

Workplace Safety Action Plan

for Nova Scotia's Health and Community Services Sectors

Update on the Workplace Safety Action Plan for Nova Scotia's Long-Term Care, Home Care, and Disability Support Sectors – Fall, 2021

Over the past number of months a significant amount of progress has been made on a number of key Workplace Safety Action Plan (WSAP) Recommendations. Also, with the change in government, it was comforting to hear that Government representatives on the Advisory Committee confirmed that the changes to government departments and ministerial appointments by the new government will not impact the work of the project and we will proceed as planned.

Here are some of the highlights regarding our recent work and progress.

- Davis Piers, consultants working with WCB, government and AWARE-NS on the WSAP, are developing an overarching implementation plan for the WSAP. This plan will take into account the many intersecting points and dependencies among the various WSAP recommendations, as well as other work underway in the sectors. Additionally, a results-based evaluation plan is being developed that will determine the overall success of the implementation of the 21 WSAP recommendations.
- In the spring of 2021 the project team conducted an evaluation of the Safe Handling and Mobility (SHM) Training offered by AWARE-NS, in an effort to understand it's effectiveness in reducing musculoskeletal injuries for workers in home care, long term care and disability support sectors. Overall, the results show that AWARE-NS, with support from WCB, is delivering SHM training to the sectors that is comprehensive, valued, and put into practice. Evidence from a sample of organizations that received training in 2019 suggest that claims related to musculoskeletal injuries declined in the year following training for some organizations but not for others. The evaluation reinforced our understanding that challenges exist when it comes to staff training, availability of equipment, and having time to monitor and support safe SHM work practices. These findings are also informing AWARE-NS as we fine tune SHM training and identify additional supports needed to infuse safe handling and mobility practices into the way people work in home care, long term care and disability support sectors.
- Work to develop and implement a centralized equipment and lift inventory and loan program (Recommendation 19) continues. Four workshops with stakeholders from home care, long term care and disability support sectors identified challenges and a number of solutions and considerations to support:
 - o Greater access to lifts and beds for Home Care and Long-Term Care
 - o Access to a variety of equipment types for existing equipment programs and greater access across the province
 - o Additional staffing for existing equipment programs to shorten existing wait times
 - o Resources to support access and education related to OT referrals

- Greater supports for clients and their families who access existing equipment programs
- Leaders from across the three sectors have been engaged to define the Leadership Engagement Strategy to address Recommendation 1: *Develop and implement strategies to build core health and safety competencies among senior leaders / BODs.* The Leadership Working Group participated in 3 workshops over the summer where they:
 - Contributed ideas and insights to help define the vision of and guiding principles for a “safety for all” culture
 - Provided feedback on proposed strategic actions required to realize the vision of a “safety for all” culture.
 - Elaborated on the barriers they encounter in trying to create and sustain a “safety for all” culture.
 - Shared valuable practical examples of safety leadership practices they utilize in their workplaces to ensure the safety of everyone in their facilities, workplaces and those working in homes and communities.
 - Voiced concerns about how capacity, staffing challenges, and funding are their most significant barriers to adopting safety leadership practices.
- During the most recent workshop, the Leadership Working Group validated the Standard Safety Leadership Practices for Nova Scotia’s Long-Term Care, Home Care, and Disability Support Sectors listed in the table below. They also helped define the core health and safety competencies senior executive leaders (e.g., CEO, Administrators) need to have to apply these Safety Leadership Practices in their organizations/workplaces.

Standard Safety Leadership Practices for Nova Scotia’s Long-Term Care, Home Care, and Disability Support Sectors

1	<p>Speak About Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about worker health and safety to highlight its importance to you as a leader. • Communicate your commitment to ‘safety for all’ in a persuasive way, fostering a sense of urgency, and setting a personal example for others to follow.
2	<p>Be Actively Involved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify your personal vision of ‘safety for all’ by visibly demonstrating to your people that nothing is more important to you than their health and safety. • Seek out opportunities to be involved in safety activities like incident investigations, frontline safety meetings, inspections, and safety briefings.
3	<p>Focus On Health & Safety as a Continuous Quality Improvement Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit the necessary resources - people, equipment, your time - to strengthen safety performance. • Include workplace health and safety measures within your organization’s performance indicators (or balanced score card) to impact strategic and operational planning for your organization. • Regularly monitor safety processes and performance outcomes to know how the organization is tracking against KPIs and changing the way things are done to reflect new learnings • Continually striving for health and safety improvements.

4	<p>Engage & Empower Your People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve people so they know what they need to do, feel empowered to do it and inspired to achieve common safety goals. • Give people the knowledge, skills, information, resources, and responsibility for making the workplace safer. • Hold yourself and your people to account.
5	<p>Recognize, Reward & Celebrate Success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take time to find out about and acknowledge the efforts employees put into safety and look for meaningful ways to celebrate safety successes. • Establish safety recognition programs for both individual contributions to a safer workplace and corporate improvements of health and safety outcomes.
6	<p>Identify & Manage Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the right questions and insist on timely, accurate, and impartial information to identify safety opportunities and mitigate risks.

- The above Safety Leadership Practices, and the core competencies for each practice, will inform the development of a competency based self-assessment to help leaders assess their individual safety leadership practices and competencies.
- The Leadership Engagement Strategy is making its way through the internal review and approval process. Once this process is complete, the strategy will be shared with the Leadership Working Group for their final review before finalizing the Leadership Engagement Strategy.
- The project team has begun working on defining ways to support the identification and implementation of safety training competencies and requirements for all staff (Recommendation 9). Safety education is a critical piece in supporting staff health and safety because it helps staff understand the risks, hazards, and injury prevention behaviors specific to their work. Key to this recommendation is defining what supports are required to allow staff to participate in regular learning opportunities and to apply what is learned in their workplaces.
- Finally, the project team has also begun working on what needs to be done to implement communication tools and mechanisms for clients and their families (Recommendation 11 & 13). The Charting the Course Report identifies a need for effective communication up, down and across organizations to achieve success in health and safety outcomes. This requires assessing the communication tools, mechanisms, and processes already in place in each sector (via councils, associations, etc.), identifying any gaps and then layering on new communication tools and mechanisms to improve communications to client and families. The project team will be seeking input from sector Family Councils and similar groups to learn more about the existing problems and challenges faced in each sector, and to help identify opportunities to improve communication about health and safety to clients, and friend and family care givers.

Involvement by sector stakeholders and other partners through the working group process and engagement opportunities has netted invaluable advice and input. We look forward to the work ahead and into 2022. If you have any questions about the information in this update or if you would like information on specific recommendations for future updates, please contact Susan Dempsey at susan@awarens.ca.