

ASCHA Resolution 2-2024

24/7 Home Care Supports in Lodges/Supportive Living Accommodation

Issue

The service needs of Albertans residing in seniors accommodations with service options is increasing, particularly in rural lodges, where access to amenities and community supports are limited. Often times, seniors requiring a few additional services are assessed for higher levels of care simply because they require some minor supports that cannot be offered in lodge/supportive living settings because there are no health care workers on site 24/7. Many residents could easily remain in their current homes within lodge/supportive living settings, without having to move if their minor or even temporary needs could be addressed. Moving them to higher-level facilities that focus on residents with much higher care needs often decreases their quality of life, as well as loneliness and isolation. Having Albertans supported in the best environment suited to their social and wellness needs is ideal, and utilizes valuable and scarce resources across the housing and health continuums more effectively.

Background

When there are minor changes in a lodge or supportive living resident's health, they are commonly reassessed as needing higher levels of care, as their support needs cannot be adequately addressed within the current home care service limitations. Examples include needing some additional personal hygiene support, assistance with incontinence issues, or medication assistance in the evenings. Sometimes these needs are temporary (ie. needs increase after an injury or infection). These situations are increasing in frequency and becoming the norm rather than the exception. As seniors are now being encouraged to remain in their family home as long as possible, entering the seniors housing continuum is occurring much later in life.

The gaps in services between lodges/supportive living, designated supportive living, and long-term care is vast. Lodges and supportive living operate with a hospitality focus, providing meals, housekeeping, life enrichment and other service options. Health care supports are arranged by the individual or provided by healthcare teams during specific scheduled hours of the day. Any assistance outside of regular daytime, early evening, or weekend hours would require the individual to move to higher levels of care to access unscheduled health care supports.

The addition of unscheduled home care assistance to the current basket of services offered would address the increasing pressures on higher-levels of care and acute care. At the same time, a person-centred approach to meeting minor service and support needs increases the quality of life for residents in lodge and supportive living environments. The addition of 24/7 HCAs in supportive living would be an innovative approach to consider as part of the Lodge Program Review, considering most Albertans would prefer to age in a supportive home-like environment.

Impact

By investing in 24/7 access to home care services for residents in need of unscheduled support such as personal hygiene services and medication assistance, there would be less reliance on higher, more costly, levels of care. This would also result in less ambulance and acute care use.

In addition, many lodges in rural Alberta are experiencing vacancies. By providing enhanced services, residents are supported to remain in their homes within their lodge and supportive living communities, where they are thriving and maintaining a good quality of life. This supports resident choice and eases stress on an already strained health care system, the individual, and their support networks.

Call to Action

That the Government of Alberta provide 24/7 home care services as part of the basket of services offered in lodges and supportive living environments currently without unscheduled supports.

Proposed by Beaver Foundation and supported by Board motion on February 27, 2024.

Submitted by the Board of Beaver Foundation Seniors Housing
Approved by ASCHA Members on March 12, 2024 at the ASCHA 2024 Annual General Meeting