



Alberta Disabilities Forum

"A United Voice"

Portability of Home Care Services

Issue Home Care services do not consistently meet the needs of clients who relocate within the province.

ADF's Position Home Care services need to become more portable.

Background The ADF Health Working Group's focus group raised the issue of Home Care services that do not meet the needs of clients who relocate within the province. While we recognize that regional health authorities provide the flexibility needed to allocate resources according to the unique circumstances that characterize each region, we are concerned that people with disabilities who decide to relocate do not consistently receive sufficient and appropriate care.

As noted in *Full Citizenship* (March 2001), when people with disabilities decide to relocate within the province, they often find "that support services are either non-existent . . . or that local interpretation or local priorities leave them under-served" (p. 21). ADF recognizes that a significant change in location (e.g. from a rural to an urban setting, or from an assisted-living environment into the community) may require significant changes in service. Yet, remarkably disparate situations exist for clients in towns or cities of similar size and location. For instance, one ADF working group member who recently moved from one city to a similar-sized city found her hours of care reduced by 75%. Instead of being allotted four hours of care per week as she had been, she is now allotted one hour of care per week. For the most part, persons with disabilities require the same *types* of Home Care support no matter where they live. If assistance is needed to have a shower, to prepare and eat meals, or to conduct bowel and bladder routines in one location, the same assistance will be required in another.

"I definitely feel that the services offered should be consistent throughout the province; my medical situation did not change when I moved yet my services did."

*Heather Sheane
Health Working Group*

When persons with disabilities decide to move, they often do so to improve their employment, education, or health situations. The time and energy needed to plan and complete a move can be overwhelming. Finding adequate, accessible, and adaptable housing, leaving behind established support systems, packing and moving belongings, and arranging details such as setting up and closing utilities accounts, transferring financial arrangements, and changing addresses are daunting tasks for any citizen. But the physical and emotional demands of these activities are exacerbated for people with disabilities. Yet,

moving to a new center is often necessary to access employment opportunities, training facilities, colleges, universities, and health amenities. Persons with disabilities need to be supported in their decisions to relocate and should receive consistent and uninterrupted care throughout their moves.

Participants in our focus group commented on feeling “trapped” by their inability to secure adequate Home Care services should they choose to move within the province. A mechanism needs to be in place that ensures consistent and appropriate Home Care services move with the client. Alberta Disabilities Forum believes that by consistently meeting the needs of clients who relocate, Home Care agencies will promote independence and support Albertans with disabilities to live in the community of their choice.

Recommendations

To resolve the issues outlined in this paper, we believe the government of Alberta, through the Regional Health Authorities and in consultation with consumers and stakeholder groups, needs to:

1. Create more formalized communication systems between referring and receiving Regional Health Authorities in addressing the situation of Home Care clients who are relocating. Information needs to be communicated prior to the move and with client consent and involvement.
2. Eliminate “lag time” between reassessment and service provision for Home Care clients who are relocating. The established care plan from the referring region should be maintained until the new care plan based on the reassessment is in place. Care needs to be in place the day the client arrives in the receiving region.
3. Develop regulations and standards of service that coordinate and improve the consistency of Home Care services between Health Regions. Consumers and stakeholder groups need to be a part of this process.

Work Cited

Premier’s Council on the Status of Person’s with Disabilities (March 2001). *Full Citizenship: Alberta’s disability strategy interim report*.