



Review of Safety and Security in Nursing Homes

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Department of Social Development
Seniors and Long-Term Care





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MESSAGE FROM MINISTER

All seniors deserve to live in safety and dignity, whether in their own homes or in a licensed long-term care facility, such as a nursing home or special care home. Seniors have helped build the New Brunswick we know and love today, and it is our duty, as governments and as a society, to protect all seniors, particularly those who are more vulnerable due to physical or psychological frailty, or cognitive decline.

While ensuring the safety of seniors is always a priority for our government, the recent police investigation related to the Villa Loch Lomond in Saint John, which resulted in charges being laid against a visitor to a nursing home for sexual assault, serves as a stark reminder of the gravity of this responsibility. The case is currently before the courts, and a separate adult protection investigation is also ongoing.

This is a sad situation that underscores the importance of working together to find solutions to prevent such tragic incidents from happening again.

To honour our commitment to making safety a priority, I have directed my staff to undertake a comprehensive internal review of the current requirements for safety and security in nursing homes. This report reviews the standards in place in other jurisdictions, outlines the results of a safety and security survey, and provides recommendations on measures that can be implemented to further strengthen safety in these facilities.

I would like to sincerely thank the nursing homes that participated in the survey, as well as the staff involved in this review. Together, let us merge our voices, strengths, and skills to ensure that every senior can live safely in all our nursing homes.



Hon. Lyne Chantal Boudreau, Ph.D.

Minister of Seniors and Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equity



CURRENT SAFETY AND SECURITY REQUIREMENTS

Nursing homes in New Brunswick are regulated under the *Nursing Homes Act* and are subject to regular inspections to ensure they comply with legislative and regulatory requirements.

Inspections are conducted annually, and additional visits may occur at any time if there are concerns related to the health or safety of residents. Inspections are conducted by Liaison Officers, who are registered nurses and are employees of the Department of Social Development. Nursing Home inspections are unannounced and usually take two days to complete and include a review of over 300 measures of compliance.

Nursing homes are also subject to routine inspections by the Department of Public Safety's inspection services, including the Office of the Fire Marshal, as well as by the Department of Health's Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health. These inspections must be current prior to the issuance or renewal of a license.

The [Nursing Home Standards Manual](#) is available online and outlines the mandatory rules, minimum level measures of performance, or restrictions that may be prescribed by a regulation and therefore must comply with the act and regulations.

Nursing Homes are inspected based on the following four categories:

- 1) **Administration**- This category addresses how well the overall administration and management of a nursing home is carried out. The nursing home must meet the requirements established for items such as admissions, services provided, policies, records, financial resources and license.
- 2) **Resident Services**- This category addresses how well the facility renders services for the residents. The nursing home must meet the requirements established for items such as care staff, care planning, resident care, medication management, physician services, food services, nutrition, and activation/rehabilitation.



- 3) **Human Resources-** This category addresses how well the facility ensures that staff employed at the facility are appropriately trained, properly licensed and skilled to perform the tasks assigned. The nursing home must ensure that there is a sufficient number of qualified and appropriately prepared staff to provide the services and programs offered by the nursing home.
- 4) **Environment-** This category addresses how well the facility maintains the resident environment to protect the health and safety of residents, staff and the public. The nursing home must ensure that the building, equipment and surroundings are maintained in accordance with established requirements.

If a Nursing Home is non-compliant with applicable legislation and Standards, they receive area(s) of non-compliance which requires the operator to develop, submit and implement a corrective action plan for rectification.

The *Nursing Home Inspection Report* indicates compliance dates by which corrective

actions must be submitted to the Liaison Officer who has conducted the inspection. The Liaison Officer must assess the plan as acceptable before the facility is found to be back in compliance. All Nursing Home inspection reports are publicly available online through the government's [Inspection of Nursing Homes](#) webpage.

NOTE: THE NURSING HOMES ACT, REGULATIONS, AND STANDARDS DO NOT MANDATE SPECIFIC SECURITY MEASURES, SUCH AS CAMERAS AND SIGN-IN SHEETS. NURSING HOME OPERATORS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OPERATIONAL DECISIONS WITH RESPECT TO SAFETY AND SECURITY.

All nursing homes are required to submit a written report of any incident, including safety incidents involving residents, to Liaison Officers. The Department receives and reviews over 1,000 incidents



reports per year. If concerning trends are noted through the incident reports, there is immediate follow-up by the appropriate Liaison Officer.

The Minister of Seniors and her delegates are authorized, under the *Nursing Homes Act*, to modify, revoke, or refuse a nursing home license if:

- For any area of non-compliance identified by the Minister of Seniors and not resolved by the specified compliance date and in the Minister's opinion, has: caused harm to the residents and/or staff; or has the potential to cause harm to the residents and/or staff.
- A repeated area of non-compliance from the previous year is found during the inspection,
- Has not achieved full compliance by each specified target date indicated in the inspection report,
- An area of non-compliance is issued outside of the annual inspection
- No plan for corrective action(s) is submitted to the liaison officer,
- False statements are identified in corrective action(s) submitted as per section 7(1)(d) of the *Nursing Homes Act*,
- The operator operates the nursing home in a manner which endangers the health, safety or welfare of the residents as per section 7(1)(e) of the *Nursing Homes Act*.



Complaints and reporting abuse

The Department of Social Development has an Adult Protection Team that protects [seniors and adults who live with a disability from abuse and neglect](#). Adult Protection investigates abuse of adults that includes neglect, medication misuse, physical, sexual, psychological, and financial abuse. In addressing potential neglect or abuse, it is equally important to ensure consent-based decision-making is prioritized and enforced, particularly for residents who may not be able to fully communicate their needs due to cognitive challenges. Consent-related protocols should be an integral part of both investigations and daily care practices.

Abuse, including suspected abuse, can be reported by calling 1-833-733-7835. Investigations involve, but are not limited to, interviews with the victim/alleged offender, witnesses, document reviews, review of video recordings, home visits, collaboration with police, and medical exams to assess if the person's security is in danger.

After completing an investigation, a decision is made that indicates whether the abuse or neglect occurred (substantiated), did not occur (unsubstantiated), or at times not enough information is available to make a decision (inconclusive). Social workers may make recommendations to further prevent harm to vulnerable adults based on observations made in an investigation; however, the department's mandate is to ensure the safety of the individual who is the subject of the investigation, therefore the social workers have the legal authority to take action to address this need. If the individual is mentally capable, the social worker can either refer the person to community services, or to another department, or provide social services. If they are mentally incapable, they can place the person under protective care or apply for a court order and/or consult/inform the police.



If a health professional is determined to have committed the abuse or neglect, the social worker will inform the appropriate regulatory body for further investigation citing violations of professional misconduct.

The Department has released a new [webpage](#) to share how to raise resident care concerns with the public and operators. In addition to today's established standards and processes for managing complaints, this initiative aims to ensure all residents living in a long-term care facility and their families are made aware of applicable processes, should they have concerns.



CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS: IN CASES OF POSSIBLE CRIMINAL ACTIVITY, ADULT PROTECTION WORKS CLOSELY WITH THE AUTHORITIES, INCLUDING THE POLICE AND FAMILY CROWN COUNSEL.

SURVEY OF EXISTING NURSING HOME PROVIDERS



Figure 1: Current Safety and Security Practices

In April and May 2026, licensed nursing homes in New Brunswick were invited to share their practices and concerns as they relate to resident safety and security. 57 responses were submitted. Nursing homes described the practices they have in place, barriers to increasing safety and security, and suggestions to improve safety and security (see Figure 1). Summary feedback is presented below.

It was clear from responses that Nursing Homes prioritize the safety and security of residents and strive to create a homelike environment.

Nursing homes provided suggestions for how safety could be

increased, based on their concerns and challenges they face. The vast majority – approximately 80% of those that responded – indicated that they had some



concerns or challenges with safety or security, thus validating the importance and timeliness of this report. The following themes were identified:



Increase Staffing Levels: The most frequent comment and request was to increase staffing ratios.

- Increase staffing, particularly during evenings, nights, and weekends, to improve supervision of residents, visitors, and entry points. Multiple homes also mentioned acuity and behaviours between residents as reasons for the need to increase staffing levels.
- Enhance staff training on safety procedures, handling disruptive behaviours, abuse prevention, and emergency response protocols.

Upgrade Security Systems and Monitoring: Nearly all homes reported having security cameras, but many commented they needed updating or were not sufficient. *"The current camera system is outdated and in need of replacement. Entry*



and exit points are not continuously monitored.” A few indicated they have digital access controls and wander management systems.

- Modernize outdated security equipment, such as cameras, nurse call systems, and access controls.
- Implement real-time monitoring systems for security cameras and consider affordable third-party monitoring services to enhance after-hours safety.
- Introduce wander management systems and tools to prevent residents from leaving unsupervised.
- A few homes reported interest in having a security audit with recommendations.

Enhance Facility Design and Infrastructure: Older facilities reported constraints associated with the physical spaces and layout making it difficult to see entrances and visitors. Other issues included uneven parking lots, sidewalks, and increasing falling risk.

- Renovate and redesign older facilities to improve sightlines, centralized supervision, and safer layouts for residents and staff.
- Address key infrastructure issues such as external lighting in parking lots, safe bedroom sizes for resident care, and secure perimeters to prevent trespassing.

Address Behavioural and Emergency Needs: Concerns about behaviours and aggression between residents and towards staff were mentioned frequently.

- Develop specialized protocols for handling residents with dementia, aggression, or other complex behavioural conditions, supported by adequate staffing for one-to-one care when needed.
- Leverage partnerships with local emergency services to improve response times, especially in rural areas, and establish contingency protocols for delays.
- Focus on proactive approaches to managing family member behaviours that may disrupt the nursing home’s environment.



Secure Sufficient Funding and Resources: Many homes indicated they did not have adequate financial resources to increase staffing, replace aging technology, or implement new tools to increase safety and security.

- Increased funding to support staffing, safety initiatives, technology upgrades, and infrastructure improvements.
- Develop cost-effective strategies to implement targeted safety upgrades without compromising care quality.

Balance Safety with Comfort and Community: Most reported families and residents did not have safety or security concerns and some mentioned concerns about increasing the 'institutional feel' of homes. *"There is a balance between keeping our homes safe and locking them down. Our residents, when at home, would often receive visitors, sit with spouses late into the night, or welcome their children at any time of day or night and we try to allow that in the nursing home, too."*

Some suggested security on site, others did not want security staff.

- Foster a home-like environment while maintaining safety measures, such as designing unobtrusive security features and preserving social interaction opportunities for residents.
- Encourage communication with families to keep them informed about safety measures and constraints, building transparency and trust.

Regular Safety Audits and Feedback: Some homes reported appreciation for the attention on safety and security and were interested in learning more and receiving suggestions.

- Conduct routine safety evaluations, including staff input on challenges, to identify gaps and areas for improvement.
- Involve residents and families in feedback processes to ensure their concerns and experiences inform safety strategies.



JURISDICTIONAL SCAN

As part of the safety and security review, departmental staff reached out to other jurisdictions across Canada to understand how New Brunswick's regulatory environment compares. Seven provinces or territories provided feedback.

In general, most jurisdictions in Canada that responded have similar safety and security regulations and standards as New Brunswick:

- **Operational Decisions:** In most jurisdictions provincial bodies responsible for licensing and policies limit dictating specific measures, but facilities are required to provide a safe and secure environment. Decisions on how each facility will do so are operational in nature and can be tailored to meet the specific needs of that facility. For example, they do not require nursing homes to have security cameras or sign-in sheets, but homes could choose to have them.
- **Budgets:** Safety and security related costs are part of operating budgets in most jurisdictions. Additional funding in exceptional circumstances when there are breaches in safety and security.
- **Training:** Training related to resident safety is generally required to be provided during orientation and ongoing. Some examples of the required training include Living at Risk, Elder Abuse, Non-violent Crisis Intervention, Abuse Recognition and Prevention, etc.
- **Incident Reporting:** Reporting of incidents related to resident safety is required by all jurisdictions. The timeframe and to whom these incidents are reported vary.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The incident and resulting investigation and court proceedings involving alleged inappropriate sexual assault at a New Brunswick nursing home remind us all of the importance of ensuring seniors live in safe and secure environments.

Our Nursing Home partners who work with and support seniors every day shared concerns and offered suggestions. Some of the suggestions can also be found in the [Long Term Care Plan](#).

This report explained the current legislative and regulatory framework in New Brunswick for licensed nursing homes, including a rigorous annual inspection process, mandatory major incident reporting, and investigations of abuse and neglect through the Adult Protection program.

The report also looked at practices in place across Canada and found that New Brunswick's regulatory environment is very much aligned with those of other jurisdictions.

Based on the report's findings, the following recommendations have been identified:

- 1) Nursing Homes have safety and security measures in common and others that are unique, but all share a commitment to ensuring safety and security and a caring and homelike environment (to the extent possible). To build on these strengths, leverage collective wisdom, Social Development/Seniors and Long-Term Care will create a community of practice among nursing home operators, as well as the New Brunswick Association of Nursing Homes, where best practices on safety and security can be shared, concerns raised, and solutions identified together. For example, the community of practice could:
 - a. provide direction to nursing homes on the appropriate use of security cameras.
 - b. explore and leverage digital solutions to support care, monitoring and transparency.

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- 2) It is critical that residents, families, staff, and volunteers are aware of their responsibility to report concerns without negative consequence, and how they can do so. To achieve this, Social Development/Seniors and Long-Term Care, with the Nursing Home Association will develop a communications toolkit for nursing homes that includes documentation and visual aids to encourage reporting to support safety.
 - 3) Social Development/Seniors and Long-Term Care will incorporate built environment safety and security guidelines, when updating nursing home design standards.
 - 4) As part of the Seniors Long Term Care Plan, Social Development/Seniors and Long-Term Care will develop new legislation to govern supports and services to seniors. As part of this new legislation, Social Development will strengthen the Minister's authority with respect to safety and security.
 - 5) Social Development/Seniors and Long-Term Care will provide clear direction on a multi-year plan (as established in the Long Term Care plan) to increase hours of care in nursing homes, allowing nursing homes the necessary time and certainty to prepare for hiring more staff.
 - 6) Social Development/Seniors and Long-Term Care will require Liaison Officers to talk to the nursing home's leadership team about safety and security practices and concerns during the annual inspection.
 - 7) Social Development/Seniors and Long-Term Care will clarify current Budget Amendment policies and directives with respect to safety and security funding requests.
 - 8) Social Development/Seniors and Long-Term Care will incorporate these actions into the operationalization of the Long-Term Care Plan, including an annual progress report on the status of these recommendations.



The safety, dignity, and well-being of seniors in nursing homes is a responsibility that extends across governments, nursing home providers, families, caregivers, and community partners. The challenges identified in the safety and security review cannot be addressed in isolation. By collaborating through shared practices, transparent communication, and unified efforts, we can create a network of support that enhances the quality of care and living conditions for all residents. It is only through collective dedication and coordinated action that we can build a system where seniors feel and are secure, supported, and respected in their later years.