

# Audit Overview



OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL  
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR



## Objective

To determine whether long term care residents are provided with quality care and services that meet their needs, and whether there is appropriate oversight of long term care facilities.



## Audit Scope Period

April 1, 2024 to  
March 31, 2026



## Why this Audit is Important

Long term care serves a vulnerable sector of the population. There are approximately 3,162 people residing in long term care facilities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. The government projects that between 2023 and 2043, the 65 plus population is expected to increase significantly. By 2043, people aged 65 and older could account for approximately 30 to 35 per cent of the population. It is critical that the Department of Health and Community Services, the Department of Seniors, and Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services have appropriate standards and processes in place to ensure resident health, safety and care in long term care facilities.



## What We Found

| Waitlist, Admission, Placement, Assessment and Care Plans                                                                                                                                                              | Staffing and Service Delivery                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Program Oversight                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Placement applications and waitlist information were often incomplete, unreliable, or inconsistently tracked across regions         |  Hiring requirements, background screening, orientation, training, and performance evaluations were not consistently completed or documented                                                       |  Long Term Care Operational Standards had not been comprehensively updated since 2005 and did not always reflect current leading practices                                                          |
|  No established provincial standard existed for long term care wait times                                                           |  Food service practices did not consistently meet food safety, nutrition, meal service, and complaint management requirements                                                                     |  Departments had not established a formal oversight framework, including clear accountability, monitoring requirements, and key performance indicators                                             |
|  Resident orientation, admission documentation, and initial resident assessments were not consistently completed in a timely manner |  Provincial expectations for hours of care were not established, and staffing skill mix targets were not achieved                                                                                 |  The Departments did not ensure that fire and life safety inspections, resident care audits, and other monitoring activities were consistently completed, documented, or comparable across regions |
|  Integrated care plans were frequently incomplete, not timely, or not regularly reviewed and updated                                |  Medication management and pharmacy oversight, resident safety, complaint management, privacy protection, occurrence oversight, and emergency preparedness requirements were not consistently met |  NL Health Services did not consistently complete resident personal care audits and did not have its own performance measurement framework for long term care facilities                           |



## Conclusion

We conclude Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services, the Department of Health and Community Services, and the Department of Seniors did not adequately ensure that long term care residents were provided with quality care and services to meet their needs, and did not ensure appropriate oversight of long term care facilities.

We found significant deficiencies in waitlist management, admissions and placements, initial resident assessments, integrated care plans, staff qualifications and training, food services, staffing levels and skill mix, therapeutic recreation, medication management, and resident safety. These weaknesses increased the risk that residents would not receive safe, timely, and appropriate care.

Weaknesses in resident safety oversight, including occurrence monitoring and accountability processes, further limited assurance that resident safety concerns were consistently identified, addressed, and resolved.

We also found the Departments did not maintain current operational standards and lacked an effective oversight framework for long term care. Responsibilities were not clearly defined, key performance indicators were not established, monitoring activities were inconsistent, and information was not always complete, accurate, or timely.

Overall, there is a lack of accountability within the long term care system, including weaknesses in governance, oversight, monitoring, and operational practices. This increases the risk that vulnerable residents are not receiving safe, high-quality care that they deserve.



## Recommendations

Waitlist, Admission,  
Placement, Assessment  
and Care Plans

1. Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services should implement processes to ensure complete and accurate waitlist and wait time data is available for monitoring and comparison against established benchmarks.
2. Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services should ensure resident admission and placement processes are defined and consistently followed, including maintaining complete and up-to-date applications, documenting resident orientation, and executing resident agreements, in accordance with the standards and relevant policies and procedures.
3. Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services should establish and enforce timelines for completing initial resident assessments and integrated care plans and monitor compliance with those timelines.
4. Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services should ensure integrated care plans are complete, current, and regularly reviewed and updated in accordance with the standards.

Staffing and Service Delivery

5. Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services should ensure all staff meet hiring requirements, including completion and documentation of background checks, qualifications verification, and licensure requirements, in accordance with established guidelines.
6. Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services should ensure staff receive required orientation, training, and performance evaluations, and that completion is consistently documented and monitored, in accordance with the standards and relevant policies and procedures.
7. Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services should implement standardized food service practices to ensure compliance with nutritional, food safety, and meal service requirements, in accordance with the standards and relevant policies and procedures.
8. Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services should establish and monitor processes to document, track, and resolve food-related complaints and food safety deficiencies, in accordance with the standards.
9. The Department of Seniors should establish and enforce provincial guidelines for staffing levels, hours of care, and staffing skill mix in long term care facilities.
10. Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services should ensure that staffing levels and staffing skill mix satisfy those expected by the Department of Seniors.

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| Staffing and Service Delivery<br>(continued) | 11. Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services should ensure therapeutic recreation services are consistently planned and delivered based on resident needs, and evaluated for effectiveness, in accordance with the standards and relevant policies and procedures.                                                                                                |
|                                              | 12. Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services should ensure medications, controlled substances, medication carts, and medication records are securely stored and appropriately managed, in accordance with the standards and relevant policies and procedures.                                                                                                     |
|                                              | 13. Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services should establish standardized provincial processes for medication management, including antipsychotic medication oversight, pharmacy services, and drug storage reviews, in accordance with the standards and relevant policies and procedures.                                                                      |
|                                              | 14. The Department of Health and Community Services should establish independent oversight of long term care occurrences to provide public assurance that the occurrence process is functioning effectively and supporting resident safety.                                                                                                                        |
|                                              | 15. Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services should establish and monitor a comprehensive resident safety program that identifies, tracks, and addresses resident safety risks.                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|                                              | 16. Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services should ensure compliance with resident safety requirements related to resident supervision, restraint use, complaint management, privacy, and occurrence reporting, in accordance with the standards and relevant policies and procedures.                                                                           |
|                                              | 17. Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services should strengthen emergency preparedness and fire safety processes and ensure identified deficiencies are corrected in a timely manner, in accordance with the standards, relevant policies and procedures, and the MOU with Department of Government Services.                                                      |
| Program Oversight                            | 18. The Department of Seniors should update the 2005 Long Term Care Facilities in Newfoundland and Labrador Operational Standards and ensure the required biennial review is completed going forward, to ensure alignment with best practices and changing care standards.                                                                                         |
|                                              | 19. The Department of Seniors should establish a formal oversight framework for long term care that includes clearly defined roles, responsibilities, monitoring requirements, reporting requirements, and accountability mechanisms.                                                                                                                              |
|                                              | 20. The Department of Seniors should develop and monitor provincial key performance indicators to assess long term care quality, safety, and service delivery.                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                              | 21. Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services should implement a formal performance measurement and quality assurance framework for long term care facilities.                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                              | 22. Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services should ensure monitoring activities, audits, and reporting processes are completed consistently, documented appropriately, and used to support corrective action and continuous improvement, in accordance with the standards, relevant policies and procedures, and the MOU with Department of Government Services. |



After reading this report, you may want to ask the following questions of government:

Given their responsibility for delivering and overseeing the Long Term Care Program, how will Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services, the Department of Health and Community Services, and the Department of Seniors:

1. Reduce lengthy wait times and improve the reliability of waitlist and placement information?
2. Ensure resident assessments, care planning, staffing, and service delivery consistently meet established standards?
3. Address significant resident safety concerns, including privacy, complaint management, emergency preparedness, and occurrence reporting?
4. Modernize the Long Term Care Operational Standards and establish clear accountability for oversight?
5. Implement meaningful performance measures, monitoring, and reporting to ensure residents receive safe, high-quality care?