



*Canadian
Paraplegic
Association
(N.B.) Inc.* *Association
canadienne des
paraplégiques
(N.-B.) Inc.*

Home Support Services In New Brunswick

A client survey of home support services

August 2008

Canadian Paraplegic Association (N.B.) Inc.
440 Wilsey Road, Suite 102
Fredericton, NB E3B 7G5
Tel. (506) 462-9555
Fax (506) 458-9134
hflaro@cpanb.ca
www.cpanb.ca

Table of Contents

Home support survey highlights.....	3
Overview of the home support services survey.....	4
Demographics.....	4
Analysis of results.....	5
Use of home support.....	5
Home support coordination.....	5
Funding sources for home support services.....	6
Home support hours utilized.....	7
Home support worker activities.....	7
Quality of home support services.....	8
Perceived challenges/problems with home support services.....	9
Possible improvements to home support services.....	10
Final reflections.....	12
Appendix A – Home support services in New Brunswick survey.....	13

1.0 Home support survey highlights

- Sixty-eight (68%) of respondents currently receive some type of home support services.
- Thirty-five percent (35%) of those who receive home support services have their home support workers coordinated by a home support agency and 45% hire and train their own support workers. An additional 5% of respondents depend on family for home support services.
- Fifty-two percent (52%) of those receiving home support services depend totally on provincial government funding for these services. Twelve percent (12%) supplement/contribute to the funding they receive from the provincial government with their own money.
- Fifteen percent (15%) of respondents indicated that they receive no funding and pay for their own home support services.
- The number of home support hours used per person per week ranged from 1 to 168 (24 hours per day/7 days per week care), with an average of 37 hours per week, per person.
- The most common assistance provided by home support workers was housekeeping (68%), meal preparation (48%), bathing (34%) and general personal care (29%).
- Eleven percent (11%) of respondents expressed that they require assistance in all aspects of daily living.
- Eighteen percent (18%) of respondents require assistance with feeding and would not be able to eat without home support services.
- Overall, respondents are pleased with the quality of home support they receive, rating it as excellent or very good.
- The most common problem articulated regarding home support services in New Brunswick was the shortage of home support workers. Other primary concerns included a lack of funding and support from the provincial government and the low quality and lack of training of home support workers.
- Almost half of respondents advocated for an increase in government support including salary and benefits for home support workers. Nearly one third would like to see increased government funding and support for persons with disabilities (e.g. more home support hours). Twenty-two percent of respondents advocated the need for improvements in the quality (e.g., level of training) of home support workers.

2.0 Overview of the home support services survey

In May 2008, the Canadian Paraplegic Association (N.B.) Inc. mailed surveys (see Appendix A) to all 283 of their current active English and French speaking clients throughout New Brunswick. Clients of the Canadian Paraplegic Association (N.B.) Inc. include people with mobility-related conditions such as paraplegia, tetraplegia (quadriplegia), cerebral palsy, spina bifida, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis and other disabilities/conditions.

The Home Support Services Survey was created to examine client's experiences with home support services, defined as "services that are designed to help people live independently in their home". Home support may include assistance with activities such as feeding, bathing, meal preparation, housekeeping, transportation to appointments, grocery shopping and other activities.

The objective of the Home Support Services Survey was to help inform the position of the CPA (N.B.) Inc. to government on the issue of home support services in New Brunswick.

Bilingual surveys were sent to client homes by mail. Clients were offered the option of returning the survey by mail, or completing the survey by phone with a CPA (N.B.) Inc. staff person via a toll-free number. Participation was voluntary and all responses were kept confidential.

Interview questions addressed a variety of topics including how clients coordinate and finance their home support services; how many hours of home support are being used; the activities with which clients require assistance; client satisfaction with the home support they receive; what challenges and problems clients currently see with home support services; and what changes clients would like to see implemented to improve home support services. Ninety-five (95) clients from all 7 health regions responded to the Home Support Services Survey – a response rate of 34%.

3.0 Demographics

The following provides an overview of the demographics captured through the survey (see also Table 1):

- Ninety-five (95) clients responded to the survey – a response rate of 34%.
- Fifty-two percent (52%) of respondents lived in an urban area and 48% lived in a rural area. All 7 health regions were represented.
- Seventy-five percent (75%) of respondents were English speaking and 25% were French speaking.

Table 1. Demographics of respondents– region, language & area of residence

Heath Region	Total respondents	French	English	Urban	Rural
1	33	11	22	22	11
2	9	0	9	6	3
3	33	0	33	19	14
4	2	1	1	0	2
5	2	1	1	0	2
6	13	11	2	2	11
7	3	0	3	0	3
Totals	95	24	71	49	46

4.0 Analysis of Results

4.1 Use of home support

The majority of participants (68%) affirmed that they received some type of home support services. See Table 2.

Table 2. Demographics of respondents receiving home support services by area of residence & language

	# of respondents receiving some type of home support services
Total respondents	65
Urban respondents	35
Rural respondents	30
French respondents	14
English respondents	51

4.2 Home support coordination

Almost half (45%) of respondents stated that they hire and train their own home support workers. A further 35% responded that their home support services were coordinated through a home support agency. Of note, five percent 5% of respondents depend on unpaid family members for home support services:

“I have had a rough time lately getting care... I had to depend on friends until an agency could find the workers and hours I needed. It is a pathetic and embarrassing position for someone to be in, if for even a day.”

The remainder of respondents used other methods to hire home support workers including assistance from agencies such as the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the

Canadian Deafblind & Rubella Association, and combinations of hiring their own workers, home support agencies, and other methods to recruit home care workers.

Regardless of the method used to recruit home care workers, many respondents articulated the difficulty they experience in finding qualified and dependable people:

"It is very difficult to find private health care workers."

"Trying to find people to work for me that are responsible, reliable, and trustworthy- e.g. don't steal from me [is difficult]."

"It is difficult to find someone willing to lift".

"It is difficult to find people who are free to work".

"I have difficulty finding and retaining workers with an appropriate level of training".

4.3 Funding sources for home support services

The majority of respondents (52%) depend on the provincial government to cover all costs related to their home support services. See Table 3. A further 12% reported that they fund their home support services with their own money in addition to the funding they receive from the provincial government:

"Support is too limited".

"We need more support from government".

"The money I receive does not cover all of my expenses".

"My monthly contribution is more than my budget can handle".

Fifteen percent (15%) of respondents receive no government support and cover their own home support service costs.

"It sure would be nice if I had funding available to cover my cleaning lady that comes over".

"I can't afford the actual hours that I require".

"Get the government to help with some of the costs".

Five percent (5%) of respondents are covered by private insurance which pays for their home support services. Another 6% receive funding from other agencies such as the Department of Veteran's Affairs and the Workplace Health & Safety Compensation Commission. The remaining respondents pay for their home support services through a combination of their own money, government funding, and other methods.

Table 3. Funding sources for home support services

	Own money	Gov't funded	Private Insurance	Gov't & own money	Combination of sources	Other
Total	10	34	3	8	6	4
Urban	4	20	2	3	4	2
Rural	6	14	1	5	2	2
French	3	7	1	2	0	2
English	7	27	2	6	6	2

4.4 Home support hours utilized

The number of hours per week of home support services ranged from 1 to 168 with an average of 37 hours per person. See Table 4.

Several respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the number of hours they currently receive:

"I just want the support that I need!"

"I could really use 24 hour care, but then my workers would make less than minimum wage".

"I would like to have more hours to have my home cleaned and have meals cooked".

"I need more hours for medical appointments, grocery shopping and preparing meals".

Table 4. Hours of home support used

	# of people using hours	Total hours used per week	Average hours per person per week
Urban	35	1280	37
Rural	30	1150	37
French	14	395	28
English	51	1990	39
Total	65	2385	37

4.5 Home support worker activities

When asked what kinds of activities their home support workers assist them with, over three quarters (78%) of respondents reported that they require assistance with Activities of Daily Living (ADLs). ADLs are defined as "the things we normally do in daily living including any daily activity we perform for self-care (such as feeding ourselves, bathing, dressing, grooming), work, and leisure". The most commonly assisted ADL was bathing (34%) followed closely by general personal care (29%). Also worth noting is that 18% of respondents reported needing assistance with feeding. Other commonly mentioned

ADLs included outings (17%), transfers (11%), exercising (9%), leisure activities (8%) and medical procedures (e.g., catheterizations) (5%).

Almost all (97%) respondents reported requiring assistance with Instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs). IADLs are defined as “the daily tasks (light housework, preparing meals, taking medications, shopping for groceries or clothes, using the telephone, and managing money) that enable the client to live independently in the community”. The majority of respondents (68%) reported needing assistance with housekeeping and almost half (48%) remarked that they require assistance with meal preparation. Other commonly listed IADLs include groceries and shopping (25%), appointments (20%), outdoor home maintenance (11%), and general transportation (2%).

Table 5. Home support worker activities

Activity	# of people who receive assistance with activity
Everything	7
ADLs	51*
Bathing	22
General personal care	19
Feeding	12
Outings	11
Transfers	7
Exercising	6
Leisure activities	5
Medical procedures	3
IADLs	63*
Housekeeping	42
Meal preparation	31
Groceries/shopping	16
Appointments	13
Outdoor home maintenance (snow removal, lawn care, gardening etc.)	7
General transportation	1

*chose a minimum of one

4.6 Quality of home support services

The majority of respondents articulated that overall they were happy with the quality of the home support services they receive. Forty-two percent (42%) rated their care as excellent and another 36% rated their care as very good:

“I could not ask for better workers”.

“Thank god for them”.

"You need to be a special person to be a home support worker".

"I am very lucky to have the person I have because there isn't anything that she wouldn't try to help me with!"

Twenty percent (20%) rated their care as average.

4.7 Perceived challenges/problems with home support services

When asked to disclose what they believe to be the current challenges or problems facing home support services, a large percentage of respondents indicated home support worker recruitment and retention as a major problem. Respondents stressed problems such as a shortage of home care workers (35%);

"There are not enough of them so they are overworked".

Another primary concern expressed (28%) was a lack of government funding and support for those who need home care services.

"The level of pay for home support workers needs to increase to keep and attract qualified people. For this to happen, money from the government has to increase".

Many also noted the poor quality of home support workers available due to unreliability, and improper training (23%);

"Some kind of registry of potential health care workers would be helpful. It is very difficult to find private health care workers".

Others noted the low wages and lack of benefits offered to home support workers (12%);

"They don't get paid enough, because good people are hard to find".

The lack of flexibility and availability of home support workers (evenings and weekends) (8%) was also a concern;

"Sundays, there is no one to work!"

A few noted the high turn around rate for workers (2%):

"Workers come and go, they never stay. Pay them better".

"Having the same person each week is not usual".

A further 6% were concerned about the lack of coordination, accountability and consistency in the home support services system:

"The government needs to actively observe how agencies are being run and have people in place to advocate for clients".

4.8 Possible improvements to home support services

When given the opportunity to voice what they believe could be done to improve home support services in New Brunswick, almost half (45%) of respondents listed increasing the pay and providing benefits to home care workers as their number one priority.

"You can't give them enough pay for what they do for me".

"I would like to see more money paid to home support workers. They earn it by their work. Also, they would likely get more money from a fast food company."

"I would like the provincial government to supply the money so the workers get what they deserve."

"We need more help and respect for home support workers. They need better training so they can provide better care. Home support workers should have the same rights and benefits as other people who work for the government. If the government helped them, it would be better for everyone."

Almost one third of respondents (29%) would increase funding and support from government to those requiring home support services.

"I don't make enough money to pay my bills and pay for an aide!"

"The government needs to help us more. It would be cheaper than sending us all to nursing homes!"

"We need more hours per person."

"We need more support from government."

"I just want the support I need."

"Give more money so you can find dependable, caring people and not have to rely on family."

Almost one quarter (22%) of respondents advocated for an increase in the quality of home care workers with tighter government regulation, mandatory background checks, regular evaluations, and regular surveying of client satisfaction.

"Check on clients and talk to them- are they satisfied?"

Six percent (6%) think that standardized and regulated training should be implemented.

“The government homecare agencies should agree to standardized levels of training which would include training in personal care”.

Six percent (6%) of respondents want to see an increase in the number of home support agencies and home support workers, and a further 6% would like to see the implementation of a centralized and coordinated home care service with databases of private home care workers.

“Ask people who want to work to have their name put on a list and distribute it”.

“Make it easier to find/locate workers and replacements.”

Eight percent (8%) of respondents want home support agencies and home care workers to be more flexible, offering 24 hour service 7 days per week.

“Services are only available at certain times, so I am not able to go to the movies or go bowling or have an evening or weekend day out. It is a great service, but there needs to be more of it”.

“Support should be available 7 days a week.”

Of note, 3% of respondents felt that family members should be eligible for financial compensation from the government if they offer home support to a family member:

“I do not agree with the fact that a family member is not able to care for the disabled and not be able to be paid for their services. This way a family member could quit their job and still have an income”.

Three percent (3%) would like the government to play a part in increasing accessible housing and providing the right supports in New Brunswick so people can continue to live in their own homes.

“More accessible housing and homecare allows us to stay home longer before being forced to give up and enter a nursing home”.

5.0 Final reflections

Though respondents receiving home support expressed a general satisfaction with the quality of home support services they receive, recurring themes of needed improvement were found in their responses. A lack of sufficient funding from provincial government was strongly vocalized by respondents. Clients feel that increased funding is required for the clients themselves in order to increase the number of hours of home support they are allotted. Also a major concern is the quality and reliability of home support workers. Respondents advocated that lack of benefits and poor wages contribute to a shortage in home support workers, as well as the poor quality of available workers. Clients expressed the need for increased funding to home support agencies for better wages, benefits, and training programs. In the future, consultation with clients regarding their satisfaction with their home support services could greatly contribute to the development of a more reliable and sustainable home support program.

Appendix A