

Information Sheet for Retirement Home Licensees and Operators: Skin and Wound Care

The Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority (RHRA) develops information and educational material to assist retirement home licensees and operators in better understanding and meeting the requirements in the *Retirement Homes Act, 2010* (“the Act”) and O. Regulation 166/11 (the “Regulation”). It is important that all licensees and operators know their obligations under the Act and Regulation, which includes those relating to skin and wound care.

Regardless of whether a home provides skin and wound care, the home has an obligation to ensure that residents are protected from neglect, and that care is aligned with the requirements in the Act and Regulations.

This information sheet is intended to provide a clearer understanding of RHRA’s expectations for compliance with the Act and Regulation when it comes to skin and wound care. The plain language information in this document does not replace the requirements in the Act and Regulation. Licensees should consult their own legal counsel to interpret the Act and Regulation and apply it to their circumstances. For clarity, the term ‘altered skin integrity’ means potential or actual disruption of epidermal or dermal tissue, including skin breakdown, pressure ulcers and skin tears or wounds.

My home provides skin and wound care as a care service. What are my obligations under the legislation?

Licensees that provide a skin and wound care program must ensure that it complies with the requirements contained in section 42 of the Regulation, which are detailed below. Those licensees must also comply with all the requirements contained in the section below, which apply to all licensees whether they provide skin and wound care as a care service or not.

The care provided under the skin and wound care program must include:

- Effective skin and wound care interventions
- Routine skin care to maintain the resident’s skin integrity and prevent wounds
- Strategies to promote the resident’s comfort and mobility
- Strategies to promote the prevention of infection, including the monitoring of the resident
- Strategies to transfer and position the resident to reduce and prevent skin breakdown and to reduce and relieve pressure, including the use of equipment, supplies, devices and positioning aids
- Preventive measures, including physiotherapy, nutrition care and proper positioning, if necessary

The skin and wound care program must be developed and implemented using evidence-based practices. If none exist, prevailing practices must be used.

If a resident who receives care under the program is at risk of altered skin integrity, the licensee must ensure that the resident promptly receives a skin assessment by a member of a College, as defined in the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991*, who has adequate training in skin and wound care.

If a skin assessment determines that the resident is not showing signs of altered skin integrity, the licensee must ensure that all necessary changes are made to the resident's plan of care to reduce the risk of altered skin integrity.

If a resident who receives care under the program is showing signs of altered skin integrity, the licensee must ensure that the resident immediately receives the required treatments and interventions under the supervision of a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario or the College of Nurses of Ontario.

If a resident is showing signs of altered skin integrity and the licensee or staff of the home are aware or should be aware, the licensee must ensure that the resident and the resident's substitute decision-makers, if any, are immediately informed about the risk of harm to the resident and options for obtaining the required treatments and interventions under the supervision of a physician or nurse. RHRA urges licensees to maintain accurate records relating to identifying and addressing altered skin integrity.

My home does not provide skin and wound care as a care service. Our residents receive skin and wound care from external care providers. What are my obligations under the Act and Regulation?

Licensees that do not provide skin and wound care as a care service still have obligations to ensure resident wellbeing.

Licensees are required to comply with the requirements set out below under the Act (s. 62, 63, 67) and the Regulation (s. 44, 47, 48), whether the Home provides skin and wound care as a care service or not.

- If a resident is showing signs of altered skin integrity and the licensee or staff of the home are aware or should be aware of the resident's altered skin integrity, the licensee must ensure that the resident and the resident's substitute decision-makers, if any, are immediately informed about the altered skin integrity and are provided with information that is readily available to the licensee and that will enable the resident to obtain skin and wound care from an external care provider. The failure to immediately report altered skin integrity to the resident and the resident's substitute decision-makers, if any, may be considered neglect.
- If a licensee or a staff member of a retirement home has reason to believe that a resident's care needs may include skin and wound care, regardless of who provides that care service, the licensee must ensure that the resident's full assessment is conducted by a Regulated Health Professional.
- If an assessment of a resident indicates that the resident's care needs may include skin and wound care, the licensee must ensure that an interdisciplinary care conference is held as part of the development of the resident's plan of care and that the resident's plan of care takes into account the results of the care conference. The licensee must ensure that the resident, the resident's

substitute decision-maker, if any, and any other person designated by the resident, or the substitute decision-maker, are given an opportunity to participate in the interdisciplinary care conference.

- If an assessment of a resident indicates that the resident's care needs may include skin and wound care, the plan of care for that resident must be approved by a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario or the College of Nurses of Ontario.
- The licensee must ensure that a resident is reassessed and their plan of care is reviewed and revised if, in the opinion of the licensee or the resident, the resident's care needs change, including where the resident may require skin and wound care.
- The licensee must ensure that there are protocols to promote the collaboration between the home's staff, external care providers and others involved in the different aspects of care of the resident, including provision of skin and wound care, in the assessment of the resident so that their assessments are integrated and are consistent with and complement each other, and in the development and implementation of the plan of care so that the different aspects of care are integrated and are consistent and complement each other.
 - RHRA expects licensees to establish a regular communication cycle with the external skin and wound care provider to report altered skin integrity and to obtain information on how the home should modify the provision of other care services (e.g., continence care, assistance with bathing, assistance with dressing, assistance with personal hygiene, etc.) to support the resident's skin and wound care, in order to ensure that the care services provided by the home complement the skin and wound care the resident receives from the external care provider.
- With the consent of the resident, the resident's plan of care must include the planned care services for the resident that will be provided by an external care provider, to the extent that such information is available to the licensee after the licensee has taken all reasonable steps to obtain that information from the resident and the external care provider, including the details of the service and the goals that the service are intended to achieve.
- If the licensee provides meals or assistance with feeding, the licensee must ensure its staff understand the importance of good hydration and nutrition intake to support skin and wound healing.

Contact Us

If you have any questions on this document and your obligations as a licensee, please email info@rhra.ca or call 1-855-ASK-RHRA (1-855-275-7472).