

## Fewer Administrative Hurdles Means More Time for Patient-Centred Care

*Abram Gutscher, Program Manager, Integrated Home Care, Alberta Health Services*

For seniors who are receiving home care, the relationship they share with those supporting their needs is an incredibly important one. These health care professionals are not only the first to detect important changes in their clients' health but are also in the best position to know when a small modification or adjustment in a process or procedure would help improve outcomes.

The Alberta Health Services (AHS) Integrated Home Care program in the Calgary Zone saw an opportunity to capitalize on the valuable expertise of the care givers by involving them in finding solutions to problems they encountered in the performance of their duties by providing them with a new quality improvement model. "Although the existing process had a mechanism for front line staff to identify issues, it didn't allow them to play a part in creating solutions," said Abram Gutcher, Program Manager, Integrated Home Care.

With funding support provided through a 2014 Innovation Fund award from the Network of Excellence in Seniors' Health and Wellness, Gutcher launched a research project to train front line staff as quality improvement agents under the Alberta Improvement Way (AIW) methodology. These staff were then incorporated into teams that also included case managers and interventionists. This collaborative approach to problem solving successfully tackled a number of administrative and care issues that had previously gone unaddressed, and provided front line staff the opportunity to suggest and shape practical, real-life solutions.

All of the front line staff who participated in the project report that the process not only increased their understanding of continuous quality improvement in a home care setting, but inspired them to continue engaging in quality improvement work.

"Finding administrative efficiencies helped free up considerable time for our workers," said Barb Shanahan, RN, Seniors Complex Continuing Care, Seniors North Calgary Home Care. "There was a great deal of staff satisfaction in being able to devote much more time to their clients and far less time to paperwork."

"We are hopeful that our project will support other Home Care programs in the province by getting front line staff further involved in improving how care is delivered," says Gutcher. "By providing front line staff with the education, tools and opportunities to influence positive change, we can improve the home care experience for seniors throughout the province."