SAFETY COMES COMES

Annual Report 2021



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.

VALUES

Leadership

We strive for every person to be a leader in health and safety in their workplace, and together be accountable for promoting change to the health and safety culture.

Accountability

We are accountable by making transparent, evidence-based decisions that lead to value-added health and safety outcomes.

Collaboration

We encourage collaboration by engaging and enabling all stakeholders to work together, sharing knowledge and expertise.

Diversity

We recognize diverse needs by building trust, respect and valuing everyone's contribution.

Courage

We support every person to have the courage to make health and safety a priority in the workplace.



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As with previous years, we want to take a moment to thank our partners for their continued support. The progress we were able to achieve was in large part due to collaboration with our partners.

AWARE-NS, and the organizations and individuals we serve, benefit greatly from the incredibly talented, passionate and driven staff that do the important work, day-in and day-out, to prioritize the health and safety of Nova Scotians working in our health and community services sectors.

Thank you to VON Canada for providing the photos on pages 4 and 6.

Message from

The Board Chair & Executive Director

It is fair to say that in Nova Scotia, in 2021, the most dominant issue, and the most pressing concern, was the state of health care across our province. Access to healthcare, gaps in healthcare, labour shortages across healthcare; worker health and safety underpins all of these concerns, and we continued to elevate this fact to government and advocate for direct, tangible and sustainable action to improve health and safety culture in the organizations we serve.

Our theme for this year's annual report is "Safety Comes First". This declaration intends to remind Nova Scotia's senior leaders, elected officials, government representatives and health care consumers in every community across the province that if we are to fix our broken system, we must prioritize the health and safety of those who keep it running.

After another year living with the reality of COVID-19, the importance of strong, healthy and safe workplaces was further emphasized as we saw the direct impact that staff shortages have on an already fragile health care infrastructure. The pandemic continued to elevate the importance of a robust and accessible healthcare model, and solidified our provincial government's commitment to fix the system and prioritize it as their most pressing mandate item.

Revamping our approach to how we deliver top-tier health care in Nova Scotia is absolutely achievable, but not without addressing the need to develop, and retain, a vibrant workforce.

Workplace health and safety must come first, and AWARE-NS is well positioned to lead the way.

The past few years remind us that change is constant, but our organization's vision remains strong. AWARE-NS' role in fostering safer working environments and healthy and safe workers keeps us motivated and reinforces the need for us to be nimble so that we meet the changing needs of Nova Scotia's Health and Community Services workplaces.

Organizational leaders and their staff have the desire to keep safety top of mind, but we also know that many are struggling to maintain their OHS programs in the midst of pandemic response and workforce struggles. AWARE-NS is increasingly being turned to for guidance and support, and while our services have ebbed and flowed due to COVID-19 restrictions, we have stayed the course in offering flexible solutions with high engagement from all sectors.

This past year, AWARE-NS continued to generate value, leading the way in offering and delivering programs and services through strong collaboration and partnerships with WCB Nova Scotia, the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration and other government departments, sector associations and stakeholders.

It is through these relationships and efforts that we continue to see progress on many fronts. Including a reduction in WCB reported workplace injuries, specifically those related to Musculoskeletal Injuries and workplace violence.

Board of **Directors**

Chair MILLIE COLBOURNE Member At Large

Vice Chair COREY MACKENZIE Member At Large

Secretary/Treasurer SHANNON MCLELLAN Community-Based DSP

> JASON MACLEAN Labour

HARMAN SINGHFacility-Based DSP

ANGELA KEENAN Acute Care

LORNA O'GRADY Facility-Based LTC

AUDREY OLIVER Home Care

JUANITA RANNI Frontline Worker

ANDREA VARDY Ex-Officio, WCB Nova Scotia

As we emerge from the pandemic, our purpose has never been clearer; our sectors need us, now more than ever, to deliver customized solutions and provide ongoing support. Nova Scotia's health and community services organizations can depend on us to help them keep safety top-of-mind and their workers healthy and safe which is imperative if Nova Scotia is going to effectively address a health care

Our team is motivated, and we're using this energy to shape our next strategic plan that will see a continued focus on achievable and measurable goals and a reduction of workplace injuries and illnesses in Nova Scotia.

On behalf of the AWARE-NS Board, Executive Director and our incredible staff, we are committed to joining our partners in creating a viable, vital, effective and inclusive health care system in Nova Scotia; one that adheres to the premise that safety must always come first.



system in crisis.

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Millie Colbourne, Chair



Susan Dempsey,
Executive Director

Advancing the Workplace Safety Action Plan

Workplace Safety Action Plan for Nova Scotia's Home Care, Long Term Care, and Disability Support Sectors

2021 Review

AWARE-NS continued to participate in and support the work to implement the Workplace Safety Action Plan recommendations. A significant amount of work was conducted over the course of 2021 with work being done on almost all of the recommendations.

Of the 21 recommendations in the *Charting the Course* report, three are out of scope for the Action Plan team. The implementation approach and initial analysis of the issues were completed for ten of the remaining 18 recommendations, and work on the approach is underway for the additional eight.

In addition, design work has been completed, and approvals received to proceed with developing an implementation plan for four of the recommendations:

- Develop and implement a workplace violence prevention program across all sectors
- Develop and implement a safe handling and mobility program across all sectors
- Develop and implement a Stay-at-Work/ Return-to-Work Program
- Develop and implement a centralized equipment and lift inventory and loan program
- * Funding for EFAP was provided for continuing care organizations to March 31, 2022.

A significant amount of work was done to prepare information for a budget submission for the 2022/2023 fiscal year. This resulted in approximately \$3.9 Million dollars being allocated by the Nova Scotia Government to support worker health and safety initiatives in the continuing care and disability support sectors.

For 2022, the Action Plan recommendations are being reviewed and aligned with the identified government worker health and safety priorities with the goal of starting to implement approved plans for specific worker health and safety initiatives later in the year.



Audrey Oliver, VON Canada

A Focus On Safety Leadership

The first recommendation in the Workplace Safety Action Plan highlights how important leaders are to create a 'safety for all' culture.

Leaders are key to ensuring that health and safety of staff is prioritized and integrated into the day-to-day operations and activities of their organization.

In 2021, the Workplace Safety Action Plan team and a working group made up of senior leaders from 16 of Nova Scotia's Home Care, Long-Term Care, and Disability Support Program organizations, AWARE-NS, WCB Nova Scotia, the Department of Community Services, and the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care came together to talk about safety leadership.

The Leadership Working Group took part in open discussions about their understanding and views on a 'safety for all' culture and safety leadership.

Working group members shared insights and ideas about what works in their workplaces, the barriers to workplace safety, and what is needed to overcome those barriers to ensure a safer workplace for everyone.

Through a collaborative approach and with enthusiastic participation of the working group members, three guiding principles of a 'Safety for All' culture were identified:

 Visible and consistent leadership participation in health and safety initiatives is necessary to create and sustain a 'safety for all' culture.

- The health and safety of both the client and worker are the primary criteria for decisions impacting continuing care and disability support workplaces.
- Health and safety core competencies are needed for everyone working in continuing care and disability support workplaces.

These principles provide a framework for expected behavior and decision-making for all stakeholders who are jointly committed to creating and sustaining a 'safety for all' culture for the continuing care and disability support system in Nova Scotia, including boards, organizations, sector associations, councils, labour unions, WCB Nova Scotia, and government.

This work led to the development of, and an agreement on, six 'Standard Safety Leadership Practices for Senior Executive Leaders' in Nova Scotia's continuing care and disability support sectors. These are:

- 1. Speak about Safety
- 2. Be Actively Involved
- 3. Focus on Health & Safety as a Continuous Quality Improvement Strategy
- 4. Engage & Empower Your People
- 5. Recognize, Reward & Celebrate Success
- 6. Identify & Manage Risk

A Focus On Safety Leadership

Finally, two high-level strategic actions were identified to help enhance and support safety leadership in Nova Scotia's Home Care, Long Term Care, and Disability Support Program sectors.

Strategic Action 1

Create opportunities to develop and sustain core health and safety competencies among leaders who make decisions that significantly impact Home Care, Long Term Care and Disability Support Program sector workplaces.

Strategic Action 2

Develop supports and enablers required to embed health and safety requirements into operational processes, procedures, and protocols, giving equal consideration for worker and client safety.

Work is currently underway to create a strategic plan that stipulates how the above strategic actions can be operationalized, including specific activities and timelines for completion.

Leadership in Action

"As Nova Scotia's largest home nursing and community care provider, our teams work in a variety of home environments which sometimes pose safety risks.

VON is acutely aware of ensuring we keep all staff safe, and is fundamentally committed to supporting and championing a culture of safety for both staff and clients. We are so grateful for the guidance we receive from AWARE-NS to help support this essential mandate"





Jo-Anne Poirer President & CEO, VON

Purposeful Work

MUSCULOSKELETAL INJURIES

Preventing MSIs remains top of mind

Injuries associated with movement, transfer and repositioning of residents and clients are the number one cause of time loss and worker injuries in the continuing care sector. Of all musculoskeletal injuries reported by health and community services workers, 50% are related to the performance of client/resident/participant handling activities, while the other 50% are related to non-care activities.

MSIs account for 80% of time loss claims in Health and Community Services

Safe Handling and Mobility Video Series

AWARE-NS and WCB Nova Scotia co-developed a video series to support the training and education of frontline workers.

Three scenario-based videos were created to provide instruction on proper use of select safe handling and mobility equipment, highlighting PACE, and encouraging workers to report.

The videos have been posted to the AWARE-NS Online Learning platform and are available for organizations to use within their own learning management systems.



Assisting a Fallen Resident



Bed to Chair Overhead Lift



Bed to Chair Compression Stockings

AWARE-NS and WCB Nova Scotia continue our collaboration, offering two programs:

- ➤ Safe Handling & Mobility (SHM)

 To reduce the risk of injury associated with tasks requiring resident/client/participant transfers, movements and repositioning
- ► Lifting & Moving Safely (LAMS)

 To reduce MSIs associated with non-care related job tasks



SHM Sustainability Workg Group

Chris Spinney, WCB Nova Scotia Workplace Consultant; Marlene Grace, WCB Nova Scotia Relationship Manager; Paul Donovan, WCB Nova Scotia Workplace Consultant; Shawn Budden, WCB Nova Scotia Ergonomist. Missing from photo: Tanya Newell, WCB Nova Scotia Workplace Consultant; Heather Matthews, AWARE-NS OH&S Manager; Jonathan Tyson, WSAP Project Consultant

SHM Sustainability Working Group

The SHM Sustainability Working Group, made up of representatives from AWARE-NS and WCB Nova Scotia continues to meet to look for ways to improve the delivery of SHM training and provide enhanced support to workplaces.

Work Included:

- Completion of a formalized implementation plan of the SHM Program, assessing supports and developing resources that aligned with sector-specific SHM requirements.
- Development of the Long Term Care Template Program/Implementation Guide. This important resource is currently being customized for Home Care and Disability Support Programs.
- Updated the **SHM SAFER Leadership training**.
- Updated the LAMS training program and resources
- Development of new tools and resources to support WCBNS Workplace Consultants, to work with organizations after their initial SHM training.

Outlook for 2022/2023:

- Continue to support participating organizations with their SHM/LAMS programs as well as engage with stakeholders not currently involved
- Develop a Train the Trainer format meeting the needs of Residential Care Homes
- Ensure all participating organizations have what they need to implement their programs

Safe Handling and Mobility

Since 2019, time loss MSI claims have been decreasing - particularly in the nursing homes and home care sectors.

This is partially attributable to the implementation of Safe Handling and Mobility best practices and training, targeting high-needs organizations and promoting OHS best practices, and recent government support to purchase aids and equipment.

- We continued to work with organizations who had not yet fully implemented the SHM Program, by providing support and training, customized to their level of readiness and identified implementation plans.
- Outreach activities remained flexible, especially during the emergence of the Omicron variant of the COVID-19 virus in late 2021. Despite this challange, we continued to support workplaces via a *Train the Trainer (TT)* model
- An evaluation of the SHM TT model was completed and results confirmed that the TT model is preferred. With support from WCB Nova Scotia, AWARE-NS is delivering SHM training that is comprehensive, valued and put into practice to support safer workers and workplaces.



- Coaching and support for the integration of SHM best practices has been handled via phone, zoom and in-person.
- AWARE-NS remains focused on developing refresher training that minimizes the amount of time workers are in training and away from providing direct care. The hands on training at the bed side and refresher training on the equipment have all been well received.

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PARTICIPANT ORGANIZATIONS

Long Term Care
Disability Support
Program

Home Care Agencies

Sessions to Re-certify Trainers

Organizational Re-engagements

Lifting and Moving Safely

The Lifting and Moving Safely Program (LAMS) strives to create awareness of the MSI hazards associated with work done by support service and care workers in Health and Community Services workplaces.

This program is co-presented by AWARE-NS and the WCB Nova Scotia Ergonomist, and covers 6 Steps for MSI Prevention: Build Awareness, Identify Hazards, Assess Risk, Implement Controls, Training and Evaluation.

Outlook for 2022/2023:

- A LAMS video series will be developed for training and education on key topics, including: lifting/lowering, pushing/pulling, and awkward positions/repetitive actions.
- A post-pandemic reset program will be offered to review organizational needs assessments and conduct refresher training.
- More program posters, training tools, resources, and communciations materials will be created for LAMS.



Safety Equipment Fund

An integral part of injury prevention

We know that when steps are taken to protect the safety of the care worker and the safety of the person being cared for, everyone wins - fewer care workers are injured enabling them to remain at work providing quality care to those who need it. Care and support workers need equipment and the supports to work safely to provide safe care and service.

The Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care (DSLTC) recognized the importance of having access to lifting and repositioning aids, and equipment to support workers in delivering service to clients in continuing care environments.

In June 2021, government announced a \$1,485,000 Safety Equipment Fund for Home Care and Long Term Care organizations.

Over the past 9 months, AWARE-NS designed and managed this fund with the following key deliverables:

- A 3-phased approach was designed to ensure an equitable and fair process was used to allow all LTC and HC organizations access to the fund
- The fund has been 100% allocated



Paraglide Wheelchair Repositioning Device, MacKenzie Healthcare Technologies

240 Applications

215 Funding Approval Letters

85%

of LTC Organizations participated/ received funding - This represents 97% of total bed count in NS

96%

of **Home Care Organizations** partipated/received funding

While \$1,485,000 in funding was provided, AWARE-NS received requests totalling over \$3.78 Million. Popular items approved were Paraglide Wheelchair repositioning device, bathroom aids, transfer belts, mop systems, Sara Steady Lifts, slings, and spring-loaded laundry bins.

AWARE-NS has developed an evaluation framework to assess key processes and to determine how the funded safety equipment has helped to prevent and reduce injuries. Launch date May, 2022

Self Care for the **Health Care Worker**

The World Health Organization calls stress "the health epidemic of the 21st century." The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically diminished employee wellbeing on all levels: physical, emotional, and mental.

A recent study by Workplace Strategies for Mental Health found that more than a third of working Canadians feel burned out, and other studies reveal that more than half of employees worldwide experienced full-blown burnout at least once during 2021.

In 2020, Dr. Debra Gilin and her research team, Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia studied the impact of COVID-19 on the health and safety of front-line health and care workers.

AWARE-NS, as a 'Team Partner' helped to support the 'Burnout Recovery Project', which examined the role of leadership and what strategies may counter burnout in Home Care team leaders.

Early findings presented in 2021 indicate:

- Focusing on work engagement, core values, and off-work recovery can help mitigate leader burnout in a long pandemic.
- Self-insight on the individual stress response, and individual coaching on empathy and conflict style, seem valuable but, more analysis is required.
- Wellness implications, including physical health (resting heart rate, sleep) are promising and corroborate self-report burnout measures.

Health care workers provide physical and emotional support for the people they care for and their families. But they often require mental and physical care for themselves.

Recognizing the level of stress and burn-out staff have experienced during the pandemic, AWARE-NS developed the **Self-Care for the Health Care Worker** program. Based on the Canadian Mental Health Commission's Self Care Wheel, this program helps care staff develop strategies for providing self-care.



"This was an amazing presentation, presented perfectly...very engaging!"

"Excellent presentation!!
One of the best I have attended in my 27 years!"

Safety Management System

A strong Occupational Health & Safety Management System (OHSMS) helps to ensure the health and safety of workers and helps organizations to proactively identify workplace hazards, assess risks, and implement procedures that reduce the risk to everyone in the workplace.

2021 was an extraordinary year as we faced the pressing challenges of the pandemic and the continued need to respond to the changing landscape of our sector. Despite these challenges, AWARE-NS remained focused on developing resources and providing coaching, support and services for continuing care organizations.

Since 2016, AWARE-NS has been working with organizations to implement the **13 Element AWARE-NS Safety Management System**, modeled after the *CSA Z-1000* and the 22 element COR/Safety Certified Safety Management System.



Alan Baretta, Kenzie Fraser and Darcy MacCallum, AWARE-NS

Through a tailored outreach approach, consultation and OHSMS safety auditing services are provided to organizations.

The COVID-19 restrictions disrupted planned safety audits and safety program reviews in 2021; however, we were able to advance the work. Audit findings and recommendations to address gaps were provided to each organization. In addition, AWARE-NS provide post audit support to help organizations develop or enhance their OHSMS.



Enhancing Safety + Building Safety Culture

AWARE-NS remains the trusted source for OHS resources

Offering education, training, consultation and support to help organizations foster a safety culture, moving beyond compliance toward a proactive safety agenda.

Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (JOHSC) Training

Provides JOHSC members with the necessary education and training required under the NS OHS Act and is a guideline on how to establish and maintain a productive and effective JOHS Committee.

Safety Leadership Training for Supervisors and Managers

These sessions integrate leadership skills with the practical application of the Occupational Health Safety Management System (OHSMS), and an understanding of the key roles, responsibilities and accountabilities leaders have for health and safety in their organizations. It provides the tools and resources required to help with the development of a proactive OHSMS, and supports leadership values that positively impact a safe work culture.

Workplace Violence Risk Assessments

This year, AWARE-NS supported a number of sector workplaces in the completion of their Workplace Violence Risk Assessments and helped them to implement recommendations to address their identified medium and high-level workplace violence risks. Code White Training (responding to a behavioural threat / emergency) was also conducted for organizations that requested it.

New Tools and Resources for Frontline Workers

The COVID-19 pandemic presented many workforce challenges in facility-based Long Term Care. New tools and resources were developed to support staff training and orientation including a short video Participatory Approach to Health and Safety in LTC, a LTC Rapid On-Boarding Framework, and a Facility-Based Quick Response Safety Orientation for Deployed Staff program. All of these new tools and resources are available at www.awarens.ca, and have all been well-received.

Consultations in 2021

Safety Management System Program Audits & Reviews JOHS Committee Effectiveness SAFETY Leadership/Hazard Assessment Safe Handling & Mobility Workplace Violence Prevention & Code White

Sector Engagement in 2021

100% of Home Care Agencies

90% of Long Term Care Organizations

60% of Disability Support Program Organizations

AWARE-NS PROGRAMMING

JOHS Committee
Self Care for the Health Care Worker
SAFETY Leadership
Safe Handling & Mobility (SHM)
Lifting & Moving Safely (LAMS)
Workplace Violence Prevention
Code White/Code Silver
IRS for the Health Care Worker

1,432
PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

342

ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTED

263

PROGRAM SESSIONS

www.awarens.ca

Online Learning

Safety education beyond the classroom walls

AWARE-NS Online Learning ensures access to the health and safety training Nova Scotia's health care workers need, while allowing them to learn safely and remotely.

We currently offer **31 different courses**, adding new content each year.

All courses are available to organizations to use for their own learning management systems.

12,253

CERTIFICATES

1,427

PARTICIPANTS

151

ORGANIZATIONS

Improving Safety Compliance

The Work Continues

In 2020, AWARE-NS and Department of Labor, Skills and Immigration (LSI) initiated work to enhance safety compliance throughout Long Term Care, Home Care and Disability Support. In 2021, despite the interruptions of COVID-19, implementation of the project plan continued to advance.

The objectives of this work are aligned with the Workplace Safety Action Plan project work:

- Increase LSI officer presence in the sector;
- Develop inspection guidelines and tools based on five key areas: The Internal Responsibility System; Slips, Trips and Falls; Safe Handling and Mobility; Violence in the Workplace; and COVID-19/Pandemic/Infectious Disease Plan.
- Increase knowledge and compliance with legislation in the sector;
- Build relationships and a culture of safety;
- Gain an understanding of issues faced by this sector.

The LSI Safety Officers completed the home care quality improvement inspections. This work has provided valuable feedback in tailoring inspection tools and resources for the Long-Term Care, and Disability Support Program sectors.

LSI Officer training and a roll-out plan for these sectors began in Spring 2022, with inspections planned for Fall 2022.



Amanda Ley, LSI; Heather Matthews, AWARE-NS; Robin Keddy, LSI; Kelly MacRitchie, LSI; Eve Webster, LSI; Kim Gillis, LSI; Jeremy Young, LSI. Missing from photo: Mark Coffin, LSI

2021 Provincial Health and Social Services Injury Data

The numbers reflect welcome progress, but also indicate areas that need focused support.

In general, for Continuing Care and Disability Support Programs, we are seeing a reduction in WCB Nova Scotia reported workplace injuries. For the three distinct sectors (Long Term Care [LTC], Home Care [HC] and Special Care Homes [SCH]) we have gone from 2377 in 2020 to 2367 total claims; a decrease of 10.

Time Loss Frequency

Time loss claims decreased for both Long Term Care and Home Care. However, the number of time loss claims increased in Special Care Homes (by 39 claims).

Total time loss days paid in 2021, for all injuries no matter when it occurred, also increased, meaning an equivalent of 498 full time staff were off work for the whole of 2021.

Increases were seen for long term care and special care homes, while home care had a decrease.

Time Loss Injury Frequency

	2020	2021	
Home Care	7.73	7.46	€
Long Term Care	4.59	4.85	①
Special Care Homes	3.01	4.44	①
Human & Health Services	2.81	2.95	①

2021 Trends

 Home Care continues to see a decreasing trend for both time loss injuries and no time loss claims. This is reflected in the lower time loss injury frequency for the sector.

- Long term care saw a small decrease for time loss claims but they saw another increase in no time loss claims. This could indicate an increased amount of injury reporting. If this is the case, this should allow for better prevention and lower rates of injury reoccurrence.
- Special care homes continue to see increases for time loss claims and also saw an increase in no time loss claims for 2021 vs 2020. There was a significant increase in slip/trip/fall claims in this sector.
- There are three main injury drivers in these sectors: musculoskeletal injuries (MSI), workplace violence and slip, trip and falls. However, the overall trend of these injuries is decreasing.

	Musculoskeletal Injuries		Workplace Violence Prevention		Slips, Trips and Falls	
	Time Loss Claims	NoTime Loss Claims	Time Loss Claims	NoTime Loss Claims	Time Loss Claims	NoTime Loss Claims
Home Care	(($igorealth{igoplus}$	(((
Long Term Care	((((((
Special Care Homes	((Θ	((①

STAFF

Executive DirectorSusan Dempsey

Occupational Health & Safety Manager
Heather Matthews

Occupational Health & Safety Coordinators

Alan Baretta Kenzie Fraser Jonathan Gillis

Administrative Coordinator Darcy MacCallum

WSAP Project Consultant Jonathan Tyson

CONTACT US

www.awarens.ca info@awarens.ca

(902) 832-3868

127 Chain Lake Drive, Unit 9 Halifax, NS B3S 1B3

