



# Seniors Health Services Plan


## Aging well 2021





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## AIM

The Seniors' Health Services Plan presents a path forward to redesigning the delivery of seniors' health services in response to the challenges and opportunities facing Islanders. The plan builds upon Prince Edward Island's successful innovations in the care of older adults, identifies emerging best practices and approaches from other jurisdictions, and applies the advice, expertise and lived experiences of older adults, health care professionals and community service providers.

This plan identifies three priority areas of renewed government focus with the intention of improving seniors' health and wellbeing.

## VISION

The overarching vision for this work is to support Prince Edward Island's seniors to age well at home and in their communities with access to a range of safe, integrated and high-quality supports to maintain health and dignity.

## THE PATH FORWARD

### Engaging stakeholders

As part of the development of this plan, a number of engagement activities, including virtual focus groups and key informant interviews, were held. Important stakeholder groups participating in the process included older adults, health care providers, private and public long term care providers, and government departments. The engagement activities were designed to gather perspectives on priority areas where action is needed to improve seniors' health services and collect advice on ways to increase care at home,

improve quality and safety of services and strengthen health human resources. The results from the engagement activities were collated and used to inform the development of this plan. The engagement of stakeholders, review of past recommendations, and research related to health services for seniors revealed three main enablers to achieving excellence in seniors' health services:

- Providing care at home and closer to home;
- Ensuring quality and safety across the seniors' health service continuum; and
- Strengthening health human resources for seniors' health services.

These three enabling factors form the basis of the province's strategic priorities for seniors' health services.



## **STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Providing care at home and closer to home**

### **Background**

- Accessing the right care and supports closer to home can help older Islanders to remain at home for as long as possible.
- Lack of adequate home and community care services to support individuals' activities of daily living (i.e. personal care, cooking, cleaning, and transportation) is a strong predictor of institutionalization and overall utilization of health care services.
- Islanders sometimes move into long term care without having received home care services.
- About 75% of the total home care hours are currently being met by unpaid caregivers with the demand for potential unpaid caregivers expected to grow significantly.
- Older adults on Prince Edward Island move to long term care at a higher rate than many other provinces in part due to limited home supports.

### **Key objectives**

- Improved access to a range of home and community based supports to better address the health needs of older adults with the aim of enabling seniors to age at home.
- Improved access to home and community based supports for older adults with complex medical conditions, including dementia and/or frailty.

### **Initiatives supporting key objectives**

#### **Enhancing Care at Home and in the Community**

- Home and community-based care includes all services which are provided either at home or in the community, such as health promotion, community-based primary care, home care and Mobile Integrated Health, specialized Geriatric Program services, the Seniors Mental Health Resource Team, and Integrated Palliative Care. While older islanders are fortunate to have access to many potential services, such services have traditionally been under-resourced, resulting in lack of access and/or disparities across the province. As examples, there are over 2,100 Islanders over the age of 65 currently on the patient registry awaiting a primary care provider and home care services are limited in terms of hours available and weekend/after hour services.

### **Supporting older adults with complex needs**

- On Prince Edward Island 1 in 5 islanders is age 65 or older. This number is higher than the national average, and is projected to increase to 1 in 4 by 2025. Older adults aged 85 or older, who may face increasing frailty and medical complexity, represent one of the fastest growing segments of the population on Prince Edward Island. Despite the fact that seniors prefer to age in place if at all possible, for many years, has been over reliant on facility-based care. Evidence suggests that care can be effectively shifted closer to home.
- Opportunities exist to explore the provision of more home based care for medically complex patients, urgent respite services, day program expansion and private/public partnerships to offer home care. Health care providers also require additional training in geriatric care and dementia care to be better equipped to meet the needs of older adults.

### **Providing the right care at the right time**

- The availability and accessibility of caregivers and community support services predict the trajectory of care for seniors. As a result of gaps in community based health programs and services, older adults may prematurely transition to long term care or remain in acute care. Based on current projections the Island will require a 35% increase in the total number of long term care beds by 2025 however with appropriate home and community support transfers to long term care homes may be delayed or prevented.
- Older adults who are no longer able to live independently or who require a transition in care but are unable to access services may become “stuck” in the hospital awaiting discharge to an appropriate location. These often lengthy wait times in the hospital are referred to as alternate level of care (ALC) stays. ALC stays are associated with delirium, pressure ulcers, hospital-acquired infections and falls, and older adults awaiting facility-based care in hospitals experience losses in both quality of life and physical function further increasing their frailty and vulnerability.
- Prince Edward Island traditionally experiences an above-average number of ALC stays of 21.5% of all inpatient days compared to the national average 15.6%. While the cost of an average hospital stay in Prince Edward Island in 2018/19 was \$6,558, the cost of ALC stays can be over \$100,000 per hospital stay.
- More options for timely health care interventions, providing the right care at the right time, such as emergency department geriatric care nurse assessment, post-acute transition home programs, and expanded restorative care options may reduce the risk of premature transitions to long term care.



## STRATEGIC PRIORITY:

### Ensuring quality and safety across seniors' health services

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#### Background

- Provincial data is not available on all long term care homes to accurately describe residents' health outcomes.
- Prince Edward Island and Quebec are the only two provinces who do not use the InterRAI data information system to populate public reports. In Prince Edward Island this applies to private and public long term care and home care however implementation of InterRAI is in progress in home care.
- While publicly funded home care services participate in Accreditation Canada assessment and quality improvement processes to meet accreditation standards, there is a lack of standardized measures of quality and performance for private providers.
- On Prince Edward Island, there are differences in standards, quality and safety monitoring processes, services, and staffing in public and private long term care homes.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic infection prevention and control measures emerged as an issue in private long term care homes across Canada.
- Existing residential designs in community care and long term care homes that feature resident room sharing increases the risk of transmission of infection.

#### Key objectives

- Improved health outcomes for older adults through safe and effective health and community services which are monitored and evaluated in a systematic and reliable manner.
- Transparent reporting of evidence-based quality of care indicators for health services delivered to seniors.



## Initiatives supporting key objectives

### **Collecting, monitoring and using robust health and safety data to enable continued quality improvement**

Quality and safety measurement, monitoring, and reporting builds public and provider confidence that health system activities are meeting their stated objectives. These activities also provide essential information for learning and to guide program and service planning. Implementing systems such as InterRAI across public and private long term care homes and developing more robust systems in other health care settings to track safety, health outcomes, and staffing data will help to measure the effectiveness of new initiatives.

### **Ensuring safe and effective seniors care**

Regular review of legislation, standards and guidelines is necessary to ensure that seniors' health services are of highest quality and safety. As an example, in response to COVID19 a review of the Community Care Facilities and Nursing Homes Act and regulations is necessary to ensure that legislation includes standards for infection prevention and control and staff education in community and long term care homes

### **Implementing of high quality seniors programs and services with demonstrated effectiveness**

Island health care providers have developed health care innovations that have enhanced the quality and safety of care however these programs and services require increased investment to enable full implementation across Prince Edward Island. As a starting point seven programs with demonstrated effectiveness were identified as candidates for enhanced implementation:

**COACH Program.** The Caring for Older Adults in the Community and at Home program an innovative partnership between Home Care, Primary Care and the Provincial Geriatric Program that supports frail seniors and their caregivers in their homes. In the initial pilot data, over a one year period, the initial participants in the COACH program achieved a 66% reduction in hospital admissions, a 33% reduction in emergency department visits and a 50% reduction in primary care visits. In follow-up analyses of 22 COACH participants who eventually transitioned to LTC, their transition to long term care was significantly delayed (average length of stay in LTC was about 3 years for islanders in general, but only 9 months for COACH participants). The delayed move to LTC allowed COACH participants an average of more than 2 additional years at home and in the community with their families (and at a cost avoidance of over 3 million dollars overall).

**Seniors Mental Health Resource Team (SMHRT)** are multidisciplinary teams that provide specialized services to seniors experiencing complex mental health and behavioural challenges, as well as support to their families and/or care team. Teams work collaboratively with Home Care, the Provincial Geriatric Program, inpatient psychiatric units and primary care providers to offer assessment, treatment, diagnosis, and condition management and support.



The program aims to reduce the incidence and impact of psychiatric symptoms, including behavioural symptoms related to dementia, to maintain or improve the quality of life of older adults, their caregivers and families while also assisting seniors in maintaining independent living.

Up to 60% of occupants in the psychogeriatric unit within Hillsborough Hospital are residents who no longer require specialized psychiatric care but do not have access to appropriate community supports, including long term care and are therefore deemed alternate level of care. The Seniors Mental Health Resource Team is a valuable resource in supporting older adults with complex health needs.

**Seniors Independence Initiative.** The Seniors Independence Initiative provides financial assistance to island seniors who require some support in order to remain in their own homes and communities, with the goal of supplementing services already provided by the Provincial Home Care program, private home care providers or by unpaid caregivers. Since its launch in 2018, the program has provided service for more than 800 Islanders.

**Restorative Care at Prince County Hospital.** This 10-bed unit provides care for patients who are recovering from an acute illness or event. By focusing on physical and cognitive functioning, and organizing individual care plans, many patients have been able to return home from hospital negating or delaying admissions to facility-based care. In 2019/2020, over 50% of all patients on the unit were either able to return home or have their needs met in supportive living arrangements rather than in long term care.



**Palliative Care.** Palliative care services in the community are delivered by home care professionals and palliative care physicians via the Integrative Palliative Care Program with additional support from the Mobile Integrated Health service which is delivered by community paramedics. Community-based palliative care currently supports 19% of Islanders who die each year; however, research indicates that this care should be available to 89% of this population. Expanding access to high quality palliative care for older adults impacts the quality of life of individuals while also delivering improved patient and system outcomes at reduced costs.

**Mobile Integrated Health.** Currently this initiative engages community paramedics to increase access to health care for older adults at home by offering wellness checks, falls assistance and expanding access to community-based palliative care. Mobile Integrated Health is a private-public partnership between the province and private emergency services providers that has demonstrated promise as an approach to improving access to care.

**Home Equipment Loan Program.** The Canadian Red Cross in partnership with the provincial government operates the Bed Loan Program and a short term Health Equipment Loan Program. These programs allow people to return home from hospital earlier and improve independence at home. Both the health equipment and bed loan program have been successful and would benefit from an increased supply of equipment.



## **STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Strengthening health human resources**

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### **Background**

- As elsewhere in Canada, on Prince Edward Island there are significant challenges in recruiting and retaining healthcare workers.
- As elsewhere in the health system, job vacancies exist in seniors health care.

### **Key objectives**

- Maintain a proactive approach to planning and recruiting health care professionals with expertise in seniors' health services.
- Strengthen long term care health human resources to ensure that residents receive safe and high quality care.
- Position career opportunities within the seniors' health services sector as rewarding employment opportunities.

### **Initiatives supporting key objectives**

#### **Strengthening health human resources requires ongoing action on several levels:**

- developing and maintaining competency in seniors health care of current health care providers
- inspiring and facilitating entry into health care training programs
- recruiting new health care providers and
- retaining providers by providing a quality work life experience.

The provincial Recruitment and Retention Secretariat, in collaboration with Health PEI and industry sector partners, will provide expertise to strategic initiatives to plan strategies to meet the current and projected future requirements for health human resources in the seniors care sector.

#### **Developing and maintaining competency in seniors health care of current health care providers**

Continuing education programs and specialized training in programs specific to geriatric care including dementia to enhance the skills of all health care providers across the seniors' health continuum. Partnerships between the private and public sectors, non-government organizations and educational institutions will be required to continue to develop and offer training that meets the needs of the Island health care system.



### **Inspiring and facilitating entry into health care training programs**

The demand for health care professionals is expected to increase and will require efforts to facilitate entry into programs such as bursaries, sponsorship opportunities, increased training spaces and additional recruitment options.

### **Recruiting health care providers**

Recruiting health care providers to the seniors' health services sector in the current highly competitive environment will require partnerships between the private and public sectors and educational institutions to explore innovative opportunities to recruit international, national, regional, entry level and experienced professionals.

### **Retaining providers by providing a quality work life experience**

Promoting physically and psychologically safe workplaces and positive work environments require ongoing efforts to ensure that healthcare providers experience work life satisfaction.

## **Governance, Accountability and Evaluation**

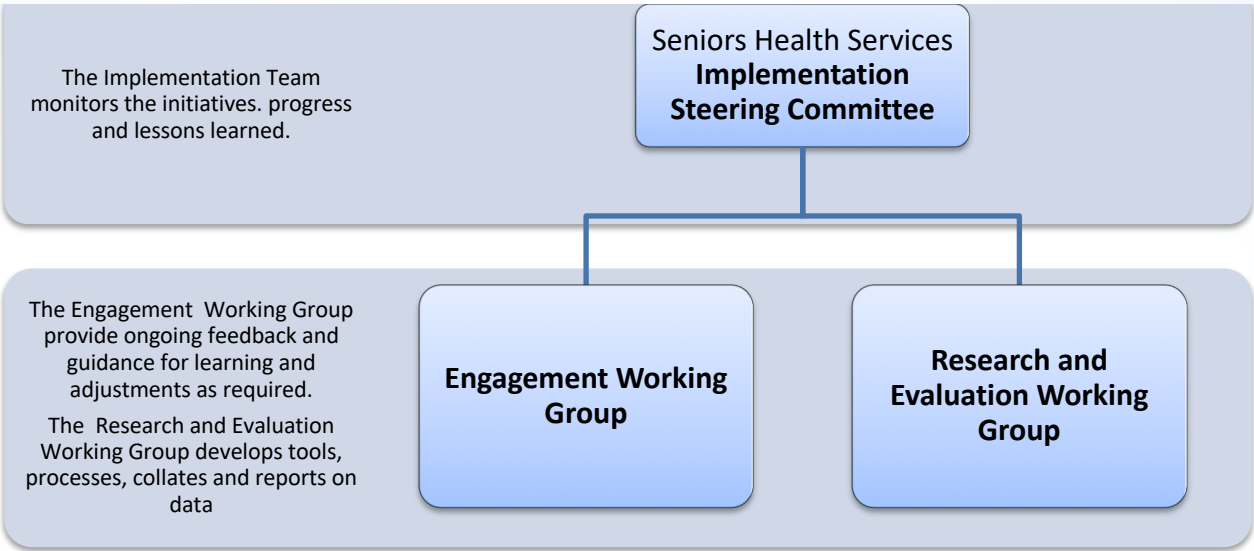
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The Seniors Health Services Plan describes changes to the delivery and funding of seniors' health services which will be outcome and results driven. New pilot and demonstration projects will require plans that include evaluation of health outcomes, provider and recipient satisfaction and fiscal analysis to ensure that these initiatives provide value for funds spent. Similarly, changes to existing services require evaluation to fully understand the intended and unintended outcomes of these changes and advance further efforts towards quality improvement.

Members of the public, decision makers, and providers require more robust measurement and public reporting of outcomes to inform decision making, guide further system changes, increase confidence in the health care system and identify emerging trends. The framework which follows describes the roles of groups which will monitor the implementation of the plan, develop and implement measurement and evaluation tools to ensure that the changes made achieve the benefits intended.

While the implementation of seniors' health services will be operationalized by Health PEI and many other organizations. A Seniors Health Services Plan Implementation Team will monitor implementation activities and contribute expertise and guidance to the process.

# Governance and Accountability Framework





## Measures of Success

To provide robust measures of improvement in seniors' health services, targets for each of the strategic priority areas will be developed as a component of an evaluation framework by a multidisciplinary Research and Evaluation Working Group. The evaluation framework will also outline the development of necessary data collection systems, monitoring and reporting frequency. The Evaluation Working Group will finalize the measures of progress which may include some of the examples which follow:

### Example Measures of Success

#### Providing care at home and closer to home

- All high risk or those older adults with complex chronic conditions, currently on the patient registry, assigned to a primary care team.
- Increase in number of patients receiving care through the COACH program.
- Trend towards increasing palliative care provision at home.
- Trend towards shorter stays in long term care homes.



### **Ensuring quality and safety across the seniors' health service continuum**

- Increase in the number of older adults with complex chronic conditions, currently on the patient registry who are assigned to a primary care team.
- Development and adoption of a consistent comparable patient adverse event reporting process across the care continuum
- Implementation of InterRAI in private and public long term care homes
- Monitoring and reporting of infection control measures

### **Strengthening health human resources for seniors' health services.**

- Development of a seniors health human resource strategy
- Positive trend towards increased number of health care graduates prepared for positions in long term care
- Number of staff completing dementia care training in public and private long term care homes

## **Making it Happen**

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Prince Edward Island has approached an intersection where the changing health needs of an aging population, increasing demands for services, and new pressures on health care providers compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic necessitates action. The Seniors Health Services Plan addresses these current challenges and proactively builds a solid foundation for the future.

In local Island communities older adults and caregivers will see the Seniors Health Services Plan in action as it is implemented by Health PEI, social, community and health service partners beginning in 2021. The Seniors Health Services Plan Implementation Steering Committee will continue to monitor and report on implementation activities, contribute expertise and guidance to the process.



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