



Innovating Integrated Supports for Alberta's Family Caregivers Strategy & Action Plan

Roundtable Engagement Report

September 2025

Introduction

Over the past year, hundreds of Albertans have helped to develop an Alberta Family Caregiver Strategy and Action Plan, a blueprint for the investment in change needed to better support Alberta's family caregivers. This strategy has been built from the ground up, shaped by the voices of more than 400 Albertans: family caregivers, care providers, educators, managers, policy makers, researchers, and champions from health, social and community, education, and other sectors. It reflects their wisdom and work, to chart a collective path forward.

As participants and co-designers in this 3-year project funded by the Ministry of Assisted Living and Social Services, many of you shared your insights and experiences through virtual roundtables, meetings and conversations. You told us what organizations are doing to support Alberta's family caregivers and where there are opportunities to work together to fortify the system of support. You have told us that action is urgently needed and that you are ready to step in to help.

Collectively, these rich and profound insights have helped to co-produce a Strategy and Action Plan—a blueprint for supporting Alberta's family caregivers as a foundation for a Caregiver-Centered Care approach that we can all champion and embrace as organizations and as individuals. This strategic work recognizes the importance of working together across health, community and social sectors to forge a stronger network of support for the one in four Albertans who provide care for a family member or for someone in their circle.

This blueprint belongs to all of us. It is practical and designed for action that anyone who partners with and supports family caregivers can use in their role, in their organization, and in their community. It lays out key building blocks with clear action areas, and invites us to bring our existing strengths and efforts as individuals and organizations in Alberta to make Alberta a place where family caregivers--and those they care for--can thrive.

We are grateful for the many partners who contributed to this work and have committed to moving it forward. We invite all Albertans to join us. Together, we can draw on our collective will and knowledge from across this province to move from ideas to action.

Family Caregivers (Carer, Care Partner)

A Family Caregiver is any person (family, friend, neighbour, or chosen family) who takes on a generally unpaid caring role and provides emotional, physical, or practical support in response to physical and/or mental illnesses, disabilities, or age-related needs.

Project Overview

Led by **Dr. Jasneet Parmar** and the Caregiver-Centered Care team (www.caregivercare.ca), the project brings together interdisciplinary collaborative partners from across the province to create and fortify the support systems for family caregivers in Alberta. The project draws together family caregivers, the many diverse partners in health, social/community sectors, education, research and elsewhere who are working diligently—often in silos—to support them. Together, we will build momentum and connections across sectors to ensure that family caregivers in Alberta receive care that meets their needs and supports their caregiving role and their own health and wellbeing.

Engagement: Gathering Wisdom, Insight and Ideas

In the initial phase of the development of this strategy, we gathered in-depth information and insights through interviews with individuals from diverse backgrounds about current supports, barriers, successes and gaps in supporting family caregivers. We focused on identifying strategies and actions, policies, programs, and interventions that could strengthen caregiver recognition, support, and inclusion. Working with our co-design team, 18 priority areas were identified. We further refined and organized these strategies with our co-design team into a draft Strategy & Action Plan that arranged these priorities into:

Primary strategies: core actions needed to support caregivers.

Supporting strategies: enabling actions that can be implemented in settings.

Strategic actions: tactical, context-specific steps for each primary & supporting strategy.

Co-design

Our co-design team of family caregivers and representatives from the health and social/community sectors guides the iterative process used in the development of this strategy. As key partners, their lived experience, expertise and advice have been vital to developing a strategy with have lasting impact.

Co-design in this strategy has meant creating the relationships and conditions that allow many solutions to emerge and evolve. It recognizes the insights and perspectives of family caregivers, care providers, leaders, researchers, and policy influencers. It is guided by the Four Voices for Change, bringing these perspectives together to drive real progress:

- **Intent**—leaders and decision-makers;
- **Experience**—family caregivers, advocacy groups, Indigenous partners, frontline providers;
- **Capability**—family caregivers, educators, leaders, researchers, professional associations, employers, providers; and
- **Design**—facilitators, connectors, and policy influencers

Through co-design and co-production, we can build an inclusive, resilient and sustainable ecosystem for change.

PRIMARY STRATEGIES

CONSISTENTLY RECOGNIZE	MEANINGFULLY PARTNER	ASSESS & ADDRESS NEEDS	SEAMLESS NAVIGATION	WORKPLACE SUPPORTS
<p>Strategic Actions</p> <p>Recognize family caregivers as essential members in care teams</p> <p>Identify caregivers in health and social/community care planning and service provision</p> <p>Document family caregiver involvement in care recipient/caregiver records</p>	<p>Strategic Actions</p> <p>Include family caregivers in care planning, decision-making and transitions across health and social/community care settings</p> <p>Define and clarify family caregivers' roles on care teams</p> <p>Embed equity, diversity and inclusion principles in Caregiver-Centered Care</p>	<p>Strategic Actions</p> <p>Engage family caregivers in conversations about their realities, needs in providing care and maintaining their wellbeing</p> <p>Identify family caregivers' needs and risks early and provide timely access to supports and services</p> <p>Strengthen mental health supports</p> <p>Provide information about financial support</p> <p>Enhance access to flexible services—respite care & day programs</p>	<p>Strategic Actions</p> <p>Equip individuals who play a formal or informal navigation role with the knowledge, tools and training needed to guide caregivers to supports.</p> <p>Define and communicate provider responsibilities for coordinated navigation across health and social/community services</p> <p>Enhance communication among providers and caregivers, including referral outcomes, to reduce challenges in navigation and co-ordination</p> <p>Develop and use community-based assets of caregivers' resources and update them regularly</p>	<p>Strategic Actions</p> <p>Identify organizational approaches to foster healthy workplaces for family caregivers</p> <p>Embed caregiver supports into Employee Assistance Programs</p>

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES

AMPLIFY EDUCATION	FORTIFY POLICY FOUNDATIONS	ENHANCE RESEARCH & EVALUATION
<p>Strategic Actions</p> <p>Equip health and social /community care providers and trainees with knowledge, skills, approaches and best practices to engage and support family caregivers</p> <p>Integrate Caregiver-Centred Care education in post-secondary health workforce curricula and accreditation standards</p> <p>Increase preparedness of family caregivers to engage and partner with health and social/ community care providers</p>	<p>Strategic Actions</p> <p>Develop consistent policies and practices for caregiver identification, partnership and support</p> <p>Identify and scale policies for flexible services</p> <p>Expand effective policies to reduce the financial burden on caregivers</p> <p>Clarify policies on access to information and consent processes to support caregiver involvement</p>	<p>Strategic Actions</p> <p>Develop a robust research and evaluation framework to measure the impact of support initiatives</p> <p>Enhanced data collection for care co-ordination and evaluation/research</p>

Roundtable Engagement

The project team sought input from across Alberta in the Engagement Phase to co-develop the Strategy & Action Plan. From January to August 2025, we brought together groups with like interests and roles for focused discussions on the initial primary and supporting strategies and strategic actions—to share their experience in supporting family caregivers, what's important to them in this work and their interest and ideas in working collaboratively in further developing and implementing actions. We held 52 sector-specific roundtable discussions, engaging over 320 of you, intentionally seeking diverse representation across rural, urban, and Indigenous communities.

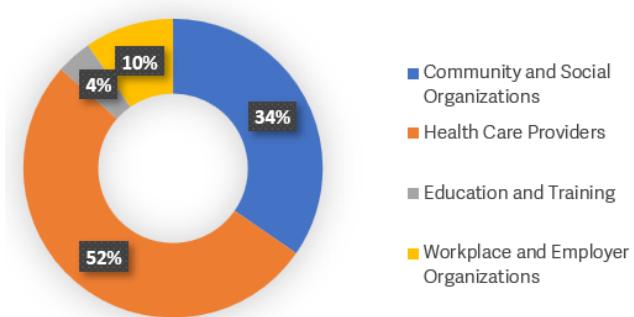
Roundtables were convened in four sectors: health care, community and social service, education and workplace/employers. Discussion focused on the draft Strategy and Action Plan—seeking input on areas of resonance, importance and preferred action priorities as we moved toward prioritization for collaborative action and implementation.

In these sessions, leaders, educators, policy makers and professionals with experience and expertise in supporting family caregivers shared the goals, efforts and challenges of their organizations and teams in partnering with and supporting family caregivers. As participants identified their own specific priorities for action, they also shared ideas on how health, social and community service sectors might work together more seamlessly for better outcomes for family caregivers and the people they care for.

Participants identified areas for action that they saw as most important and helped to identify priorities for working collectively to improve the system supporting family caregivers in Alberta. Throughout the process our co-design team helped to further refine and validate language, ideas and insights into emerging priorities.

Health care providers	Community and social service organizations	Education and training sectors	Workplaces and employer organizations
Acute, primary, continuing, palliative, and home care, as well as pharmacy and geriatric services	Family and Community Support Services, Indigenous organizations, seniors' centres, and advocacy groups	Post-secondary institutions, educators, and professional associations	Human Resource (HR) professionals and caregiver advocates

Roundtable Sessions by Sector (n=52)



Roundtable Input

Identifying what's important (what matters most)

In each sector, key areas of importance emerged—reflecting the specific roles and contributions of the sectors and the evolving understanding and awareness of the critical importance of family caregivers and their role and contributions to the overall health and wellbeing of the province. With diligent analysis of the records of the roundtables, we identified strategic actions that were most frequently discussed as areas of importance or potential action. These provide the grounding for identifying areas for collaboration and integration.

Health care providers	Community and social service organizations	Education and training sectors	Workplaces and employer organizations
<p>Identify caregivers in care planning & service provision</p> <p>Enhance access to flexible services</p> <p>Equip care providers with knowledge, skills & best practice to engage & support family caregivers.</p> <p>Expand effective policies to reduce financial burden</p> <p>Develop consistent policies & practices for caregiver identification, partnership & support.</p>	<p>Document family caregiver involvement in care recipient/ caregiver records</p> <p>Identify family caregiver needs & risks early and provide timely access to supports & services</p> <p>Enhance access to flexible services</p> <p>Define & communicate responsibilities for co-ordinated navigation across sectors</p> <p>Develop consistent policies & practices for caregiver identification, partnership & support.</p>	<p>Equip care providers with knowledge, skills & best practice to engage & support family caregivers.</p> <p>Integrate caregiver-centred care education into post-secondary health workforce curricula and accreditation standards</p>	<p>Identify organizational approaches to foster healthy workplaces for family caregivers.</p> <p>Embed caregiver supports in Employee Assistance Programs.</p> <p>Identify caregivers in care planning & service provision. *</p> <p>Enhance data collection for care co-ordination and evaluation/research.</p> <p>Develop consistent policies & practices for caregiver identification, partnership & support.</p>

* Here, participants also included the identification of family caregivers in the workplace.

Finding areas of common ground

Across the 52 roundtables, participants collectively expressed support for the proposed Primary and Supporting Strategies presented in the Strategy & Action Plan. An analysis of our discussions also provided insights into points of agreement across sectors and highlighted some shared priorities for change.

Recognition: Naming Caregivers in the System

Recognition was frequently described as the entry point to all other actions—a critical foundation to ensure the caregivers are visible and acknowledged in care records, decision-making processes, and policies. Family caregiver invisibility erodes their legitimacy and undermines trust. The absence of clear family caregiver identification left care and service teams uncertain about how or with whom to engage.

Partnership: Moving from Helper to Collaborator

Participants emphasized that family caregivers are already carry a heavy burden of care—supporting function, navigating the system, serving health-related needs, administering medications, coordinating appointments, managing crises—and need to be seen and supported as partners. Partnership with family caregivers must become part of the culture, embedded as a principle in every process and step in the care journey.

Needs Assessment: Identifying needs and risks in timely manner

Family caregivers often receive support when they are already in crisis. Providers acknowledged that they lack consistent tools and approaches to identify family caregiver needs in a timely manner and agreed that support for family caregivers needs to be flexible and easy to access to be effective.

Navigation: Lifting the Burden

Navigation was one of the most frequently cited pain points, with the system frequently described as fragmented, overwhelming, and often reliant on family caregivers' ingenuity. Even those who want to help family caregivers navigate are unsure how or where to refer them and how to work effectively across sectors.

Education: Preparing Everyone

Participants highlighted a critical need for educating care providers and all disciplines to ensure foundational knowledge, skills and approaches to partner and support family caregivers. Furthermore, they recommended learning supports to prepare family caregivers for care transitions and to engage and partner with health and social/community care providers throughout their caregiving journey.

Workplace Supports: Sustaining the Dual Role

Many spoke to the challenges and personal impact of balancing a family caregiving role and work responsibilities. Most workplaces don't have the policies, tools and guidance to effectively support working family caregivers. Investment in a caregiver-friendly work culture was seen as key to ensuring psychologically safe work environments and sustaining employee satisfaction, wellbeing and retention.

Policy & Research: Creating Foundations for Change

Strong policy infrastructure—at the local and provincial level—was seen as key to ensure family caregiver supports do not rely only on local champions. Clear mandates, standards, and flexible funding models are essential to lead system change—alongside evaluation frameworks that measure what family caregivers value: inclusion, access, and continuity.

Focusing our efforts

Throughout our engagement activities—interviews, conversations, co-design teamwork and roundtables—you have also provided invaluable advice in moving the strategy to action. You expressed your willingness to be part of the solution and encouraged us to focus on how we can work together across sectors to create a movement for change.

One of the most important insights that arose through our consultations was that an Albertan family caregiver strategy must reflect a caregiver-centered approach as a way of being and thinking—an integral part of a person-centered culture that is embedded in our systems and organizations. In moving forward with a strategy that we can all embrace, we recognize the importance of this work as a journey.

This kind of change requires collective action. You have told us it is important that we recognize that there are opportunities for everyone to embrace their role and contribution—wherever they are—to help improve the individual day-to-day experiences of family caregivers, the ways family caregivers are supported in their overall journey through all stages and the structural and system aspects that create sustainable, lasting change.

Finally, you encouraged us to have a clear focus on priority actions that will have the greatest impact for family caregivers as we move into an implementation phase over the next year.

The Path Forward

With your input, we have developed a way forward that builds, first and foremost, on the past year of learning about what Albertans have shared is important. Considering this, we used four principles shown below to identify some key priorities (on page 6) with the highest potential for collaborative action and impact.

Readiness	Intent, desire and willingness to invest in change
Momentum	Best conditions for impactful movement and advancement
Feasibility	Availability of resources to support the energy and sustain the change
Value	Greatest value and benefit to people and system

Strategic Action Framework: A blueprint for change

With your input, the Strategic Action Framework on the following page presents the strategies and actions we've identified over the past year in a comprehensive blueprint for change, providing direction for our strategy work. Each strategic action will help bring about improvement for family caregivers, and the framework presents these efforts as an ecosystem of action that is:

- founded on intentional identification, recognition, and involvement;
- supported by consistently assessing and addressing caregiver needs;
- empowered and sustained by seamless navigation; and
- enabled by investments in education, workplace supports, policy & research.

This blueprint is a valuable tool to help you as decision-makers, leaders, educators to clearly see your own role and identify opportunities for desired areas of action, influence and involvement.

Strategic Priorities: Opportunities for collaborative action

Several focused priorities arose from the assessment of input, applying the principles of readiness, momentum, feasibility and value. These reflect prime opportunities for further collective cross-sector action and implementation to ensure a stronger system supporting family caregivers. We have outlined each priority with potential outcomes that demonstrate how these actions can make a tangible difference.

PRIORITIES	POTENTIAL OUTCOMES (examples only)
Mobilize and apply knowledge from the Strategy to drive adoption in policy and practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build greater awareness and understanding of family caregivers as partners in care across health, community and social sectors.• Drive actions and change at the individual, organizational and system levels.
Identify & document family caregiver related information consistently across systems of care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhance existing systems to ensure consistent recognition of family caregivers.• Utilize documentation to improve co-ordination of care between settings and providers.
Assessment of caregiver needs and build capacity to respond.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess family caregiver needs and build capacity to respond.• Integrate family caregiver needs into intake processes and care planning.
Strengthen navigation systems to provide integrated, coordinated support for caregivers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognize and prepare formal and informal navigators.• Collaborate to identify and connect resources across sectors.
Embed caregiver-centered education across settings and services and educational institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhance preparation of students and care providers in every setting.• Integrate Caregiver-Centered Care into accreditation and educational curricula.
Foster workplace environments to sustain caregivers' work and care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create caregiver-friendly workplaces and psychologically safe work environments for employed caregivers.• Strengthen policies/benefits to support employed caregivers.
Enhance policy and practice to support caregiver basic needs—financial, access to flexible supports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create policy and organizational practice as levers to enhance availability and access to programs, services and supports to sustain family caregivers in their role.
Prepare and support caregivers to empower their partnership role.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhanced family caregiver confidence to engage with providers• Enable effective collaboration between providers and family caregivers.

Please Join Us

Let's work together to build a better system of supports for family caregivers in Alberta. We are looking for partners to work on planning, best practices, tools and implementation.

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Strategic Action Framework | September 2025

This blueprint for change outlines the core actions that must work together to create a strong system of support for Alberta's family caregivers. The framework aims to help us assess and guide our efforts as individuals, organizations and decision-makers in Alberta.

