

Chapter 27

Saskatchewan Health Authority—Providing Timely Access to Mental Health and Addictions Services in Prince Albert and Area

1.0 MAIN POINTS

The Saskatchewan Health Authority provides mental health and addictions services in Prince Albert and surrounding areas through inpatient (e.g., in hospital, recovery centres), outpatient (e.g., day programming), and community rehabilitation and residential services. The Authority provides most of these services in the city of Prince Albert.

By July 2025, the Authority implemented the final two recommendations we first made in 2018 about providing timely access to mental health and addictions services in Prince Albert and surrounding areas (i.e., Northeast integrated service area).

The Authority developed a provincial strategy to implement a mental health and addictions IT system that records key information in a single client file for mental health and addictions services provided in outpatient and inpatient settings. The Authority has a provincial work plan for implementing the IT system and expects all mental health and addictions services to be using the system by March 2028. Having a single file that includes all mental health and addictions services provided to a client will better help healthcare providers in determining the next appropriate course of action for clients.

Further, the Authority sufficiently collaborated with the Ministry of Social Services to enhance access to housing (e.g., supportive housing) for mental health and addictions clients living in Prince Albert. The Authority also signed a data sharing agreement with various agencies (e.g., Ministries of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety, Social Services, and Health; Saskatchewan Housing Corporation) to share certain data to support the Government's Provincial Approach to Homelessness (PATH) initiative, which is an integrated response to address the increase in chronic homelessness. The Authority plans to monitor the initiative through various outcome indicators. Stable housing can lead to better outcomes for people living with complex mental health and addiction issues.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

The Provincial Health Authority Act makes the Minister of Health responsible for the strategic direction of the provincial healthcare system, and makes the Saskatchewan Health Authority responsible for planning, organizing, delivering, and evaluating healthcare services, including mental health and addictions services.



The Authority uses six integrated service areas within Saskatchewan for the delivery and management of health services. The Northeast integrated service area includes the city of Prince Albert and surrounding areas.

2.2 Focus of Follow-Up Audit

This chapter describes our third follow-up audit of management's actions on the recommendations we first made in 2018.

We concluded, for the 12-month period ended January 31, 2018, the Saskatchewan Health Authority had effective processes to provide timely access to mental health and addictions services in Prince Albert and surrounding areas except for areas reflected in our 10 recommendations.¹ By July 2023, the Authority implemented eight recommendations.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 discussed with management the actions taken and examined key documents (e.g., Mental Health and Addictions Information System provincial work plan).

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 15, 2025, and the Saskatchewan Health Authority's actions up to that date.

3.1 Strategy Developed to Centrally Collect Client Information

We recommended the Saskatchewan Health Authority develop a strategy to collect key mental health and addictions client information from healthcare professionals for the provincial integrated mental health record system. (2018 Report – Volume 1, p. 114, Recommendation 3; Public Accounts Committee agreement February 26, 2019)

Status—Implemented

The Saskatchewan Health Authority developed a strategy to implement a provincial IT system (referred to as the Mental Health and Addictions Information System [MHAIS]) to record key information in one single client file on mental health and addictions services provided in outpatient and inpatient settings.

¹ 2018 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 8, pp. 103–125.

² 2021 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 22, pp. 241–253 and 2023 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 26, pp. 227–234.

In 2021, the Authority, Ministry of Health, and eHealth Saskatchewan jointly created the MHAIS steering committee to set strategies, priorities, and scope of initiatives related to key information to support the continuity of care for mental health and addictions clients.

The MHAIS steering committee maintains a provincial work plan for implementing MHAIS. We found the steering committee met seven times between July 1, 2024, and July 15, 2025, and monitored MHAIS implementation.

At July 2025, the Authority had implemented MHAIS as follows:

- MHAIS implemented in all inpatient acute care facilities (i.e., hospitals).
- Expectation that all other Authority-owned and operated inpatient facilities (e.g., recovery centres, detox centres), as well as programs operated by community-based organizations, will be using MHAIS by March 2028.

The Authority plans to transition 10 facilities (five in Prince Albert) to MHAIS in 2025–26, and another 28 facilities (three in Prince Albert) during April 2026 to March 2028.

Additionally, we found the steering committee continues to evaluate the effectiveness and usability of MHAIS. The committee worked with healthcare providers to develop a list of planned service enhancements to improve the system's functionality. For example, in 2026, the Committee plans to enhance the system for prescription generation.

Full province-wide implementation of MHAIS will allow the Authority to capture all client information and mental health and addictions services provided, giving healthcare providers a complete and comprehensive service history. Having one, central client file will help ensure relevant and timely information is readily available for client care.

3.2 Access to Housing Enhanced

We recommended the Saskatchewan Health Authority collaborate with the Ministry of Social Services to enhance access to housing options for mental health and addictions clients. (2018 Report – Volume 1, p. 120, Recommendation 5; Public Accounts Committee agreement February 26, 2019)

Status—Implemented

The Saskatchewan Health Authority collaborated with the Ministry of Social Services to enhance access to housing options for mental health and addictions clients.

In October 2023, the Government of Saskatchewan announced its Provincial Approach to Homelessness (PATH) initiative with the objective of providing an integrated response to address the increase in chronic homelessness. For example, through PATH, the Government committed to build 155 new supportive housing units in Regina and Saskatoon, 120 new permanent emergency shelter spaces in Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, and other communities, and 30 new complex needs emergency shelter spaces in Regina and Saskatoon.



In November 2024, the Authority also signed a data sharing agreement with the Ministries of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety, Social Services, Health, and Justice and Attorney General; Saskatchewan Housing Corporation; and eHealth Saskatchewan to support the disclosure of data among these agencies to further the PATH initiative.

The agreement also sets out approved outcome indicators. See **Figure 1** for examples of approved outcome indicators for the agreement's three areas of focus.

Figure 1—Examples of Approved Outcome Indicators from PATH Data Sharing Agreement

Supportive Housing:

- Number of clients referred to supportive housing
- Number of unique client referrals to support services (e.g., addictions services, mental health services)
- Clients who identified as experiencing past chronic homelessness

Enhanced Emergency Shelters:

- Utilization rate
- Number of Saskatchewan Income Support and Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability clients
- Number of clients moved to housing from shelters
- Number of clients accessing support services

Complex Needs Emergency Shelters

- Occupancy and utilization rate
- Number of referrals to services (e.g., mental health, addictions)
- Number of connections to services (e.g., mental health, addictions)

Source: Saskatchewan Health Authority Data Sharing Agreement, pp. 15–19.

Authority management indicated it expects to begin reporting on the PATH initiative and client indicators in late 2025. Having and monitoring outcome indicators is important as it can help management make informed decisions and may lead to better outcomes for people living with complex mental health and addictions issues.

The Authority also continued to support the Reaching Home Community Advisory Board that, as part of its mandate, is to provide advisory services and assist in planning for homelessness reduction and prevention strategies in Prince Albert.³ In November 2024, the Advisory Board oversaw the expansion of housing for youth (ages 12–18) resulting in the Authority signing an agreement with a community-based organization in Prince Albert to provide an additional five spaces for youth impacted by mental health issues and symptoms or addictions.

Collaborating with several agencies, including the Ministry of Social Services, can expand access to housing options that better fit clients' specific needs. Providing stable housing can lead to improved outcomes for people living with complex mental health and addictions issues.

³ In 2012, the Federal Government established the Reaching Home Community Advisory Board, which includes community partners (e.g., City of Prince Albert, Prince Albert Police Service), as well as government agencies (e.g., representatives from the Ministry of Social Services, Saskatchewan Housing Corporation).