

Cancer Care Alberta, Supportive Care: Counselling Services

Information for Patients

Welcome to Cancer Care Alberta's Counselling Services. We know a cancer diagnosis can affect many parts of a person's life. Getting support and guidance is important. Counsellors are here to help you and your family cope with cancer and support your emotional well-being. Our goal is to provide you with safe, helpful, and compassionate counselling services. We value and respect your experiences, viewpoints, and backgrounds.

Counselling

Psychosocial Oncology offers professional counselling to help patients and families with cancer-related concerns during the cancer experience. Patients and family members may seek support for:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Uncertainty
- Loss
- Fear
- Loneliness
- Purpose, meaning, and hope
- Overall well-being
- Quality of life

Counselling may involve learning new ways to manage symptoms and distress, and adjusting to changes in relationships and sexual health. We offer guidance through the cancer care system, and referrals to community resources when needed. If you need a translator, language interpretation services are available.

Support Groups, Classes, and Workshops

Trained counsellors lead all our support groups, classes, and workshops either in-person or online. To find available group programs visit the [Classes, Groups and Events](https://www.cancercarealberta.ca/classes-groups-and-events) page at www.cancercarealberta.ca.

Counsellor Qualifications

Counsellors include psychologists, social workers, spiritual care counsellors, psychiatrists, and are registered with their appropriate regulatory colleges. Counsellors may also include trainees under staff supervision.

Terms of Service

Our program provides free counselling services and group programs to cancer patients and family members. You and your counsellor will talk about your needs and goals, how many sessions you will need, and how often. Many people benefit from 1–6 sessions, which are typically 50 minutes long. We offer counselling services in-person but Telehealth, telephone, or online video (like Zoom) may also be available.

Cancellations

Sometimes cancelling or changing appointments is unavoidable. Please give us **48-hours' notice** when possible.



The Counselling Relationship

Having a good relationship with your counsellor is important for a successful outcome. It can take more than one session to become comfortable with a counsellor, and to figure out if their approach is a good 'fit' for you. Talk to your counsellor if you have any concerns.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Your privacy is important to us. We follow provincial and federal privacy legislation as well as Alberta Health Services policies related to confidentiality and privacy. If there is a need to talk with third-parties such as government agencies, we will need your consent.

Your health care information belongs to you. Cancer Care Alberta will keep it confidential, except when:

- Coordination of care across other Alberta Health Services programs is needed
- Information must be disclosed by law (such as a child or adult in need of protection, for a court order, or subpoena)
- There may be a high risk of harm to you or others

Record Keeping

We will document a summary from counselling sessions on your electronic health record. If both patient and family members are getting services from our team, they will have separate health records.

Use of Email

We may use email for scheduling appointments or providing resource information. We do not provide counselling using email. Email content may become part of your health care record.

Teaching and Research

Cancer Care Alberta is involved in teaching and research. We may offer you services from students or residents. It is your choice if you would like to accept their services or not. We may also invite you to participate in research studies or to evaluate the services you receive. Your participation is voluntary and your decision will not affect your care.

Crisis Support & Resources

If you or someone you are concerned about needs mental health crisis support, or are considering suicide, please call **1-877-303-2642 (Mental Health Help Line)** from anywhere in Alberta, at any time. Where to find urgent and non-urgent help in Alberta: [Help in Tough Times](#) webpage at www.ahs.ca for addiction and mental health services, stress management and grief resources. Also see our Cancer Care 'Getting Help' resource: bit.ly/ccagettinghelp.

For more details about Psychosocial Oncology services, see our website: www.ahs.ca/cancersupportivecare > Psychosocial Oncology