

ALR News

A newsletter from B.C.'s provincial Assisted Living Registry

Greetings from the Assisted Living Registry

This is the first newsletter from the registry since moving into the Ministry of Health last January. Some of you have been asking when we would start sending newsletters again, and we thank you for your patience while we got settled. We plan to send out the ALR News quarterly, and more often if needed. Read on to learn about:

1. The new Registrar and registry staff
2. What we've been up to since the transition to the ministry
3. New Initiatives
 - Registration of residences for adults with mental health and/or substance use problems
 - Posting of substantiated complaints in seniors' assisted living residences
4. Changes to existing Serious Incident Report (SIR) form
5. New registration requirement
 - Identifying Assisted Living Units in Seniors' Residences

1. The Registrar

In January 2012 the work of the assisted living registry moved from Vancouver into the ministry in Victoria. At that time, the Minister of Health designated Barbara Korabek, the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Health Authorities Division, as the provincial Assisted Living Registrar. The role of the Registrar is to oversee the requirements for assisted living outlined in the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act*. This includes the requirement for assisted living operators to register their residences and meet health and safety standards. The Registrar has delegated specific assisted living registry staff to carry out this work.

Registry staff...

Genevieve Stainton is our Program Assistant and will most likely be your first point of contact when you call or email.

We have two assisted living investigators:

- *Karin Heimlich* who primarily works with the seniors' sector; and
- *Karla Krawchuk* who works primarily with the mental health and/or substance use sector.

Naomi North is our Program Policy Advisor; and

Robin McMillan is the Director of the registry. Both Naomi and Robin are also delegated as investigators.

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2. What we've been up to since the transition to the ministry

The past year has flown by, in part because while we continued with the normal administrative and follow-up registry work related to assisted living residences for seniors, we have also accomplished a number of other important projects including:

- updating the registry information system and registration process;
- merging registry operations into the ministry system;
- updating the website, including revised information about developing, registering and operating an assisted living residence and complaint investigation;
- developing health and safety standards and guidelines for a new assisted living sector – mental health and substance use residences (available on our website);
- registering mental health and substance use residences that meet the definition of assisted living as set out in the *Community Care and Assisted living Act*; and,
- working with sector representatives on posting information about substantiated complaints related to health and safety issues in assisted living.

3. New Initiatives

Registration of residences for adults with mental health and/or substance use problems

Government committed to registering assisted living residences for adults with mental health and/or substance use problems. We began work on this initiative last spring and started accepting applications for registration of supportive recovery houses and other unlicensed mental health residences that meet the definition of assisted living in the fall. The goal of registration is to strengthen services for vulnerable adults living in these residences by providing health and safety standards and guidelines for care. We currently have over 40 applications in process.

Registry staff have been doing site visits – meeting with applicants in person to review the application process, answer questions about registration and to learn about how operators and site managers are working with or implementing new policies to meet the standards. Staff enjoy being able to meet with new applicants and existing registrants to support your efforts to ensure the health and safety of residents. Feedback from applicants suggests that site visits are welcomed as an opportunity to further develop a collaborative working relationship.

The assisted living registrar's standards and guidelines for mental health and substance use residences are available on our website at www.health.gov.bc.ca/assisted/pdf/mhsu-health-and-safety-standards.pdf. For additional information about registration please see www.health.gov.bc.ca/assisted/ops_devs/registering.html.

Posting of substantiated complaints in seniors' assisted living residences

The ministry committed in the Improving Care for B.C. Seniors: An Action Plan to provide online public access to substantiated complaint information related to assisted living residences. Substantiated complaints are allegations that have been investigated by assisted living registry staff and have been found to have valid health and safety concerns.

Assisted living registry staff collaborated with residents and their families, health authority representatives, seniors assisted living operators and sector representatives to develop guidelines for the posting of substantiated complaint information. This information is intended to provide seniors and their families with accessible information that will assist them to make care decisions for the future.

High level summary information about substantiated complaints that occurred after September 1, 2012 is now being posted on the assisted living registry website with the residence information. To locate information about a residence, click on "Find a Seniors' Residence" and select "Search by Community" or "Search by Health Authority" to locate residences in your region.

To read more, please see the ALR website at:

<http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/assisted/complaints.html>

4. *Changes* to the Serious Incident Reporting (SIR) form

Following the move to the ministry, the Serious Incident Report (SIR) form was updated with the new fax number. At the same time, three new reporting areas were added; flood, missing person and police calls. *Hint* check the date at the bottom of the Serious Incident Report form – the most current version of the form is dated 2012/11/02 (watch for a further updated form coming soon!). The SIR form is used for both residences housing seniors and those housing individuals with mental health and substance use problems.

Flood

The "flood" category was added to the section that speaks to fire causing personal injury or building damage. We added this option because upon reviewing the SIRs filed under the "other" category, it was noted that there were a significant number of buildings where floods were reported. Flooding, like fire, can cause building damage that can lead to an unsafe environment for residents.

Missing person

The category "missing person" was added, particularly for seniors' residence, as it may indicate that a person may no longer be suitable for assisted living accommodation and an operator may need to initiate the process of exit planning with the resident, their family or significant caregivers, health authority staff or family physician as appropriate.

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Missing person means a person who is missing from the residence. As outlined in Section 8, (Serious Incident Reporting, page 1) of the registrant handbook for seniors' residences, the definition of serious incident (prepared by a multi-stakeholder group, including operators) is broad. Therefore, if you as the operator consider a resident's absence sufficiently serious to warrant reporting, you should do so.

Police call

The category "police call" was added at the request of mental health and substance use stakeholders. Stakeholders felt that for this sector, it was appropriate.

Other new additions

We are currently updating the SIR form to include information about whether the incident involves a resident receiving publicly subsidized or private pay assisted living. Once the new SIR form is completed, it will be posted on the registry website and you will be notified when the new version of the form is available. Please print off a new master copy form for your registrant handbook and destroy all older copies of SIR forms that you may have in file.

Remember, SIR forms should be faxed to the registry no later than the next business day after the incident. To protect the privacy of the information being sent, please use a cover page with the form. You can find the SIR form at this link on the ALR website under Publications/ALR forms. <http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/assisted/publications.html>

There may be other categories that could be added to the list of reportable incidents such as falls, disease outbreak or aggressive or unusual behaviour on the part of a resident towards staff or another resident. Further consultation will be held before these categories are added.

5. *New* Registration Requirement

The notices for the 2013/14 annual registration have been sent out to operators. If you have not received an electronic notice, please contact Genevieve.

Identification of Assisted Living Units in Seniors Residences

Beginning with this year's annual registration, operators who provide different levels of service in a Campus of Care setting (e.g. supportive or independent living, assisted living and/ or licensed or residential care) are required to be able to identify which units in their building are accommodating assisted living residents at any given time. This requirement will pertain mainly to residences that accommodate seniors', and can be done simply using a map of the unit numbers that identifies which units are designated as assisted living.

In addition, operators should not use an arbitrary number of units to register as assisted living. The number of registered units should accurately reflect the number of units where assisted living services are being delivered. If this number changes during the year, the registry must be informed of the changes and the diagram of the unit numbers must be revised.

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The reason for this registration requirement is that assisted living services are regulated under the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act* and operators have specific health and safety responsibilities with regards to residents receiving assisted living services, whether they are publicly subsidized or private pay. The responsibility or duty of care is not the same for operator providing Independent or Supportive Living services because these services do not fall under the jurisdiction of the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act*.

As an operator, you do not need to designate specific units as assisted living on an ongoing basis. The assisted living units themselves may change as residents move in and transition out of assisted living. However, you must know what units are designated as assisted living at any point in time so that staff can provide appropriate services and monitoring. The ministry is starting to work with stakeholders and BC Housing to clearly define for the public how Independent Living services differ from Assisted Living services.

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In conclusion, if you have suggestions for future topics, or if you have questions or feedback about information in the newsletter, please contact us!