

**Concurrent Capable Standards for  
Addiction and Mental Health Services**

# A Handbook for Individuals and Families



## Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge the work of the participants who helped create this handbook and are grateful for their valuable contributions. In particular, we want to thank the patients and family members who so generously participated in a focus group to provide critical feedback on the development of this handbook. Their suggestions and validation of content were invaluable.

This handbook was written with patients and their families. The Concurrent Capable Standards articulated in the handbook align to The Patient First Strategy (2015) and Accreditation Canada Standards (2016). They were developed following a literature review and discussions within the organization with a variety of stakeholders, including provincial and zone partners. Representation was inclusive of front-line clinicians from a wide range of practice settings and roles, managers, directors, educators, clinical supervisors, and patients/clients and their family members.

We are committed to reviewing this handbook every three years to ensure it remains a valuable resource to patients and families accessing Addiction and Mental Health (AMH) services within AHS, and to the staff and leaders who provide quality, recovery-oriented person-centered care. Please email us at [concurrent.disorders@ahs.ca](mailto:concurrent.disorders@ahs.ca) with your feedback and questions.

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# Introduction

Alberta Health Services (AHS) Addiction and Mental Health (AMH) is committed to making it easier for Albertans to access services and supports for mental health concerns and addiction issues, as well as addiction, problem gambling and mental health disorders happening at the same time (also known as concurrent disorders).

This handbook will explain what you, as a client or family member, can expect of AMH staff and other service providers in your service experience as established by provincial, national, and international best practices. The indicators listed in each section are a way for you to know that the standards are being met.



# Background

When a person experiences a mental health disorder along with substance misuse or problem gambling, these problems often influence one another. They can affect a person's relationships at school, work, and with their family and friends. Many of these concurrent disorders begin before adulthood, and treatment outcomes are improved when they can be recognized and treated together at the same time.

In 2009, Alberta Health Services announced a province-wide system of addiction and mental health services that would respond to the unique needs of three groups of people:

1. those with mental illness or mental disorders
2. those with addiction concerns
3. those with both (including concerns with problem gambling)

In 2015, AHS launched its Patient First Strategy (PFS). This strategy places patients and their families at the centre of managing their own health and wellness.

The Concurrent Capable Standards, and this handbook, are written from the perspective of a patient and their family. This is because you and your family are active participants in your recovery journey.

**By developing these standards, we affirm our commitment to you, your families and your care teams.**



STANDARD

1

# Welcoming and Engaging

You, your family and your care team are welcomed and engaged as active participants in your care. You feel accepted and hopeful when you access services for concurrent disorders.

## Key Indicators

- You are welcomed warmly when you reach out to us for assistance with your addiction and/or mental health concerns, and you are invited to involve your family and other people that support you, such as a care team.
- Your provider explains their role, how you can agree to treatment, the limits of confidentiality, and how you can agree to allow others to be involved in your treatment.
- Your provider ensures you have access to educational information about your addiction and/or mental health concerns. They listen to you, answer your questions, empathize with you and work with you in finding the most appropriate resources, while being respectful of your cultural beliefs and lifestyle.
- Your provider helps you access services quickly and in a coordinated manner, and supports you through any delays.
- Your provider is open, transparent, and respectful towards you, your family and your care team.
- You, your family and your care team are encouraged to be engaged in your care and are asked to sign consent forms, when appropriate.
- Your provider explains the process of filing a complaint if you have concerns about the way you are treated, or the services you receive.
- You are asked to provide feedback on your experience so that we can continue to improve services.



# Screening

When you enter our service system, you are asked some questions, and may be asked to fill in a screening questionnaire about your use of alcohol, other drugs and gambling, as well as your history and experience with any mental health conditions. This helps your provider work with you and the rest of your care team in your recovery.

## Key Indicators

- With your consent, your provider asks you or your family questions about substance use, gambling, and mental health concerns. Your provider will use this information to offer you a variety of services to meet your needs.
- You and your family feel engaged and understand the purpose of the screening questions and how your answers help make sure you are connected with the most appropriate services.
- You may be asked to complete a short questionnaire called a screening tool that will help your provider identify health concerns that require treatment and support you in setting your goals for recovery.





# Comprehensive Assessment

Your provider reviews or gathers more information about you to fully understand your concerns and the goals you wish to accomplish. Giving extra attention to your current strengths, skills, supports and periods of well-being provides a positive, recovery-focused approach to treatment.

## Key Indicators

- With your consent, your provider asks you, your family and your care team additional questions to give them an even better picture of what you are experiencing, and to identify your strengths to help you set goals for recovery.
- Your provider listens to you, your family and your care team to ensure you receive the best care, at the right place and in a timely manner.
- With your consent, your information is shared with your care team and family so they are able to support you in your recovery.



# 4

## Integrated Treatment Planning

With your consent, you participate in setting goals as part of your treatment or care plan, which focuses on your needs, strengths and expectations.

### Key Indicators

- With your consent, your provider invites you, your family and your care team to participate in planning and shares information to support you in your recovery.
- With your consent, your family is encouraged to participate in your recovery journey.
- You are an active participant in your care, which means your provider tells you your rights and responsibilities while respecting your preferences and goals. You have responsibility for your recovery journey.
- Your provider explains the risks and benefits of each option for recovery and supports you and your family in accessing resources.
- Your treatment plan ensures you receive the most appropriate care in a timely manner, and that you feel empowered to meet your basic needs and your addiction and mental health concerns.
- Whenever possible, you receive a copy of your goals for recovery.



STANDARD

5

# Comprehensive Interventions

You participate in activities you have chosen to support your recovery that are matched to your needs, preferences and desires, and that renew your sense of hope over your future.

## Key Indicators

- Your provider explains treatment options to you, your family and your care team, giving you an understanding of the services offered and the risks and benefits of each. Your choices are respected.
- Your provider gives you educational information that helps you, your family and your care team make decisions about your recovery and set goals that work for you, giving you the best opportunity for success.
- You feel involved in your care, learning skills and effective self-care, and understand how to connect with peer support groups and community resources to regain quality of life and maintain your well-being.
- Your family understands how to access community supports and resources that promote their well-being and recovery.



## Transitions in Care

You are part of a team that recognizes you may have multiple needs, and works together to ensure the services you receive are coordinated and match your goals for recovery. The team recognizes that each person recovers at his/her own pace, which means some individuals may require longer-term supports than others.

### Key Indicators

- Your provider recognizes that your goals may benefit from a multidisciplinary team approach and supports you by matching your needs to other care providers as required to achieve this, and builds on your strengths to assist you in meeting your goals.
- Your provider helps you navigate the system to ensure you are connected with community services as required (e.g., housing, finance, legal, education).
- Your family and care team are your advocates, working collaboratively to ensure the services you receive are coordinated.
- You, your family and your care team make sure you have satisfactory supports in place to help you achieve your recovery goals at all stages, and give you a written list of community resources as needed.
- You, your family and your care team help you manage your recovery by using your strengths and the skills you have learned in our service.
- Your provider tells you how to re-engage with services, if needed.
- With your consent, information regarding your care and progress is shared with the rest of your care team.
- You and your family provide feedback on your experience so we can continue to improve.





## Conclusion

This handbook describes standards and key indicators to support you and your family as you receive care related to mental health concerns, addictions issues and concurrent disorders. It will be updated as concurrent-capable practice continues to evolve and change over time.

If you have suggestions on how this handbook can be improved, please email: [concurrent.disorders@ahs.ca](mailto:concurrent.disorders@ahs.ca).





# Appendix I

## Glossary

### Care team

The team of people who work with you and your family to ensure you receive the support you need to achieve your goals in your recovery journey. This may include family physicians, medical specialists, elders, community or school counsellors, probation officers, caseworkers, psychiatrists, addiction workers, mental health therapists, peer support workers, housing support workers, outreach workers and teachers.

### Comprehensive assessment

Questions asked by your provider to get further information about your health concerns, your desires, and goals for treatment, and your strengths to support you in your recovery journey.

### Concurrent capable

The ability to identify, manage and treat people who present to either addiction or mental health services with concurrent disorders (mental health concerns and addiction issues and/or problem gambling).

### Co-occurring disorders/Concurrent disorders

A combination of mental health disorders and substance use disorders and/or problem gambling.

### Coordinated care

You are provided with the support and follow up you need to be most successful in your recovery journey, including community supports and self-help options while ensuring you, your family and care team have the understanding and knowledge of how to re-engage with services as required based on the recognition that your needs will fluctuate over the course of your lifetime.

### Family

The people you consider part of your support system. This can include immediate relatives, extended family, partners, friends, advocates, cultural supports, parents or guardians.

### **Informed consent**

Agreeing to treatment, or allowing your provider to release information, only after you, your family and your care team understand the benefits and risks of each option.

### **Integrated treatment planning**

Recovery planning that includes you, your family and your care team. You all take responsibility to develop a recovery plan together.

### **Recovery journey**

A process of change through which you can improve your health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach your full potential.

### **Screening**

Questions that help identify whether you are experiencing an addiction, mental health disorder, or problem gambling.

### **Social determinants of health**

The many factors that influence our health, including employment status, level of education, income, where we live, our childhood experiences and our physical environment that surrounds us.

### **Standard**

The level of performance that establishes best practices and provides a reference against which actual performances can be compared.

### **Transitions in Care**

Transitions of care refer to the movement of patients of all age groups between health care providers, services, and/or sectors.

### **Welcoming**

You and your family and care team are greeted respectfully and in a non-judgemental manner at every visit and feel like the team genuinely cares about you and your concerns.





# Appendix II

## Guiding Resources

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# Notes

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