



Home Support Workers: HR Strategies to Meet Chronic Care Needs of Older Canadians



RESULTS FROM THE PAN CANADIAN CONSULTATIONS

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About the Project

Home support is typically defined as non-professional services involving personal assistance with daily activities, such as bathing, dressing, grooming, and light household tasks. These services are considered by many as essential for supporting older individuals with long-term health problems to remain in their own homes. **The goal of this project was to identify and analyze human resources strategies for Home Support Workers (HSWs) among public and private sector agencies, in order to improve Canada's ability to meet the projected demand for formal home care services for older adults.** Five consultations were held across Canada, in addition to other research activities. Participants included provincial government representatives, caregiver organizations, unions, educators, and others.

**Surrey, BC,
March 25, 2009.**
17 stakeholders



**Halifax, NS,
September 23, 2009.**
25 stakeholders

**Regina, SK, January 12,
2010.** 18 stakeholders

**Toronto, ON,
November 30, 2009.**
28 stakeholders

**Montreal, QC, May 4,
2010.** 26 stakeholders

Home Support Worker recruitment and retention is critical to the future health of older Canadians!

An important finding from our program of research¹ is that the demand for formal home support services in Canada will increase in the coming decades. The final report of this project provides a comprehensive review of issues affecting the recruitment and retention of Home Support Workers, as well as strategies underway in Canada and in other countries.

¹ Keefe, Légaré, *et al.* Visit our website for products and reports. www.mdcaaging/msvu.ca. Select 'Future home care needs'.



Key issues impacting recruitment and retention of HSWs:



1. **Compensation:** low wages, lack of wage parity between provinces and with counterparts in institutional settings, uncertain hours, inconsistent benefits.
2. **Education and training:** inconsistent requirements; lack of provincial and national standards hindering job mobility.
3. **Quality assurance:** client care may be impacted by undefined roles and requirements, and lack of regulation and accreditation for employers and educators.
4. **Working conditions:** part-time and casual schedules, safety issues, feelings that the work is under-valued.



Most home care programs in Canada are under provincial/territorial jurisdiction. The services offered and the scope of HSWs' roles differ between jurisdictions, therefore, the key messages from each consultation also differed. However, there were many similarities. Overall, the consultation participants revealed that **addressing wages and scheduling** (e.g., guaranteed hours or salaries to support regular incomes, or wage parity with other long-term care employees) **and standards** (e.g., implementing provincial standards for scope of practice/role, or provincially standardized curricula for HSW training) would be beneficial for improving recruitment and retention of HSWs in their jurisdictions. These findings are consistent with other research on HSWs in Canada. Many participants also felt that **enhancing the profile of home support as a career option** would be necessary and suggested that media **awareness campaigns** could be used. Participants also identified **information needs** (e.g., specific areas for further research) and identified **barriers to implementing proposed strategies**, such as collective agreements, legislation, budget constraints, human resource capacity issues, and 'political will'. In many cases, participants spoke of the **lack of common standards and regulation** in the home care industry as a challenge for broad or uniform change.



What we learned at the provincial consultations - possible strategies:

1. Examine the potential for developing **wage parity** (BC, ON) and **guaranteed hours** of work (SK, NS)
2. Work collaboratively to **promote the value of the worker**: Enhance profile through public relations - media campaign (QC, NS, ON)
3. Consider **enhancing training standards** across the community care sector (ON, QC)
4. Formulate a plan to **educate clients, families, and the public** about scope of practice/role (SK, NS, ON)
5. **Work with decision-makers** to keep them informed about the role of home care in our health system (SK)



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Or visit our website to download the Final Report
www.msvu.ca/mdcaging

