



News Release

June 5, 2014

HQCA RELEASES TWO REPORTS THAT ADDRESS CONTINUING CARE IN ALBERTA

(Calgary, AB) Today, the Health Quality Council of Alberta (HQCA) released findings and recommendations from two separate reviews that focused on the quality of continuing care in Alberta. The first report examined the quality and patient safety implications of Alberta Health Services' (AHS) policy on continuing care wait lists. The second report looked at the structures and processes that support quality assurance of publicly funded continuing care services in Alberta, including home care, supportive living, and long-term care.

"The focus of these two reviews was very different. We released them together because we recognize that for Albertans, this is really about making overall improvements to continuing care in our healthcare system. Individuals who are making the transition to or who are already living in continuing care expect and deserve a high quality healthcare experience. That's true whether the environment is home care, supportive living, or long-term care," says Patricia Pelton, Acting Chief Executive Officer for the HQCA. "As much as these reviews were about policies, systems and processes, the interests of those clients who are served in this system were our top priority," she said.

"Review of Alberta Health Services' Continuing Care Wait List: First Available Appropriate Living Option Policy" was requested by AHS and focused on the quality and patient safety implications of an AHS policy. HQCA findings and analysis discuss critical operational topics such as capacity planning, measurement data and policy development.

Key Findings and Recommendations

- The HQCA recommends AHS develop a policy and procedure to support fairness in transitioning patients to a continuing care living option.
- Individuals facing this life transition should have *some degree* of choice in determining a living option. The HQCA recommends that AHS develop information that supports patients and caregivers so that they can make informed decisions about available continuing care living options.
- If an individual is waiting in acute care for a continuing care living option, there is a downstream impact on those needing hospital services. In order to manage this capacity challenge and better align resources now and in the future, the HQCA recommends that AHS refine its demand/capacity modeling.

"Review of Quality Assurance in Continuing Care Health Services in Alberta" was requested by the Minister of Health to examine the adequacy and monitoring of quality assurance processes utilized by AHS with respect to continuing care services (home care, supportive living, and long-term care) delivered directly by AHS and by providers under contract to AHS.



The review did not look at individual facilities, but focused on the structures and processes that support quality and safety management in publicly funded continuing care environments.

Key Findings and Recommendations

- Continuing care contracts are not yet standardized across the province, resulting in variable contract accountabilities. The HQCA recommends that AHS move all continuing care contracted providers to a standardized master services agreement, and make explicit where responsibility and accountability for contract compliance monitoring and oversight resides.
- There are tools and mechanisms in place for managing quality and safety in continuing care across Alberta's healthcare system, however they can be strengthened and applied more consistently. The HQCA recommends the Ministry of Health and AHS:
 - eliminate redundancies and inefficiencies in standards auditing processes;
 - provide clarity on the requirement for accreditation;
 - ensure the performance information used to assess the quality and safety of care has been fully implemented and utilized across the continuing care sector in Alberta;
 - clarify roles and responsibilities for quality and safety management in continuing care;
 - further, that the HQCA complete the establishment of standardized client and family experience surveys in continuing care.

"We are confident that the recommendations in both reports will lead to benefits for Albertans receiving continuing care," said Pelton. "We are committed to working closely with the Ministry of Health and Alberta Health Services to make continuing care better for all of us now and into the future."

Both reports are available on the HQCA website at www.hqca.ca.

The Health Quality Council of Alberta gathers and analyzes information and collaborates with Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services, health professions, academia and other stakeholders to translate that knowledge into practical improvements to health service quality and patient safety in the health care system.

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For more information, or to book an interview, please contact:

Lisa Brake, HQCA
Office: 403-297-8162
Cell: 403-850-5067
lisa.brake@hqca.ca