



Just Workplace Framework



**Covenant
Health**

*Compassionate care led
by Catholic values*

Just Workplace Framework

- *Experience suggests many ways in which the demands of justice can be satisfied. Not to mention other ways, it is especially desirable today that workers gradually come to share in the ownership of their company, by ways and in the manner that seem most suitable.*

**Mater et Magistra,
Pope John XXIII, 1961, 77**



Introduction

In keeping with Covenant Health's vision to positively influence the health of Albertans, the organization is actively pursuing transformational strategies that will bring innovation and enhanced quality to the health care system. New models in care and service, demonstration projects, and other redesign work currently underway in continuing care are driven by multiple factors, the foremost being the needs of the people we serve. Provider and system-focused approaches are being challenged, inviting critical reflection to ensure care and service delivery practices are evidence-based and fully responsive to those in need.

While the ultimate driver of change is the holistic needs of patients and residents and to create a better care experience, economic and other system issues are also a catalyst for change. This is in keeping with Covenant Health's mission and values to ensure sound stewardship of resources in order to maintain a viable, sustainable presence in the health care system. Innovation and redesign work will also challenge traditional workforce models, and it is unrealistic to expect Covenant Health can be successful in achieving its mission to transform care and service delivery without bringing proportionate attention in envisioning new workforce and compensation paradigms that will best support this goal.

This work has already begun, building on previous work and efforts that demonstrate Covenant Health's long-standing commitment to continuous quality improvement. For example, we have identified a number of options in creating new corporate structures in support of our demonstration projects in seniors' health. This includes consideration of both economic drivers for business growth, as well as the parameters in which our mission and values will be honoured. One such value is that of social justice.

Karen Galenzoski, Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer
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Towards a Just Workplace

Covenant Health's Just Workplace¹ Framework articulates how our mission, values and ethical commitments support the transformation of care and service delivery, to ensure both an economically viable and just workplace, all oriented to the people in our care and the fulfillment of our strategic directions. This framework is not intended to debate the merits of unionized versus non-unionized workplaces, or to redefine our Labour-Relations Strategy. As the quote from Pope John XXIII above attests, there are many ways to ensure a just workplace, and thus this framework is intended to define the set of principles and the parameters that will help inform our redesign work and innovation.

For example, while Catholic Social Teaching (CST)² affirms the right of workers to associate, it also acknowledges unions are not the only model whereby staff can be represented. What fidelity to CST does require, however, is a commitment to justice and fairness in how workers are treated, compensated, and encouraged to participate in decisions that directly impact them through open, respectful, and timely communication. In turn, workers have a mutual responsibility to support and promote the viability of the organization. This shared commitment is already assumed in Covenant Health's values of respect, integrity, collaboration and social justice.

The Just Workplace Framework further articulates how our core values and ethical traditions can actually be applied to support our redesign of continuing care services and other new businesses.

Application

The *Employer/Employee Relationships* section of the new revised 2012 Health Ethics Guide serves as the basis of Covenant Health's Just Workplace Framework. It is also informed by our values, and the broader Catholic Social Teachings out of which emerged the Church's reflections on employer/employee relationships in contemporary society. The following reflections define our bedrock commitments that will be reflected in all future innovation and redesign work, and which the moral legitimacy of our work will be vigorously tested. The examples chosen are neither exhaustive, nor intended to limit our moral imagination in discerning "ways and in the manner that seem most suitable" for their application and interpretation in the face of particular issues and opportunities. Sample questions are included to deepen our commitment to our mission, values and ethical framework.

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- 1 Covenant Health's Just Workplace Framework is distinguished from its Just Culture Policy. While similar, the latter addresses the non-punitive environment that encourages timely disclosure of adverse events and near misses, with a focus on system accountabilities to ensure collective learning and prevention of future error. The former defines the workplace conditions and relationships that best promotes shared responsibility among employers and employees in realizing the strategic goals of the organization, including such quality initiatives as disclosure of error.
 - 2 Catholic Social Teaching refers to a collection of papal encyclicals and other ecclesial statements developed over the past 120 years that address, among other things, the fundamental rights of workers including the right to a just wage. Appended to this document is one-page summary of key CST principles, including dignity of work, rights of workers, participation, etc.



Reflections on the Health Ethics Guide

- 1. All members of the organization are to respect and act in accordance with the organization’s mission and values. The primary responsibility of everyone in the organization is the person receiving care. To enhance the mission and the care, employees should exercise respect for one another (Health Ethics Guide 167).**

As a Just Workplace, Covenant Health is committed to:

- a. Recruit, select and promote for “fit.”** Staff recruitment and physician appointments³ should be made both on the basis of demonstrated skill and competency as well as the person’s alignment with our mission and values. Contract agencies and other partners should also be selected based on objective criteria that demonstrates mission and values fit, and appropriately monitored. Succession planning is key to ensuring the legacy and viability of the organization into the future.
- b. Focus on the person in care.** Everyone associated with Covenant Health’s workforce needs to be focused on our primary responsibility –the person in care. Personnel will be evaluated to the degree they contribute positively to a safe, quality patient care⁴ environment. Given the inherent power imbalance between providers and those receiving care, decision-making should ensure the needs of the most vulnerable are given proportionate attention.
- c. Respect our staff and contract providers.** Our mission and values define not only our obligations to the people in care, but also extend to all those who work in our facilities. The care environment is enhanced by mutual respect for and among personnel, including respect shown to personnel by those in our care and their families. The organization’s code of conduct defining respectful behaviour will be upheld.

Questions for Reflection:

What process would demonstrate due diligence has been done in assessing potential hires or contracted vendors for “fit”?

How much respect is “owed” another when seemingly all efforts at dialogue and problem-solving have been exhausted? How much respect is equally “owed” to personnel?

³ All subsequent references to “personnel” include staff, physicians, and volunteers

⁴ All subsequent references to “patients” are intended to include patient, residents and clients

2. **The organization should treat personnel respectfully and justly. The employer/employee relationship calls for fairness and mutual accountability from both the organization (represented by the board and administration) and from those who work in the organization. Boards have a fiduciary responsibility to set policy governing employee/employer relations that uphold the values of the organization (Health Ethics Guide 168).**

As a Just Workplace, Covenant Health is committed to:

- a. **Treat personnel respectfully and justly.** Personnel will be provided timely and constructive feedback on their performance, with appropriate supervisory and educational supports to promote ongoing development and learning. Progressive discipline should be practiced, including personnel's right to representation. Personnel should be treated respectfully and justly, as they are similarly expected to treat others.
- b. **Integrate human resource practices.** Equitable employer/employee practices should be integrated across the organization, ensuring like issues are treated in like manner, without prejudice.
- c. **Set organizational expectations.** Board and administration are responsible for setting the expectations for desired behaviour and cultural practices that model the values of the organization. This includes monitoring of policy adherence.

Questions for Reflection:

What best practices from our Employee/Physician Engagement process and action plans support a Just Workplace?

Are there organizational expectations that are critical for our success but difficult to monitor? If so, what is required to ensure consistent policy adherence?



3. **Those who give direct care and those whose work enables care providers to function effectively should be valued as carrying out different but important aspects of the mission and operation of the organization. All persons are to be treated with respect and equal consideration in employment practices (Health Ethics Guide 169).**

As a Just Workplace, Covenant Health is committed to:

- a. **Honour the contributions of all.** Personnel should be valued for contributing to the success of the organization, and appropriately recognized. A just workplace actively promotes engagement at all levels of the organization. Professional practice standards must be honoured and promoted.
- b. **Create a shared sense of ownership.** Personnel are mutually accountable for the reputation and viability of the organization, and, in effect, own the legacy we create together. Messaging that reinforces a shared sense of ownership is recommended. Employee and employers both have rights, and corresponding responsibilities.
- c. **Uphold regulatory practices.** A just workplace is committed to OH and S legislation and other regulatory practices to ensure a safe environment, including freedom from retaliation in disclosing wrongdoing.

Questions for Reflection:

Are we consistent in equally recognizing all Covenant Health personnel for their contributions and teamwork, and if not, what can be done collectively to address this?

Is our messaging around mutual accountability and shared responsibility in creating a just workplace consistently reinforced in internal and external communications?

4. **The expertise and experienced judgment of care providers are to be acknowledged in their individual areas of competency. Similarly, teams of care providers should respect the diverse expertise of their members in providing consultation, making decisions and delivering services (Health Ethics Guide 170).**

As a Just Workplace, Covenant Health is committed to:

- a. **Create dynamic interdisciplinary teams.** High functioning teams will depend on and respect the diverse skill set of all personnel, rallying around a shared goal. Success will now be defined by overall team functioning, not just individual performance.
- b. **Empower team accountability.** Members of the interdisciplinary team are mutually accountable for ensuring the team's success, encouraging peer behaviour consistent with the mission and values of the organization.
- c. **Uphold the principle of participation.** Personnel have a right to participate in furthering the goals of the organization, and provide input on decisions that may directly impact them, as appropriate. The principle of participation also requires a shared accountability among personnel to find collaborative solutions in proactively addressing economic realities and other drivers for change.

Questions for Reflection:

What kind or magnitude of decision requires broad stakeholder input from personnel to ensure shared ownership for the outcome?

How do we continually reinforce team, site and organizational goals without dismissing the individual contributions of personnel?



5. **Equal opportunity for employment and career development should be available to all, irrespective of gender, race, age, national origin, disability, or other differences, unless the differences interfere with the ability to fulfill the obligations of the office. All are entitled to fair compensation and benefits for their work (Health Ethics Guide 171).**

As a Just Workplace, Covenant Health is committed to:

- a. **Create equal opportunity.** A just workplace actively seeks to attract top talent and to mentor aspiring leaders into successive levels of responsibility, with salary and benefits commensurate with their ability and the resources of the organization.
- b. **Model diversity and inclusion practices.** The organization is enriched by the diverse cultural mosaic of the workforce, mirroring the diversity of the communities it serves. While celebrating diversity, a just workforce will remain focused on the needs of the person in their care, so that both patient and personnel feel welcome and included.
- c. **Set transparent compensation and benefits.** All personnel will be informed of the financial realities of the organization, and expected to work together to ensure its ongoing viability and flourishing. While personnel are entitled to fair compensation, a just workplace will balance personnel needs with the goals and resources of the organization. All contractual obligations negotiated in good faith will be honoured.

Questions for Reflection

Are there systemic practices in our organization that preclude equal opportunity for all?

What objective criteria do we draw on to help define the parameters around what constitutes “a just” total compensation?

- 6. The employer must recognize the right of employees to form associations to engage in collective bargaining, to provide various benefits for their members and to work for a better society. All members of the organization are to encourage a collaborative approach between unions and administration based on the good of the person receiving care. Respectful dialogue and behaviour should govern grievance and other non-escalating conflict resolution processes, with priority given to the principle of subsidiarity in mediating differences at the most basic level (Health Ethics Guide 172).**

As a Just Workplace, Covenant Health is committed to:

- a. **Honour the right to associate.** Personnel have a right to associate to ensure their needs are represented, whether by unions or other professional or member associations. While new Covenant Health businesses may initially be established as non-unionized environments, there is no guarantee they will remain so. The organization is obliged to provide all factually relevant information to support personnel in making an informed choice around representative options, including encouraging personnel to work directly with the employer to resolve issues or concerns.
- b. **Promote collaborative problem solving.** Whether working within a unionized or non-unionized environment, employers and employees are mutually accountable for respectful dialogue and behaviour that serves to build up the organization, promote its flourishing, and ultimately, to enhance care and service delivery.
- c. **Uphold subsidiarity.** Problem solving and conflict resolution should be addressed at the appropriate level, without escalating matters unnecessarily. This is aligned with both Covenant Health's code of conduct and basic Catholic Social Teaching.

Questions for Reflection:

What mechanisms or forums are appropriate to inform personnel about their options around association, as well as working directly with the employer?

What ways does the organization model subsidiarity in consistently redirecting personnel to resolve issues at the appropriate level?



7. ***In light of its commitment to respect individuals and its recognition of the value of involving all levels of staff in planning and decision making, organizations should develop explicit guidelines for situations in which it becomes necessary to lay off workers. This implies consultation with those affected, examination of alternatives, open communication, and a flexible approach to honour the uniqueness of each individual. Staff layoffs should be a last resort; one that is used only after all other alternatives have been seriously tried. Treatment of non-unionized employees should be as consistent as possible with that of unionized employees. Employees terminated as a result of downsizing or program changes should be treated equitably and with respect and compassion. Employees terminated with cause should be treated with compassion and respect (Health Ethics Guide 173).***

As a Just Workplace, Covenant Health is committed to:

- a. **Exercise creative problem-solving.** Covenant Health will respect the rights of workers and seek their input in transformational redesign work to find solutions to ensure the long-term viability of the organization. Alternative business case models will be generated and evaluated for their alignment with the organization's mission and values.
- b. **Commit to open communication.** Mechanisms will be established to actively engage personnel for timely and mutual exchange of information and feedback to advance the goals of the organization. While open and respectful communication is important at all times, it is especially important during times of significant organizational change.
- c. **Exercise compassion and justice at all times.** If layoffs or terminations are required, or workforce disruption as a result of redesign, exit interviews will reflect the organization's demonstrated respect for effected personnel throughout the process. Just severance, transitional career counseling and other appropriate compassionate support will be offered.

Questions for Reflection:

When is the appropriate time to begin engaging personnel who may be potentially impacted by contemplated change?

Are there equal considerations in waiting too long to seek input from personnel as well as premature disclosure?

- 8. Financial realities and other operational issues may result in the need to contract out some services to ensure the sustainability of the organization, and/or to ensure the highest standards of care. When contracting out work, care should be taken to ensure that all contracting out arrangements respect the rights and responsibilities of unions, provide just wages and benefits, do not treat staff as a commodity, do not endanger the sense of community within the organization, and do not threaten the quality of work or the mission of the organization (Health Ethics Guide 174)**

As a Just Workplace, Covenant Health is committed to:

- a. **Exercise mission due diligence.** If the business model requires contracting out services, appropriate due diligence is required in selecting the vendor whose own business practices and employment standards are congruent with Covenant Health's mission and values.
- b. **Safeguard assets and reputation.** Clear accountabilities are set with contract vendors and their business practices are monitored to ensure Covenant Health's ethical integrity and reputation is maintained.
- c. **Uphold quality.** Economic drivers for transformative workforce models and redesign must be balanced with the organization's commitment to quality. As a people organization, it is our personnel, or that of deployed contract staff in our buildings, which are the face of the organization. The quality of their work, and ultimately, the care experience, must reflect positively on our reputation.

Questions for Reflection:

What kinds of questions would satisfy Covenant Health that it has done due diligence in selecting and monitoring contractor provider business practices?

How does efficiency and effectiveness help support our organizational goals in achieving both a quality work experience, and a quality care and service experience?



9. Succession planning and leadership formation opportunities should be continually pursued to develop and prepare the next generation of health and social service leaders for the Catholic organization (Health Ethics Guide 175)

As a Just Workplace, Covenant Health is committed to:

- a. **Ensure stability.** Proportionate support is required to invest in both front line personnel and leaders to develop their competency to ensure the highest quality of care and right service is provided. Turnover, absenteeism, and vacancy rates must be monitored and proactively addressed to provide for the stability and stewardship of the organization.
- b. **Support formation of personnel.** Along with essential education and learning and development opportunities, the organization must ensure the legacy of the organization is carried forward, forming personnel (both employed and contracted) in the mission, values and ethical traditions of Covenant Health
- c. **Promote ambassadors.** We hold our leaders to a higher standard and their behaviour and decision-making practices have a demonstrable influence on the culture of the organization, with positive reach into the community. Covenant Health will aspire to be known nationally as a just workplace, upholding the rights and dignity of the people we serve, as well as the people we work with.

Questions for Reflection:

What is the threshold of quality standards expected of personnel to ensure a consistent quality care experience regardless of organizational redesign?

In what ways can Covenant Health demonstrate national leadership in transforming both the work and care experience with innovative and sustainable business models?

10. Recruitment and retention practices should reflect a commitment to Catholic moral teaching and ethical practices. For example, employee referral and other inducement programs, or recruitment of internationally educated health and social service workers, should be carefully considered in light of the organization's mission and values, as well as of the Catholic social teaching around solidarity and justice. (Health Ethics Guide 176)

As a Just Workplace, Covenant Health is committed to:

- a. **Ensure the dignity of work.** Recruitment and retention practices will uphold the highest ethical standards, with consideration of the global implications of our HR practices. Work will not be treated as a commodity nor will personnel be exploited for the sake of advancing overly-lean business models. Success for Covenant Health is defined by both what we do, and how we achieve our goals, respecting the dignity of personnel at all times.
- b. **Set new, innovative business standards.** Given the economic realities in health care, Covenant Health will define a threshold limit by which it is expected personnel will be treated. While remaining fiscally responsible, the model will serve as a gold standard for striking the right balance to ensure quality, as well as a steady supply of committed personnel aligned with the mission and values of the organization.
- c. **Embody Catholic social teaching.** As a ministry of the Catholic Church, Covenant Health will provide tangible witness to living the mission and integrating Catholic social teaching in its just workplace framework, positively influencing human resource standards and innovative business standards in other Catholic ministries in Alberta and beyond.

Questions for Reflection:

How does our innovation and redesign work help advance our reputation as both an employer and provider of choice?

How does our innovation and redesign work help solidify our leadership nationally in Catholic health care and our authentic witness of Gospel values in society?

Conclusion

The Just Workplace Framework will be used to guide current and future redesign work and new business models, and to provide a moral foundation to support systemic, organizational change. The framework anchors us to the tradition in which Catholic health care is steeped, while also unleashing creativity and the “many ways” Pope John XXIII attests in how these foundational principles of justice will be integrated in operational and strategic planning.

The economic realities that Covenant Health faces must be respected. Equally, Catholic social teaching that defines our core identity must also be respected. Other Catholic organizations in Canada are faced with the same challenges in balancing respect for both realities, and will look to Covenant Health as leaders in creatively integrating good business strategies and good ethics in transforming how care and service will be best achieved into the future.

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Appendix 1

KEY PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Human Dignity

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the person is at the core of a moral vision for society. Our belief in the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity of the human person is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching.

Community and the Common Good

In a global culture driven by excessive individualism, our tradition proclaims that the person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society – in economics and politics, in law and policy – directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. Our Church teaches that the role of the government and other institutions is to protect human life and human dignity and promote the common good.

Rights and Responsibilities

Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities – to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

Catholic teaching proclaims that a basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt. 25) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

Participation

All people have a right to participate in the economic, political, and cultural life of society. It is a fundamental demand of justice and a requirement for human dignity that all people be assured a minimum level of participation in the community. Conversely, it is wrong for a person or a group to be excluded unfairly or to be unable to participate in society. In the words of the U.S. bishops, “The ultimate injustice is for a person or group to be treated actively or abandoned passively as if they were non-members of the human race. To treat people this way is effectively to say they simply do not count as human beings.”

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Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers

In a marketplace where too often the quarterly bottom line takes precedence over the rights of workers, we believe that the economy must serve people, not the other way around. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected – the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to organize and join unions, to private property and to economic initiative.

Stewardship of Creation

Catholic tradition insists that we show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God’s creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions which cannot be ignored.

Solidarity

Catholic social teaching proclaims that we are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Solidarity means that “loving our neighbor” has global dimensions in an interdependent world.

Role of Government

Because we are social beings, the state is natural to the person. Therefore, the state has a positive moral function. It is an instrument to promote human dignity, protect human rights, and build the common good. Its purpose is to assist citizens in fulfilling their responsibility to others in society. Since, in a large and complex society these responsibilities cannot adequately be carried out on a one-to-one basis, citizens need the help of government in fulfilling these responsibilities and promoting the common good. According to the principle of subsidiarity, the functions of government should be performed at the lowest level possible, as long as they can be performed adequately. If they cannot, then a higher level of government should intervene to provide help.

Promotion of Peace

Catholic teaching promotes peace as a positive, action-oriented concept. In the words of Pope John Paul II, “Peace is not just the absence of war. It involves mutual respect and confidence between peoples and nations. It involves collaboration and binding agreements.” There is a close relationship in Catholic teaching between peace and justice. Peace is the fruit of justice and is dependent upon right order among human beings.



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