

Chapter 26

Saskatchewan Health Authority—Overseeing Contracted Special-Care Homes in Saskatoon and 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. The Authority contracts 15 private special-care homes in Saskatoon and surrounding area.

By June 2025, the Authority implemented all remaining recommendations originally made in 2017 about overseeing contracted special-care homes in Saskatoon and surrounding area.

The Authority signed new contracts in 2024 with each of the 15 contracted special-care homes clearly outlining the accountability relationships between the Authority, the special-care homes, and the Ministry of Health. The Authority also established and included performance measures and targets, service expectations, and reporting requirements in the new contracts. This should help the Authority to assess each home's compliance with the Ministry's *Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes* and work toward improving the overall quality of resident care within these homes.

While special-care homes in Saskatoon and surrounding area continue to not meet all performance targets, they improved their results since 2023. Although results worsened for one measure (i.e., newly occurring pressure ulcers), results improved for four measures (i.e., residents in daily physical restraints, use of antipsychotics, pain management, residents with depression).

The Authority works with special-care homes to address non-compliance with performance measures related to the quality of resident care, including the option of entering into a co-management agreement if a home continuously fails to comply with the Guidelines. The Authority also requires homes to provide quarterly reports on their achievement of performance measures and targets, as well as associated corrective action plans to address any areas of non-compliance.

Effective oversight of contracted special-care homes allows the Authority to make sure the overall quality of resident care in special-care homes is reasonable and appropriate, and aligns with the Guidelines.



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 2024–25, the contracts with these 15 home operators costed a total of \$127.4 million.

Figure 1—Special-care Homes Contracted in Saskatoon and Surrounding Area in 2024–25

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	129
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	97
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. 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 by the Ministry of Health's *Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes*. These Guidelines set out the minimum care standards and related procedures (e.g., use of restraints, pain management) for the operation of special-care homes.

2.2 Focus of Follow-Up Audit

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

We concluded, for 12-month period ended December 31, 2016, the Saskatchewan Health Authority had effective processes to oversee contracted special-care homes in Saskatoon and surrounding area except for areas reflected in our six recommendations.¹ By July 2023, the Authority implemented one recommendation and one recommendation we deemed no longer relevant.²

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 of Health. In addition, we examined documents such as the contracts, 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 June 30, 2025, and the Saskatchewan Health Authority's actions up to that date.

3.1 Accountability Relationships Defined and 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—Implemented

The Saskatchewan Health Authority and representatives from special-care homes in Saskatoon and surrounding area signed new contracts during 2024 sufficiently outlining the accountability relationship between all parties (i.e., the Authority, special-care homes operators, and the Ministry of Health).

¹ 2017 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 12, pp. 161–180.

² 2020 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 29, pp. 269–276 and 2023 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 25, pp. 221–226. We found one recommendation no longer relevant because the Ministry of Health began inspecting special-care homes instead of the Saskatchewan Health Authority.



In June 2024, the Authority and representatives from each contracted special-care home in Saskatoon and surrounding area finalized a 'Principles and Services Agreement' template. We found the Authority and all 15 special-care home representatives signed contracts by August 2024.

We found the new contracts clearly outline the expected accountability relationships between the Authority, special-care home operators, and the Ministry in greater detail than past contracts. For example, the new contracts now include additional schedules outlining parties' expectations regarding funding, performance measures and targets (as described in **Section 3.2**), and accountability and cooperation toward delivering quality health services.

Outlining clear accountability relationships between all parties reduces the risk of confusion for special-care home operators.

3.2 Service Expectations and Performance Measures Established and Clearly Defined

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—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—Implemented

The Saskatchewan Health Authority clearly established and included performance measures, service expectations, and reporting requirements in the new contracts signed with special-care homes in Saskatoon and surrounding area to help assess each home's compliance with the Ministry of Health's *Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes*.

The Ministry's Guidelines set out expected care practices (e.g., use of restraints, managing responsive behaviours in accordance with a care plan, provision of skin and wound care, pain management) in the homes. The Ministry updated its Guidelines in October 2024.

We found the Authority collaborated with the Ministry to determine performance measures and targets for specific quality indicators. **Figure 2** describes the set performance measures, targets, and reporting requirements for 2024–25 and 2025–26 to help assess special-care home compliance with the Ministry's Guidelines. The Authority and the

Ministry developed these performance targets after conducting jurisdictional scans and research (e.g., data from the Canadian Institute for Health Information).

Figure 2—2024–25 Performance Measures, Targets, and Reporting Requirements for Special-care Homes

Performance Measures	2024–25 Target (%) of Residents	2025–26 Target (%) of Residents	Reporting Frequency
1. Residents in Daily Physical Restraints	Not to exceed 13.5%	Not to exceed 11.5%	Quarterly
2. Residents on Antipsychotics without a Diagnosis of Psychosis	Not to Exceed 27.5%	Not to exceed 23.4%	Quarterly
3. Residents whose Behavioural Symptoms Worsened	Not to Exceed 12.5%	Not to exceed 12.0%	Quarterly
4. Residents with a Newly Occurring Stage 2 to 4 Pressure Ulcer (sores resulting from being in a set position for long periods of time)	Not to exceed 2.7%	Not to exceed 2.6%	Quarterly
5. Residents Experiencing Pain	Not to exceed 5.0%	Not to exceed 4.0%	Quarterly
6. Residents Whose Mood from Symptoms of Depression Worsened	Not to exceed 22.5%	Not to exceed 20.0%	Quarterly

Source: Signed 'Principles and Services Agreements' provided by the Saskatchewan Health Authority.

We found the Saskatchewan Health Authority updated the targets for the performance measures in each fiscal year and communicated them to the special-care homes appropriately. The Authority also clearly outlined the service expectations (e.g., number of beds available for long-term or short-term care, no double occupancy in any room, types of care to be provided such as respite, palliative, or rehabilitative care) in the new contracts signed with special-care homes in 2024. It also provided training and educational resources to support homes' understanding and implementation of the performance measures and service expectations.

We tested signed contracts for three special-care homes in Saskatoon and surrounding area and found each contract clearly included service expectations, performance measures and targets set out in **Figure 2**, and reporting requirements (e.g., quarterly reports on performance measures, critical incident reports).

Having established performance measures and service expectations help special-care homes to understand and to deliver the quality of care expected.

3.3 Prompt Actions Taken to Address Non-Compliance

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—Implemented



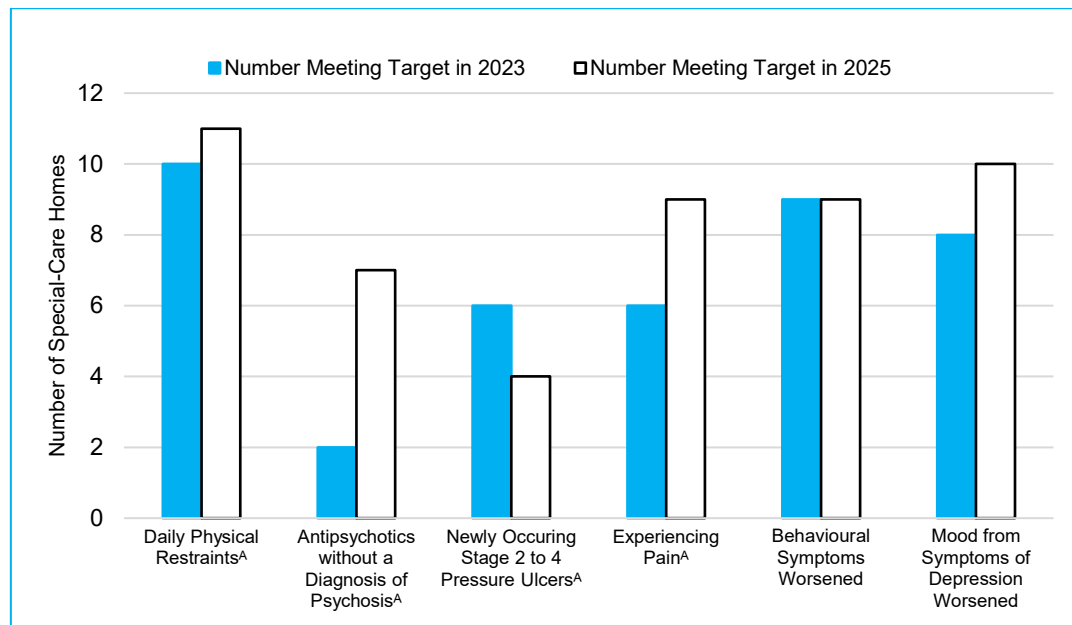
The Saskatchewan Health Authority takes prompt action when it finds Saskatoon and surrounding area special-care homes did not meet performance measures regarding the Ministry of Health's *Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes*. We found the Authority monitored homes' compliance and took appropriate action as required, including entering into one co-management agreement with a special-care home in Saskatoon and surrounding area.

The Authority monitors special-care homes' compliance with the performance measures described in **Figure 2**. It requires special-care homes to provide quarterly reports on their achievement of the performance measures. When a home exceeds the target threshold for one or more of the measures, the Authority requires the home to create an associated corrective action plan to address the non-compliance. The Authority also requires homes to report on the progress of their corrective action plan in the subsequent quarter.

We tested three special-care homes in Saskatoon and surrounding area and found quarterly reporting occurred as expected and the homes prepared corrective action plans for any performance measures not meeting the established targets. These corrective plans included actions like more frequent check-ins with residents experiencing pain or more frequent repositioning for any bedridden residents with pressure ulcers.

As illustrated in **Figure 3**, while the 15 special-care homes in Saskatoon and area continue to not meet all performance targets, they improved their results since 2023. Although results worsened for one measure (i.e., newly occurring pressure ulcers), results improved for four measures (i.e., residents in daily physical restraints, use of antipsychotics, pain management, and residents with worsening depression).

Figure 3—Special-care Homes in Saskatoon and Surrounding Area Meeting Performance Targets for January 1 to March 31, 2025, compared to January 1 to March 31, 2023



Source: Information provided by the Saskatchewan Health Authority.

^A Four of the six performance measures remained unchanged from our 2017 audit.

The Ministry of Health inspects special-care homes' compliance with its *Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes* and the Authority continues to support Ministry inspections by assessing whether special-care homes appropriately address identified areas of non-compliance. Since our 2023 audit, Ministry staff inspected (initial and follow-up) 10 of 15 special-care homes in Saskatoon and surrounding area. We tested three inspections and found the Authority reviewed the special-care homes' remediation plans, visited the homes, and collected necessary evidence to corroborate whether each special-care home appropriately addressed the areas of non-compliance identified by the Ministry (e.g., documented pain interventions in care plans, properly documented family involvement in the development and review of care plans).

We found the Authority also developed a process in 2024 to assess Saskatoon and area special-care homes' continued compliance with previously identified unmet standards. To observe sustained compliance of homes, the Authority conducts an onsite audit about 18 months following the Ministry's last inspection. The Authority's audits aim to identify areas of continued growth, as well as potential areas for improvement. As of June 2025, the Authority conducted onsite audits at five out of 15 special-care homes in Saskatoon and surrounding area. We tested two of these audits and found the Authority conducted the audit as expected and provided a report with recommendations to the special-care homes, which identified areas of improvement for the homes to help ensure continued compliance.

Furthermore, the Authority's new contracts with special-care homes described in **Section 3.1** include provisions that allow for the Authority to take action if a home continuously fails to comply with the Ministry's Guidelines. For example, the Authority can issue a written notice to special-care homes informing them about contract termination resulting from any material breach, which then results in a new co-management agreement. Since our 2023 audit, the Authority issued a notice to one special-care home in Saskatoon and surrounding area and entered into a co-management agreement for a significant non-compliance breach (i.e., non-compliance with several standards, practices and care-related policies, applicable laws, service performance).

Addressing special-care homes' non-compliance with expectations timely can result in improved services provided to residents, which can positively impact their quality of life.

