

Living Well in Retirement - Week 2

Establishing your level of care

TAYLOR HERMISTON
Managing Editor

When you come to the realization you no longer can live at home and need to pursue a spot in continuing care, how do you determine where to go?

Through Alberta Health Services (AHS), Home Care is a branch that takes individuals or couples through an assessment to determine their Level of Care, or what their needs are.

"Part of your level of care will be determined by Home Care," said Vermilion District Housing Foundation CEO Sheri Heller.

According to AHS, Home Care is a publicly funded health care service for clients of all ages living in a private residence or other private residential setting, such as suites in a retirement residence. Anyone living in Alberta with a valid health care card can receive its services, as long as their needs can be met safely in their place of residence.

"Through Home Care,

they can ask for an assessment, which helps determine what level of care they need to be in. If they are independent and they want to have all of the basic amenities covered like cooking, cleaning and yard work, then they want Level 2 Care," Heller said.

Level 2, also known as SL2 or Supportive Living, are lodge settings where residents live in a private suite inside a lodge. On site, there is 24-hour non-medical staff, private suites, prepared meals, and maintenance. The residents are also required to bring their own medication, furniture, toiletries, and other daily living aids, according to AHS.

Currently, the Vermilion Valley Lodge operates with Level 2 and Level 3 care.

Level 3, also known as SL3 or Designated Supportive Living, provides accommodations for people who require assistance. Like Level 2, they are required to supply their own daily living aids, but received assistance by health care aides who are usu-

ally onsite 24 hours a day to support unscheduled needs.

"They give out the daily assistance with dressing, bathing, and we do get that in the lodge, but in this level our staff does it. It just offers reassurance that someone is around, watching. There is still independence, but there is a shadow to offer comfort. Those in the lodge don't get that, I have cooks and housekeepers and that is it," Heller said.

Level 4, also known as SL4, 4-Dementia, or SLD4, aids residents with have licensed practical nurse and health care aide on site to provide unscheduled health care support services, from distributing medicine, bathing, dressing, and other daily needs. Residents in supportive living and long-term care often have to travel to urban centres for this level of care or look into the private sector.

The closest Level 4 facility is in Mannville, and then in Wainwright and Vegreville.

"Level 4 is what we don't have in the community, but we

are beginning conversations to address that need," Heller said. "The county and town are striking a committee to get that level four looked at. I haven't seen anything more on that, but we meet for a Regional Health meeting every three months and we recently met on Feb. 15 and then we went away from that meeting with that conversation."

Once your level of care has been determined, choosing a facility that will fit your needs is the next step. Heller shared the tool, www.housingdirectory.ascha.com, which allows an individual to research all of the continuing care facilities in the province.

Heller said the search engine will help those narrow down their search and see what options they have in their own community or in another, from pricing, rooms needed, amenities, and more.

Heller added the biggest thing when moving into a continuing care facility is the concern to be able to afford it.

Though not all work like this, the Valley Lodge determines their cost based on an individual's income, which allows for easier living.

She said there are some misconception around facilities in regards to cost, but Heller assured they want people to be able to live affordably.

Look out for next Living Well in Retirement installment in the April 5 edition of the *Vermilion Standard*.

The Vermilion Valley Lodge will be undergoing a \$14.1 million project, which will be replacing the three oldest wings of the lodge, built in 1960, the dining room, and kitchen. The current structure has 84 suites, ranging from 150 to 280 square feet in size, and no longer fit the Government of Alberta's standards to senior access.

The new building will include 52 new, 350 square foot rooms, which will each have a small kitchenette and walk in shower. Of the 52 rooms, four will be one bedroom couple's suites for

a total of 124 rooms and a maximum of 130 residents. There will also be two resident bathing rooms, two bathing assist rooms, new home care office, kitchen, dining room, commercial laundry, staff area, chapel, gathering room, and "man-cave" room with a pool table, big screen television, lounge area, and library.

Through the anticipated Living Well Capital Campaign, VDHA hopes to fundraise \$1.5 million of the \$14.1 million.

Within 10 years, it has been predicted that 4,000 area residents will be over the age of 65, according to Heller.

Demolition is expected to begin in April with construction to follow and end as early as next year to lead into Phase 2. The project has been broken into different phases to limit disruption for residents.

For more information on the Living Well Capital Campaign and to watch an informative video, visit vimeo.com/195236310.