

Memorandum

Date: January 12, 2026

To: Community Stakeholders – Grimshaw

From: Sandra Herritt, Senior Operating Officer, Alberta Health Services
Dr. Rob Greidnaus, Community Medical Director

RE: Virtual Emergency Physician program expands to Grimshaw

Alberta Health Services (AHS) launched a project in January 2025 to improve support for emergency departments (ED) in five North Zone communities: Beaverlodge, Edson, Elk Point, Hinton, and Lac La Biche. The program then expanded to EDs in Barrhead, Redwater, Westlock, Coronation, Two Hills and most recently, St. Paul and Smoky Lake. *Note: Since launch, Elk Point and Redwater have each recruited on-site physician support and no longer use the VEP program.*

We are pleased to share this program will be expanding into Grimshaw this week to improve support for the ED at the Grimshaw/Berwyn and District Community Health Centre.

The **Virtual Emergency Physician** program uses an experienced ED physician to remotely support facilities during times when they do not have available on-site ED physician support.

During ED service disruptions, site clinical staff connect with an AHS physician by telephone or videoconference for ED patients with low acuity issues. This off-site virtual physician can collaborate with local staff, speak with patients, order tests and medications, and transfer or discharge patients.

Virtual physician models are currently being used in B.C., Saskatchewan, and Ontario, where this approach has proven to be reliable and effective in ensuring low-acuity patients receive the support they need when they need it. EMS remains available to transfer high-acuity patients to a facility with in-person ED physician support.

AHS continues to actively recruit physicians to supply in-person emergency department support. This initiative will not impact those continued efforts in communities where the VEP program is offered. On-site physician coverage remains AHS' priority and preferred approach.

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