we have also included librarians and library managers in our communications such as our Compassionate Alberta newsletter.

Recommendation #9: Identify and pursue opportunities with potential community facilitators.

Leveraging our partnership with Pallium Canada and the Palliative Care ECHO Project, we have twice been able to deliver the full suite of the [PalliLearn](#) course series in the form of five sequential online webinars. PalliLearn, an Alberta adaptation of a program first developed by Palliative Care Queensland, aims to equip individuals to be active compassionate community members. When offering PalliLearn online, an individual webinar session is dedicated to each of the four courses: *Your Role in a Compassionate Community*; *What is Palliative Care?*; *How to Have Conversations about Dying and Grief*; and *What Matters Most?* Professionals and

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members of the public are welcome to attend any of the courses they feel would grow their learning and are encouraged to attend all of them if interested.

These courses are followed by a fifth webinar aimed at teaching those who have attended all sessions to become PalliLearn course facilitators equipped with the understanding, resources, and support to deliver course content to their own communities. As of March 2024, 20 health care and allied health professionals from across Alberta have been trained as PalliLearn facilitators.



The **Plan Ahead Toolkit** also empowers community facilitators as it is designed for community organizations to use its content as a means to educate the public about advance care planning. Additionally, the [Understanding Palliative Care](#) online, interactive learning module helps the user learn more about what palliative care is and the support it offers. While this is available to and can be used by any member of the public, community organizations may also use it similar to the Plan Ahead Toolkit by absorbing and sharing the content it provides to their teams, clients, and members.

Recommendation #10: Proactively engage and meaningfully involve Indigenous communities, diverse faith communities, and non-religious Albertans.

Throughout 2022 and 2023, we reached out to more than 50 faith and cultural associations from across the province to better ensure that diverse perspectives and approaches are reflected in

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our tools and other activities. Some challenges emerged as many shared that resources were limited and efforts were focused inwards as a result of post-COVID realities. While a number of these organizations have provided direction and remain actively engaged with us, we recognize that more work needs to be done to better reflect diverse perspectives.

The Palliative Institute is also in the process of finalizing an inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility toolkit that aims to guide community organizations in inviting, learning, and reflecting diverse perspectives in the work they are doing.

The Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative has been an important partner of the Covenant Health Palliative Institute, and participated in our 2023 Compassionate Communities Forum by sharing their processes and successes as part of the Compassionate Communities Showcase

Recommendation #11: Elevate training opportunities for faith leaders, volunteers and end-of-life doulas.

Our efforts supporting [Death Cafes](#) in Alberta are one way we have tried to elevate opportunities for individuals to provide effective support within their communities. While Death Cafe is a grassroots initiative that was founded in the United Kingdom and spread across the globe, we have focused on expanding opportunities to host and attend these events across Alberta.

These efforts have included hosting a Facebook group to increase awareness of Death Cafes taking place across the province and attracting more individuals as facilitators for these events. This Facebook group provides prospective facilitators access to information about Death Cafes, tips on how to effectively facilitate a Death Cafe, and networking opportunities with other Alberta-based facilitators to improve understanding and confidence in hosting a Death Cafe. From Taber to Peace River, over 100 Death Cafes were hosted in Alberta in 2023.

As previously mentioned, our **PalliLearn** courses are also designed to train attendees to become facilitators of future PalliLearn sessions in the future. PalliLearn facilitator training sessions have taken place twice so far: once in Fall 2023 and again in Winter 2024. Caregivers Alberta will offer the PalliLearn courses in Spring 2024.

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Next Steps

This event in March 2022 was followed by a second Compassionate Communities Forum on November 30, 2023. With a theme of **Growing and Sustaining Compassionate Communities**, it continued the work of the first forum by bringing together community organization teams, health care providers, professionals, caregivers and others interested in improving public support for palliative care and advance care planning for a day of inspirational discussion, knowledge-building sessions, and opportunities to build connections. A summary report that details learnings and next steps from this event is available on the Compassionate Alberta website's [forum web page](#).

Readers are encouraged to check out the [Compassionate Alberta website](#). This website hosts not only our five tools but also links to the numerous resources championed by other organizations across the province that support people in times of serious illness, grief, and loss. In the spirit of the Compassionate Communities movement, the website is designed to elevate the great work done by others while providing resources and support to fill the gaps.

We are always interested in hearing about what other organizations are doing to promote Compassionate Communities, and welcome feedback on what we at the Covenant Health Palliative Institute could be doing differently. Please reach out to share with us any insights you might have by emailing Palliative.Institute@covenanthealth.ca.

Conclusion

While the Compassionate Communities Forum in March 2022 and the engagement and activities that resulted from it have been successful in promoting the Compassionate Communities movement, more remains to be done to grow and sustain Compassionate Communities across the province. We are encouraged by the interest numerous partners have expressed in the resources developed by the Palliative Institute as well as by the countless initiatives championed by other organizations and groups from across Alberta.

The Covenant Health Palliative Institute remains committed to empowering those in Alberta and elsewhere in their efforts to expand the reach of this movement and support individuals to plan ahead, build community support, improve their understanding, and provide comfort in talking about these important topics.

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Covenant Health is proud to continue our mission to seek out and respond to the palliative care needs of vulnerable populations. Following two decades of establishing an international reputation, Covenant Health launched the Palliative Institute in October 2012 with a strategic plan to “be leaders in robust palliative and end-of-life care and advocate for it to be an essential part of the health system.”

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