

**STRATEGIC
DIRECTIONS AND
FUTURE ACTIONS:**



**Healthy Aging
and
Continuing
Care in
Alberta**

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Alberta
HEALTH AND WELLNESS

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<http://www.health.gov.ab.ca/key/keylong.html>

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND FUTURE ACTIONS

Healthy Aging and Continuing Care in Alberta

I. PURPOSE

In November 1999, the Minister of Health and Wellness released the final report of the Long Term Care Review: *Healthy Aging: New Directions for Care*. The report recommends a new vision for continuing care and seniors' health in Alberta to meet the changing needs of aging Albertans. The report was released for public review and feedback. There is strong support for the new vision and recommendations of the report from the following respondents: health authorities, provincial professional organizations, consumer organizations, government departments and the public.

Alberta Health and Wellness has developed a document entitled *Strategic Directions and Future Actions, Healthy Aging and Continuing Care in Alberta* based on the results of the stakeholder, public response and departmental analysis. These strategic directions are designed to shift to the new vision and principles for continuing care and to implement the recommendations of the Long Term Care Review Policy Advisory Committee often referred to as the Broda Report. This new vision for continuing care will be implemented in partnership with the health authorities, stakeholders and the public within the next three years.

II. VISION AND PRINCIPLES

A New Vision

Aging in the 21st century in Alberta is in a society where all Albertans:

- *are treated with respect and dignity,*
- *have access to information which allows them to make responsible choices regarding their health and well-being,*
- *can achieve quality living, supported by relatives, friends and community networks and by responsive services and settings.*

This vision for aging is one in which individuals are in control of their life and people have choices in the care they receive and where they receive it. People will “age in place” and age in their own community. Communities and services will be designed in a way to make this vision a reality.

Meeting the future needs of an aging population requires more than just expanding services. It is a holistic approach that looks at all the supports that are needed to assist Albertans to stay in the community as they age. As a new focus on healthy aging, it requires a change in philosophy of the delivery of services so that services are delivered in the sites where individuals live. The nurturing of a caring society and a caring community is also necessary, so that individuals can get the social supports they need from friends, social networks and community agencies.

Guiding principles

Consistent with the vision, the following guiding principles will help the health system respond to an aging population.

Wellness and prevention

- Support healthy aging for all Albertans.
- Emphasize promotion of health and prevention of illness, injury and disease.
- Help Albertans to cope effectively with chronic conditions and function to the best of their abilities.

Client centered

- Endeavor to understand and meet client and family needs, work in partnership with clients, and ensure client choice where possible.
- Acknowledge the client's right to dignity and self-determination.
- Have reasonable access to a variety of affordable services and have their needs met in a flexible, timely and responsive manner.
- Respect the client's right to privacy of space and person.
- Recognize and respond to the physical, psychological, spiritual and social aspects of health.

Information

- Provide clients with access to information required to make informed choices and decisions regarding care and services.
- Ensure confidentiality of personal information, however, allow appropriate sharing of information to support the highest quality of services and best possible outcomes.

Individual and shared responsibility

- Encourage independence by assisting Albertans to reach their greatest potential, recognizing that clients and families have the primary responsibility for their own health.
- Recognize the concept of interdependence and facilitate collaboration between Albertans, community and government.

Effectiveness and efficiency

- Make decisions based, as much as possible, on the values of the consumer, on evidence provided through research, evaluation and technology assessment, and available resources.

Intersectoral approach

- Recognize that, by working together, Albertans, government, regional and provincial authorities, non-government organizations, and the voluntary and private sector all have an active role in contributing to the health of Albertans.

III STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND FUTURE ACTIONS

The following strategic directions and future actions are developed to achieve the new vision. They are guiding statements for Alberta Health and Wellness and the health authorities to use as a reference point as they develop their business plans, service plans, and future policies.

1. HEALTHY AGING: *Promote “healthy aging” as a priority goal for Alberta to ensure that Albertans are healthy and independent as they age*

- **The Government of Alberta supports “healthy aging” as a priority goal for the province of Alberta. The health system will work with other government departments, professional associations, stakeholder groups, the voluntary, private, and public agencies, and the public to provide supports for citizens of Alberta to achieve healthy aging.**
- **Alberta Health and Wellness will work with the health authorities to develop healthy aging strategies, outlining approaches to promote healthy aging for older adults. A population health approach will be used and will include strategies for health promotion, preventive care, and health protection.**
- **Alberta Health and Wellness and the health authorities will work with other government departments, municipalities, stakeholders,**

and the voluntary, private and public agencies to promote environmental changes in communities that will facilitate healthy living and “aging in place.” This includes the design of barrier-free communities, development of accessible transportation services for persons with frailty and disability, and the development of caring support networks at the community level.

COMMITMENTS/ACTIONS

- Alberta Health and Wellness will work with the health authorities and stakeholder groups to develop a healthy aging strategy where health promotion and preventive care becomes an integrated part of the health system. It will be incorporated into the Alberta Health and Wellness and Health Authorities 2001/2002 Business Plans for implementation. Expectations and reporting mechanisms will be developed to monitor the progress of this strategy.
- Alberta Health and Wellness will work with Alberta Community Development and other stakeholders to facilitate and promote the development of senior friendly communities with barrier free environments and support networks to assist Albertans to age in their own communities.
- Alberta Health and Wellness will work with the Provincial Health Ethics Network and others to promote public awareness and discussion and explore ethical issues specific to seniors’ health.
- Alberta Health and Wellness will review transportation policies relating to health related services so that transportation services move towards removing barriers that currently exist so that Albertans can more readily receive these services in the community.

2. CONTINUING CARE SERVICES: *Modify and enhance continuing care services to respond to the aging population with the goal of supporting Albertans to “age in place” in the community*

- **Regional health authorities will prepare ten-year service plans for continuing care services which will cover a broad range of continuing care services including a home living stream, supportive housing stream and facility based stream. The plan will adjust and modify existing continuing care services to respond to the future needs of an aging population.**
- **The guiding principles for the service plans are as follows:**
 - **Continuing care services in Alberta will cover a broad range of services and will be “unbundled” so they can be delivered in a variety of sites.**
 - **Regional health authorities are responsible for providing the services, as well as providing a leadership role in**

coordinating, referring clients and providing linkages to services in the region, as well as linking to services across the regions.

- **The priority of the service plan will be to provide the necessary supports so that Albertans can remain in their homes (their own house, apartment, or supportive housing unit) for as long as possible based on “assessed needs.”**
- **Home care and community-based services will be expanded to assist Albertans to “age in place” in their own community.**
- **Continuing care centres will focus their resources on serving residents with high and complex health needs.**
- **Delivery models will be modified so that they are more flexible and responsive to varying needs of communities.**
- **Services will be provided to Albertans based on “assessed needs” in a manner most appropriate to meet their needs. The publicly funded services will address the clients’ needs in the most appropriate manner.**
- **Client choice will be respected wherever possible.**

COMMITMENTS/ACTIONS

- **Regional health authorities will prepare and implement ten-year continuing care service plans according to the above strategic directions. The plans will be reviewed by the Minister of Health and Wellness to ensure that the continuing care service needs of residents of all regions are addressed and are moving towards implementation of the new vision for continuing care in Alberta.**
- **Alberta Health and Wellness will conduct benchmarking studies comparing our service-ratio with other provinces and other countries to strive towards excellence and improvement of services to Alberta residents as well as to move towards providing more services in the community and less in institutions.**
- **Alberta Health and Wellness will refine the service projection model to forecast service needs including the three streams, by taking into account the changing health status and lifestyle expectations of a new generation of older Albertans. This will ensure that there is rationale for long range planning to meet future continuing care service needs of a new generation of aging Albertans.**

3. COORDINATED ACCESS: *Implement an improved process for “coordinated access” province-wide to ensure that there is no barrier to Albertans in receiving continuing care services*

- “Coordinated access” is an enhanced model for an information, assessment and referral process.
- The “single point of entry” system will be expanded to include a full range of continuing care services, and be re-named “coordinated access” for continuing care services.
- “Coordinated access” will include providing information when a client makes the initial contact as well as screening, intake, assessment, identification of required services, referral, reassessment/on-going evaluation and discharge planning.
- “Coordinated access” operated by regional health authorities will be accessible to citizens seven days a week. It will be linked to all community-based services, hospital discharge planning and housing registries so that it can provide referrals to a comprehensive array of services.
- There will be no barrier to Albertans in receiving continuing care services when they move from one region to another.
- A new provincial standardized tool for assessing the need for continuing care services will be adopted after demonstration and validation. The tool will be used consistently by regional health authorities.

COMMITMENTS/ACTIONS

- Alberta Health and Wellness and the health authorities will implement a demonstration project to validate and refine the new standardized assessment tool. After testing, validation and refinement, the tool will be implemented and used consistently province-wide. The assessment tool will follow the client and be applied to all continuing care services.
- Alberta Health and Wellness will work with the regional health authorities to implement policies for “coordinated access” for continuing care services. “Coordinated access” will ensure that Albertans have sufficient information regarding potential choices of services. It will also ensure that continuing care services respond to the changing needs of clients by effective coordination between components of the health system and linkages with other sectors.

4. SUPPORTIVE HOUSING: *Expand care services in supportive housing to meet the needs of the new aging population*

- **Care services in supportive housing will be enhanced to meet the needs of the aging population living in these settings.**
- **Policies and standards will be developed for services delivered in supportive housing.**

ACTIONS

- Alberta Health and Wellness will form a Health and Housing Partnership Committee and by working together with stakeholders identify and develop policies, standards, and the strategies required to expand supportive housing as an alternative to institutionalization to meet the needs of aging Albertans.
- Regional health authorities will implement the Healthy Aging Partnership Initiative by partnering with housing, the voluntary and/or private sectors to increase supportive housing spaces. Rural health authorities were provided with ten million dollars to support this initiative.

5. HOME CARE AND COMMUNITY CARE: *Expand home care and community care services to meet the increased needs of Albertans in the communities*

- **Home care and community care services will be expanded across the province to support Albertans and enable them to remain independent and in their own homes for as long as possible.**
- **Home care and community care policies will be reviewed and revised to ensure that they do not pose barriers for achieving this objective.**

COMMITMENTS/ACTIONS

- Alberta Health and Wellness will work with the health authorities to amend the current home care policies to enable them to meet the changing needs of the population. Service limits to clients, exemptions and the delivery of self-managed care will also be reviewed.
- Alberta Health and Wellness will continue the implementation of the palliative care drug program providing drugs to palliative clients in the community.
- Alberta Health and Wellness will work with the regional health authorities to implement a Short Term Intravenous Therapy Program for clients in the community with parenteral anti-infectives as the first priority for implementation.

6. RE-GENERATION OF LONG TERM CARE CENTRES: *Re-generate long term care centres to meet the needs of residents with high and complex health needs*

- Physical conditions in long term care centres will be improved to provide a better living environment for residents. Improving the physical conditions of long term care centres will be a priority for provincial capital investment.
- Three and four bed wards in long term care centres will be phased out by the year 2006.
- Innovative models for new continuing care centres will be developed to meet the needs of the aging population.
- Continuing care centres will continue to re-orient their services to serve residents with high and complex care needs.
- Human resource strategies will be developed to provide training and support for care centre staff.

COMMITMENTS/ACTIONS

- Alberta Health and Wellness will reflect the need to re-generate long term care centres by utilizing the criteria used to determine provincial priorities for capital investment.
- Regional health authorities and care centres will work together to re-focus care delivery towards providing care for residents with more complex medical conditions and higher level of care needs.
- Human resource and training strategies will be developed and implemented to enhance the skills of front line staff, in order to improve the quality of care provided in continuing care centres.

7. NEEDS OF PERSONS WITH ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE, DEMENTIA AND OTHER SPECIAL NEEDS: *Develop provincial and regional plans to meet the special needs of clients with Alzheimer's disease and dementia*

- Continuing care services in Alberta will be sensitive to the special needs of different target groups including persons with mental health needs, disabled persons, persons with Alzheimer's disease and dementia as well as persons from different cultural backgrounds.
- The Provincial Mental Health Board will work with regional health authorities to develop a plan to address the mental health needs of older Albertans.

- A multi-faceted province-wide plan and regional plans will be developed to address the future needs for care and support for people with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. The plan will include the following components: education and training, support for care givers, development of supportive housing models and residential centres designed for dementia clients, and supports for long term care centres to meet the needs of residents with severe Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

COMMITMENT/ACTIONS

- Regional health authorities will review and revise policies for continuing care programs and services to ensure that the services are provided in a culturally sensitive manner to meet the needs of different target groups.
- Alberta Health and Wellness will form an Implementation Committee with representatives from the Alzheimer Society of Alberta and the health authorities to oversee the development and implementation of the province-wide plan to address the needs of people with Alzheimer's disease and dementia.
- The Provincial Mental Health Board will develop a plan, in consultation with regional health authorities, to address the mental health needs of older adults.

8. COMPREHENSIVE CARE FOR THE ELDERLY AND PRIMARY HEALTH CARE: *Develop comprehensive care for the elderly to address the special needs of older adults with multiple and complex health problems*

- Regional health authorities will develop comprehensive care for the elderly including enhanced geriatric assessment, improved discharge planning protocols, quick response teams and surveillance services linking acute care hospitals to community-based services within and across regions. The objective is to provide integrated services to the elderly, particularly those with multiple and complex health problems.
- Primary health care will be developed as the focal point of a reformed and integrated health system. Stakeholders will be involved in its development.
- Alberta Health and Wellness will work with stakeholders to develop strategies regarding medication use by the elderly.

COMMITMENTS/ACTIONS

- Alberta Health and Wellness will work with the regional health authorities to prepare implementation strategies to support the development of comprehensive care for the elderly. Expectations and reporting requirements for these strategies will be incorporated into the 2002-2003 Business Planning Process.
- Alberta Health and Wellness will host a conference on medication use by the elderly, which will act as a catalyst for future actions regarding medication use by the elderly. Following the conference, specific strategies on medication use will be developed and implemented as a phased in plan.

9. HUMAN RESOURCES: *Enhance the skills and increase the supply of health care workers in the delivery of health services for an aging population*

- **All health care workers, professionals and non-professionals, will have the appropriate skills and knowledge to respond to the needs of an aging population. Current in-service training for health care workers will be enhanced.**
- **A comprehensive community care workforce strategy will be developed to assist in the implementation of this new vision for continuing care.**
- **Supply, recruitment and retention strategies will be developed to ensure that the health system will have sufficient human resources to respond to the aging population.**

COMMITMENTS/ACTIONS

- Alberta Health and Wellness will work with Alberta Learning and training institutions to ensure that in-service and pre-service training programs for personal care aides and home support workers will be more affordable to students.
- Alberta Health and Wellness will work with Alberta Learning and educational institutions to increase geriatric medicine training spaces and geriatric nurse specialists spaces.
- Alberta Health and Wellness will work with the health authorities to project health workforce needs and develop strategies to ensure that there is sufficient and an appropriate mix of health care providers with the appropriate skills and knowledge to respond to the needs of an aging population in Alberta.

V. SUPPORTS TO IMPLEMENT THE VISION

- The above strategic directions cannot be implemented without the necessary supports. Concurrent to the above directions and actions, Alberta Health and Wellness will review and implement the changes necessary in areas such as information systems, standard setting and accountability measures to facilitate the implementation of the above directions.
- Alberta Health and Wellness will also assess and develop the regulation and legislative changes required to implement the above directions.

VI. NEXT STEPS

- Alberta Health and Wellness will develop a three-year implementation plan to achieve the above strategic directions on “healthy aging and continuing care”. Multi-stakeholder project groups will be formed for the various initiatives. The public and stakeholders will be consulted as the plan evolves.
- Alberta Health and Wellness will issue “progress reports” as the plan proceeds for implementation. The progress reports will be widely circulated as well as posted on Web sites.