

# Alberta Doctors' Digest

## New continuing care framework

When we think about continuing care, residential complexes such as long-term care centres often come to mind. After all, many of us have parents, grandparents or loved ones who call these places home.

While supportive living and long-term care homes are familiar fixtures in Alberta's continuing care landscape, home and community care programs are the bedrock of a sustainable system. These vital supports meet Albertans where they live in their communities, empowering them to age independently in their homes.

"Robust, accessible care in the community benefits everyone," says Dr. Vivian Ewa, a care-of-the-elderly physician. "When these supports are available, seniors can age in place. They are less likely to go into residential care prematurely or be hospitalized, and we see less pressure on caregivers and the acute care system."

But many seniors and frail Albertans face barriers to these services. Caregivers report rising levels of burnout, transitions between hospital and home are frequently disjointed, and seniors often stay in acute care units as they wait for placement in a continuing care home.

These challenges, along with the launch of Assisted Living Alberta this fall, prompted the AMA to develop the [Safety Net for Continuing Care framework](#). Created in collaboration with physician experts, the Safety Net underscores the essential role of home and community care programs within Alberta's continuing care system.

"We're advocating for a system driven by compassion, integration and flexibility – one that helps Albertans stay safe, supported and healthy at home," says Dr. Shelley Duggan, AMA President. "Community-based care is foundational to that vision, but it's often sidelined during continuing care conversations."

The Safety Net framework outlines issues and solutions at four levels (threads) of continuing care:

1. home- and community-based care
2. supportive living
3. long-term care
4. hospice care

Each thread represents a distinct level of support tailored to the unique needs of Albertans who require continuing care. While care of the elderly is prevalent, we also must remember the needs of Albertans requiring continuing care at other times of life and for different reasons, with quality care at every level dependent on robust community programs that support individuals wherever they live. When these threads are strong, they preserve independence and ease pressure on acute care. When they're frayed or missing, vulnerable Albertans are at risk.

“Ensuring adequate housing, social and medical care facilitates aging in place and keeps people out of the hospital,” says Dr. Ewa. “A sustainable health system must address the social determinants of health that impact over 50% of health outcomes.”

The AMA continues to work closely with physician leaders to advocate for a more integrated and responsive continuing care system – one that enables gaining in place by protecting the health, dignity and independence of seniors and frail Albertans. The Safety Net framework marks a meaningful step toward that vision, offering practical solutions that support caregivers, improve health outcomes and ensure Albertans receive the right care in the right place.

If you are interested in helping to advance this advocacy, let us know where you have witnessed the system failing to support patients – or when things work well that should not be lost. Email [katrina.lingrell@albertadoctors.org](mailto:katrina.lingrell@albertadoctors.org).

If you have a story that would help to identify issues and illustrate what patients need, we would be glad to use it in our advocacy across meeting tables and in public spaces. Text our Report My Story line **587-401-9591**. Share your story or ask us to contact you.

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