

The Health Neighbourhood & Addressing What Matters Most for Patients

Lessons learned from Reducing the Impact of Financial Strain (RIFS): A Leadership Primer



Lacey's Story

This story illustrates how a family physician and team came to realize the importance of addressing their patient's social needs/situation.

But they didn't have to do this alone. With community partners working together, the patient received the best possible care.

[Link to Lacey's story](#)

[Link to other digital stories](#)

The Health of Populations & Communities

To help individuals and families stay healthy, it is important to look at the social and economic factors within the broader determinants of health. As much as 50% of a person's health is determined by socioeconomic factors. One of the most important determinants of health is income. Financial strain is economic pressure that can cause stress and harm health. Anyone can have trouble making ends meet at any time.



Reducing the Impact of Financial Strain (RIFS)

- Tested a collaborative approach to address income as a determinant of health across the continuum from the medical home to the health neighbourhood in three different Primary Care Networks (PCNs).
- A partnership between AHS Provincial Primary Health Care, Provincial Population and Public Health (PPPH), the Alberta Medical Association, AHS Zones, Primary Care Networks (PCN), clinics and communities. [Learn more about RIFS.](#)

From a Patient's Medical Home to the Health Neighbourhood

Learnings from RIFS apply to any initiative across the care continuum. To address what matters most to patients, create a multi-sector team that encompasses key healthcare and community supports such as community pharmacists, psychologists and community programs like the local food bank or Family & Community Support Services (FCSS). [Evidence](#) shows that strong partnerships between organizations and sharing of information in the health neighbourhood result in improved patient outcomes, safety, experience, and lower costs through reduced duplication of services.

A Shift in Perspective

"I want to provide value to my patients, but I only have a few minutes with each of them and I have so much to cover. How can I make a difference in such a short amount of time?"



Ask "What matters, Listen to what matters, Do what matters."

Starting a conversation with patients about their social challenges can feel overwhelming.

With patients: Ask and explore "what matters to you?"

With community partners: Ask what's important to the community, share stories, review progress and make adjustments together.



Activities like a poverty simulation, journey mapping and personas can help facilitate a shift in perspective and initiate discussions about complex and sensitive topics.

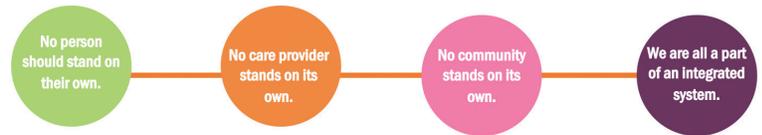
Customize to your community

Build relationships and get to know the local referral sources and other resources for specific health and social challenges.



Some options for clinic teams to get current information about services and resources are:

- 211 (<https://ab.211.ca/>)
- Helpseekers app (<https://helpseeker.org/>)
- Paper-based directories



Teamwork and Collaboration

Promote connections between clinics, PCNs and communities.

Be intentional and strategic about engaging partners from a variety of organizations.



Use [the Alberta Healthy Communities Approach](#) to provide the building blocks for multi-sector teams to align around a common vision, purpose and goal. This five-step process is an effective way to build connections in the health neighbourhood. [Link to the evidence.](#)



Care Coordination

Collaborative relationships with community partners are an important foundation to:

- Co-develop referral and communication processes between the medical home and health neighbourhood
- Communicate patient progress and follow-up plans for continuity.
- Provide patient navigation to resources and support — a warm hand-off from one provider to the next.



The approach to navigation (dedicated role or integrated into the workflow of a care team member) should be tested and customized in the primary care team's context. See resources for keeping care in the community [here](#).

Support for Transformational Change

Working together with non-traditional partners to solve complex problems requires leadership support at all levels to advocate for change.

- Provincial health leaders demonstrating a commitment to work collaboratively with other sectors to address complex health challenges.
- PCN leadership and support can have a profound impact on fostering an organizational culture in which social determinants are aligned with PCN perspectives.
- Physician champions are powerful and essential change agents at the clinic level



- The [Population Health Needs Framework](#) can be used to develop intentional strategies for transformational change.
- The [Alberta Healthy Communities Approach](#) can be used to support multi-sector teams.
- Support for clinic-level change can be found [here](#).
- Training and ongoing support can be found [here](#).

How can you take action?

Engage in conversations at every opportunity about how to integrate the Patient's Medical Home with the Health Neighbourhood to address what matters most for patients. #StartTheShift

