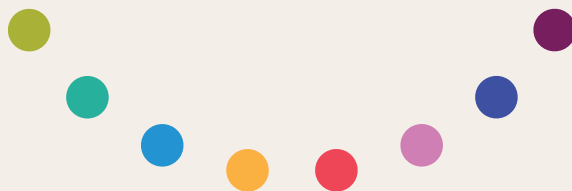




Seniors' Health and Well-Being Plan

for Newfoundland and Labrador



Introduction

People worldwide are living longer due to far-reaching advances in public health and medicine.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, where 23.6 per cent of the population are aged 65 and older, we are working to ensure seniors can live well and maintain their health and independence into the future. We are preparing our province to support a healthier and more engaged older population.

Seniors provide significant investment in communities through offering their career and life experience, wisdom, perspective, and guidance. Across our province, seniors are business owners, are members of service organizations and churches, lead volunteer initiatives, and provide caregiving and childcare to family, friends, and neighbours. As people age, health care needs may change. Our government is committed to providing the support people need to remain active members of their community, and to age well with dignity.

Seniors' Health and Well-Being Plan

Improve Seniors' Well-Being and Support Healthy Aging

Building communities that promote healthy aging, social connection and inclusion.



Establish Centres of Excellence in Aging

Providing optimal health care specialized for the needs of seniors.



Strengthen Integration and Services

Providing the right care at the right time to help seniors maintain independence, dignity and quality of life.



Through consultation with various stakeholders, including the Social Well-Being Engagement process, the Provincial Government heard from organizations and seniors to better understand how to best support their health and well-being. Based on what was heard and best practices around the world and other research, the Provincial Government, in partnership with NL Health Services, has developed the **Seniors' Health and Well-Being Plan**. The plan will guide how we meet the health and wellness needs of seniors by supporting communities and providing services that offer independence, choice, and safety to enable aging at home or in their community.

The Seniors' Health and Well-Being Plan will guide the changes needed to transform health care and help ensure equitable supports for all seniors. Actions supported through this plan are in addition to and will complement existing supports and services.

This comprehensive plan focuses on three action areas:

1. **Improve Seniors' Well-Being and Support Healthy Aging**
2. **Establish Centres of Excellence in Aging**
3. **Strengthen Integration and Service Delivery Across the Care Continuum**

Improve Seniors' Well-Being and Support Healthy Aging

The social determinants of health are conditions and the environment in which people live that can have a positive or negative impact on health, well-being, and quality of life. These include income, education, access to health care, social connections, and how neighbourhoods are designed.

Our government, using a partnership approach, is committed to addressing the conditions that may have a negative impact on health across all ages and communities. To support seniors, the Provincial Government, in partnership with NL Health Services, will focus on enhancing affordable and accessible housing, improving food security, enriching social connections within communities, and improving access to quality health care services.

Building on our Poverty Reduction Plan as well as our Housing Plan, the **Seniors' Health and Well-Being Plan** introduces actions to support people to age and live well in their homes and communities. These actions include:

- ❖ New funding programs to decrease financial barriers for low-income seniors to age at home through the Aging Well at Home Grant and the Caregiver Benefit.
- ❖ Increased investments for home repair and modifications for seniors.
- ❖ Enhanced immune response influenza vaccines for people aged 65 years and older.
- ❖ A supplement of \$500 annually for food and heating for seniors in coastal Labrador communities.
- ❖ Expanded 211 navigation services.

Many adults remain healthy, active, and independent as they age. They are socially engaged and involved in their families and communities. Others, however, may need additional supports as their circumstances and health change to maintain a similar level of independence and to remain in their communities as active members.

Through the **Dementia Friendly Communities Initiative**, with investment from the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Provincial Government, in partnership with NL Health Services and the Alzheimer Society, is supporting communities across the province to become more inclusive for individuals living with dementia. A dementia-friendly community understands, respects, and supports people living with dementia and their essential care partners.



Government is also supporting communities to incorporate age-friendly approaches into design, policy, and services to encourage seniors to age actively, enjoy good health, and remain independent and involved in their communities. Communities can access funding from the **Seniors' Social Inclusion Initiative** and the **Newfoundland and Labrador Age Friendly Communities Fund** to implement healthy aging, mental health, and well-being activities. Government is committed to continue to support communities implementing actions to become more age- and dementia-friendly and decrease stigma.

Intergenerational programs strengthen communities. Government is developing an **Intergenerational Program Guide**, which will highlight the benefits of intergenerational activities and provide resources for community organizations developing intergenerational programming.

Actions implemented from the **Dementia Care Action Plan** also support the health and well-being of seniors through funding provided for the following initiatives:

- ❖ Promoting healthy aging to reduce risk of developing dementia.
- ❖ Enhancing dementia care training for health care providers, dementia-friendly training for businesses and first responders, and First Link support groups for people living with dementia offered by the Alzheimer Society of Newfoundland and Labrador.
- ❖ Supporting inclusive arts and recreational programming.

Establish Centres of Excellence in Aging

Geriatrics is a field of study dedicated to providing high-quality, person-centered care for seniors. As people age, they may need the services of a health care provider who specializes in care of seniors. A team-based approach to care, including a range of health care providers, can be effective for supporting individuals managing multiple health conditions for healthy aging.

Centres of Excellence in Aging in Newfoundland and Labrador will use a geriatric-informed approach to care for older adults. Care is based on shared decision making, with patients and their families working with a health care team to develop care plans specific to their goals, needs, and preferences. Teams include, but are not limited to, physicians, nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, social workers, pharmacists, and dietitians who work together to improve quality of care for seniors.

Specific initiatives included in the **Centres of Excellence in Aging** include:

- ❖ Establishing senior-friendly emergency departments that improve older patients' experience in emergency rooms and are committed to support seniors' return home as soon and safely as possible.
- ❖ Creating acute care of the elderly units in hospitals that focus on supporting recovery and return home.
- ❖ Establishing a geriatric medicine consult process for seniors in hospitals.
- ❖ Establishing geriatric medicine community outreach programs within primary health care, personal care homes, long-term care homes, and for people receiving community support services.
- ❖ Increasing access to compassionate palliative and end-of-life care that maintains a person's dignity.
- ❖ Increasing options for community based rehabilitative and restorative care services.

To support the implementation of the **Centres of Excellence in Aging** and a geriatric approach to care, Government is funding Memorial University to provide a geriatric medicine training program and to expand the existing Care of the Elderly family physician training program. This investment will increase access to health care providers with advanced training in geriatrics.

Through commitment to give people choice and provide the right level of support, government is expanding services provided through the **Provincial Home Dementia Care Program**. This program connects people living with moderate to advanced dementia to a dedicated health care provider with specialized training in a geriatric approach to care (nurse practitioner or physician). This program can help people living with dementia lead healthier lives. The program also provides support to their essential care partners.



Strengthen Integration and Service Delivery Across the Care Continuum

Seniors who are managing more than one chronic health condition are likely to see several health care practitioners and move from one health care setting to another. Providing consistent and coordinated care across settings is important for older adults. Ongoing communication among primary care providers, specialists, other health care practitioners, clients, and family members is critical to ensuring people receive appropriate care in all settings.

The Newfoundland and Labrador **Aging with Dignity Plan** was created to implement changes in our health care system to improve quality of life and quality of care for seniors. This five-year action plan is supported by funding provided by the Government of Canada. Actions to improve care at home, palliative and end-of-life care, care for people living with dementia, quality of care provided in long-term care homes, personal care homes and through community support services are all included in the **Aging with Dignity Plan**.

Through this action plan, government, in partnership with NL Health Services, continues to implement the Home First initiative. Home First ensures clients with complex care needs can remain in their own homes and communities with support from a team of care providers. This team ensures that communication, planning, and coordinated care occur and the right level of support is provided in a timely manner. To implement this initiative, government is providing funding for dedicated health care staff to support people who need it most.

As part of the Home First Initiative, government is supporting improvements in palliative and end-of-life care. Training is currently being offered to health care providers focused on improving comfort, managing symptoms, helping with grief, and improving quality of life from diagnosis to end of life. Government is also investing in the Lionel Kelland Hospice to provide palliative and end-of-life care in this person and family centered setting.

Government is currently exploring other options to support seniors to remain in their communities for as long as they choose; to access short stay options in personal care homes for rehabilitation; to provide recreation and social opportunities in community; and to support essential care partners with respite care to allow a temporary rest from caregiving.



Enhancements are also being made in personal care homes and long-term care homes to improve the quality of care and quality of life for people who live there. A review of both programs has been completed and a final report will be delivered to government soon. Once recommendations are identified, government will work to action recommendations to ensure these programs align with suggestions for improvement from residents, families, and staff, and are in line with national standards and best practice evidence. Through the **Dementia Care Action Plan**, initiatives to improve quality of care in long-term care homes are currently being implemented including:

- ❖ Expanding social and recreational programming for people living in long-term care homes that is inclusive of people with different abilities or preferences and offered during evenings and weekends.
- ❖ Enhancing dementia inclusive environments in long-term care homes to improve quality of care and quality of life for individuals living with dementia.

To support people in our province with future health care and financial decisions, government will be developing a resource that makes it easy for people to record their wishes and instructions for future health care treatments, along with legal, financial, and estate plans. These resources will be released later this year.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to optimizing health, well-being, independence, and self-determination of seniors. Quality senior care benefits communities in our province by supporting seniors to remain active and engaged and can promote a sense of belonging. Guided by recommendations from Health Accord NL and consultation and research on social well-being, the **Seniors' Health and Well-Being Plan** will provide direction on how best to support seniors. By providing the right care at the right time we can help seniors maintain independence, dignity, and quality of life.

