
Home and community care in Alberta

A guide to new continuing care legislation



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Purpose Statement

The heart of Alberta’s continuing care system is people: clients and residents, family, operators, providers, volunteers and dedicated staff. The focus of our continuing care system is to support Albertans in need of care.

This document provides an overview of home and community care within Alberta’s continuing care system. It includes a summary of the new legislative framework, including the *Continuing Care Act*, which takes effect April 1, 2024, along with information about Continuing Care Transformation initiatives.

The overview is designed to inform Albertans about the changes in continuing care legislation, services and Continuing Care Transformation initiatives in a reader-friendly manner.

Throughout the document, reference is made to the legislative framework, which includes the *Continuing Care Act*, regulations and standards. Together, they create a strong foundation for an improved continuing care system.

Our new legislative framework

Continuing Care Act

The Act establishes clear and consistent authority and oversight for licensing, accommodations and the delivery of publicly funded health care in the continuing care system.

Regulations

Regulations build on content in the Act and outline what the Government of Alberta expects to be provided through continuing care.

Associated Policy Tools

These include Ministerial orders, directives, guidelines and standards, etc.

1. Continuing care, new legislation and Continuing Care Transformation

Our continuing care system is designed to ensure Albertans receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time, by the right people to support their independence and quality of life. We support people from various age groups, abilities, and conditions with a range of service types and settings designed to meet their unique needs. The table below provides an overview of the continuing care settings we provide to support Albertans. It includes the previous names of each setting and what they are now called.

Previous name	New name
Home Care	Home and Community Care
Licensed Supportive Living	Supportive Living Accommodations
Designated Supportive Living	Continuing Care Homes
Long-Term Care (<i>includes Nursing Homes and Auxiliary Hospitals</i>)	
Hospices	

Note: Specialized programs, such as palliative care and end-of-life care, may be offered either in home and community care, in continuing care homes or in other settings.

The new Act

The continuing care sector plays a vital role in the delivery of Alberta’s health services. Its effectiveness is directly impacts hospitals, primary care services, and most importantly, the lives of Albertans. The Government of Alberta recognizes there are challenges in the continuing care system and is committed to addressing them. As part of this commitment, Alberta Health has crafted a new legislative framework, which includes the *Continuing Care Act*. This new legislation marks a pivotal moment in the ongoing transformation of the system. The new legislative framework establishes clear and consistent authority and oversight under a single Act for licensing, compliance monitoring, accommodations and the delivery of continuing care in Alberta. It ensures that legislation governing continuing care in Alberta accurately reflects current practices and settings while addressing the changing needs and expectations of Albertans.

The priorities in creating this Act and the key factors considered throughout the process are organized below:

Priority	Key considerations
Responsiveness	Designed to align with the needs and preferences of the Albertans we serve.
Consolidation	Combines multiple acts and their regulations into a unified, modern legislative framework.
Coverage	Brings all aspects of the continuing care sector into a single cohesive Act.
Focus	Centers around clients and families, replacing outdated tools with evidence-based processes
Public Involvement	Reflects Albertans’ priorities based on extensive reviews and public feedback .

Regulations and policies

While creating this Act marks a significant step forward, work to develop the legislation will be ongoing. Regulations and policies must continue to evolve to address remaining barriers, gaps, and opportunities for improvement. Since the new legislation cannot transform continuing care alone, the Government of Alberta is committed to ongoing improvements to build a better, more responsive system.

Continuing Care Transformation

Beyond legislation, a transformation of the continuing care system is already underway to address other necessary changes. Budget 2024 supports the ongoing commitment to invest \$1 billion over three years to transform the continuing care system. This is supporting more care in the community, increasing choice and innovation, boosting capacity in the workforce and improving quality across continuing care. These investments are set up to improve the lives of people receiving continuing care services and build a more sustainable and responsive continuing care system.

2. Home and community care overview

Home and community care provides clients of all ages with publicly funded health and personal care services and supports in private residences or other residential settings, such as suites in lodges or retirement residences, as well as in community clinic settings. It includes support with daily living activities (such as bathing, dressing or eating) and services if a client cannot carry out those tasks on their own and does not have help from family members, friends or other sources. Home and community care also includes a variety of professional health services, such as nursing or rehabilitation therapy, as well as various other goods and services to meet both short-term or long-term healthcare needs in a community setting.

The primary objective of home and community care is to support Albertans to maintain their well-being, safety, and independence within the comfort of their homes for as long as possible, adapting to their changing care needs. The services and supports provided by home and community care are designed to complement, rather than substitute, the invaluable care offered by families and communities.

127,000

Unique clients across Alberta

Clients may receive temporary or short term supports due to an acute injury or illness (e.g. recovery from surgery) or ongoing care due to chronic health conditions.

This is an increase from 2021-22, in which there were 122,084 unique home and community care clients across Alberta.

75%
Adults
65 years
and older



23%
Adults
under
65
years



2%
Clients
under
18
years



22,296,257

Hours of support services authorized
(excluding professional services/case management)



Source: 2022-23 data from Alberta Health Services

Types of home and community care

There are three types of home and community care in the new legislative framework. They include different service models available through publicly funded home and community care in Alberta.

Under the new legislation, a client may receive services from more than one type of home and community care provider. For example, a client might access case management services from Alberta Health Services (type 1) and receive personal care services or caregiver respite from a type 2 or type 3 home and community care provider. The mix of services and types of home and community care provided to a client is individualized based on what is appropriate for each person, and may change over time as a client's health and needs evolve or as new service options become available.

Type 1: Regional Health Authority



Home and community care provided to a client directly by the regional health authority (i.e. Alberta Health Services). Type 1 home and community care is typically used for case management and professional health services. It is also used for other home and community care services in communities without contracted home and community care providers.

Type 2: Contracted



Home and community care provided to a client by a home and community care provider who has an agreement with the regional health authority. Type 2 home and community care is typically used for personal care, caregiver respite, and home support services. The services are typically provided by health care aides and licensed practical nurses, particularly in urban and suburban settings.

Type 2 home and community care includes providers who hold an agreement to provide services within a specific geographic area, as well as providers who hold an agreement to provide services to people who live in a specific congregate living environment such as a seniors lodge or other residential building.

Type 3: Client Directed Care



Home and community care provided through any service model where a client selects a home and community care provider of their choosing. This includes existing service models such as Self-Managed Care and Client Directed Home Care Invoicing. Type 3 home and community care has typically been used for clients with stable, ongoing needs for personal care, caregiver respite, and home support services.

Home and community care service delivery

The Government of Alberta provides funding to Alberta Health Services for the management and delivery of home and community care. In turn, Alberta Health Services:

- Provides care directly (type 1);
- Contracts providers to provide care (type 2); or
- Authorizes clients to choose or arrange for their own provider (type 3).

There are many contracted providers already delivering home and community care services. Additionally, the Government of Alberta is committed to exploring innovative new delivery models to better meet the needs of specific populations and use what we've learned in Alberta and other regions to improve outcomes for our clients.

Home and community care eligibility and access

Anyone who is legally entitled to be in Canada and has a permanent residence in Alberta can be assessed for home and community care. The regional health authority is responsible for determining if someone qualifies for services. A regulated health professional completes a standardized assessment to determine if an Albertan needs support because their needs are not being met. Following the assessment, a care plan is developed in partnership with that person and their family. Based on what they are assessed to need, the client (and their caregiver, where appropriate) may receive one or more types of home and community care in order to provide all of the services and supports identified in a client's care plan.



3. Key changes

With the implementation of new legislation, there are some key changes related to home and community care. They include:

Clear terminology for types of home and community care

Under the new legislation, there are three types of home and community care. To summarize the descriptions provided in section 2 above, the three types of home and community care are:

- **Type 1** – where home and community care is provided to a client directly by the regional health authority;
- **Type 2** – where home and community care is provided to a client by a home and community care provider who has an agreement with the regional health authority; and
- **Type 3** – where home and community care is provided through any service model where a client selects a home and community care provider of their choosing.

These types all currently exist in Alberta, however they are now reflected in legislation to improve transparency and oversight. Clearly defining these types of home and community care in legislation helps improve communication of expectations and differences across the three types of home and community care.

Increased clarity around monitoring and inspections

Alberta Health is responsible for inspecting and monitoring all three types of home and community care providers to make sure they follow requirements, including the Continuing Care Health Service Standards (CCHSS) for type 1 and type 2 home and community care. Given the nature of type 3 home and community care (client-directed), these providers are not required to follow the CCHSS. Type 3 clients with concerns are encouraged to discuss their concerns directly with their provider, and may also use Alberta Health's provider complaints and concerns process to address any issues. For all types of home and community care, Alberta Health has the authority to investigate concerns about client health, well-being, or safety.

Clients and family members now have the option to directly submit complaints about all types of home and community care providers to Alberta Health. New legislation ensures the results from type 1 and type 2 home and community care inspections may be posted publicly.

Enhanced emphasis on assessing caregiver needs

Under the new legislation, there is a requirement for a relevant regional health authority to offer an assessment to caregivers for home and community care clients as part of case management. Please note that the term "caregiver" here does not refer to the employees of a home and community care provider, but rather refers to people close to a client who provide care for that person, such as a family member or friend. The goal of the new requirement for caregiver assessments is to determine if a caregiver may benefit from caregiver support services. This transparent approach to addressing caregiver needs recognizes the vital support that caregivers provide for home and community care clients and that the Government of Alberta has a role to play in making sure their needs are also identified and met. Section 10 of this guide provides more information about how the Government of Alberta is supporting caregivers.



4. Home and community care goods and services

New legislation outlines in detail the goods and services that may be provided within home and community care. The regional health authority conducts standardized assessments to determine which goods or services are included in an eligible individual's care plan.

The following two categories of goods and services may be provided through home and community care:

- Health goods and services; and
- Other goods and services

Health goods and services

- Case management services such as assessment of needs, identification of care options and health system navigation;
- Professional health services (e.g. regulated nursing services, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, respiratory therapy, social work, etc.);
- Palliative care; and
- End-of-life care.

Other goods and services

- Personal care services (supports with activities of daily living such as dressing, bathing and eating);
- Home support services (e.g., homemaking services, heavy housework, meal delivery services, etc.);
- Caregiver support services (services to support and assist caregivers in carrying out caregiving responsibilities, such as respite care);
- Day programs;
- Temporary or short-term use of medical/surgical supplies;
- Temporary or short-term use of assistive equipment;
- Supplemental nutritional products; and
- Medications (please note: limited types of medications are only provided in exceptional or emergency circumstances).



5. Public funding and client costs

Public funding

The Government of Alberta funds the regional health authority to provide the home and community care services that clients are assessed as requiring. As part of Continuing Care Transformation, several funding-related initiatives are underway, including increasing services to meet more complex needs in community, increasing access to palliative home and community care, and adding more caregiver respite hours and day program services across the province.

Client cost responsibility

Home and community care clients are responsible for the costs of medications, supplemental nutritional products and the long term use of personal medical supplies and equipment, such as wheelchairs and incontinence supplies. Provincial financial assistance programs, such as [Alberta Aids to Daily Living](#), may be available to subsidize these costs.

Home and community care clients who receive day program services provided by Alberta Health Services or a contracted provider are responsible for a per diem (daily) fee. This fee has been in place for many years and contributes to day program provider costs related to providing meals and maintaining a safe environment. This fee is set out in a schedule determined by the Minister of Health and outlined in the regulations.

The fee schedule also caps the monthly amount that clients may be charged for the day program fee to ensure that these fees do not become a financial burden. The regulation also gives home and community care providers the ability to waive fees for clients if the provider believes the fee would create financial hardship.

Clients are not responsible for any costs connected with the remaining home and community care services provided by type 1 or type 2 providers, including:

- Case management;
- Professional health services;
- Palliative care or end-of-life care;
- Personal care; and
- Home support services and caregiver support services.

Cost expectations are different in the regulations for Albertans receiving type 3 home and community care (such as the current Self-Managed Care and Client Directed Home Care Invoicing models). That is because these service models allow clients to choose their own home and community care providers from the private market, where prices for services may vary. In cases where a client chooses a type 3 home and community care provider who charges a higher price than the publicly funded amount for a given service, the client is expected to pay the difference.

Beyond the client costs noted above, there are also additional costs that home and community care clients are responsible for living in the community. These include personal accommodation and food costs, transportation, social and recreational activities, and all other costs of daily living.

Financial assistance

Clients who require financial assistance are encouraged to contact [Alberta Supports](#) at 1-877-644-9992 for up-to-date information through one phone number about a variety of social-based programs and services offered by the Government of Alberta, including programs that may offer financial assistance.

For example, the Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services offers financial assistance through the following programs:

- [Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped](#): provides financial and health benefits for eligible adults with a permanent medical condition that prevents them from earning a living.

- [Alberta Seniors Benefit](#): provides a monthly benefit to eligible seniors to help with living expenses. Benefits are based on a number of criteria such as a senior's income level, marital status, type of residence, and eligibility for the Old Age Security pension.
- [Special Needs Assistance for Seniors](#): provides assistance to eligible seniors toward the cost of specific health and personal supports.

For more information regarding financial assistance for seniors, please visit <https://alberta.ca/seniors-financial-assistance> or use the [Seniors Benefit Estimator](#) online tool to determine eligibility for provincial assistance programs.”

6. Home and community care staff

A resilient workforce is critical to quality care and client satisfaction. Therefore, as home and community care evolves, so must Alberta's approach to staffing in home and community care. Some of the main workforce challenges across home and community care include managing labour supply issues and staff shortages, increasing funding for staff wages, improving workplace culture and supporting the mental health and well-being of staff.

Workforce compensation

Beginning in 2023, government increased funded rates for home care agencies, and this investment is ongoing. This funding reduced the gap between the wages of home and community care staff and their coworkers in facility-based continuing care and other health care settings, in order to attract and retain home and community care staff.

Staff well-being

Beginning in 2024, the Government of Alberta is providing new funds over three years to support the mental health of the continuing care workforce. This investment will support the mental health of continuing care staff across our province, including improvements to work environments and workplace culture.

Workforce recruitment

The Government of Alberta is also supporting Indigenous post-secondary institutions to train Indigenous Albertans and funding bursaries to help attract and support individuals who want to become health care aides.

Alberta's Health Workforce Strategy

The Government of Alberta recognizes that while incredible people make up our health workforce, there is a need to address their immediate work-related needs and challenges as well as prepare for the future. To achieve this, an [Alberta Health Workforce Strategy](#) has been developed. It sets out a framework for supporting the province's current health care workforce and building a future workforce that can support Albertans to get the health care they need when and where they need it. The work being done to bolster a resilient continuing care workforce fits under this broader workforce strategy

7. Monitoring compliance and complaints

Alberta Health oversees the compliance monitoring of home and community care. Alberta Health upholds the requirements and expectations outlined in the *Continuing Care Act*, along with regulations and health service standards. This work strives to provide assurance that high standards of care are met to promote the health, safety and wellbeing of clients.

Compliance Monitoring and Inspections

Alberta Health employs a variety of enforcement tools to address a situation prior to it potentially getting worse. This might involve having a conversation with a provider about care standards and various ways in which compliance can be achieved or issuing immediate actions during inspections when issues are observed.

Regular inspections of type 1 and type 2 home and community care providers are conducted to ensure providers are following care standards, with the majority of these inspections unannounced. Public reporting of the results of compliance activities for home and community care may be provided in the future on the Government of Alberta's website (<https://standardsandlicensing.alberta.ca>), as is currently the practice for continuing care home and supportive living accommodations.

Concerns

Complaints or concerns regarding home and community care can be brought forward by clients, families, friends, legal representatives, staff or other concerned citizens.

Clients (or anyone concerned on a client's behalf) are encouraged to bring their complaints or concerns regarding their publicly funded care directly to the home and community care provider.

If health care service concerns remain unaddressed, clients can contact Alberta Health Services' Patient Relations Department at 1-855-550-2555 or by filling out the [Patient Feedback Form](#). In addition, clients may also wish to share their concerns with Alberta's Health Advocate at 780-422-1812, by e-mail at info@albertahealthadvocates.ca, or by submitting an [online inquiry](#).

Alberta's Health Advocate supports Albertans to address and review concerns about health services. The Act gives Alberta Health the authority to review and investigate complaints. Complaints may be filed if a provider is believed to be in violation of the Act, regulations, or standards by contacting the Continuing Care Licensing Office at 1-888-357-9339 (option 3) or by email at CCLO@gov.ab.ca.

Protection for Persons in Care

The *Protection for Persons in Care Act* promotes the prevention and requires the reporting of abuse of adult Albertans who receive publicly funded care or support services from the service providers named or otherwise identified in the Act and Regulation. The *Protection for Persons in Care Act* is one of the safeguards that the Government of Alberta has in place to help protect vulnerable individuals from abuse. More information about the *Protection for Persons in Care Act* is available at <https://www.alberta.ca/about-protection-for-persons-in-care>.

Detailed information about the reporting process is available at <https://www.alberta.ca/protection-for-persons-in-care.aspx>. Albertans with concerns about persons in care may contact the Protection for Persons in Care reporting line at 1-888-357-9339

8. Home and community care standards

Alberta Health sets minimum standards for the publicly funded health care services delivered in continuing care settings, including home and community care. Providers of type 1 and type 2 home and community care are monitored for compliance on a regular basis through the Continuing Care Health Service Standards (CCHSS), while providers of type 3 home and community care may be subject to inspections or investigations in response to a complaint.

As part of the new legislative framework, the CCHSS have been updated. These updates focus on alignment with the new legislation and will result in minimal changes for most home and community care providers.

The most significant update is to the contingency planning standards, which are expanding. The changes were informed by COVID-19 learnings and recommendations from the Office of the Auditor General. Expanded requirements for providers include, but are not limited to, regularly practicing and simulating plans, involving other parties in planning, communicating contingency plans, and more. This change will help safeguard the health and well-being of home and community care clients.



Type 1 and **Type 2** home and community care providers are expected to continue to follow to the Continuing Care Health Service Standards.



Type 3 home and community care providers will not be expected to follow the Continuing Care Health Service Standards, there has been no change in this expectation compared to previous legislation and standards.

9. Person-centred care

Albertans have shared a clear desire to grow old in their homes with the support of home and community care rather than move into a continuing care home as their needs increase. Changes are needed to make this an option for more Albertans. For example, home and community care clients have identified that services do not meet the unique needs and preferences of some clients (younger Albertans, those with cultural or language preferences, and Albertans living in rural and remote areas of the province).

Person-centred care is a philosophy that recognizes that everyone has their own values, personal history, and unique personality. Therefore, each person has an equal right to dignity, decision-making and full participation in their environment. Making home and community care more person-centred means increasing clients' flexibility and choice related to services, how care is provided, and who provides that care.

One of the first major steps to making home and community care in Alberta more person-centred is the expansion of client-directed care models (type 3 home and community care) that support flexibility and client choice. **Almost \$20 million has been committed to specifically support the introduction and expansion of innovative projects that enable person-centred care.** This includes [Client Directed Home Care Invoicing](#) – a new model of home and community care, which is available across Alberta and gives clients the ability to select from an approved list of home and community care providers. Client Directed Home Care Invoicing also includes easy direct-billing technology for providers to submit claims through Alberta Blue Cross.

10. Supporting caregivers

Caregivers (i.e. family members and friends who support home and community care clients) play a major role in clients' quality of life because of the physical support they provide and the emotional connection they offer. As we increase our focus on person-centred care, the role of family members and friends is expected to remain vital. The Government of Alberta is committed to ensuring that supports exist to protect the health and well-being of caregivers while they care for friends or family members.

Beginning in 2023, investments have been made to boost in-home and facility-based respite services for caregivers, and expand access to day programs across the province to provide caregivers with a helpful break from their caregiving responsibilities, and these investments are ongoing.

We are committed to ensuring that supports exist for them by:

- Including a requirement in the new continuing care legislation to assess the needs of caregivers and provide caregiver support services as required. This means that caregivers of eligible Albertans will now qualify to be assessed for their own needs to identify if extra support is needed to limit or prevent caregiver burnout;
- Providing funding to expand [programs](#) that serve more family and friends supporting clients, including in underserved communities;
- Growing programs to train and support volunteer ambassadors to foster awareness and develop connections that can help build stronger support systems for caregivers;
- Supporting caregivers by educating healthcare providers about how to support and [involve caregivers](#)
- Establishing pathways and supports for family and friends to navigate the system and easily connect with help; and
- Implementing Work & Care curriculum for employers.

11. Conclusion

This document has provided an overview of the new legislative framework for continuing care and other aspects of Alberta's continuing care system, as they relate to home and community care. Legislation and policies will continue to evolve to address remaining barriers, gaps, and opportunities for improvement, and the Government of Alberta is committed to ongoing improvements to build a better, more responsive system for Albertans.

Please check the [Government of Alberta's website](#) regularly to view other materials that may be helpful to you and to view future updates relevant to continuing care.

