

ANNUAL
REPORT
2023 - 2024

AWARE  NS

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EXECUTIVE

SUMMARY

This past year marks a pivotal moment for our organization as we welcomed a new transformative Executive Director who brings a vision for innovation and growth, built on the strong foundation laid by our former leadership. We are embarking on an ambitious journey to streamline our processes, embrace digital solutions, and enhance service delivery. We are well positioned to continue to evolve our programs and services to meet the needs of the diverse sectors we support. Our commitment to safer and healthier workplaces across the province has never been stronger.

We are proud to have collaborated on the launch of the Leadership Playbook, a cornerstone of our leadership development efforts, as well as the "Better Safety, Better Care" campaign, which continues to create meaningful change in creating a culture of safety throughout Nova Scotia. Our safety leadership program has gained significant momentum, and the success of our recent leadership forum, attended by dedicated leaders, demonstrates the growing engagement in our mission. By empowering our team, and expanding our capacity, we are ensuring that safety and wellness remain at the heart of everything we do. The future holds great promise as we continue this important work.

As we look ahead, we are energized by the opportunities before us to create lasting change. Our work is far from over, but with the passion, dedication, and vision of our team, we are confident that we will continue to lead the way in shaping safer and healthier workplaces across Nova Scotia. Together, we are building a future where safety and wellness are not just goals, but realities for every individual and organization we serve.

Your continued support, and our commitment to collaboration will drive us forward, propelling us to innovate, grow, and make a meaningful impact together.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dawn Pickering".

Dawn Pickering
Executive Director



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Corey MacKenzie".

Corey MacKenzie
Chair

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Corey MacKenzie
Chair, Member-at-Large
SE Health First Nations

Shannon McLellan
Vice Chair, Community Based DSP
Colchester Residential Services Society

Harman Singh
Facility Based DSP
Breton Ability Centre

Jill Smith
Acute Care
Nova Scotia Health

Audrey Oliver
Home Care/Home Support
VON Annapolis Valley

Bernadette Lake
Member-at-Large
Health Association of Nova Scotia

Lorna O'Grady
Facility Based LTC
Harbour View Hospital

Juanita Ranni
Frontline Worker
Harbour View Hospital

Nan McFadgen
Labour Representative
CUPE

Andrea Vardy
Ex-Officio
WCB Nova Scotia



Nova Scotia Health + Community Services Safety Association

AWARENS TEAM



Dawn Pickering
Executive Director



Rachel Byrne
Executive Assistant



Jonathan Gillis
Occupational Health and
Safety Coordinator



Kenzie Fraser
Occupational Health and
Safety Coordinator



Alan Baretta
Occupational Health and
Safety Coordinator



Beth Barczyk
Occupational Health and
Safety Coordinator

OUR WAY FORWARD

MISSION

Advance workplace health and safety in Health and Community Services sectors throughout Nova Scotia via collaboration, leadership, knowledge exchange and innovation.

VISION

Safe and healthy people;
Safe and healthy workplaces

VALUES

Commitment to Excellence

Through evidence-based approaches, we set high expectations and standards to achieve results while living our vision and mission.

Accountability

We are accountable for achieving the goals within our strategic plan and together with partners we are accountable for advancing workplace health and safety.

Responsive and Flexible

We are responsive to the needs of individuals and organizations, as well as opportunities and innovation that emerge in advancing workplace health and safety.

Respect

We approach our work with honesty respecting the rights of all workers for a safe and healthy workplace.

Inclusion

We are committed to inclusive engagement of our communities and strive to ensure equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility in all our work.

Collaborative

We build and support collaborative relationships and partnerships in advancing workplace health and safety

WORKPLACE SAFETY INITIATIVES



The Departments of Seniors and Long-Term Care (SLTC), and Community Services (DCS) allocate funding for Workplace Safety Initiatives which continue to help build improved work safe culture, as well as contribute to a sustainable and safe workforce. AWARE-NS is in receipt of funding for specific program deliverables to provide safety training; administer backfill funding; and develop leadership tools.

- **S.A.F.E.R.i. Leadership Development, Preparation and Delivery:** The S.A.F.E.R.i. leadership program, self-evaluation, and 360 tool were successfully launched.
- **Safety Forum:** The very successful March Safety Forum brought safety leaders together for, among other things, the launch of Leader Safety Playbook, sharing of workplace safety experiences and expertise, and networking.
- **Workplace Violence Training Grant Funding:** This backfill funding is available for SLTC and DCS (DSP) funded organizational staff to attend Workplace Violence Prevention workshops and training.
- **Safe Handling and Mobility Training:** This backfill funding is available for SLTC and DCS (DSP) funded organizational staff to attend Safe Handling and Mobility training and programs.
- **“Better Safety, Better Care” Campaign:** In February, in collaboration with WCB Nova Scotia and the Government of Nova Scotia, the “Better Safety, Better Care” campaign was successfully launched. This initiative raises awareness of the importance of keeping workers safe, healthy, and caring for Nova Scotians. The campaign created a centralized source of information and practical tools under a unifying theme to drive the minimization of workplace hazards and risks.

SAFETY FORUM 2024

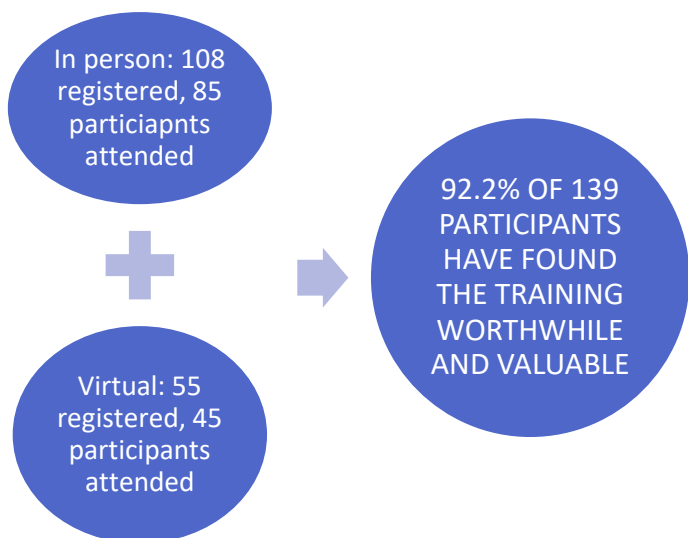
AWARE-NS held a successful Leadership Safety Forum in March of 2024. It brought together leaders from the Disability Support Programs (DSP), Home Care (HC), and Long-Term Care (LTC) sectors with the goal of fostering a “Safety for All” culture within their organization.

Our new S.A.F.E.R.i. program was a focus of the event where leaders shared experiences and success stories about “Peer Partners”; goal setting processes; and the results of the self-assessments completed during S.A.F.E.R.i. sessions. The new “360-assessment tool”, designed to encourage leaders’ prioritization of worker safety and continuous improvement, was introduced as an additional resource.

This event celebrated the launch of the “Leader Safety Playbook”, an innovative platform designed to support leaders from the LTC, HC, and DSP sectors to enhance safety practices within their organizations, at the same time acting as a one-stop resource for safety leadership. The Leader Safety Playbook and other tools were developed by Davis Pier and WCB NS, in consultation with sector partners, designed to help leaders prioritize safety goal setting and integrating the S.A.F.E.R.i. leadership style to leaderships’ day-to-day routines.

Some topics discussed:

- *The results of the self-assessments completed during SAFERi sessions*
- *Celebrated the launch of the Leader Safety Playbook and other tools*
- *Shared Peer Partner experiences*
- *Supported themes via guest speakers*
- *Launched the 360-assessment tool*
- *Supported working together to create a safety culture for NS organizations*



S A F E R I

The S.A.F.E.R.i. Safety Leadership Framework was created to provide senior leaders with guidance and effective safety leadership practices to help them become true S.A.F.E.R.i. leaders, with the aim of being a safety champion and leader for their staff and stakeholders.

Built upon the S.A.F.E.R. model, the addition of ‘i’ ensures leaders **Identify & Manage Risks** in their workplace. This is another important way to build a “Safety for All” culture within their organization, aiding them in becoming truly transformative safety leaders.

S.A.F.E.R.i. had a successful launch in June 2023 with 146 attendees from 56 organizations having attended a session over the past year. This unique program allows participants to learn from their peers about different strategies and techniques to implement S.A.F.E.R.i. leadership. Participants create a personalized set of goals to support the implementation of S.A.F.E.R.i. leadership behaviours into their day to day work routine.

The new “360-assessment tool”, designed to encourage leaders’ prioritization of worker safety and continuous improvement, was introduced as an additional resource to the S.A.F.E.R.i. program.



*Number of participants from
June 5th, 2023- March 31, 2024*
146

*Number of Organizations from
June 5th, 2023- March 31, 2024*
56

LEADERSHIP SAFETY PLAYBOOK



The Leadership Safety Playbook is an innovative platform aimed at supporting leaders in Disability Support Programs, Home Care, and Long-Term Care sectors to enhance safety practices within their organizations. This dynamic guide evolves with new safety practices and legislation, ensuring it remains relevant and effective. Since its launch at the 2024 Safety Forum, AWARE-NS has gathered data through site traffic, highlighting the playbook’s successful implementation within the sector.



2024-2025 Q1 website traffic data

SAFETY EQUIPMENT FUND

The Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care (SLTC) provided funding, in fiscal 2021-2022, for nursing homes and home care agencies, funded by Continuing Care, to access equipment to support workplace safety. The equipment is provided to help reduce risks related to care tasks requiring individuals to be moved and / or repositioned. In addition, the equipment is used to improve the safety of workers performing “non-care” tasks, which may also contribute to workers’ injuries.

The funding, totaling \$1,485,700.00 was administered by AWARE-NS. AWARE-NS established a communication plan and a process to ensure funds were distributed fairly across organizations. An approval committee, comprised of WCB and AWARE-NS representatives, evaluated the approvals.

For the remaining equipment, the previous applications were reviewed, and many were subsequently approved. The Provincial Safe Handling and Mobility Committee then researched new equipment. The committee identified equipment aimed at reducing musculoskeletal injuries. These items have recently been distributed to SLTC funded organizations in the form of training kits and other equipment. For the small amount of remaining equipment, distribution continues during program related travel. AWARE-NS is currently accepting eligible requests for this equipment.

“I knew this equipment would be beneficial, but I had no idea how much it would help multiple departments.”

AWARE-NS OHS Coordinator

The meal trays are so much lighter.”

“My back thanks you.” “I do not dread moving residents anymore.”

Continuing Care Assistants

“We did not know this type of equipment existed. We are so thankful you showed us this. We are so busy, we do not have time to go looking for better equipment to support safety and reduce our injuries. We are so thankful to have a professional like you, who deems it useful, and we trust, show us this!”

Continuing Care Assistant

AWARE-NS PROGRAMS



AWARE-NS is proud to offer a comprehensive range of programs to meet all your organization's safety needs. Our trainers provide both classroom and virtual classroom courses.

AWARE-NS provides over 35 self-directed online courses. These online courses provide an efficient tool to educate staff at all levels on occupational health and safety. Our newly updated web platform allows participants to track their progress and print certificates with ease.

We offer individual consulting services. Our health and safety experts can help develop policies, procedures, and a comprehensive Safety Management System. This 13-section system is designed to meet all requirements

outlined in the Occupational Health and Safety Act. To support sector compliance, we can help facilitate and write an organization's Violence in the Workplace Risk Assessment and Workplace Violence Program.

In the 2023-2024 Fiscal Year, AWARE-NS delivered the following training:

- *335 orgs participated in AWARE-NS Programs*
- *1960 individuals participated in AWRAE-NS programs*
- *12,266 certificates were issued for on-line learning*

S A F E T Y T R A I N I N G C L A I M F U N D

Through the Safety Training Claim Fund AWARE-NS administered, on behalf of the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care and The Department of Community Services, over \$349,000 in 2023. The figure represents the reimbursed wages of over 2500 frontline workers, supervisors, managers, and others who participated in the eligible Safety Training Fund AWARE-NS Programs.

The Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care and the Department of Community Services continue to offer targeted funding to support employers in releasing staff to attend AWARE-NS Safe Handling and Mobility and Workplace Violence Prevention education sessions.

These sessions include:

- **Safe Handling & Mobility/PACE**
- **Safe Handling & Mobility/Train the Trainer**
- **Safe Handling & Mobility/SAFER**
- **Workplace Violence Prevention**

Please visit our website for more information on the Safety Training Fund and to submit an organizational claim.

Thank you to 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.

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