

Chapter 35

Saskatchewan Health Authority – Providing Timely and Appropriate Home-Care Services in the City of Prince Albert and Surrounding Area

1.0 MAIN POINTS

By February 2019, the Saskatchewan Health Authority had improved its processes to provide timely and appropriate home-care services in Prince Albert and surrounding area. The Authority implemented the three remaining recommendations first made in 2014.

The Authority improved its compliance with established policies and procedures for completing required needs assessments. Completing each of the required needs assessments help ensure clients receive all the required services, and reduce the risk of injury to clients and staff.

It also began conducting monthly audits to monitor compliance with its needs assessment policy. Tracking compliance rates helps the Authority monitor the work done, and focus its efforts on communities and areas where improvements are needed.

The Authority formed a Home Care Approval Committee for Prince Albert home care. The Committee reviews and approves all clients' home-care plans. Staff work schedules align with the approved home-care plans. Consistent review and approval of home-care plans confirms the appropriateness of assessed needs for home-care services. Having schedules that align with approved home-care plans helps ensure clients receive the services based on their assessed needs.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

Home-care services are an integral component of a health care system because the services enable individuals with health needs to live independently in their own homes. These services help relieve pressures placed on other parts of the healthcare system such as the need for acute and long-term care.¹

Under *The Provincial Health Authority Act*, the Saskatchewan Health Authority is responsible for the planning, organization, delivery and evaluation of health services. This includes delivering home-care services to people with healthcare needs. Home-care services include health care and support services to help people maintain independence and well-being in the community.

¹ www.cha.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2012/11/Home_Care_in_Canada_From_the_Margins_to_the_Mainstream_web.pdf (01 April 2019).



The Authority provides various home-care services in the City of Prince Albert and surrounding area through one regional, three rural, and four sub offices.² It uses almost 200 staff to deliver services in this area as well as volunteers.

The Ministry of Health has established the *Saskatchewan Ministry of Health Home Care Policy Manual*. It includes policies and guidelines that the Authority must follow for providing home-care services.

2.2 Focus of Follow-Up Audit

This chapter describes our second follow-up of management's actions on three remaining recommendations we first made in 2014 about processes to provide timely and appropriate home-care services in the city of Prince Albert and surrounding area.

Our *2014 Report – Volume 2*, Chapter 36 concluded that for the period of August 1, 2013 to July 31, 2014, the former Prince Albert Parkland Regional Health Authority had effective processes to provide timely and appropriate home-care services except in a few identified areas. We made twelve recommendations. By October 2016, the Prince Albert Parkland Regional Health Authority had implemented nine of 12 recommendations.³

To conduct this audit engagement, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook – Assurance* (CSAE 3001). To evaluate the Saskatchewan Health Authority's progress towards meeting our recommendations, we used the relevant criteria from the original audit. Prince Albert Parkland Regional Health Authority's management agreed with the criteria in the original audit.

To complete the audit, we discussed with management progress they made in meeting our recommendations, reviewed supporting documentation, and sampled 30 home-care client files.

3.0 STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This section sets out each recommendation including the date on which the Standing Committee on Public Accounts agreed to the recommendation, the status of the recommendation at February 28, 2019, and the Authority's actions up to that date.

3.1 Needs Assessments Completed

We recommended that Prince Albert Parkland Regional Health Authority follow its established policies and procedures and complete the needs assessments as required for home-care services. (*2014 Report – Volume 2*, p. 264, Recommendation 4; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 17, 2015)

Status – Implemented

² The regional home-care office is located in Prince Albert. The rural home-care offices are located in Hafford, Shellbrook, and Spiritwood. The sub home-care offices are located in Big River, Blaine Lake, Debden, and Leask.

³ See our *2016 Report – Volume 2*, Chapter 42 (pp. 279-287).

The Authority completed the needs assessments for home-care services provided in the City of Prince Albert and surrounding area consistent with its established policies and procedures.

The Authority uses a variety of assessment tools to assess home-care service needs and staff safety.

In 2017, the Authority revised its policy. The revised policy requires staff to complete the following assessments for each client:

- In-home safety assessment: a checklist used to identify safety issues in the client's environment, which may cause the client or home-care provider to be at risk (e.g., a dangerous dog on site).
- Falls risk screen: This assesses the client's risk of falling. It identifies possible interventions for each risk factor to prevent future falls or to reduce injury from a future fall.
- Client mobility/transfers, lifts and repositioning assessment: This determines the appropriate means of safely moving—transferring, lifting, and repositioning (TLR)—the client.
- Medication risk assessment: This screening tool determines whether the client is at high risk for medication errors. It helps determine whether or not the client requires assistance managing their medication to safely follow their medication regime.
- Suicide risk assessment: This screening tool is used for appraising the underlying factors that indicate suicide risk (warning signs and risk factors).

In April 2018, the Authority began conducting monthly audits to monitor compliance with its established policies and procedures for three of its needs assessments—in-home safety assessments, falls risk screens, and suicide risk assessments. It tracks the compliance rates by community (i.e., Prince Albert, Spiritwood, Shellbrook/Hafford).

The Authority's audits identified the following average compliance rates:

- In-home safety assessments: 93% compliant
- Falls risk screens: 75% compliant
- Suicide risk assessments: 85% compliant

As shown in **Figure 1**, the Authority's results were relatively similar to our test of 30 files. Also, since our 2016 audit, the Authority improved its compliance with its established policies and procedures for completing required needs assessments. Our testing of 30 home-care files found the Authority completed each required assessment at least 83% of the time.

**Figure 1 – Audit-Determined Compliance Rates of Completing Required Needs Assessments**

Need Assessment	Compliance Rates		
	2016 ^A	2019 ^B	Trend
In-home safety assessment	100%	93%	Slight decrease
Falls risk screen	57%	83%	Significant increase
TLR mobility assessment	71%	87%	Moderate increase
Medication risk assessment	86%	100%	Moderate increase
Suicide risk assessment	N/A – not required	93%	Significant increase as it was not required in 2016

Source: Developed by Provincial Auditor Saskatchewan based on home-care files sampled.

^A Compliance rates were reported in our *2016 Report – Volume 2*, Chapter 42 (pp. 281-282).

^B Compliance rates based on a sample of 30 home-care files.

Tracking compliance rates helps the Authority monitor the work done, and focus its efforts on communities and areas, where improvements are needed. Completing each of the required needs assessments help ensure clients receive all the required services, and reduce the risk of injury to clients and staff.

3.2 Home-Care Plans Reviewed and Approved

We recommended that Prince Albert Parkland Regional Health Authority require the review and approval by a supervisor of home-care plans.

(2014 Report – Volume 2, p. 265, Recommendation 5; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 17, 2015)

Status – Implemented

We recommended that Prince Albert Parkland Regional Health Authority prepare and approve work schedules consistent with home-care plans.

(2014 Report – Volume 2, p. 265, Recommendation 6; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 17, 2015)

Status – Implemented

The Authority, for home-care services delivered in the City of Prince Albert and surrounding area, reviewed and approved clients' home-care plans, and prepared work schedules that aligned with those home-care plans.

In February 2018, the Authority formed a Home Care Approval Committee for Prince Albert home-care. This Committee meets daily and is responsible for reviewing and approving home-care plans. During the review, it completes an approval record that sets out:

- The client name and assessor
- Urgency priority rating (e.g., priority rating 1 indicates client service delay may result in hospitalization or delayed hospital discharge)

- Complexity of case (e.g., complex indicates one or more services are needed because there are issues such as a lack of a reliable support system)
- Services approved and the start date
- The scheduler assigned

Schedulers prepare work schedules after the Committee approves the home-care plan. If the scheduler identifies that the schedule will not work, the scheduler resubmits it to the assessor and the Committee for further review and adjustments.

For each of the nine client files we tested, the Committee reviewed and approved the home-care plans as required. It also completed the approval record as required. We also found the work schedules for each aligned with the approved home-care plans.

Consistent review and approval of home-care plans confirms the appropriateness of assessed needs for home-care services. Having schedules that align with approved home-care plans helps ensure clients receive the services based on their assessed needs.

