

## Chapter 25

# 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. Saskatoon and surrounding area has 15 private special-care homes contracted by the Authority.

By July 2023, the Authority made little progress on addressing recommendations made in 2017 about overseeing contracted special-care homes in Saskatoon and surrounding area. Of the five outstanding recommendations, one was no longer relevant and the Authority requires more work to fully implement the remaining recommendations.

The Authority and private operators of special-care homes continue to work on developing a new contract to clarify accountability relationships, and define service expectations related to quality of care, along with associated performance measures. The Authority expects to sign new contracts with special-care home operators by March 31, 2024. This will help special-care home operators to better understand their relationship with the Authority as well as with the Ministry of Health, along with the quality of care expected of them.

Since 2021, the Ministry of Health inspects special-care homes' compliance with its *Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes*. We found the Authority supports the Ministry's inspections by assessing whether special-care homes appropriately address identified areas of non-compliance.

However, the Authority needs to continue working with special-care homes toward addressing homes' non-compliance with performance measures related to the quality of care provided to residents. Special-care homes continue to not meet established performance measures (e.g., residents experiencing daily physical restraints, use of antipsychotics, newly occurring pressure ulcers). Not taking timely actions to address non-compliance can result in poor services provided to residents of special-care homes, which may negatively impact their quality of life.

### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

#### 2.1 Background

The Saskatchewan Health Authority contracts with private sector operators for services at 15 special-care homes in Saskatoon and surrounding area (See **Figure 1**). In 2022–23, the contracts with these 15 home operators had a total cost of \$99.2 million.

**Figure 1—Special-care Homes Contracted in Saskatoon and Surrounding Area in 2022–23**

Special-care Home	Location	Long-Term Care Beds
Central Haven Special-care Home (Sherbrooke Community Society Inc.)	Saskatoon	60
Circle Drive Special-care Home Inc.	Saskatoon	53
Langham Care Home	Langham	17
Lutheran Sunset Home of Saskatoon	Saskatoon	126
Oliver Lodge	Saskatoon	139
Porteous Lodge (Jubilee Residences Inc.)	Saskatoon	99
Samaritan Place	Saskatoon	100
Saskatoon Convalescent Home	Saskatoon	60
Sherbrooke Community Centre (Sherbrooke Community Society Inc.)	Saskatoon	263
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	72
Stensrud Lodge (Jubilee Residences Inc.)	Saskatoon	100
Sunnyside Adventist Care Centre	Saskatoon	91
Warman Mennonite Special-care Home Inc.	Warman	31

Source: Information provided by the Saskatchewan Health Authority.

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

In addition, special-care homes must provide health services in compliance with applicable provincial legislation and policies. For example, *The Facility Designation Regulations* [s. 17(2) and (3)] require operators of 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 the operation of special-care homes.

## 2.2 Focus of Follow-Up Audit

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

In 2017, we assessed the Saskatchewan Health Authority's processes to oversee contracted special-care homes in Saskatoon and surrounding area. Our *2017 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 12, concluded that, for the 12-month period ended December 31, 2016, the 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> By November 2019, the Authority implemented one of the six recommendations.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *2017 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 12*, pp. 161–180.

<sup>2</sup> *2020 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 29*, pp. 269–276.

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

To carry out our follow-up audit, we interviewed relevant Authority staff responsible for overseeing special-care homes. We reviewed the Authority's process for monitoring special-care homes' actions to address recommendations from inspections conducted by the Ministry. In addition, we examined documents such as the draft contract, meeting minutes, policies, and reports related to the oversight of special-care 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 July 31, 2023, and the Authority's actions up to that date.

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

***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 and representatives from special-care homes have yet to sign new contracts outlining the accountability relationship between the parties (i.e., the Authority, special-care home representatives, and the Ministry of Health).

As described in our 2019 follow-up audit, the Authority, Ministry of Health, and special-care homes' representatives approved an accountability document setting out the accountability relationship between the parties.

The Authority and special-care home representatives also formed a Principles and Services Agreement Steering Committee to revise the existing contract template. We found the Committee experienced delays in finalizing its revisions to the contract template. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted a need to include provisions in the contract template requiring special-care homes to comply with care-related policies, standards and practices acceptable to the Authority.

As of July 2023, the Authority and special-care home representatives had not finalized revisions to the contract template. The Authority's management indicated the targeted timeline for completion is December 31, 2023. Once completed, the Authority expects to sign new contracts with special-care home operators by March 31, 2024. As of July 2023, special-care homes continued to operate under old contracts. These old contracts are inadequate as they do not clearly set out the accountability relationship between the Authority, each special-care home, and the Ministry.



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 special-care home operators. For example, home operators may take direction or provide reports to the wrong agency (i.e., the Ministry versus the Authority).

## 3.2 Working to Address Service Expectations and Performance Measures in Contract Template

***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 special-care homes to provide quality care and to follow the Ministry of Health’s *Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes*. However, it has not redefined performance measures or service expectations to help assess special-care homes’ compliance with the Guidelines.

The Ministry updated its Guidelines in July 2021 and, in collaboration with the Authority, established the 2022–23 performance measures, targets, and reporting requirements for special-care homes set out in **Figure 2**.

**Figure 2—2022–23 Performance Measures and Reporting Requirements for Special-care Homes**

Performance Measure	2022–23 Target Percentage of Residents	Reporting Frequency
1. Residents in Daily Physical Restraints <sup>A</sup>	Not to exceed 13.5%	Quarterly
2. Residents on Antipsychotics without a Diagnosis of Psychosis <sup>A</sup>	Not to exceed 27.5%	Quarterly
3. Newly Occurring Stage 2 to 4 Pressure Ulcers (sores resulting from being in a set position for long periods of time) <sup>A</sup>	Not to exceed 2.7%	Quarterly
4. Residents Experiencing Pain <sup>A</sup>	Not to exceed 5%	Quarterly
5. Residents whose Behavioural Symptoms Worsened	Not to exceed 12.5%	Quarterly
6. Residents with Depression whose Mood Worsened	Not to exceed 22.5%	Quarterly

Source: Information provided the Saskatchewan Health Authority.

<sup>A</sup> Four of the six performance measures remained unchanged from our 2017 audit.

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 2** provide little insight into how special-care homes meet the expected care practices of the Ministry's Guidelines.

As described in **Section 3.1**, the Authority continues to work on finalizing revisions to its contract template with special-care homes. The Authority has yet to finalize the schedules within the template relating to service expectations, performance measures and targets, and reporting requirements. It expects to do so in 2023–24.

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

### 3.3 Prompt Actions to Address Non-Compliance 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**—No Longer Relevant to the Saskatchewan Health Authority because the Ministry is now doing inspections

***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**—Partially Implemented

The Ministry of Health inspects special-care homes' compliance with its *Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes*.<sup>3</sup> The Saskatchewan Health Authority supports the Ministry's inspections by assessing whether special-care homes appropriately address identified areas of non-compliance. However, the Authority has yet to improve the ways it addresses non-compliance with performance measures, and special-care homes continue to have issues meeting performance targets (since our 2017 audit).

We found the Ministry developed a process to assess special-care homes' compliance with the Guidelines on a three-year cycle.<sup>4</sup> Ministry staff inspected five of 15 special-care homes in Saskatoon and the surrounding area during 2022. We tested three inspections and found the Ministry shared the results (i.e., areas of non-compliance) with the Authority and special-care homes' representatives. For each of these inspections, we found the Authority reviewed the special-care homes' remediation plans and provided the Ministry with confirmation that the homes appropriately addressed the areas of non-compliance.

<sup>3</sup> Section 17.01 of *The Facility Designation Regulations* provides the Minister of Health with authority to designate special-care homes inspectors.

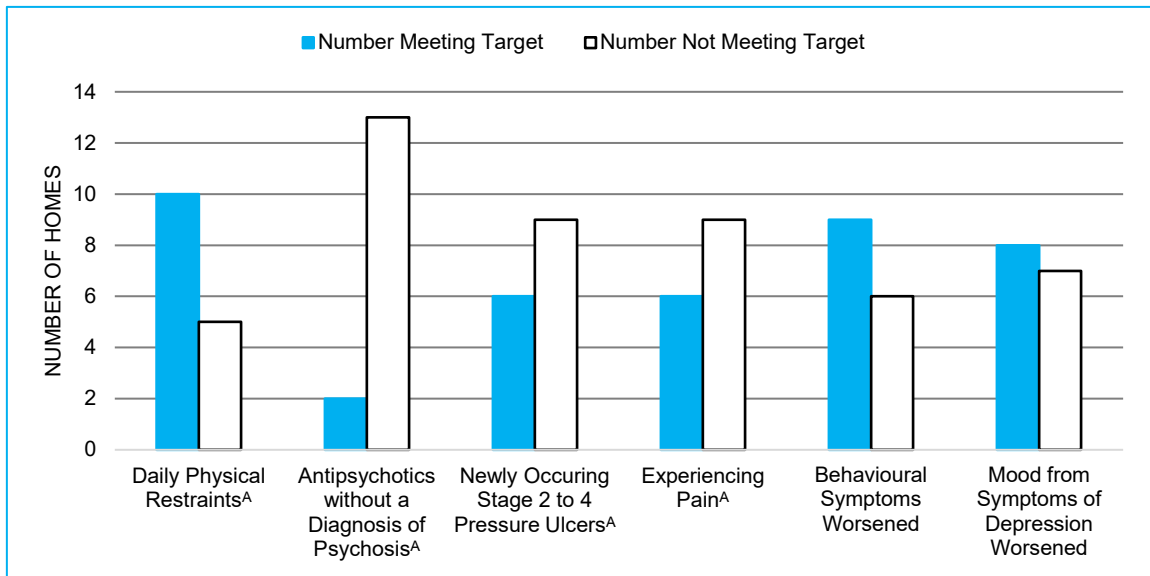
<sup>4</sup> Our audit did not assess the Ministry of Health's processes to conduct inspections of special-care homes. Our audit focused on assessing the Authority's involvement in supporting the Ministry's inspections. Our *2024 Business and Financial Plan* (p. 36) includes inspections of long-term care homes as a potential area of focus for future performance work.



Inspections help to confirm the quality of services special-care homes provide to residents.

Authority officials also discuss with each special-care home, their self-reported performance measures and results (see **Figure 3**). The Authority assigns project coordinators to support the homes (e.g., review results, review action plans to help address possible root causes).

**Figure 3—Number of Special-care Homes in Saskatoon and Surrounding Area Meeting and Not Meeting Performance Targets for January 1, 2023 to March 31, 2023**



Source: Information provided by the Saskatchewan Health Authority.  
<sup>A</sup> Four of the six performance measures remained unchanged from our 2017 audit.

Similar to our audits in 2017 and 2019, special-care homes in Saskatoon and surrounding area continue to not meet performance measure targets. In fact, results worsened since 2019 for three measures (i.e., residents in daily physical restraints, use of antipsychotics, and newly occurring pressure ulcers).

Our analysis found only one contracted home in Saskatoon and surrounding area met all six performance targets during the January 1, 2023, to March 31, 2023, period. For example, as shown in **Figure 3**, almost all of the special-care homes (i.e., 13 of 15) did not achieve the target for minimizing the number of residents on antipsychotic drugs without a diagnosis of psychosis, which is often an indicator that special-care home staff chemically manage their homes' residents.

Failure to address non-compliance with expected quality of care performance targets can result in poor services provided to special-care home residents, which may negatively impact their quality of life.