

AWARE+NS

Nova Scotia Health + Community Services Safety Association

STEADY + SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS =  
**IMPACT**



Annual Report 2017/18

# Table of Contents

IMPACT of COLLABORATION and LEADERSHIP	Page 2
IMPACTING CHANGE for the BETTER	Page 3
IMPACT of PEOPLE and BUILDING SOLUTIONS	Page 4
IMPACT of LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES	Page 6
IMPACT of PARTNERSHIPS	Page 7



AWARE-NS Board of Directors

(left to right) Denise Turnbull, Tracy D'Entremont, Millie Colbourne, Corey MacKenzie, Jenna Brookfield, Julie Hannam, Caroline Wolfe Stewart and Katrina Philopoulos. (missing: Andrea Vardy and Menna MacIsaac)

*"Our promise to you is that we will continue to be innovative,  
will strengthen our commitment, and focus our efforts in  
helping you achieve safer workplaces"  
-Susan Dempsey, Executive Director*

## Message from the Executive Director

Making a difference is all about people helping people find the right pathway in building safer work environments and, with the right initiatives and supports, the prevention of accidents and injuries. It starts with keen interest, leadership commitment and partnerships in making **Steady and Significant Progress to create Impact.**

The role of AWARE-NS is to add clear value to the occupational health and safety agenda and support our stakeholders to champion safety excellence. This year was no exception. The collaboration and collective efforts of our partners and all stakeholders is evident and our work together represented solid progress in meeting the needs of our members for safety programs and services. I am proud of our team who has achieved incremental growth this past year, helping to build safer workplaces— through the promotion of the Safety Management System, our tools and resources, targeted outreach and providing required safety education and training. We are also very proud to have 406 organizations engaged with us. We trained over 3500 people in health and safety classroom courses. We also reached a new milestone - 200 organizations are active in E-Learning. As injury rates and injury costs are of significant concern, we are seeing success as 22 organizations have improved their WCB merit in relation to others over the last year.

Significant time, effort and unprecedented engagement, with sector stakeholders continued on the development of the Workplace Safety Action Plan. 2018 marked a significant milestone, the Workplace Safety Report. This report establishes where we are and provides direction in charting the course forward.

Thank you to the AWARE-NS Board of Directors, WCB Nova Scotia, the Department of Health, the Department of Labor and Advanced Education and our stakeholder community, who have dedicated their resources and worked hand-in-hand with us, so that we are able to accomplish our goals.

This Annual Report highlights some of the accomplishments in 2017/18 and reminds us of the efforts required to keep moving in this positive direction.

*-Susan Dempsey*

## Message from the Chair of the Board

The past year has been a watershed moment in occupational health and safety within the health and community services sectors. Stakeholders have come together to confront the long standing challenges in supporting organizations to enhance their health and safety practices. AWARE-NS has played a vital role in coordinating the development of the Workplace Safety Action Plan, playing a vital role in bringing together government, employers, and workers to find meaningful actions that can prevent injury and illness occurring in the course of employment. This year has clearly demonstrated the value that AWARE-NS brings to the organizations it serves; the credibility AWARE-NS has built amongst its stakeholders was vital in facilitating the participation of people and organizations in working groups that informed the actions that will be implemented in the coming years. The future of health and safety in the sectors is full of potential but it is not guaranteed; the work that began this year has created a solid foundation but the real measure of success will be what we build going forward.

The increase in resources targeting health and safety in the health and community services sectors demonstrates a collective will to challenge and change the status quo. The time for debate and discussion is drawing to a close and we will now be judged not by what we say, but what we do. We need organizations to commit to implement the actions found in the action plan. We need workers to participate in enhancing the safety of their workplaces. We need unions to support and promote building a sustainable safety culture. And, we need AWARE-NS to lead the path forward and keep these groups focused on the important work ahead of us. It is tempting to look at lagging indicators such as workers compensation rates to measure our future success, the dollars saved on workers compensation can be reinvested in the sector to enhance care, but let us not forget the human tragedy that drives these rates. Families facing economic hardship while injured workers are not able to earn the wages on which their families depend. Mothers and fathers unable to participate in their childrens' lives while recovering from physical or psychological injury. It is time for us to take care of those who care for the most vulnerable in our society. To take care of the people who will be there to care for us in our times of need. Last year I closed this report in imploring you to join us in confronting these challenges and today we are united in this pursuit. This year I will close with a quote from Henry Ford that will help focus us all on the big picture moving forward; *"Coming together is the beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success."*

*-Jenna Brookfield*

# IMPACT of COLLABORATION and LEADERSHIP

## Workplace Safety Action Plan for Nova Scotia's Health and Community Services Sectors

Nova Scotia's home care, long term care, and disability support program sectors play a critical role in the health and well-being of Nova Scotians. Combined, these sectors employ approximately 16,500 Nova Scotians. Unfortunately, workers in these sectors are more likely to be hurt on the job than in any other line of work. These injuries impact not only workers, but their families and colleagues. **The high cost of these claims results in employers in these sectors paying \$63 million in WCB premiums, annually.**

**This is about the people who are caring for people, and their safety must be made a priority – it is the right thing to do!**

Spring 2016 marked the beginning of our journey in the development of a Workplace Safety Action Plan for Nova Scotia's Health and Community Services Sectors. Over the last two years, three areas of focused activity were undertaken: research into best practices and assessment of the current state of workplace safety in Nova Scotia; extensive stakeholder consultation and engagement; and a working group process.

After the **research and consultation phases, which engaged more than 1200 stakeholders**, a report is now

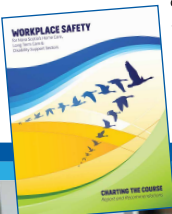
complete. The Workplace Safety Report sets out 21 recommendations to improve occupational health and safety outcomes for home care, long term care and disability support program workers in Nova Scotia.

**The 21 recommendations in the Report focus on five areas:**

- Safe handling and mobility;
- Workplace violence;
- Slips, trips, and falls;
- Mental health and wellness; and
- Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW)

The organizations that collaborated in the research and recommendations were led by AWARE-NS and included the Nova Scotia Departments of Labour and Advanced Education, Health and Wellness, and Community Services, the Nova Scotia Health Authority, the IWK Health Centre, WCB Nova Scotia, employers in home care, long term care, and disability support, and labour representatives of workers in these sectors.

As we reflect on our work together, we are ready to move into implementation and a go-forward plan. We know this is a complex working environment, and there are no easy solutions to improving safety outcomes. But the safety conversation has started, we have listened, and we understand. **With committed people and organizations at the table, a positive difference will be made.** From government and organized labour, to employers and front-line workers, we are all united to achieve this goal.



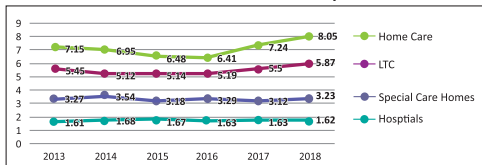


# IMPACTING CHANGE for the BETTER

Since 2015, WCB premium assessment rates in the acute care and special care homes sectors have remained fairly stable. However, the long term care and home care sectors have experienced an increase. As we look to the future, current projections show continued annual increases for the next 5 years. The increase in premiums in these sectors reflects the rising rate of worker injuries in home care and long term care, the increasing number of time-loss claims, and the length of time a worker needs before returning to work.

In 2017, the health & social services sector premiums were **\$63.7 million** and are expected to rise to over **\$65 million** in 2018.

WCB Rates/\$100 Assessable Payroll



The equivalent of **506** fulltime employees were absent for one full year due to injuries in 2017.

Northwood

**SAFETY FIRST**

Creating a Culture of Safety

In late 2016, the Northwood Environmental Services Department's WCB claim costs were at an all-time high. Teaming up with Vanessa Roy, OT, Healthy Workplace Advisor, identified root causes of frequent workplace injuries and consulted AWARE-NS for support and resources in further developing this aspect of their Safety Management System. They completed a hazard and risk identification process, and developed new safe work processes and procedures. Staff received training and new PPE was purchased, including safety shoes for a core group of staff responsible for completing high risk tasks such as moving beds and equipment.

The staff have appreciated their leaders' concern for their Health and Safety and they are now active champions of workplace safety culture.

Claim costs have tumbled from \$20,000 in 2016 to \$659.00 in 2017 and zero in 2018.

*"More importantly, staff have a prevention mind-set, report hazards and near-misses long before an incident occurs. They will no-longer complete tasks without thinking about the safest approach and asking for help when needed. We are so proud of this team. Their success is demonstrated not only in terms of the reduction of injuries, but in the improved health and safety of our valued Environmental Services team."*

*-Terri Sarty, Senior Supervisor*



- Section 1 – Commitment, Leadership and Participation
- Section 2 – Hazard Management
- Section 3 – Inspections
- Section 4 – Incident Management
- Section 5 – Emergency Preparedness
- Section 6 – Training
- Section 7 – Safe Work Procedures and Practices
- Section 8 – Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee
- Section 9 – Contractor Safety
- Section 10 – Stay at Work/Return to Work
- Section 11 – Communication
- Section 12 – Documentation
- Section 13 – Monitoring



## IMPACT of PEOPLE and

AWARE-NS is committed to building solutions through program development, resources education and training. The Safety Management System (SMS) supports the needs of the community. It has been proven that the use of an SMS decreases the risk of incidents. AWARE-NS has developed specific training programs for the Safety Management System.

### Safety Management System Bay Side Home

In Spring of 2017, AWARE-NS embarked on a partnership with Bay Side Home's senior leadership team and the **Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (JOHSC)**, to develop a plan to fully implement a **Safety Management System (SMS)**. The training of the JOHSC Committee rejuvenated members, resulting in an engaged and effective committee which helped set the course to implement the SMS. This established a solid foundation for other training programs at Bay Side Home including: **Safety for Supervisors and Managers; Safe Handling and Mobility & PACE**; and **Code White**.

During the process of the SMS implementation, they developed an inspection program, redeveloped their incident report, and strengthened the **Stay at Work/Return to Work** program.

Bay Side Home has shown that leadership commitment, team work and partnerships can result in a tremendous increase in safety culture and the prevention of injuries.

### Code White Program Grandview Manor

As Grandview Manor began the process of implementing the AWARE-NS **Workplace Violence Prevention Program**, it was identified that they were not confident in all aspects of Code White. Code White is a trained team response to a threat that is a behavioural emergency involving a client, resident, person supported, and family member or outside intruder.

Grandview Manor reached out to AWARE-NS to work in partnership to develop a **Code White Program**, including:

- A templated Code White Program
- A 3-hour **Code White Responder Training** program, including scenarios
- An **E-Learning Code White Awareness** module.

How teams work together with their partners during a Code White will determine the outcome of what can sometimes be a dangerous and high-risk situation. Having a clearly defined process for situations of extreme aggression, positively influence the competence and confidence of staff when responding to Code White situations and promotes safety for all involved in a Code White event.



# BUILDING SOLUTIONS

h Community of Safe Practice (COSP) initiatives  
ning. The implementation of an effective Safety  
e health and community services sectors. It has  
sk of a workplace-related injury or illness.  
and services that align to support all 13 elements of

## Safety Management System (SMS) Targeted Outreach Program (TOP)

The **AWARE-NS SMS** was promoted using a **Targeted Outreach Approach (TOP)**. This was done through various engagement opportunities, specific training programs and safety audits.

This year, eight organizational audits were conducted. A **safety audit** is a structured process where information is collected relating to the efficiency, effectiveness, and reliability of the total health and **Safety Management System (SMS)**. These audits examine compliance with legislation, as well as the safety climate of the organization. Safety audits assist in identifying gaps within an organization's SMS and the information gathered helps to determine the best course of corrective action. A customized implementation plan is then developed. It is designed to create stability within the organization to ensure success going forward.

The completion of five audits in the home care sector have helped to identify key issues, best practices and trends. Also, having the results shared throughout home care fosters the spirit of collaboration and building solutions.

New program: **Code White Awareness - 6 Long Term Care facilities participated in Code White Awareness training: 458 staff, and 210 code white responders trained.**

## Building Communities of Safe Practice Leading Practices

*"Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia, Cape Breton Integrated Service Team and AWARE-NS facilitated 2 leading practice working groups for long term care and home care. Composed of agencies and facilities within the Eastern Zone of Nova Scotia, the purpose and intent of these leading practice working groups is to share best practices, trends, resources, sector subject matter expertise, and to build solutions.*

**The Home Care Leading Practice working group** has completed the review of a list of safe work procedures and developed a booklet resource to be shared amongst all home care agencies in the province. The working group participated in **PACE** training and program implementation within their individual agencies. They also began a review of their **Stay at Work/Return to Work** programs.

**The newly established Long Term Care Leading Practice working group** was established in winter 2018. This group is focused on their respective **Safe Handling and Mobility & PACE** and **Stay at Work/Return to Work** programs, and is identifying their future goals.

*-Kelly Johnston-Noseworthy, Relationship Manager, WCB*



# IMPACT of LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

**3599** participants  
**200** organizations  
**246** sessions

Four years ago, AWARE-NS shifted its focus and efforts that involved greater attention to the development and delivery of OHS programs and services, while leveraging our resources to build a collaborative model that supports an integrated approach to safety programs. We continue to experience incremental growth and an increasing demand for our programs and services. AWARE-NS continues to offer both **classroom training** and an array of **E-Learning** options.

## Classroom Topics offered this year:

1. JOHS Committee Effectiveness
2. Safety for Supervisors & Managers/SAFER Leadership
3. Workplace Violence workshop - 6 step program
4. Communication & Self -Care
5. Self Care
6. Code White Awareness
7. Code White Responder
8. Safe Handling and Mobility/PACE

## Classroom participants, by Sector:

<b>33%</b> Long Term Care	<b>25%</b> Community Services	<b>21%</b> Acute Care	<b>13%</b> Home Care	<b>5%</b> Other
---------------------------------	-------------------------------------	--------------------------	-------------------------	--------------------



## Workplace Violence Prevention

Enhancements were made to the Steps for Safety - Preventing Workplace Violence program. A templated program and user guide for conducting a risk assessment was developed. Training workshops were held in 6 communities to help organizational leaders jump start the development of their WPV program.

*"The array of services and training that AWARE-NS offers is impressive and they have been a great resource for our organization over the past several years. Recently, the staff at AWARE-NS helped us conduct a Workplace Violence Risk Assessment. The staff were knowledgeable, helpful, and realistic, taking the time to get to know the strengths and needs of our organization! Once the assessment was complete, they continued to support us by answering our questions, policy development and staff training."*  
-Building FUTURES Employment Society

## Safe Handling & Mobility (SHM)

Musculoskeletal injuries (MSI's) from moving and handling clients remain the leading causes of injury claims in the health and community services sector. Work continued to implement best practices of a Safe Handling and Mobility (SHM) program. WCB Nova Scotia and AWARE-NS hosted five showcase sessions around the province, providing an opportunity for long term care facilities to share SHM program successes. Vendors were invited to demonstrate equipment that could be helpful in safely moving and re-positioning clients. This road show focused on the impact of aggression in the pre-mobility PACE tool. It also provided an opportunity for networking and to discuss challenges and problem solving.

*"Recently, the majority of our agency received PACE training by AWARE-NS. This training helped establish a culture of 'Safety for All', reminding staff of the critical nature of daily assessing the situation, the environment, the person and, most important, reminding them to make a plan. We often get stuck in routines. This is when accidents occur. This education has helped establish a dialogue of communication between staff and management, resulting in a better understanding of why, 'we do what we do'.*

*Heather provides a relaxed, learning environment with wonderful real-life examples that everyone can relate to."*

*-Ginger Gates, YACRO*

## AWARE-NS E-Learning:

We have had a steady growth increase since the launch of the E-Learning Campus in September, 2014 with 18 courses. To date, 41,605 modules have been completed. This year alone, just over **14,700 Modules** have been completed, with **4596 Certificates of Completion** issued to participants from **206 Organizations**.

## E-Learning participants, by Sector:



### This year, 5 new courses were added:

- Code White
- PACE - Pre Mobility Check
- Using the PACE Card
- Incident Reporting for Front Line Staff
- Transportation of Dangerous Goods

### Top courses, by # of certificates issued:

- PACE (300)
- WHMIS (216)
- Code White (196)
- Transportation of Dangerous Goods (194)



# IMPACT of PARTNERSHIPS

## JOHSC Awareness

*"This chapter was very helpful. I am new to my committee and this gave me a greater understanding of my duties and the duties of others."*

## Safety Accountability

*"Helped me come up with ideas to promote safety in my workplace to encourage people to participate more."*

## Workplace Inspection

*"Great workshop! Learned lots of ways to watch for hazards and then fix the issues."*

## Safe Handling & Mobility/PACE

*"Very resourceful session. Lots of new and useful information. I really felt like we were allowed to voice our concerns and recommendations and felt they were taken seriously."*

## Safe Handling & Mobility/PACE

*"The whole training course was well put together, so different parts of it were most valuable and will be great to use in different aspects of this organization. Different parts for different houses."*

## Incident Investigation

*"Thanks for offering this course. It's the 'defensive driving' of health and safety."*



## The National Alliance for Safety & Health in Health care (NASHH.ca)

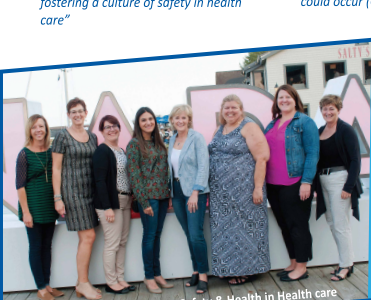
*"A pan-Canadian partnership supports workplace safety best practices and fostering a culture of safety in health care"*

## Code White Awareness

*"Very educational and I have a lot of info from the session to feel confident in most situations that could occur (Code White)."*

## JOHSC Awareness

*"The sessions are very interesting and I learned some valuable information to move forward with."*



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Jenna Brookfield**  
Canadian Union of Public Employees  
**Labour Representative**

**Corey MacKenzie**  
Indigenous Services Canada  
**Home Care/Home Support**

**Katrina Philopoulos**  
NSHA  
**Acute Care**

**Tracy D'Entremont**  
VON  
**Front Line Representative**

**Millie Colbourne**  
Breton Ability Centre  
**Community-Based Disability Support Program**

**Julie Hannam**  
Annapolis County Municipal Housing Corporation  
**Facility-Based Disability Support Program**

**Denise Turnbull**  
Windsor Elms Village  
**Facility Based LTC (DHW)**

**Menna MacIsaac**  
Grand View Manor  
**Member at Large**

**Caroline Wolfe Stewart**  
The Berkeley  
**Member at Large**

**Andrea Vardy**  
Worker's Compensation Board  
**Ex-Officio**

## STAFF

Susan Dempsey  
**Executive Director**

Heather Matthews  
**OH&S Manager**

Kenzie Fraser  
**OH&S Coordinator**

Alan Baretta  
**OH&S Coordinator**

Neil Horsley  
**OH&S Coordinator**

Darcy MacCallum  
**Administrative Coordinator**

## CONTACT US

(902) 832-3868

[info@awarens.ca](mailto:info@awarens.ca)

201 Brownlow Ave. Unit 1  
Dartmouth, NS B3B 1W2

[www.awarens.ca](http://www.awarens.ca)



## VISION

Safe and healthy people; safe and healthy workplaces.

## MISSION

Working with stakeholders and partners to promote and improve health and safety in Health and Community Services workplaces.

## BELIEFS

A healthy and safe workplace is every person's right.

All workplace injuries are preventable.

Everyone has a role and responsibility for workplace health and safety.