

About PFSP



ALBERTA
MEDICAL
ASSOCIATION

Physician and
Family Support
Program

What We Do



24/7 Assistance Line

- Peer to peer support
- Funding for counselling services



Education

Activities to promote prevention and awareness



Case Coordination

Service for physicians, residents and medical students with complex health concerns

What Makes PFSP Unique



Peer to Peer Support

Every caller has the opportunity to talk with a physician peer.



Boutique service by the external service provider

We don't use a large call centre. Our service provider will match you to a therapist with expertise in your particular concern. All of our therapists have extensive experience with physicians and their families.

Our Network Supporting Alberta Physicians



Service provider made up of **3 individuals**



Provincial network of **600 + therapists**



A collection of external resources (family doctors, psychiatrists, treatment facilities etc.)

PFSP Team



10 Assessment Physicians



Case Coordination team made up of **4 individuals**



Administrative team made up of **7 individuals**

Who is Eligible for PFSP Services?



Physician Groups

including physicians, residents, medical students



Immediate Family Members

of the physician groups



Third Party Callers

anyone who has a concern for a member of the physician group may access an Assessment Physician to discuss their concerns



Why do People Call the Assistance Line

Most Common Reasons for Calling PFSP

1. Mental Health/Psychiatric Issues
2. Family/Relationships
3. Addictive Disorders
4. Occupational Issues
5. Other Issues
6. Family Physician Requests

PFSP Philosophy & Mission

Philosophy

Supporting the development of effective personal wellness strategies and early intervention

Mission

Support physicians, their immediate families and enhance the quality of patient care and public safety



Where We Came From

- 1983 Physician Assistance Committee (PAC)**
Volunteer program to assist physicians with substance use disorders
- 1997 Physician Support Initiative (PSI)**
24 hour access to assistance line with access to counselling
- 1998 PAC and PSI amalgamate to form PFSP**
Funded by Alberta Health as a part of the benefits stream in the master agreement



What Guides Us

- Report to Alberta Health (funder) and AMA
- Program specific practices and guidelines
- PFSP Advisory Committee
- Program evaluation and client feedback
- College of Physicians and Surgeons (CPSA)
- Privacy and confidentiality laws
- Grant agreement with Alberta Health
- AMA leadership & PFSP administrative team
- Collaborate with Canadian Medical Association (CMA), Federation of Canadian Physician Health Programs (FCPHP), Alberta Medical Association (AMA)



 **Call us toll-free 1.877.SOS.4MDS**
(767).(4637)

24 hours a day | 7 days a week | 365 days a year

The Physician and Family Support Program provides confidential support and help with personal health issues and enhances the quality of patient care and public safety by promoting health and well-being for the medical profession that cares for all Albertans.



Confidentiality Practices



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What you need to know

PFSP 24-Hour Assistance Line

All services on the PFSP Assistance Line are provided by contractors who are external to the PFSP program and to the AMA. When you contact the PFSP Assistance Line, your identity and any other personal information you provide is known only to the Assistance Line operator and the Assessment Physician on-call.

All information shared through the PFSP toll-free Assistance Line is non identifiable by PFSP/AMA and is confidential.

Calls to the PFSP Assistance Line and referrals to our therapists are not documented in the provincial electronic health record.

Case Coordination Service

For members with complex health concerns who enter into Case Coordination (approximately 30-35 physicians in any given year), there is an informed consent process in place to disclose personal information so that the Case Coordination team may liaise with your treatment providers, as well as non-clinical stakeholders who may be involved in more complex situations.

Entering Case Coordination is voluntary. The Case Coordination team will work with you to ensure that you understand what will be shared and the purpose of the disclosure. We will not share information without your consent.

Limits to Confidentiality

If a caller to the PFSP Assistance Line were to disclose that they were at serious risk of harming themselves or someone else, or

that a child in their care were at risk of abuse or neglect, we would be legally and ethically obligated to take reasonable steps to prevent that serious harm. This could include contacting police or other authorities.

CPSA's Physician Health Monitoring Program Info

All physicians in Alberta are bound by the College of Physicians & Surgeons (CPSA) Standards of Practice, which stipulate the reporting requirements regarding physicians' medical conditions.

The Physician Health Monitoring Program (PHMP) of the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta monitors and supports physicians with specified health conditions. This program is entirely separate from PFSP. The only time PHMP may be involved in conjunction with PFSP is if you consent to the sharing of information to support the maintenance of, or return to, safe practice.

Rest Assured, Your Confidentiality is Protected

Physicians are all well versed in the importance and necessity of maintaining and protecting patient confidentiality. As a physician patient it's likely you would be reluctant to confide in a healthcare provider if you did not believe that confidentiality was an unstated assumption. PFSP applies this understanding and value to all of our work with medical students, residents, physicians, and their family members.

Our Privacy Commitment

<https://www.albertadoctors.org/services/pfsp/i-need-help-now>

If you have any questions about how PFSP maintains confidentiality, please reach out to us at 403-228-2880.



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Dealing with Adverse Events, Complaints, and Medical Legal Litigation



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The information found here is intended to provide immediate and useful information for physicians and their families when facing adverse events, complaints, challenges to privileges and medical legal litigation.

What You May Experience

- In adverse situations, you may experience intense emotion and confusion. You may feel disbelief, hurt, anger, sadness, guilt, shame, fear, anxiety and self-doubt.
- You may feel the urge to do something impulsive such as changing the way you practice, but this is not the best time to make significant decisions. Trust that these intense emotions will subside, especially once you've begun receiving the support you need such as legal counsel and counselling.
- Being excessively hard on yourself is unproductive – it can damage your morale and your ability to take action to make things better. Self evaluation, on the other hand, can be a positive motivator for change. Analyzing the incident as to how it happened, why it resulted in a complaint or legal suit, and what can be learned from the experience may even benefit you in the long run.
- Errors and adverse medical outcomes are usually the result of a number of factors. It's reasonable for you to acknowledge your role in the incident. Recognize, though, that others – staff, the hospital, the system and sometimes even the patient – may have played a role.
- You may feel that a complaint or legal suit is a betrayal or an affront in response to the long hours and the personal sacrifices of your career.
- Complaint and legal processes can be time consuming and take longer than you might wish. Focus on one step at a time, with the guidance of your lawyer as well as your counselor (PFSP). This can help prevent putting your life on hold, or dwelling on the “what ifs”.
- Make a point of caring for yourself and your family. Eating well, adequate sleep, exercise and allowing yourself some pleasurable activities will help you cope with this stressful experience.

Helpful Self-Talk & Actions To Take

- I can expect to be very upset. This is an emotionally painful experience.
- Being sued is not an attack on me personally.
- Virtually all physicians experience situations of miscommunication, adverse events and errors.
- Litigation and complaints can happen regardless of whether negligence actually occurred.
- It is reasonable that a patient should be compensated if he or she is injured by error.
- I owe it to myself to keep balanced thoughts by acknowledging all the positive contributions and relationships I've made in medicine. This unpleasant event does not need to diminish my overall satisfaction of the practice of medicine.
- It is appropriate to evaluate the situation, attend to my role in the incident and learn from this process.
- Right now the feelings are very intense and uncomfortable. This intensity lessens over time. I will make it through this; I will seek out help and support, and take one step at a time.

Impact On Family Members

- Your family can also expect to experience a wide range of emotions similar to the physician. They may also feel betrayed by the patient/health system. They may feel anger and shame as to how this situation might reflect on you.
- Initiate discussion about feelings and emotions with your family member. Encourage communication. In the Province of Alberta, communication between spouses is confidential. A physician family member cannot be forced to disclose.
- Seek support through the Physician and Family Support Program (PFSP) for yourself and other family members if you need information, advice or counselling.
- Seek help from PFSP if you, your spouse or other family members are suffering from depression or anxiety.
- Plan some family activities. Discuss and acknowledge each other's feelings.



When your patient experiences an adverse event or you receive a notice of claim, complaint or challenge to privileges, call:

Canadian Medical Protective Association (CMPA) 1.800.267.6522

- The CMPA is the organization through which physicians in Canada carry medical liability protection. They provide legal counsel across Canada. The CMPA is a great support and excellent source of information.
- Communicating and disclosing to your patient about an adverse event can be difficult. The CMPA has helpful information on disclosure available on their website at www.cmpa-acpm.ca
- Calling CMPA is a critical first step when facing an adverse event and prior to responding to a notice of complaint or a challenge to privileges.
- The CMPA physician advisor will be able to give you valuable advice. If necessary, you will be referred to appropriate legal counsel for further guidance.
- Uncertainty about the process of complaint or litigation is normal. The CMPA will guide and support you through the specific steps and processes to be taken. For more information go to:
 1. CMPA's website at <https://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/en/advice-publications/help-and-advice>
 2. CPSA's website at <http://www.cpsa.ca/complaints/our-complaints-process/>

Physician and Family Support Program (PFSP) 1.877.767.4637

- The Physician and Family Support Program is an Alberta Medical Association program available to all physicians, residents and medical students and their families in Alberta and the Yukon.
- PFSP provides valuable, confidential, emotional support and counselling for you and your family.
- Physicians are often concerned about the confidentiality of their information, and calls to the PFSP line and referral to our therapists are confidential and are not entered into the provincial electronic health record.

Tips

- Record everything you can remember about the incident for your own future reference. Protect and secure the medical file. Do not change or write anything on the file. Make a photocopy of the file.
- It is best not to discuss the content of a lawsuit, complaint or challenge with others. It is, however, acceptable and beneficial to share your feelings in general around this challenging experience with an appropriate, trusted individual.



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