

Why did we do the survey?

Surveys are an important part of the Health Quality Council of Alberta (HQCA)'s legislated mandate to measure, monitor, assess and report to Albertans about their experience and satisfaction with the quality of health services they receive. In 2007/08, we conducted resident and family experience surveys in 173 long term care facilities across the province. These were the first such surveys conducted at the provincial level and formed a baseline about residents' and family members' experiences when a loved one is living in a long term care centre.

In 2010/11, the HQCA repeated the family experience survey in 157 long term care facilities across the province. Where possible, it compares the results with those from 2007/08. The survey was designed to capture family members' observations or experiences with the care and services provided at the long term care facility. It is not intended to provide a proxy for residents' experiences.

We did not conduct the resident survey again as we found in 2007/08 that less than 30% of residents were capable of completing it. The HQCA is looking at different ways to collect this important feedback.

In this report, we use the terms long term care facility, long term care centre and nursing home interchangeably. When we use the term family member, we mean family member or the person most involved in the resident's care.

What did we want to learn?

As in 2007/08, the main reason we did the survey was to get information about the family experience because this is a key measure of quality and an important aspect of providing and improving care and services for long term care residents.

This information can be used to help long term care providers, health professionals, Alberta Health Services and Alberta Health and Wellness to:

- Improve the quality of care and services for residents.
- Improve aspects of quality of life for residents.
- Identify areas of excellence and opportunities for improvement.

We also wanted to:

- Get standardized and comparable data across the province, Alberta Health Services zones and service providers.
- Give those facilities surveyed in both 2007/08 and 2010/11 the opportunity to compare results from one survey year to the next.
- Help long term care facilities meet the requirements of Alberta's Continuing Care Health Service Standards.



Alberta Health Services Zones





How did we do the survey?

The HQCA contracted Agili-T Metrics Inc. to conduct the 2010/11 survey in accordance with Alberta privacy legislation requirements. Agili-T conducted the HQCA's previous long term care survey. The survey again used the Nursing Home Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems Family Survey Instrument, which was developed by the U.S.-based Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

Survey packages were mailed to 11,690 family members (or the most involved person) for residents living in 157 long term care facilities across Alberta between November 22, 2010 and February 20, 2011. Overall, 8,179 surveys were completed for a response rate of 70%, similar to the response rate in 2007/08. The high response rate and large sample size resulted in a low margin of error of less than or equal to 1% at the provincial level.

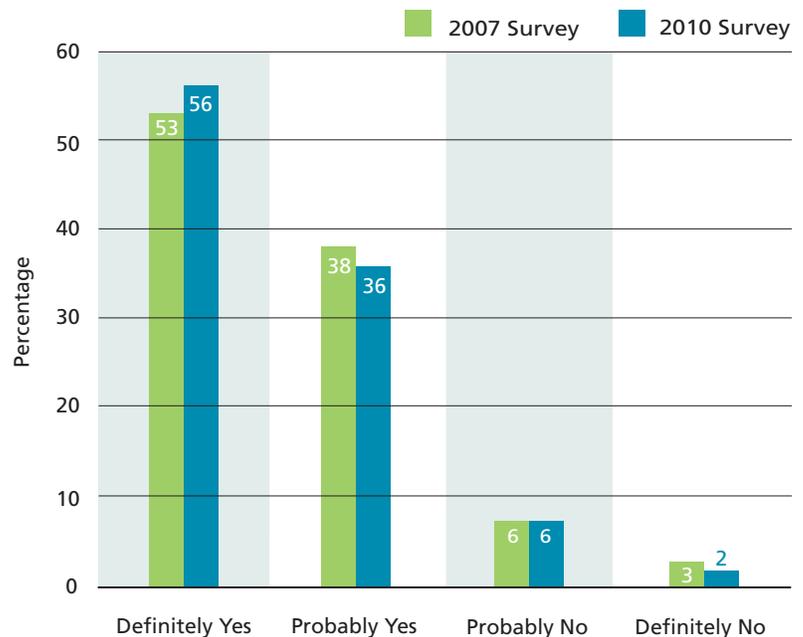
Results are presented for the 150 nursing homes that participated in both surveys so valid comparisons could be made between 2007/08 and 2010/11. This represents 95% of the total sample for 2010/11. Respondent characteristics measured are essentially the same in both surveys.

What are some of the key findings?

In the majority of areas surveyed in 2010/11, results have improved or remained stable since 2007/08.

- In 2010/11, the average overall care rating was 8.2 out of 10, a significant increase from 8.1 in 2007/08.
- On a scale of 0 to 10, 47% of family members surveyed rated the care at the long term care facility as 9 or 10. Forty-one per cent (41%) rated the care as 7 or 8 and 12% rated the care from 0 to 6. While small, this increase from 44%, 42% and 14% respectively in 2007/08 suggests a modest but consistent improvement between 2007/08 and 2010/11.
- 31% of survey respondents were unhappy with the care the resident received at the nursing home in the last six months, a significant improvement from the 33% who were unhappy with care in 2007/08.
- 92% of respondents would definitely (56%) or probably (36%) recommend the nursing home where their family member resided to someone else compared to 91% in 2007/08.

Facility Recommendation by Family



- Publicly operated facilities received a higher overall care rating than private and voluntary facilities.
- As in 2007/08, smaller long term care facilities (those with fewer beds) were rated more positively than large facilities.

- A new survey question for 2010/11 found that on a scale of 0 to 10, 22% of respondents rated the food at their nursing home as 9 or 10, 41% rated it as 7 or 8 and 38% rated the food from 0 to 6.
- Survey items that have the greatest influence on family members' overall care rating related to:
 - staffing levels
 - care and security of residents' personal belongings
 - timely response to residents' needs for toileting, drinking and eating

What did family members say about the overall care residents received?

- In 2010/11, the average overall care rating was 8.2 out of 10, a significant increase from 8.1 in 2007/08.



- 31% of survey respondents were unhappy with the care the resident received at the nursing home in the last six months, a significant improvement from 33% in 2007/08. The Calgary Zone also showed a significant improvement from 2007/08.
- 92% of respondents would definitely (56%) or probably (36%) recommend the nursing home where their family member resided to someone else compared to 91% in 2007/08.



What did family members say about the quality of food?

- A new survey question for 2010/11 found that on a scale of 0 to 10, 22% of respondents rated the food at their nursing home as 9 or 10, 41% rated it as 7 or 8 and 38% rated the food from 0 to 6.

What did they say about nursing home staffing levels?

- 86% of those respondents who tried to find a nurse/aide during any of their visits said they were always (43%) or usually (43%) able to find a nurse/aide when they wanted one, a significant improvement from 83% in 2007/08. The Calgary Zone also showed a significant improvement from 2007/08.
- 64% reported there were usually (47%) or always (17%) enough nurses/aides in the nursing home, a significant improvement from 53% in 2007/08. The Calgary, Edmonton and Central Zones also showed a significant improvement from 2007/08.

How were residents and their belongings cared for?

- 90% of respondents reported the resident always (39%) or usually (51%) looked and smelled clean, similar to 89% in 2007/08. The Edmonton Zone showed a significant improvement from 2007/08.
- 34% stated the resident's personal medical belongings were damaged or lost in the previous six months either once (20%) or two or more times (14%). This is similar to 33% in 2007/08.
- 59% of respondents that used the nursing home laundry service said clothes were damaged or lost one or more times in the last six months, unchanged from 2007/08.

What did family members say about the nursing home environment?

- 92% of respondents reported the resident's room always (51%) or usually (41%) looked and smelled clean, a significant improvement from 91% in 2007/08. The Edmonton and Central Zones also showed a significant improvement from 2007/08.
- 91% said the noise level around the resident's room was always (53%) or usually (38%) acceptable, similar to 2007/08.
- 93% of those surveyed said they could always (70%) or usually (23%) find places to talk privately with the resident, similar to 2007/08.

Did family members believe nursing home staff treated residents and family members with kindness and respect?

- 95% of respondents reported they always (68%) or usually (27%) saw nurses/aides treat residents with courtesy and respect, unchanged from 2007/08.
- 94% of those surveyed always (63%) or usually (31%) saw nurses/aides treat the resident with kindness, similar to 93% in 2007/08. The Calgary Zone showed a significant improvement from 2007/08.
- 88% of respondents always (50%) or usually (38%) felt nurses/aides really cared about the resident, similar to 87% in 2007/08. The Calgary Zone showed a significant improvement from 2007/08.
- 14% reported they saw nurses/aides being rude to a resident (including their family member), similar to 13% in 2007/08.
- 35% of those surveyed saw residents (including their family member) behave in a way that made it hard for nurses/aides in the last six months compared to 32% in 2007/08.
- 92% felt nurses/aides always (54%) or usually (38%) handled the situations noted above appropriately compared to 90% in 2007/08. The Calgary Zone showed a significant improvement from 2007/08.

Were family members given information about and encouraged to be involved with residents?

- 88% of respondents that sought information about the resident from a nurse/aide reported they always (48%) or usually (40%) received the information as soon as they wanted. This is similar to 87% in 2007/08.
- 92% of respondents who asked about payments and expenses always (73%) or usually (19%) received all the information they wanted compared to 94% in 2007/08.
- 93% of those surveyed said nurses/aides always (64%) or usually (29%) explained things in a way that was easy for them to understand, similar to 92% in 2007/08.
- 3% reported nurses/aides tried to discourage them from asking questions about the resident, unchanged from 2007/08.
- 31% of respondents reported being unhappy with the care the resident received at the nursing home in the last six months, a significant improvement from 33% in 2007/08. The Calgary Zone also showed a significant improvement from 2007/08.
- Of those respondents who were unhappy and reported their concern, 56% were always (12%) or usually (44%) satisfied with the way staff handled these problems compared to 54% in 2007/08.
- Of those who were unhappy with the care the resident received in the last six months, 33% said they stopped themselves from talking to staff about their concerns because they thought staff would take it out on the resident. This is similar to 2007/08.
- 79% reported being part of a care conference in the last 12 months, a significant improvement from 71% in 2007/08. The Calgary, Edmonton and South Zones also showed a significant improvement from 2007/08.
- Of those who were not part of a care conference, 51% said they were given an opportunity to participate, a significant improvement from 38% in 2007/08. The Calgary, Edmonton and North Zones also showed a significant improvement from 2007/08.
- 83% of respondents reported they were involved in decisions about the resident's care in the last six months compared to 80% in 2007/08. Of that 83%, 91% said they were always (57%) or usually (34%) involved as much as they wanted to be, similar to 90% in 2007/08.

Did family members believe the nursing home met residents' basic needs?

- 68% of respondents reported they helped with care of the resident when they visited in the last six months compared to 70% in 2007/08.
- 15% felt nursing home staff expected them to help, a significant improvement from 17% in 2007/08. The Calgary, Edmonton and Central Zones also showed a significant improvement from 2007/08.





Did family members believe the nursing home met residents' basic needs? – continued

- 43% of those surveyed helped the resident with drinking and 44% helped with eating at least once in the last six months. 23% of these respondents helped with drinking and 21% helped with eating because they felt staff didn't help or the resident waited too long. These numbers are unchanged from 2007/08.
- 23% helped the resident with toileting at least once in the last six months, similar to 24% in 2007/08. Of that 23%, 49% helped because they felt staff did not help or made the resident wait too long, unchanged from 2007/08.

What did family members say about medical services and treatments and medication concerns? (new questions for 2010/11)

- 60% of those surveyed said their family members always received the medical services and treatments they needed and 34% said this was usually the case.
- 93% of respondents said they never (53%) or sometimes (40%) had concerns about their family member's medications. Of those that had concerns, 94% reported them to the nursing home staff.
- Of the 94% that reported their concerns, 84% said their concerns were always (47%) or usually (37%) resolved.

What are quartiles and why are the nursing homes in the survey divided this way?

104 of the 157 long term care facilities that participated in this study had statistically reliable sample sizes (greater than 25 respondents). These 104 facilities were grouped according to their average care rating scores into four performance quartiles: upper, middle+, middle- and lower. This analysis enables nursing homes to see which quartile their facility fits into for each question on the survey.

Quartile results provide an opportunity for long term care facilities in the lower quartiles to target areas for improvement and identify what they should strive for and from whom they can learn.

What are the differences between upper and lower quartile facilities?

- Upper quartile nursing homes received an overall care rating of 9.2 out of 10 from respondents compared to 7.5 for the lower quartile facilities.
- Nursing homes in the upper quartile were operating nearly three times fewer the number of beds on average than facilities in the lower quartile (66 beds versus 177). This is similar to 2007/08.
- Upper quartile facility respondents reported more often that there were always or usually enough nurses/aides compared to lower quartile facilities (85% upper versus 54% lower). They also reported they were more likely to find a nurse/aide when they wanted one (97% upper versus 80% lower).

- Residents' clothing and medical belongings were damaged or lost to a lesser extent in upper quartile facilities than in lower quartile ones (18% upper versus 42% lower).
- Upper quartile facility respondents are less likely to be unhappy with the care the resident received than lower quartile facility respondents (14% upper versus 43% lower).
- Respondents from lower quartile facilities are more likely to help with toileting, drinking and eating because nurses/aides either did not help or made residents wait too long (toileting: 35% upper versus 64% lower; drinking: 11% upper versus 29% lower; eating: 8% upper versus 27% lower).
- Upper quartile respondents are more likely to report nurses/aides always or usually give them information about the resident as soon as they wanted (95% upper versus 76% lower).

Does facility ownership make a difference to overall care ratings?

- The survey found that on average, publicly operated facilities obtained significantly higher overall care ratings compared to private and voluntary (not-for-profit or faith-based) operated facilities (public 8.4 out of 10; voluntary 8.1 out of 10; private 8.0 out of 10).



In summary

Between 2007/08 and 2010/11, the HQCA long term care survey findings showed significant improvements in some areas as well as areas that held steady, with no significant negative shifts. While the survey highlights areas where respondents felt Alberta's long term care facilities were performing well, it also focuses on quality of care issues they feel must be improved.

The survey found that what most influenced families' overall care ratings were:

- staffing levels.
- care of resident's belongings.
- assistance with daily living activities such as toileting, drinking and eating.

From this perspective, we suggest improvement efforts should focus on:

- Improving the number and availability of long term care staff.
- Ensuring the care and security of residents' personal belongings.
- Creating environments and staff relationships similar to those found in smaller nursing homes.

While these dimensions of care (from the perspective of family feedback) have the strongest relationship to the overall rating of care, we recognize that all dimensions of care are important.

Within the province there is considerable variation in performance between long term care facilities. We suggest those long term care centres that received lower scores overall and on specific attributes can look to those facilities in the upper performing quartile as a valuable resource for sharing best practices, ideas and experience.

Individual facilities will need to determine where to focus their quality improvement efforts to best meet the care and service needs of their residents and family members.

What happens next?

The HQCA did this survey to get information to help long term care providers, health professionals, Alberta Health Services and Alberta Health and Wellness improve the quality of resident care and services as well as aspects of residents' quality of life.

We gave a detailed report to every long term care facility that participated in the survey so they can see what they are doing well and where they can improve.

We will continue to work with these groups to use the survey results to make improvements in the quality of care for Alberta's long term care residents.



Acknowledgements The HQCA thanks those Albertans who participated in the survey and provided valuable information.

Want more details about the survey? For a copy of the technical report, go to www.hqca.ca.

Tell us what you think

You may also do this online at www.hqca.ca

1. How did you hear about the survey?

2. Did you find the information useful? Yes No

3. How could we improve future publications?

4. What other topics would you like the HQCA to focus on?

5. Other comments?

Fax your comments to **403.297.8258** or mail to:

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Email your comments to info@hqca.ca or tweet us @HQCA.

Thank you for completing and returning this survey.