

More Than a Visitor:

The Emerging Role of Essential Caregivers in Long-term Care

April 23, 2021



CiRA

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Excellence in long-term care

The Report Team



Justine Henry has an Honours Degree in Psychology (science) from Mount Allison University, a Diploma in Health Wellness and Recreation from Eastern College, and a Master of Science in Kinesiology from The University of New Brunswick. Justine has been working in the research field for nearly a decade with extensive experience in both quantitative and qualitative research design. Currently, she is the Executive Director at The Centre for Innovation and Research in Aging (CIRA), New Brunswick's only research organization housed within a long-term care facility, York Care Centre (YCC). In her role, she regularly engages with staff, family members, residents, stakeholders, and other long-term care facilities.



Kelsey Rusk has a Bachelor of Arts in Gerontology and Psychology from St. Thomas University. She is currently finishing her Master's Degree in Applied Health Services Research at the University of New Brunswick. Her background includes working with non-profit organizations that support older adults in the community. She is a Research Coordinator at CIRA. Her current research project is looking at improving immunization rates of older adults living in assisted and independent living facilities using digital technology.



Lori McDonald is a Registered Nurse with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Ottawa and holds a Master's Degree in Public Health – Nursing Specialization, from Lakehead University. Lori has been the Vice President of Care and Research Services at YCC and CIRA since July of 2019. She has worked as an RN in a supervisory role for several years; this experience extends to the long-term care environment and the hospital setting. While completing her Master's Degree, Lori assisted the New Brunswick Association of Nursing Homes with various initiatives, one of which was to promote best practices in palliative care. Lori has been working closely with the Department of Health to follow guidelines to allow family visitation for long-term care residents, exploring every avenue to connect families with their loved ones.



Tony Weeks holds an MBA in Healthcare Administration, and has completed executive leadership programs with Cornell University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has worked in the health and care industry since 1988, including serving as a healthcare CEO in Ontario, and as a senior executive within the Alberta and Saskatchewan health systems. Tony is currently the President & CEO at YCC, CIRA, and York Developments Inc. He previously operated his own healthcare consulting company, supporting public and private organizations with strategy, change management, and consultations.



Located in Fredericton, New Brunswick, York Care Centre is the province's largest long-term care facility and is home to 218 residents. It is a privately owned, not-for-profit organization that receives government funding. The Centre shares a campus with two sister companies that are not directly government funded – the Centre for Innovation and Research in Aging (CIRA), and York Developments, an assisted and independent living company. The mission at York Care Centre is to lead and provide an enhanced quality of life, through an individualized approach, for residents, families, and clients.

The Centre for Innovation and Research in Aging began as an idea and quickly grew into an official startup research organization. Since its incorporation in the spring of 2018, CIRA has received several research funding grants and has fostered research collaborations with stakeholders, researchers and academics from across Canada. To date, the research conducted at CIRA has spanned many topics that impact older-adults including medication use, emotional wellbeing, physical health, safety, and cognitive ability. The CIRA office is housed within the York Care Centre campus.

Executive Summary

This report is comprised of summaries of several research projects that the Centre for Innovation and Research in Aging (CIRA) team completed throughout 2020 and 2021 in partnership with the York Care Centre (YCC).

Visitation has been restricted for many long-term care facilities across the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This report considers the impact of the pandemic on the role of Essential Caregivers in long-term care, but it can also be applied to other emergency situations that may arise. A list of recommendations will be presented.

There are several names to describe the role of a family member assisting their loved one in long-term care. The Ontario Centres for Learning, Research & Innovation in Long-term Care (CLRI) defines this role as “a type of essential visitor who is designated by the resident and is visiting to provide direct care to the resident (for example, supporting feeding, mobility, personal hygiene, cognitive stimulation, communication, meaningful connection, relational continuity and assistance in decision-making)” (3). Some facilities or organization may adopt other names to describe this role (4).

For the purpose of this report, **an essential caregiver is defined as anyone, family or friend, visiting a loved-one in long-term care to provide direct care and support (emotional and/or physical).**

** For further clarification, the New Brunswick provincial government refers to this classification as ‘Designated Support Persons’.*

This report is focused on exploring the following questions:

- ➔ What is an essential caregiver?
- ➔ What has been the experience of residents and families during the pandemic?
- ➔ Why are essential caregivers needed?
- ➔ What are some policy and program recommendations to support the emerging role of essential caregivers in long-term care?

Foreword

As the Chair of the Family Advocacy Group for York Care Centre, I am a strong advocate for the promotion of person-centered care, and the importance of maintaining physical family connections to promote quality of life. While it is essential to protect residents of long-term care physically, it is just as important to safeguard their emotional and mental well-being.

One of the biggest stressors that has come from the COVID-19 pandemic and its lockout of families, is the detrimental negative impact it has had on residents living in these facilities, and the grief it has caused to the people that love them. Not only have I experienced and lived the hardships of this pandemic personally, but I have also heard countless testimonials of the challenges experienced from family members, friends, and caregivers of residents from long-term care.

In an effort to keep each long-term care facility safe, fundamental necessities of life such as loving bonds and emotional security, were sacrificed. While I do not believe this was done intentionally, it has been a valuable lesson learned from this pandemic.

As families have done long before the COVID-19 virus surfaced, caring for their loved ones residing in long-term care has been a common practice. The pandemic has highlighted the great role families have played and the necessity for this to continue, even during an outbreak. Families have shown that they can be trained on infection control and safe practices within a long-term care facility. Families can be integrated into the care team and provide care for those they love while supporting their community in a time of need.

I hope that we take the lessons learned from the last 12 months and move forward with a plan that allows families to support vulnerable residents living in long-term care, even during an outbreak.

Sincerely,



Greg Doucet
Chair, Family Advocacy Group
York Care Centre
Fredericton, NB

Greg Doucet has served as the chair of York Care Centre's Family Advocacy Committee since late 2016 and plays a vital role as a liaison and assists in facilitating meaningful family engagement. Greg has experienced first-hand the impact of COVID-19 in long-term care and is passionate about creating a safe platform for family members to express their concerns, while keeping the best interests of the residents in mind.

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New Brunswick: An Aging Population



Of New Brunswick's 750,000 citizens, nearly 20% are 65 years of age or older. Using Statistics Canada medium growth population projections, analysis suggests that New Brunswick's population will be at approximately 794,000, with around 30.2% over the age of 65, by the year 2043 (1).

People are living longer. Using the same medium growth projections, analysis suggests that those over 90 years of age will make up 2.6% (20,800) of the New Brunswick population, compared to 1% (7,700) in 2021. While these projections will undoubtedly add pressure to the health and long-term care sectors, it is important to note that 93% of older New Brunswickers still live at home (2), meaning approximately 7% are in long-term care.

The fast-aging population will require growth in long-term care (LTC), healthcare, and home care. The role of care providers as well as the role of volunteers and Essential Caregivers will continue to be vital in planning for this growth.

Long-term Care in New Brunswick

Long-term care (LTC) falls under the Department of Social Development's Nursing Home Services Branch.

Nursing homes are based on eight geographic regions, seven of which align with New Brunswick's Health Zones.

There are up to 5,086 residents that call the province's 71 licensed long-term care facilities home. Unique to New Brunswick, 100% of LTC facilities are privately owned but publicly funded; 88% are not-for-profit, and 12% are for-profit (12).

According to the New Brunswick's 2021-2022 budget, government allocated about \$407 million for nursing home services, \$194 million for seniors & long-term care, \$192 million for disability support services, and another \$908,000 for an aging secretariat (7). In total, these services saw an increase of approximately \$47.6 million from the 2020-2021 budget (5), including an additional budget line of \$12.6 million in COVID-19 support for all of Social Development.

Recommendation

Creation and evaluation of a funding model to support an Essential Caregiver Program for all New Brunswick LTC's.

Long-term Care in New Brunswick

The debate about the right amount of funding for direct hours of care is not new. A 2010 government of New Brunswick study titled: Evaluation of 3.5 Hours of Care Pilot in Nursing Homes (9), resulted in 14 recommendations for consideration, many of which remain relevant today.

Interestingly, although the report makes a recommendation to establish a regional volunteer coordinator role – to enhance volunteer recruitment and thereby support resident quality of life – **it does not speak specifically to the important role of family members.**

Regardless of the defined hours of care, it has become apparent that there is an emerging role for the Essential Caregiver in long-term care. Not as employees or volunteers, but as family members who choose to be part of the circle of care and quality of life their loved one's experience. In future, perhaps the role of Essential Caregiver becomes recognized in long-term care standards and crisis response planning.

*"A comprehensive approach needs to be used to approach quality of care and quality of life of residents in nursing homes. There is a continuous need to ensure all stakeholders work within this framework and **avoid the myopic attention to hours of care as the sole answer to residents' quality of life in nursing homes.**"*

*-Evaluation of 3.5 Hours of Care Pilot in
Nursing Homes*

Needs Assessment

In December of 2019, The Centre for Innovation and Research in Aging (CIRA) conducted a Needs Assessment (NA) at York Care Centre (YCC). The NA was designed to gain a better understanding of the current state at YCC and establish baseline data with the goal of targeting future research towards areas that are needed, and most importantly, wanted. The questionnaire was divided into five categories: activities, care, relationships, environment, and mental health and was completed by 100 family members, 68 staff, 67 residents.

The quantitative results indicated that residents' mood is on average just average or below. Many residents expressed the importance of having families and friends visit regularly. Those who were unable to see families on a regular basis reported lower mood ratings.

The importance of families was also acknowledged by the staff and families themselves. In fact, some family members reported being in the facility for 5-6 hours helping with meals, walking, toileting, and grooming. Some even reported up to 25 hours per week of caregiving. Many recognized the realities of staffing issues but provided a great deal of praise for the facility staff.



*"I think the staff does a wonderful job of keeping the residents engaged and entertained. I know I appreciate all the effort put into **making my loved one's life as enjoyable as possible.**"*

York Care Centre Needs Assessment (CIRA, 2019).

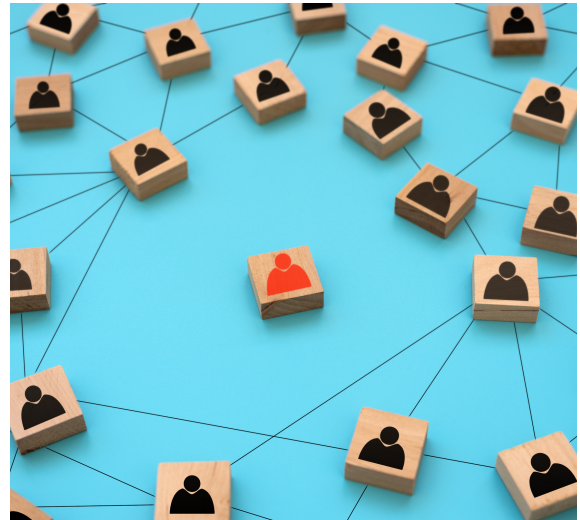
Social Isolation and Loneliness

A recurring theme in the NA from families, staff, and residents, was the issue of social isolation. Many residents reported feelings of isolation, loneliness, and the need for more human contact.

Originally, CIRA intended to conduct a study looking at the impact of a caring touch, by the means of hand massages, on the impact of loneliness. However, due the onset of the pandemic, the project was modified to consider Public Health guidelines and the safety of the residents.

Instead, researchers from CIRA set out to have bi-weekly visits with residents in YCC and assess the impact of social engagement on social isolation. During these visits, the goal was to engage in meaningful conversations, one-on-one, with each resident. During this time, the CIRA staff was operating as an adjunct to therapeutic recreation and assisting with resident engagement.

Although the residents expressed that they enjoyed the one-on-one time, and that they enjoyed when staff took time out of their shifts to converse with them, it did not compare to the enjoyment they felt when being with their family members.



*"I do enjoy our talks, but I'd much rather be talking
in person with my daughter".*

-York Care Centre Resident

Another prominent topic of conversation was of family and how the participants miss personal connections with their loved ones. Most conversational topics did gravitate towards family and friends; the researchers heard many stories reflecting on special moments with family members and friends. Many participants talked about their grandchildren, and how much they missed seeing them.

Although Canada had its first case of COVID-19 on January 25, 2020, New Brunswick's first case was not identified until March 11, 2020 (8). At the time this report was written (April 22, 2021) the New Brunswick COVID-19 Dashboard indicates there have been a total of 1804 confirmed cases, 1631 recoveries, and 34 confirmed deaths (10). Many of these deaths occurred in LTC or adult residential facilities but most of New Brunswick's 71 LTC facilities continue to be without a single case of COVID-19.

Despite restrictions on caregiver access to long-term care, the success of the New Brunswick Government and its Public Health experts in leading the province through this crisis cannot be understated. By April 2020, government had announced the formation of its pandemic task force (11), led by the Department of Health, through the Chief Medical officer of Health.

A Government Recovery Plan

By August 2020, the Government of New Brunswick released its new COVID-19 recovery plan (6), which included yellow, orange, and red levels, ***with recognition of caregivers as essential across each level.***

Currently, in the province of New Brunswick, if you are an Essential Caregiver, you may attend a long-term care facility at any of the province's recovery levels (6). The only exception is if a facility is in COVID-19 outbreak, defined as one positive case. Access for Essential Caregivers may vary across the province, as each facility is privately owned and may choose to apply restrictions that exceed government guidelines.

Recommendation

Development of a standard definition of an Essential Caregiver and the recognition of the role by the Nursing Home Services Branch.

COVID-19 and Long-term Care

Unfortunately, like most facilities across the province, in the earliest days of the pandemic YCC was required to implement several restrictions, including a complete lockout of caregivers and visitors, restricting gatherings, large group activities, and inter-facility movement.

Within the first two months of the pandemic lockdown, it became apparent that the restrictions were beginning to impact residents, both physically and emotionally. Residents, while mostly accepting of the changes, were now completely separated from their friends and family members physically. For example, some residents lost weight, while others declined in their mobility.

This is not because LTC staff did not care for their residents, this is due to the power and influence that family has on quality of life for residents, they are able to spend more time with their loved ones than what could be reasonably provided by staff members. Not to mention the impact happiness plays on health and well-being, this cannot be underestimated.

While most of the world were able to “bubble up” with the people they felt most secure with, residents of long-term care were not given that opportunity. This took a tremendous toll on this population.

-Lori McDonald, Vice President of Care and Research Services

COVID-19 and Long-term Care

CIRA launched a series of pandemic response surveys to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the residents living at York Care Centre. The surveys, conducted in June 2020, September 2020, January 2021, and April 2021 confirmed what was anticipated – many residents were significantly impacted by the pandemic restrictions and reported a decline in mental health.

Levels of concern about the pandemic peaked between June and September 2020, and feelings of concern persist currently. Most respondents throughout all four surveys indicated that the **restrictions in place have made them feel safe, but they are struggling with the lack of visitation** and ability to partake in group activities. The researchers consistently noted that the conversations resulting from the surveys were almost always around the topic of family and friends, and how much their presence is missed.

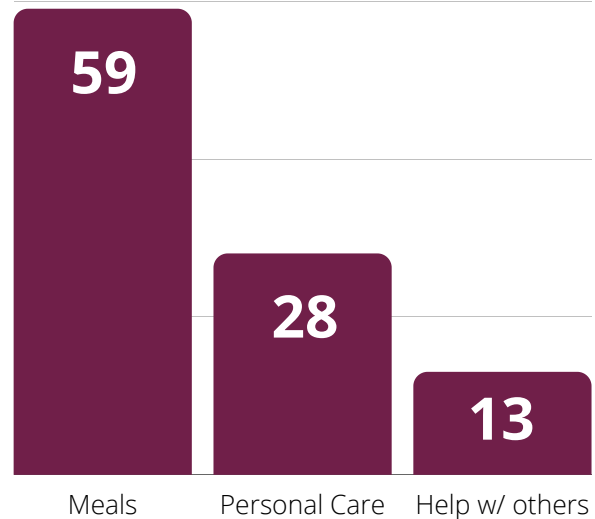
Since the introduction of Essential Caregivers, **resident self-reported emotional wellbeing has improved by nearly 20%.**



Essential Caregivers: Not New

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, YCC considered the extended role of Caregivers in 2019 when CUPE Nursing Home workers were positioned to go on strike. At the time, obviously, the goal was to ensure an uninterrupted delivery of care. As a result, family members of every resident living at the Centre were contacted and asked about their ability to provide support should there be a nursing home staff strike.

A total of 208 family members were contacted. One hundred and thirteen family members indicated that they would be willing to come into the facility to provide some type of support. During each call, the individual was asked when they would be willing to come into the facility (morning, afternoon, evening, anytime) and which type of care they would be willing to assist with (meals and personal care). Overall, the response was very positive, with some families indicating willingness to assist with other residents in addition to their loved-one.

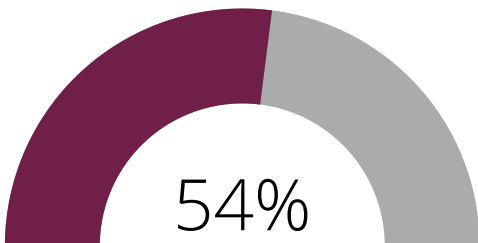


Advocacy

YCC, working with its families and residents, undertook advocacy efforts to recognize the role of caregivers as essential.

In May 2020, YCC wrote to the provincial pandemic task force, the Chief Medical Officer of Health, and the Minister of Social Development to request consideration for an essential caregiver program, including specific criteria for managing safely.

In anticipation of government support, YCC took the lead to design an essential caregiver training program that included infection control, the use of personal protective equipment, safe practices within the Centre and in community settings.



Willing to help during staff shortage (n=208)

The Essential Caregiver Program

In August of 2020, New Brunswick's LTC facilities were given approval from Social Development to allow designated caregivers into their facilities. This meant that each individual LTC facility could offer a program that would enable a limited number of family members into their homes to provide support for their loved ones.

As result of this progress, YCC launched its Essential Caregiver program in late August 2020. It includes a mandatory application process and the completion of an orientation course where participants demonstrate their ability to follow infection control practices and adhere to strict scheduling criteria and screening measures. Like employees, every caregiver is required to be screened, provide contact information, perform hand hygiene regularly and wear a medical mask.

Recommendation

Creation and deployment of an official Essential Caregiver Training Program for all New Brunswick LTC's.

170 Essential Caregivers trained

Average of **335** visits per week

2 hours for a typical visit

0 positive cases of COVID-19

The Essential Caregiver Program

Program Importance

Families are integral to the care of residents in long term care. Care staff do a brilliant job of assisting residents with such things as activities of daily living, personal care, medication management, etc. Staff provide a service that must be met, and they often form strong bonds with the residents they care for. With all that they do, staff still cannot fill the void of families.

*"Many residents have a deep, loving bond with their families, just as anyone else living independently has. **The connection between residents and families helps with emotional, spiritual, and mental health.**"*

-Care Staff, York Care Centre, 2021

Feelings of isolation are diminished when residents have ongoing personal interactions with families. As highlighted in the previous work by CIRA, the benefits of family interaction on residents were obvious long before the pandemic began.



York Care Centre Essential Caregiver program materials

Simulation Exercises

After the implementation of the Essential Caregiver Training program, YCC was continually examining ways to improve the situation during the pandemic. As a result, a 'Table Top' brainstorming session was conducted at the end of August 2020. This exercise incorporated staff members from each department and served to identify different situations, possible risks, and solutions relating to the pandemic.



One solution that arose was the creation and execution of a COVID-19 simulation exercise. **The purpose was to emulate the possible staff shortages that might occur during a COVID-19 outbreak or other emergency.** In consultation with CIRA, the simulations were designed to assess potential gaps in care that might occur during staff shortages and where, if possible, family members (as Essential Caregivers) could help mitigate the gaps.

*"We all had different ideas based on that exercise, some of the biggest were the need to train Specialized Isolation Care Area staff, increase N95 mask fit testing, advocate for designated caregivers during an outbreak, support the mental health of staff and residents, and the need to perform **simulation exercises of staff readiness**"*

-Lori McDonald, Vice President, Care and Research Services, York Care Centre 2021

Simulation Exercises

Two simulations took place, each on a separate unit within the facility. One unit was a locked memory care unit with most residents requiring advanced levels of care due to mobility issues. Each simulation lasted for an entire day shift (7am – 3pm). Staff who were scheduled for that shift were randomly divided into two teams. Family and residents on the participating units were notified and consented.

One team, which reflected approximately half-staff capacity, was responsible for triaging and caring for all the residents on the unit. Their goal was to accomplish as much as they could, while pretending to be at half-staff capacity. Team two was present to fill in the gaps, but only when necessary. This ensured that, during the simulation, residents were not actually receiving any less care than usual. Whenever team two was required to fill in, the researchers took detailed notes on what tasks were being done.

In a real-world situation these gaps in care would not have been filled and this provides evidence for the supporting role as family members operating as Essential Caregivers. **For periods where there may be extended staff shortages, these continued gaps in care would present with significant declines in physical and emotional quality of life.**



York Care Centre simulation exercise, December 2020

The findings of both simulations indicated that, during an emergency with staff shortages, there are significant gaps in care that would occur. Prioritizing and triaging residents with complex medical needs, such as blood sugar checks, wound checks, and medication passes are tasks that cannot be delayed. As such, many other residents stayed in bed longer than usual. In some cases, meals were also delayed due to the inability to porter to the dining room, or do meal assists in the resident's room. Other areas that would be lacking significantly during staff shortages were social activities, physical activity, socialization, and one-on-one visits with residents for mental health purposes.

Allowing Essential Caregivers access to the facility during a staff shortage emergency would reduce the risks to resident quality of life during staff shortages.

The simulations also highlighted how environmental and situational factors (such as the size of the unit or the location of supplies and equipment), can act as barriers or facilitators and potentially impact care services during staff-shortages.

Recommendation

Development and deployment of a New Brunswick wide LTC needs and feasibility assessment assessing the barriers and facilitators to implementing an Essential Caregiver training program.

#MoreThanAVisitor: Essential Caregiver Survey

The simulation exercises led to the creation of a province-wide survey conducted by CIRA in February 2021. The goal of the survey was to better understand the perceptions and opinions on the role of Essential Caregivers from individuals living in New Brunswick with a loved-one living in long-term care.

The survey was circulated online through various social media platforms, as well as shared with various organizations for older adults across the province. Basic demographic data was collected followed by a series of questions pertaining to feelings and perceptions on the role of essential caregivers in long-term care settings during a crisis. Participants were also able to provide written responses and comments. This survey was reviewed and approved by the Veritas Independent Review Board to ensure ethical guidelines were followed.

123 survey respondents

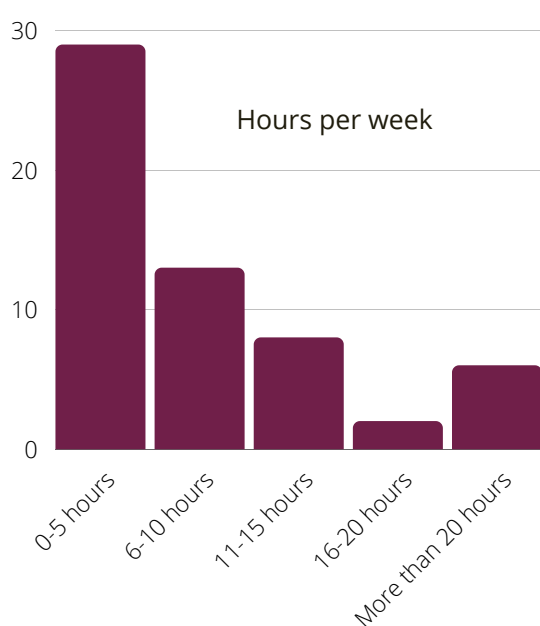
75% female

61 years of age on average

89 respondents with a loved-one living in long-term care

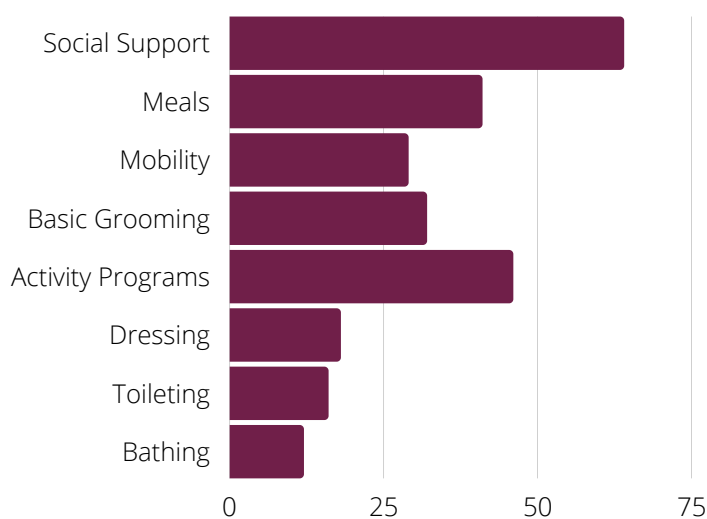
#MoreThanAVisitor: Essential Caregiver Survey

A total of 49 participants indicated that they were currently Essential Caregivers in a long-term care facility. As shown in the chart below, current Essential Caregivers are providing varying amounts of time of support in their loved-ones facility.



Fifty-six people believed that they would be a good fit to be an Essential Caregiver, but the comments also highlighted the importance of a proper screening and orientation program. Some caregivers mentioned being worried about liability, while others indicated their own health was a concern.

Despite some of the concerns, 71% of respondents said that they were comfortable (or extremely comfortable) volunteering as an Essential Caregiver in their loved-one's long-term care facility and 72% would like to attend a structured caregiver training. Below are the tasks they indicated they would be comfortable performing.



#MoreThanAVisitor: Essential Caregiver Survey

"It is critical for long-term care residents to have someone familiar in their environment. They must feel that they have not been abandoned by their families.

Only a close family member truly understands the things that provide the most comfort to their loved one"

- #MoreThanAVisitor survey respondent

Of the 123 respondents, many expressed that family members provide a unique type of support. This was emphasized to be particularly important for loved-ones with dementia:

*"They (loved-ones with dementia) may not know who you are, but they certainly **know who loves them.**"*

Others expressed that the circle of essential care should be expanded to include more family members, even those who are not always able to provide regular care because mental health is just as, if not, more important, especially during the pandemic. The case was also made to allow more than one designated caregiver per resident.

*"Children of a resident in a long-term care facility should be able to visit their parent, and **if the resident has more than one child, more than one caregiver should be permitted**".*

Several respondents indicated that family members play an integral role in maintaining the mental health of their loved ones in general, but this is particularly important due to the pandemic:

*"Individuals all have unique needs, but the greatest need during COVID-19 is **socializing...human touch...hugs**"*

Some were frustrated by the lack of information provided by the province:

*"Very little information has been provided about the possibility of being an Essential Caregiver in this province. I know of others who do not even know that it is a possibility for them to see their loved one during the pandemic. I believe the program should be better publicized, and **individual LTC facilities should be OBLIGATED to allow Essential Caregivers access.**"*

Several others indicated that they would be happy to partake in training and gain a better understanding of proper PPE use and infection control.

Conclusion

Thus far, throughout the course of the pandemic, individuals living in the community have had occasional reprieves from the lockdown (i.e., family bubbles, steady 10), but long-term care facilities across the province continue to have different rules for visitation. Although the government has approved long-term care facilities to allow Essential Caregivers entry during the pandemic, only a fraction of facilities have adopted this practice. More support is needed to help facilitate the implementation of a province-wide Essential Caregiver Program.

The pandemic has forced all long-term care facilities to act promptly and put measures in place to immediately protect residents as they are extremely vulnerable to the virus. By restricting families from physically visiting their loved ones in long-term care, we prioritized physical health over mental and emotional health. What we have learned since the beginning of the pandemic is that we did not see the bigger picture, in fact the separation of residents with their loved ones caused resident to suffer emotionally and decline physically. Moving forward, there needs to be a more holistic approach to events such as this one, with a focus on including all aspects of health and quality of life.

It is vital that a new approach be implemented for immediate use, but also in planning for future situations that may mimic the effect of a pandemic or other adverse situation. There is a need for more support for long-term care, but not only for short-term fixes – it needs to be permanent, readily accessible, and sustainable for all facilities. A significant and important aspect of this change must include the extended role of families as Essential Caregivers and partners in care.

The gaps of care found in the Needs Assessment and the Simulation Exercises, highlighted in this report, align with the care tasks families indicated they would be willing to assist with during the strike preparation and the #MoreThanAVisitor survey. Not only is there a need for families to be considered Essential Caregivers, but there is a fit both in emergency situations and as a regular practice.

Recommendation

Creation of an Essential Caregiver Work Group, comprised of front line LTC workers, community members, families, residents, government, and LTC policy makers.

Recommendations

Based on our consultations and research, we offer five recommendations for consideration:

1. Creation of a funding model to support an Essential Caregiver Program for all New Brunswick long-term care facilities.

To promote long-term sustainability of an Essential Caregiver Program and equality among all New Brunswick long-term care facilities, there must be consistent funding from government to support each facility in implementing and maintaining an Essential Caregiver Program.

2. Development of a standard definition of an Essential Caregiver and the recognition of this role by the Nursing Home Services Branch.

A clear and defined definition of an Essential Caregiver, including the scope, role, importance, and required training needed. This role needs to be incorporated into existing nursing home standards and practice.

3. Development and deployment of a New Brunswick wide long-term care facility needs and feasibility assessment to evaluate the barriers and facilitators to implementing an Essential Caregiver training program.

A detailed assessment within each New Brunswick long-term care facility to determine the needs and requirements within individual facilities for the successful implementation and training of Essential Caregivers (i.e., budgetary constraints, home size, infrastructure, staffing).

4. Creation and deployment of an official Essential Caregiver Training Program for all New Brunswick long-term care facilities.

A detailed Essential Caregiver Training Program including a defined Essential Caregiver contract, curriculum, length of training, and related materials. This includes ongoing monitoring and tracking and auditing of the program (i.e., # of Essential Caregivers trained, frequency of visits, tasks performed during the visits).

5. Creation of an Essential Caregiver Work Group, comprised of front-line long-term care staff, community members, families, residents, government, and long-term care policy makers.

The Essential Caregiver Work Group will assist with the development and deployment of the Essential Caregiver Training Program in New Brunswick long-term care facilities. They will provide ongoing assessment and monitoring of the program, evaluate, and address any changes to the program, and would be responsible for tackling challenges or concerns related to the program. They will ensure all New Brunswick long-term care facilities are complying with the Essential Caregiver mandate as stated in the Nursing Home Standards. The Work Group will have a fluid meeting schedule but must have mandatory quarterly meetings.

One-Year Appreciation

With the one-year anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic, we would like to acknowledge the tremendous patience our families have shown as we have navigated these uncharted waters. All families of residents living in long-term care facilities have been impacted immensely this year, it has not been an easy road, but they have shown great cooperation and support as the changes kept coming. At York Care Centre, families are an extension of the care team. In March 2021, at the one-year mark of the restrictions placed on visitation in long-term care, we took the opportunity to thank our families for their support, understanding, and sacrifice. We look forward to a time where families will be re-integrated back to their full capacity in our organization.

Sincerely,

Staff and Management of York Care Centre

2020-2021

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