

Memorandum

Date: June 3, 2026

To: Smoky Lake Healthcare Centre Stakeholders

From: Adele Richardson, Director, Clinical Operations, Alberta Health Services

RE: George McDougall - Smoky Lake Healthcare Centre ED Service Advisory

Due to lack of clinical personnel, the emergency department at the George McDougall - Smoky Lake Healthcare Centre is without onsite physician coverage for the following time periods:

- 5 p.m., Thursday, June 4 to 8 a.m., Friday, June 5
- 5 p.m., Thursday, June 11 to 8 a.m., Friday, June 12
- 5 p.m., Thursday, June 18 to 8 a.m., Friday, June 19
- 5 p.m., Thursday, June 25 to 8 a.m., Friday, June 26

This is a temporary measure due to a lack of available clinical personnel and an inability to secure locum coverage.

Nursing staff will remain on site in the emergency department providing triage and assessments and referrals for patients to alternate emergency departments in surrounding communities.

Patients are asked to call 911 if they have a medical emergency. AHS is working hard to ensure residents continue to have access to the care they need during this time.

Virtual Emergency Physician coverage may be available for all or part of this service advisory.

The Virtual Emergency Physician program uses an experienced ED physician to remotely support facilities temporarily without available on-site ED physician support. Site clinical staff can connect with an AHS physician by telephone or videoconference for ED patients with non-life-threatening issues. This off-site virtual physician can collaborate with local staff, speak with patients, order tests and medications, and transfer or discharge patients.

The Virtual Emergency Physician program is currently being offered in ten northern Alberta communities: Athabasca, Barrhead, Beaverlodge, Grimshaw, Edson, Hinton, Lac La Biche, Smoky Lake, St. Paul and Westlock.

EMS will remain available in the community to ensure residents continue to have access to the emergency services they need.

Residents are reminded to call Health Link at 811, which is available 24/7 for non-emergency health-related questions.

AHS continues to work towards finding coverage for this closure. This closure, or portions of it, may be cancelled should coverage be found.

We are grateful for the support of our healthcare teams and would like to thank the community for their patience and understanding. We are also grateful for the support of surrounding healthcare centers and medical staff.

As a reminder, when community members reach out to healthcare staff, we ask that they be polite and respectful. Our team is working hard to provide the best care, and kindness helps create a positive experience for everyone.

AHS has several initiatives underway to help support recruitment efforts including northern incentive programs as well as working closely with practicing professionals and the community. The Alberta Rural Health Professions Action Plan is also in place, aiming to improve rural medical services for communities, support rural practitioners and recruit new talent.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.