

## Chapter 29

# Saskatchewan Health Authority—Overseeing Contracted Special-Care Homes in Saskatoon and Surrounding Area

### 1.0 MAIN POINTS

The Saskatchewan Health Authority uses private operators of special-care homes to provide 24-hour care to those Saskatchewan residents who can no longer care for themselves.

By November 2019, the Authority had made some progress in addressing recommendations made in 2017 about overseeing 16 contracted special-care homes in Saskatoon and surrounding area. However, significant work remains.

The Authority along with the Ministry of Health and private operators of special-care homes clarified accountability relationships between all three parties. In 2019, the Authority started working with private operators to develop a new template contract. The Authority plans to finalize the template by March 31, 2020, and start work on signing new contracts with the 16 special-care homes in Saskatoon and surrounding area. It expects new contracts may be signed over several years as current contracts expire.

At November 2019, the Authority was waiting for the Ministry of Health to complete its revision to the Ministry's *Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes* before it takes additional steps to improve its oversight of contracted special care homes. Necessary steps include determining how best to: define the quality of services the Authority expects homes to provide, assess each home's compliance with those expectations and the Ministry's Guidelines, and address identified non-compliance to mitigate risks to residents within homes.

Not having a process to assess whether homes provide quality care and taking timely actions when necessary puts the residents of special-care homes at risk of not receiving quality services.

### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

#### 2.1 Background

The Saskatchewan Health Authority contracts with private sector operators for services at 16 homes in Saskatoon and surrounding area (see **Figure 1**). In 2018-19, the Authority had contracts with these 16 home operators for a total cost of \$96.6 million.

**Figure 1—Special-care Homes Contracted in Saskatoon and Surrounding Area in 2018-19**

Special Care Home Name	Location	Long-Term Care Beds
Central Haven Special-care Home (Sherbrooke Community Society Inc.)	Saskatoon	60
Circle Drive Special-care Home Inc.	Saskatoon	53
Extendicare Special-care Home (Preston Nursing Home, Saskatoon of Extendicare (Canada) Inc.)	Saskatoon	82
Langham Care Home	Langham	17
Lutheran Sunset Home of Saskatoon	Saskatoon	129
Oliver Lodge	Saskatoon	139
Porteous Lodge (Jubilee Residences Inc.)	Saskatoon	99
Samaritan Place	Saskatoon	100
Saskatoon Convalescent Home	Saskatoon	59
Sherbrooke Community Centre (Sherbrooke Community Society Inc.)	Saskatoon	255
Spruce Manor Special Care Home Incorporated	Dalmeny	36
St. Ann's Home (St. Ann's Senior Citizens Village Corporation)	Saskatoon	80
St. Joseph's Home (Ukrainian Sisters of St. Joseph of Saskatoon)	Saskatoon	78
Stensrud Lodge (Jubilee Residences Inc.)	Saskatoon	100
Sunnyside Adventist Care Centre	Saskatoon	97
Warman Mennonite Special-care Home Inc.	Warman	31

Source: Information provided by the Saskatchewan Health Authority.

*The Provincial Health Authority Act* requires the Saskatchewan Health Authority to enter into written contracts with special-care homes. This Act specifies contracts must cover health services to be provided, funding, performance measures and targets, required reporting, and certain dispute resolution mechanisms.

Homes are to provide health services in accordance with these contracts. In addition, homes must provide health services in compliance with applicable provincial legislation and policies. For example, *The Facility Designation Regulations* require operators of all special-care homes (including those operated by the Authority) to comply with the standards established in the Ministry of Health's *Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes*. The Guidelines set out the minimum care standards and related procedures for operation of homes.

## 2.2 Focus of Follow-Up Audit

This chapter describes our first follow-up audit of management's actions on the recommendations made in 2017.

Our *2017 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 12, concluded that, for the 12-month period ended December 31, 2016, the Saskatoon Regional Health Authority (now amalgamated into the Saskatchewan Health Authority) had, other than the areas reflected in our six

recommendations, effective systems to oversee contracted special-care homes compliance with the Ministry of Health's *Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes*.<sup>1</sup>

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 toward meeting our recommendations, we used the relevant criteria from the original audit. The Authority's management agreed with the criteria in the original audit.

To complete our follow-up audit, we interviewed relevant Authority and Ministry of Health's staff, examined documents such as the draft contract, meeting minutes, and reports related to the oversight of homes.

## 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 November 30, 2019, and the Saskatchewan Health Authority's actions up to that date.

### 3.1 Accountability Relationships Clarified, But Not Yet Formalized

***We recommended the Saskatchewan Health Authority work with the Ministry of Health to clarify the accountability relationship between the Authority, the special-care homes, and the Ministry of Health.*** (2017 Report – Volume 1, p. 167, Recommendation 1; Public Accounts Committee agreement February 26, 2019)

**Status—Implemented**

***We recommended the Saskatchewan Health Authority enter into contracts with special-care homes that clearly set out expected accountability relationships between itself, the special-care home, and the Ministry of Health.*** (2017 Report – Volume 1, p. 168, Recommendation 2; Public Accounts Committee agreement February 26, 2019)

**Status—Partially Implemented**

The Saskatchewan Health Authority, Ministry of Health, and representatives from special-care homes have clarified accountability between the parties, but have not yet signed new contracts outlining the relationship.

In December 2018, the Authority, Ministry of Health, and special-care home representatives approved an accountability document, which clarifies accountability relationships between the parties (see **Figure 2**).

<sup>1</sup> Our report can be found at [auditor.sk.ca/publications/public-reports](http://auditor.sk.ca/publications/public-reports).



Figure 2—Accountability Relationship between the Saskatchewan Health Authority, Ministry of Health, and Special-care Homes

Ministry of Health	Saskatchewan Health Authority	Special-care Homes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Accountable to the public</li> <li>➤ Sets provincial policy and regulations</li> <li>➤ Builds and maintains relationship with Authority</li> <li>➤ Determines provincial program parameters</li> <li>➤ Provides funding to the Authority to subsidize the cost of special-care homes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Sets operational plans and ensures homes comply with provincial and applicable Authority's policies</li> <li>➤ Operates homes</li> <li>➤ Funds and maintains relationships with contracted/affiliated homes</li> <li>➤ Complies with contractual arrangements with the special care home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Comply with provincial and applicable Authority's policies</li> <li>➤ Accountable relationships with resident, the family and/or Power of Attorney</li> <li>➤ Accountable to the Authority for all aspects of policy, safety and operations as per the contract</li> </ul>

Source: Information provided by the Saskatchewan Health Authority.

Since December 2018, the Authority and special-care home representatives formed a Principles and Services Agreement Steering Committee to revise the existing contract template. Committee membership is equally split between the Authority staff and special-care homes' representatives.

The Committee first met in February 2019 to develop a template contract and strengthen collaboration and co-operation between special-care home operators and the Authority. It met bi-monthly in 2019 to work on a new template contract. The template contract includes the following provisions in relation to the accountability relationship:

- As participants in Saskatchewan's provincial health system, the Authority and special-care homes are accountable for the delivery of quality health services in Saskatchewan
- Special-care homes agree to be accountable to the Authority for the provision of the services in the manner required under applicable laws and by the Agreement
- The Authority and special-care homes are accountable for quality and strategic outcomes while ensuring financial controls are in place
- The Authority is accountable to the Minister of Health in respect of health services

As of November 2019, the Authority had not finalized the template contract. The Authority's management indicated the targeted timeline for completion is March 31, 2020. Once completed, the Authority expects to start signing new contracts with special-care home operators. As of November 2019, homes continued to operate under old contracts.

When the accountability relationship between the Ministry, the Authority, and each special-care home is not clearly outlined in the contract, it can cause confusion for home operators. For example, home operators may take direction from or provide reports to the wrong agency (i.e., the Ministry versus the Authority).

## 3.2 Quality of Services Partially Clarified in the Draft Template Contract

*We recommended the Saskatchewan Health Authority work with the Ministry of Health to confirm performance measures that it requires contracted special-care homes to report on to help them assess each home's compliance with the Ministry of Health's Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes and improve quality of resident care. (2017 Report – Volume 1, p. 170, Recommendation 3; Public Accounts Committee agreement February 26, 2019)*

**Status—Partially Implemented**

*We recommended the Saskatchewan Health Authority clearly define service expectations related to quality of care, and include targets for related key performance measures and all key reporting requirements in its contracts with special-care homes. (2017 Report – Volume 1, p. 171, Recommendation 4; Public Accounts Committee agreement February 26, 2019)*

**Status—Partially Implemented**

The Saskatchewan Health Authority clearly expects homes to provide quality care and follow the Ministry's *Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes* (Guidelines). However, it has not redefined performance measures or service expectations on which it expects special-care homes to follow.

The Authority is waiting for the Ministry to finish revising the Guidelines so the Authority may use this work to determine how to assess homes' compliance with them. The Ministry told us it intends to complete the revision in 2020. The Authority plans to use the Principles and Services Agreement Steering Committee's working group, established in 2019, to develop enhanced performance measures, targets, and reporting requirements for special-care homes.

As of November 2019, we found the new template contract includes the same performance measures and targets as in use during our 2017 audit (see **Figure 3**).

Special-care homes continue to report results on the quality of care performance measures directly to the Authority, which then shares them with the Ministry of Health. The Canadian Institute for Health Information also receives and publishes data on the first seven performance measures in **Figure 3**.<sup>2</sup>

The Ministry's Guidelines set out expected care practices (e.g., feeding methods, hygiene, medication reviews, therapies provided, pain management) in the homes. As we reported in our 2017 audit, the performance measures in **Figure 3** provide little insight into how homes meet the expected care practices in the Ministry's Guidelines.

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Institute for Health Information is an independent, not-for-profit organization that provides essential information on Canada's health system and the health of Canadians. [www.cihi.ca/en](http://www.cihi.ca/en) (09 March 2020)



Having performance measures and service expectations that clearly link the key aspects of quality of care could help homes to better understand the quality of care expected of them.

**Figure 3—Performance Measures and Reporting Requirements for Special-care Homes**

Performance Measure	2019-20 Target Percentage of Residents	Frequency of Reporting
1. Residents in Daily Restraints	Not to exceed 8%	Quarterly
2. Potentially Inappropriate Antipsychotic Use without Diagnosis	Not to exceed 21%	Quarterly
3. Residents who fell in the last 30 days	Not to exceed 10.5%	Quarterly
4. Pressure Ulcers – with newly occurring stage 2–4 pressure ulcers (sores resulting from being in a set position for long periods of time)	Not to exceed 2%	Quarterly
5. Pressure Ulcers – whose stage 2–4 pressure ulcers worsened	Not to exceed 2%	Quarterly
6. Pain, Pain Worsened	Not to exceed 7%	Quarterly
7. Bladder Continence Worsened	Not to exceed 7%	Quarterly
8. Critical Incidents Reporting		Upon occurrence
9. Outbreak Reporting		Upon occurrence
10. Staff Injuries		Annually
11. Protection for Health Care Workers		Upon occurrence
12. Financial Reporting		Annually

Source: Saskatchewan Health Authority draft Schedule E and Schedule F of the draft template contract.

### 3.3 Inspections and Prompt Actions to Address Issues Still Needed

***We recommended the Saskatchewan Health Authority periodically inspect special-care homes to assess if they comply with key areas of the Ministry of Health’s Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes.*** (2017 Report – Volume 1, p. 176, Recommendation 5; Public Accounts Committee agreement February 26, 2019)

**Status—Not Implemented**

***We recommended the Saskatchewan Health Authority take prompt action when it finds non-compliance with key measures that assess special-care homes compliance with the Ministry of Health’s Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes.*** (2017 Report – Volume 1, p. 177, Recommendation 6; Public Accounts Committee agreement February 26, 2019)

**Status—Not Implemented**

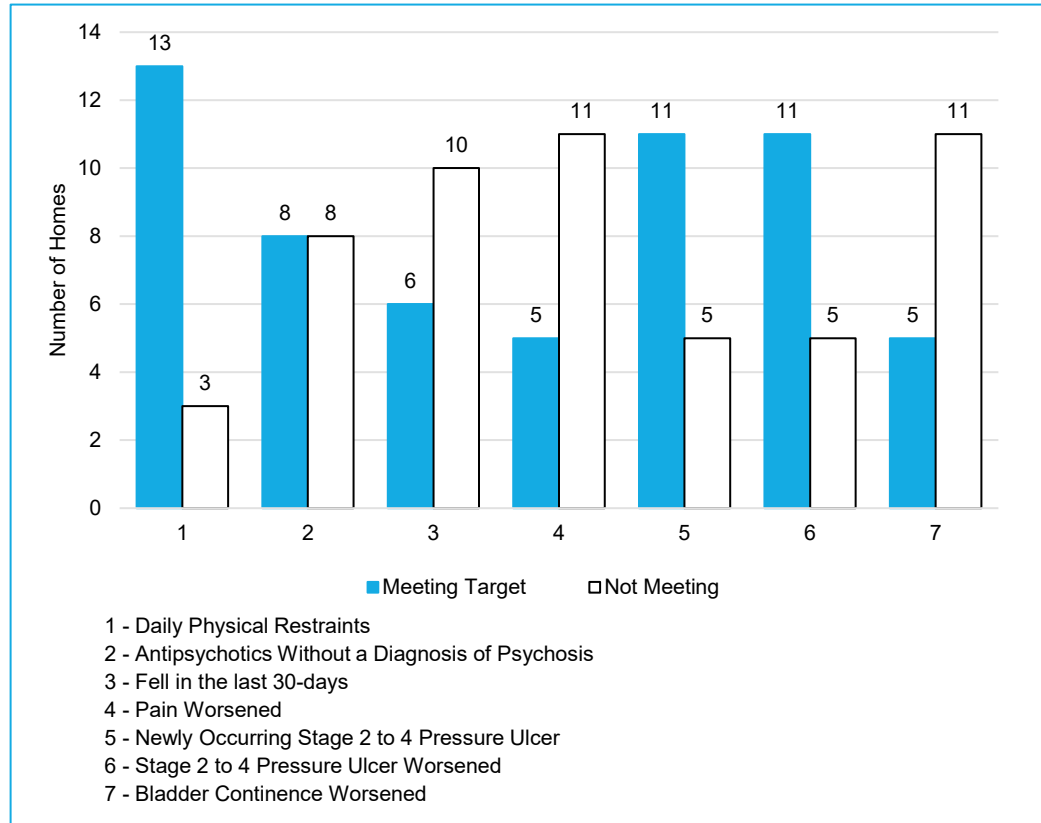
The Saskatchewan Health Authority is not yet inspecting special-care homes’ compliance with the *Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes*. The Authority has not modified the ways it addresses non-compliance with performance measures and homes continue to have issues meeting performance targets (since our 2017 audit).

At November 2019, the Authority continued its practice of annual visits to special-care homes to meet with management, and residents and their families to discuss any issues or concerns. The Authority tracks these concerns, and works with the home to address them.

Unlike other jurisdictions, such as British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario, the Authority does not periodically inspect special-care homes in key areas. We found other provinces use inspections to assess if the homes meet established physical facility and care standards (e.g., creation and use of care plans, adequacy of nutrition, use of restraints).

The Authority officials also discuss with each home, its performance measures and results (see **Figure 4**). The Authority assigns project coordinators to support the homes. The project coordinators help homes not achieving performance targets develop action plans to address the underlying root causes.

**Figure 4—Number of Special-care Homes in Saskatoon and Surrounding Area Meeting and Not Meeting Performance Targets (see Figure 3) for April 1, 2019–June 30, 2019**



Source: Information provided by the Saskatchewan Health Authority.

Similar to the 2017 audit, homes in Saskatchewan continue to not meet performance measure targets.

Our analysis found each contracted home in Saskatoon and surrounding area did not meet at least one of the seven performance targets for April 1, 2019 to June 30, 2019. For example, as shown in **Figure 4**, over half of the homes (i.e., 11 of 16) had more residents whose pain and bladder continence worsened; half the homes (i.e., 8 of 16) had residents



on antipsychotic drugs without a diagnosis of psychosis; almost 65 percent of homes (i.e., 10 of 16) had more residents than expected fall within the last 30 days. However, 13 of the 16 special-care homes achieved the target that minimizes use of daily physical restraints.

Not being successful in identifying and addressing non-compliance with expected quality of care performance targets can result in poor services provided to residents of the special-care homes, which may negatively impact their quality of life.