



Covenant
Health

MISSION, ETHICS
AND SPIRITUALITY



COVENANT HEALTH ETHICS CENTRE
SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES
2021-22



From the Chief Mission and Ethics Officer

On behalf of the Covenant Health Ethics and Discernment Centre I am pleased to present our 2021-2022 annual report. This year's report captures highlights from the first year of our expanded services offerings and reflects the early steps we've taken toward our vision for the Centre and advancing the work of our ambitious three-year work plan.

At the time of writing, Covenant continues to navigate challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Last year—the second of the global pandemic—continued to be 'exceptional' and included ethically complex tensions related to immunization policies, ongoing COVID-related restrictions, and staff moral distress.

In the charts, graphs and highlights below we hope that the readers of this report will perceive the ethically challenging experiences of our clinical and administrative colleagues. We also underscore that in this season of disruption, the organization's long-standing commitment to cultivating an ethical culture is bearing fruit.

Despite the immense challenge of the past two years, Covenant's staff, physicians and volunteers continue to live their callings to care for the sick and vulnerable with passion, compassion and integrity. I am honoured to highlight our people's commitment and exceptional dedication to the individuals at the core of our mission.

Dr. Gordon Self



In Focus: Moral Distress and Staff Debriefing

The problem of moral distress is not new to most health care professionals. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought this concept to the forefront of our minds as distinct pandemic-ethics issues confront Covenant Health's people. Staffing shortages and re-deployments, new work-prioritization structures, reduced and altered standards of care, conflicting clinician and leader expectations, and unrelenting uncertainty have given rise to new ethical tensions at the bed side.

As we have observed over the past year, the problem of moral distress is not limited to doctors, nurses, and those at the point-of-care. Individuals from all areas—including support service staff, facilities, maintenance and environmental services, administrators, operations and senior leaders, and many others—have experienced the pain that comes with the compromise of important values and ethical commitment.



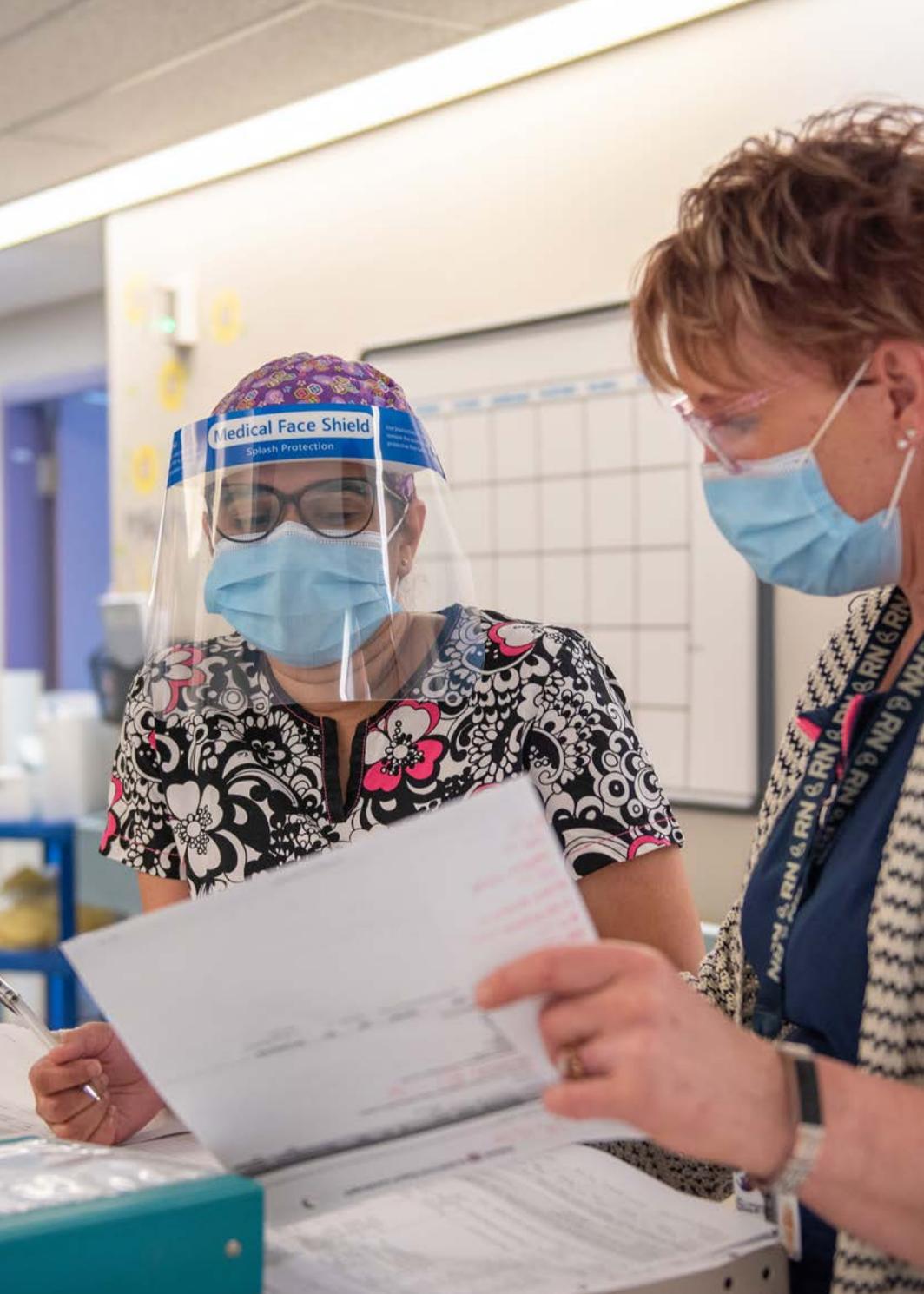
In simple terms, moral distress is the distress one experiences when they feel forced to take actions that they perceive to be wrong. “Moral distress occurs in situations where the person is aware of a moral problem, acknowledges moral responsibility, and makes a moral judgement about the correct action; yet as a result of real or perceived constraints, participates in perceived wrongdoing” (Nathaniel, 2002).

In simple terms, moral distress is the distress one experiences when they feel forced to take actions that they perceive to be wrong.

This Centre’s staff and volunteers have journeyed with many people, learning with them about moral distress and its direct impact. Supportive efforts were aimed at creating safe spaces to share and bear witness to one another’s experiences. To help colleagues find the words to describe and to attempt to make meaning of their experiences of moral compromise. To help them reflect on and move toward actions of self-kindness, self-compassion and self-forgiveness.

We now have a new vocabulary. Some words represent the challenges and work ahead, alerting us to things requiring attention such as moral residue, moral injury, moral compromise and moral resilience. Along with these terms we have others, more hopeful ones like the ones already shared above: self-kindness, self-compassion and self-forgiveness.

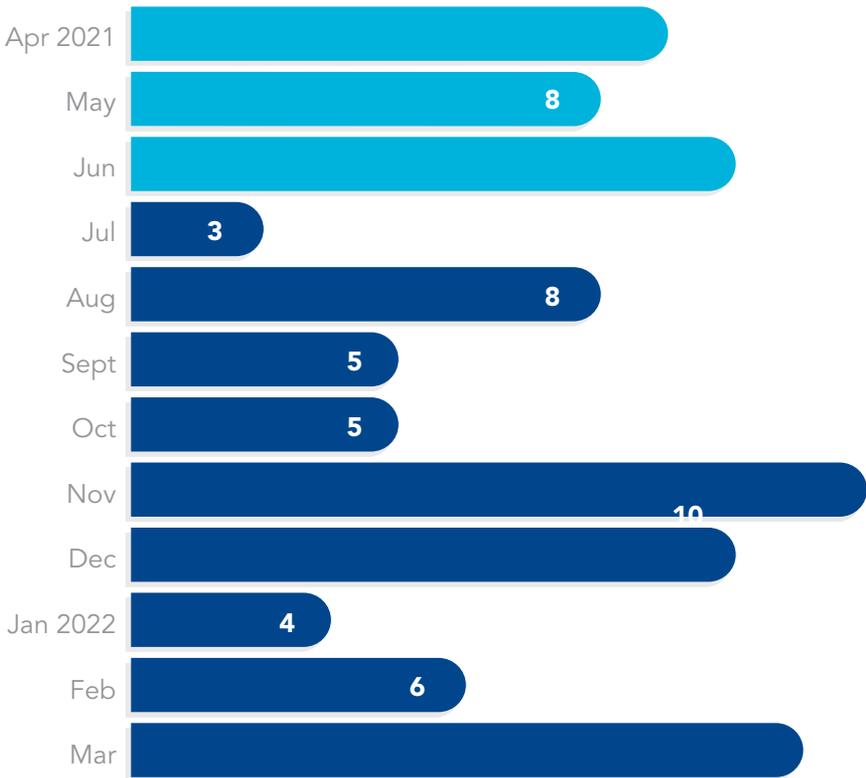
In response to accumulating experiences of moral distress and its growing impact, the Ethics and Discernment Centre team offered moral distress and ethics debriefings for individuals and teams to discuss their experiences. Through dozens of facilitated discussions, several themes and situations leading to moral distress were identified. Overarching themes included: Experiencing Intense Feelings, Threats to Community, Lack of Respect by Others, Erosion of Purpose and Mission, Instances of Moral Distress, and Burnout. Situations precipitating experiences of emotional and moral distress included: enforcing visitor restrictions, capitulating to reduced or modified standards of care, working in short-staffed or involuntary re-deployment contexts, lack of trust that the actions taken at the direction of another will be defensible.



Ethics Consultation Reporting

The core business of the Ethics & Discernment Centre continues to be our 24-hour, province-wide ethics consultation service. Clinical ethics consultations contain structured discussions led by a member of the ethics team. Consultations are guided by Covenant Health’s ethical decision-making framework, and the Catholic Health Ethics Guide (Catholic Health Association of Canada 2014). The data below reflects consultation services undertaken by the Ethics & Discernment Centre from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022.

Consultation requests by month



91 requests were made in the last year

Consultation requests by theme



Withholding/Withdrawing/Refusing Interventions **3**

Professional Ethics **26**

Privacy and Confidentiality **1**

Policy/Process/Organizational issues **25**

MAID Medical Assistance in Dying **3**

Living at Risk/Unsafe Behaviours **1**

Health Care Provider Communication **2**

Early Induction **3**

Difficult/Non-Compliant/Abusive Patient **2**

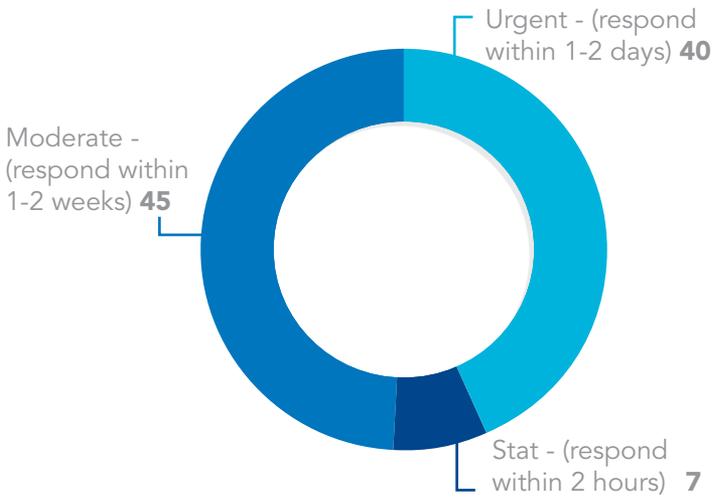
Difficult Family **2**

Conflict between Advocate/Patient/Care Team **18**

Complex discharge/transfer/placement **4**

Capacity/Consent/Informed Decision-Making **2**

Consultation request by urgency



Consultation requests by location



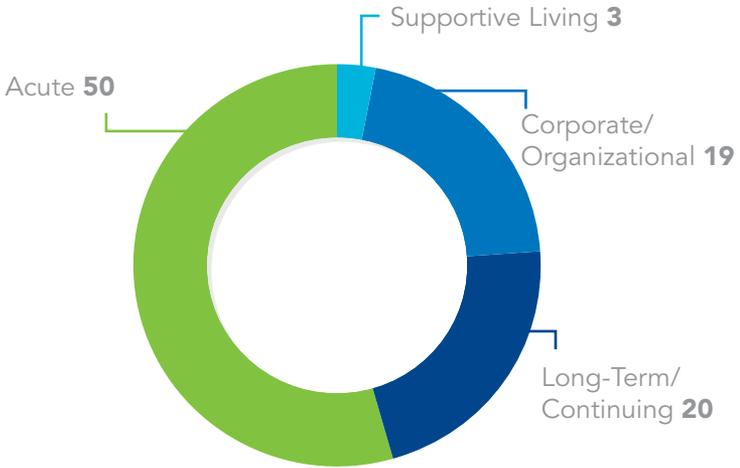
Consultation Requests by Facility



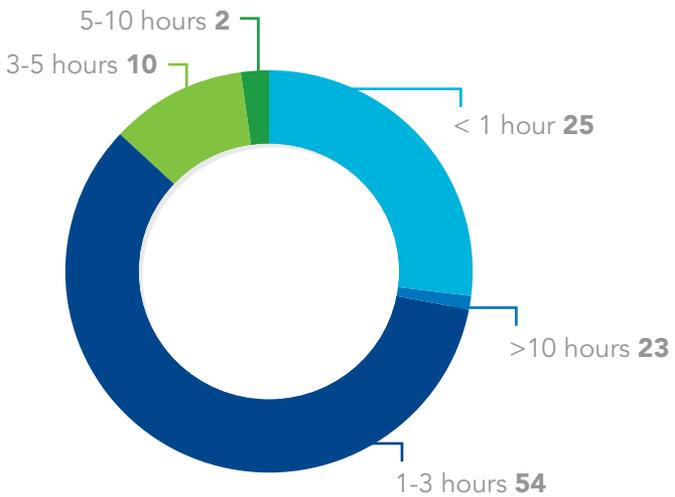
- | | |
|---|--|
| ■ Banff Mineral Springs Hospital 2 | ■ St. Joseph's Auxiliary Hospital 4 |
| ■ Bonnyville Health Centre 2 | ■ St. Joseph's General Hospital (Vegreville) 1 |
| ■ Corporate 10 | ■ Joseph's Home 1 |
| ■ Covenant Care 4 | ■ St. Mary's Hospital (Camrose) 3 |
| ■ Edmonton General Continuing Care Centre 5 | ■ St. Michael's Health Centre (Lethbridge) 2 |
| ■ Grey Nuns Community Hospital 20 | ■ Villa Caritas 4 |
| ■ Killam Health Centrel 1 | ■ Youville Home (St. Albert) 5 |
| ■ Misericordia Community Hospital 23 | ■ Other 4 |
| ■ Our Lady of the Rosary 1 | |

Sites not listed did not request consultations

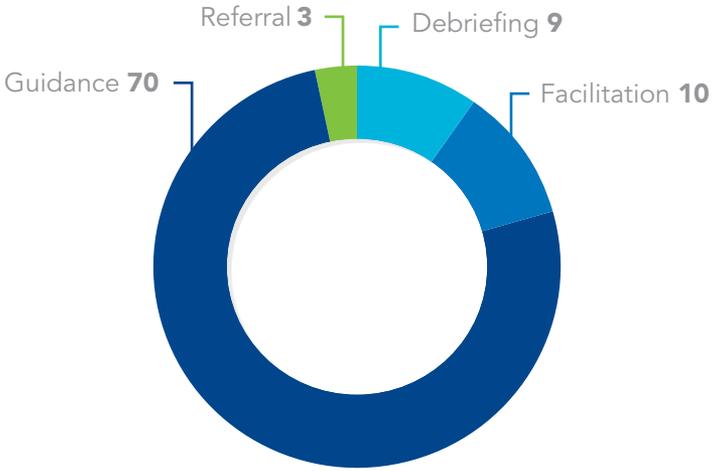
Consultation requests by category



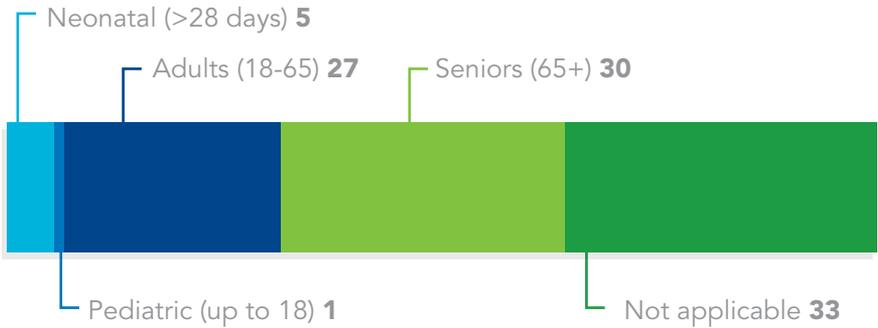
Consultation requests by total time spent



Consultation request by type of support provided



Consultation request by population



Highlights

Leadership

We are very pleased to welcome Meaghan Ellis to the Ethics and Discernment Centre team. As Covenant Health's Director of Diversity and Inclusion, Ethics, and Volunteerism, Meaghan brings a wide range of leadership experience and expertise to our team. Meaghan's background in nursing, education and legal nurse consulting, and human resource management compliments the team's offerings and deepens the Centre's impact. In addition, her leadership in advocating for minority groups and her passion for fostering inclusive environments is inspiring and a great fit for the Centre. Welcome Meaghan!



Diversity and Inclusion

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation September 30th.

Covenant Health honoured this important day with a number of learning and engagement opportunities. Residential school survivor stories were available in immersive listening rooms to provide the opportunity for quiet reflection, and sites also served Indigenous-themed meals in their cafeterias to commemorate the day.

John Humphrey Survey and Interviews.

In this reporting period Covenant partnered with the John Humphrey

Centre for Peace and Human Rights (JHC), experts in understanding experiences of racism and discrimination in the workplace, to help identify strengths and opportunities for growth. Results of this assessment will inform strategies to build a culture of inclusion and mutual respect that embraces diversity. The final report with recommendations will be presented in June 2022.

JOHN HUMPHREY CENTRE
for **PEACE** and **HUMAN RIGHTS**

Black History month.

Covenant Staff, physicians and volunteers participated in a myriad of learning opportunities and resources online and through listening rooms – raising awareness of impacts Black people have had in the community, and to share the rich aspects of various cultures. The month was also marked by African- and Caribbean-themed food items which were offered at all of our cafeterias

Education and Equipping

Provincial On-Call Ethics Team.

In keeping with the Centre's goal of deepening capacity for ethical reflection and discernment throughout the organization, our Provincial On-Call Ethics Team members led (with remote supervision by a clinical ethicist) approximately 15% of ethics consults, and actively contributed to approximately 25% of all ethics consultations this year. This experiential learning, and mentoring approach is now complemented by bi-monthly ethics consultation competencies learning sessions in addition to bi-weekly case discussions and debriefs. We look forward to increasing the hands-on learning experiences for the team in the coming year.

Quarterly Ethics Seminars.

Following the successful launch of the Ethics and Discernment Centre and Virtual Ethics Conference in March 2021, the Centre held regular Ethics Seminars designed to foster interdisciplinary ethical dialogue between Catholic Health Care, Education and Social Service agencies. The topics we engaged this year included 'Trust' and 'Knowledge'. Details on the EDC [website](#). These seminars averaged around 100 participants per session and participants ranged, geographically, from British Columbia to New Brunswick and the contiguous northern United States.



Contributing to the Community and looking to the future

Requests for consultation from partner and other-than-Covenant Health faith-based health care organizations saw a modest increase this year. The supports requested included clinical ethics consultation and coaching, policy-related consultation, and ethics education related to accreditation processes. It was a privilege to journey with these individuals and organizations and we are grateful for the opportunity to grow together.



Acknowledgments

We were honoured this year, once again, by the many hours and efforts contributed to the work of the Centre by dozens of volunteers. Our report is, if nothing else, an acknowledgment of the commitment and support of both Covenant Health's staff and physicians as well as our gracious, dedicated community. We acknowledged the significant contributions to the Ethics and Discernment Centre of the following groups and individuals

Banff Mineral Springs Hospital Ethics Committee Members

Margie Smith	Dr. Dino Smiljic	Margarette Moar-Bell
Lori Thorburn	Muhannad Alabbas	Tonya Carson
Sarah Lonz	Dr. Peter Baylis	Richard Kline
Nancy Cowtun	Sandy Penrose	Melissa Mason
Nancy Barnes	Max Marlow	

Bonnyville Health Centre Ethics Committee Members

Elizabeth Moon	Sherry Lucas	Leah Synowec
Anita Layh	Derrick Lee	Alena Thompson

Covenant Health Rural Ethics Network Members

Lora Maygard	Jim Wilson	Kim Weinkauf
Sherry Irwin	Reno Giumond	
Sherry Lucas	Nicholas Wasylowich	
Anita Lay	Krista Bilyk	

Edmonton Area Ethics Committee Members

Barbara Roemer	Josh Stachniak	Sandy Ayre
Bonne Tejada	Katrina Damer	Scott Stewart
Cecilia Marion	Larry MacKay	Sharon Semeniuk
Deborah Kirkpatrick	Lora Maygard	Karen Hansen
Dr. Eleanor Stewart	Mark Vigrass	Jacqueline Hills
Dr. Gordon Self	Meg Hagerty	Jacqueline Thompson
Jon Gilchrist	Ogechukwu Ezeh	

St. Mary's Camrose Hospital Ethics Committee Members

Jim Wilson	Kyla Joyce	Kathy Henderson
Cherylyn Antymniuk	Karen Burton	Shelly Dalueg
Irine Sware	Glenda Shiell	Stacey Lynn Brewster

Provincial On-call Ethics Team

Anita Layh	Jon Gilchrist	Sandy Ayre
Bonnie Tejada	Karen Hansen	Scott Stewart
Cecilia Marion	Nicholas Wasylowich	Ogechukwu Ezeh
Dr. Eleanor Stewart	Dr. Peter Baylis	

Quarterly Seminar presenters and contributors

Dr. Jennifer A. Gibson	Bonnie Tejada	Kerry McKinstry
Kathleen Ibsen	Jon Gilchrist	Dr. Dino Smiljic
Dr. Eleanor Stewart	Leah Janzen	



Covenant
Health