

# NetCare Connect at Home: Fraser Health

Fall 2025



Healthcare Excellence Canada would like to formally acknowledge Fraser Health's generosity in sharing their skills, knowledge, expertise and experiences to inform this promising practice.

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At HEC, healthcare excellence means improving safety, quality and value for everyone. It means care grounded in what matters most to patients, caregivers, communities and people in the workforce. It also means care that respects and responds to First Nations, Inuit and Métis priorities and is culturally safe, equitable and supported by the appropriate use of technology. Together with our partners, we embed these foundations across the health system.

Our work also focuses on expanding access to safe, connected, high-quality care closer to home and community. This includes supporting people with primary health care needs and older adults with health and social needs.

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## Enabling Aging in Place collaborative

The Enabling Aging in Place collaborative brought together health and social service organizations from across the healthcare continuum to implement promising practices that can delay people's entry into long-term care. The collaborative aimed to improve safety, health and quality-of-life outcomes, while also reducing emergency department visits, lessening demands on care partners and making better use of health and social care resources.

Teams from communities across the country participated in the Enabling Aging in Place collaborative.

# NetCare Connect at Home

Fraser Health's Day Program for Older Adults (DPOA) has expanded to include the NetCare Connect at Home program. This virtual program provides opportunities for social connection, physical activity and cognitive stimulation for participants joining from their own homes.

These activities address modifiable factors that contribute to frailty in older adults. As frailty increases, so does the risk of adverse outcomes, including falls, which can lead to older adults having to enter long-term care.<sup>1</sup> The NetCare virtual program is working to reduce this risk by increasing social connection, physical activity and cognitive stimulation – factors that can prevent increasing frailty.<sup>2</sup>

Evidence from Fraser Health's published research on DPOA indicates that older adults who attend day programs use fewer acute hospital services<sup>3</sup> and stay at home longer, delaying institutional placement.<sup>4</sup> Research also indicates that older adults experience greater benefits from more frequent attendance and longer length of participation in the programs. The NetCare virtual program extends these benefits by increasing the accessibility and opportunities for people to benefit from programming.

The virtual format removes barriers to participation such as transportation. It also allows spaces for participants that the in-person program cannot accommodate.

This makes the program more accessible to existing DPOA clients as well as older adults across the Fraser Health region.

## Key Features

### Objectives

The objectives of the NetCare Connect at Home program include:

- increasing social connections and reducing isolation
- improving older adult health and well-being to avoid increasing frailty
- increasing older adults' comfort and confidence with technology
- supporting older adults to age in place, which delays entry to long-term care or assisted living

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<sup>1</sup> Gilmour H, Ramage-Morin P. Association of frailty and pre-frailty with increased risk of mortality among older Canadians.

<https://www.doi.org/10.25318/82-003-x202100400002-eng>; 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Frailty Network. AVOID Frailty. <https://www.cfn-nce.ca/frailty-matters/avoid-frailty/>

<sup>3</sup> Kelly R. The Effect of Adult Day Program Attendance on Emergency Room Registrations,

Hospital Admissions, and Days in Hospital: A Propensity-Matching Study. *Gerontologist*. 2017 Jun 1;57(3):552-562. doi: 10.1093/geront/gnv145. PMID: 26640154.

<sup>4</sup> Kelly R, Puurveen G, Gill R. The Effect of Adult Day Services on Delay to Institutional Placement. *J Appl Gerontol*. 2016 Aug;35(8):814-35. doi: 10.1177/0733464814521319. Epub 2014 Apr 2. PMID: 24717560.

## Population served

DPOA in-person programs support complex medically frail older adults receiving Home Health services and living with two or more of the following:

- cognitive impairment
- risk for increased functional deterioration
- care needs that require monitoring and supervision
- care partners at risk for burnout
- social isolation

The population served by the NetCare virtual program is broader and includes any older adult in the community who is medically stable and meets the following criteria:

- free from acute health conditions
- able to follow one-two step directions consistently
- able to tolerate moderate levels of physical activity
- able to access internet/Wi-Fi at home
- able to participate using computer/iPad/tablet or have support at home to do so

## Program team

The NetCare virtual program is supported by an interdisciplinary team including:

- **Regional team lead** – responsible for initial planning, implementation and ongoing evaluation of the NetCare program.

- **Day program coordinator** – responsible for planning, implementation and ongoing coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the NetCare program.
- **Program secretary** – monitors virtual programs while in progress and supports staff and participants with technical issues.
- **Activity workers** – support both in-person programming and the virtual CareFit exercise, bingo and falls prevention program.

Fraser health regional DPOA leadership provide strategic oversight, regional practice support and contract management.

## NetCare Connect at Home

The NetCare program provides a virtual extension to the in-person DPOA, allowing older adults with limited access to community activities to increase their participation in physical, cognitive and social activities.

## Access to the program

While clients of the in-person DPOA require a referral from their Home Health Community Health Nurse, older adults who want to join the virtual program can call or email the program coordinator directly to learn more and get enrolled. The coordinator reviews the participation criteria and safety measures with the older adult. If criteria and safety measures are met, the participant is enrolled immediately.

To date, many participants have heard about the program through a trusted professional or organization, including Fraser Health, DPOA staff and community physiotherapists, nurses, occupational therapists and social workers.

The Fraser Health team is building community connections to increase awareness among older adults who may not yet know the program exists. These connections include:

- Home Health clinicians
- partner organizations (e.g. Compassionate Neighborhood Health Partners Society in Chilliwack, BC)
- Chilliwack community connector through United Way
- other healthcare providers (e.g. occupational therapists, physiotherapists, nurses, social workers, recreation therapists and other staff)

## Services

The NetCare virtual program includes gentle Carefit exercises, bingo and interactive falls prevention education.

- **Carefit** is an evidence-based, medically endorsed exercise program designed for older adults with multiple diagnoses who may be at risk for falls and fractures and/or need to maintain and improve their current level of function. Developed by BC Women's Hospital (formerly Modified Osteofit), it is delivered in collaboration with Fraser Health Falls and Injury Prevention.
- **Bingo** provides cognitive stimulation while supporting social connection and meaningful engagement.

- **Falls prevention education** raises awareness of common causes of falls and provides strategies for prevention.

## Implementation context

The Fraser Health team began implementation of the NetCare program following the success of virtual day programs offered during the COVID-19 pandemic, when in-person day programs were closed. Early feedback identified the social connection and programming components as invaluable, but clients and caregivers expressed that they were missing opportunities for exercise. The team connected with internal departments and community organizations with experience offering online virtual exercises, which supported the development of a model that could be tried within the NetCare program.

The decision to offer the program to a broader community of older adults living in the Fraser Health area – not just those already receiving Home Health Services – was informed by an Asset-Based Community Development approach. This approach was introduced through capability building activities with Healthcare Excellence Canada's (HEC) Enabling Aging in Place collaborative.

## Outcomes<sup>5</sup>

### Delayed entry to long-term care

One hundred percent of participants surveyed agreed that the program was helpful in

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<sup>5</sup> The outcome and impact information shared reflects information available at the time of writing this promising practice. HEC would like to acknowledge that evaluation activities are an ongoing process for many promising practices and

the type of data collected is influenced by program goals, the length of time the program has been implemented and the level of resources available to support evaluation.

allowing them to stay at home for as long as possible.

The program measured factors that influence an older adult's frailty level including activity, mood, cognitive stimulation, social isolation, falls and fear of falling. NetCare's impact on these factors is helping participants to slow, reverse or avoid frailty, which helps older adults stay healthy and age in place longer.

## Increase in physical activity

More than half of NetCare participants reported they were more physically active because of the program.

This is an important finding, as increasing physical activity is one of the main factors in the Canadian Frailty Network's [AVOID Frailty framework](#) that focuses on preventing frailty in older adults.

Participants also reported decreased reliance on assistive devices for walking short distances, improved sleep quality, less shortness of breath and improved confidence and motivation to be active.

"NetCARE Connect at Home motivates me to get off the couch and be more active. As a retired person at home, it gives me something enjoyable to do. It motivates me, and I look forward to it every week. I enjoy playing Bingo and the staff are all friendly and wonderful. Today, even though my arm was sore from getting my vaccines, I still participated because I enjoy the program so much. I look forward to more online programs."

– NetCare client

## Improvements in social connection and mood

This program showcases the importance of social connection and its impact on mood and mental health.

Seventy-six percent of participants reported spending more time socializing after joining the program. The remaining participants indicated they spent the same time socializing. This is an important outcome, as social isolation can contribute to frailty in older adults. Participants shared the impacts of the program on providing the opportunity for connection and increasing socialization.

"I find my mood has improved as I look forward to the weekly program."

– NetCare client

"Attending this program has dramatically improved my mood and decreased my depression. If I didn't have this program or lost it, I could possibly fall back into depression. This program really does add more quality of life for all of us and we have a sense of community. Seeing other people's faces smiling just brightens my day."

– NetCare client

## Decreased falls

The program noted reduced falls and increased confidence among participants in exercising and their mobility. Before participating in NetCare, 29 percent of participants had experienced one or more falls in the three months prior. After implementation, only 6 percent had experienced one or more falls over the previous three months.

## Improved confidence using technology

In one surprising outcome, 76 percent of participants reported improved confidence with technology as a result of participating in the program. This enabled some to access services and socialize more online than they had before. One participant noted that programs like this help combat ageism.

“Before this program I didn’t even own a computer. My physiotherapist encouraged me to get a used computer which I did for \$150. The salesperson set me up with all the programs. My PT also helped me set up an email to access the program. Now, I feel confident in accessing technology and can send emails.”

– NetCare client

“Attending the program has dramatically increased my level of confidence using technology.”

– NetCare client

## Funding

Initial funding from HEC’s Enabling Aging in Place collaborative assisted NetCare in purchasing technology and gave staff time to develop, implement and evaluate the program. Once the technology and program implementation were in place, adult day program staff incorporated the virtual program as part of regular work. Ongoing incidental costs and technology fees are covered by the NetCare in-person program.

## Asset-Based Community Development Approach

**Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)** is a strengths-based approach to solving challenges in communities by focusing on and developing the strengths of local assets (e.g. people, physical assets) that are key to ensuring a sustainable community.

The NetCare virtual program team applied the ABCD approach to engage with their communities in the program development and implementation. The team began by connecting with the health region’s local community connector and a lead for the Compassionate Neighborhood Health Partners Society in Chilliwack. Through these conversations they discussed their commonalities and created better awareness of their respective programs. Engaging directly with these community supports was a new experience for the Fraser Health DPOA team.

“It allowed us to see ourselves in a different light – as a community support/resource versus only an independent health region program. It gave us more of an understanding of the opportunities for [Day Program for Older Adult] clients in the community and for the community programs to understand how we are supporting frail people in the community and add our program to their resources.”

– NetCare program team member

The program team also connected with people in the community already attending the DPOA and had a table at two exposition events in the community for older adults to share their experiences and ideas. Staff connected with private care facilities to explore whether a virtual program would benefit them. The team took requests and feedback from community members and incorporated it into their programming. They continue to engage with participants to make improvements based on what participants would like to see in the program.

The NetCare program also contributes to enablement for older adults living in the community. For example, one participant notes that the program enables them to participate independently, without relying on others for transportation.

“This program has been a Godsend for me. The program allows me to participate on my own time/pace without having to rely on other people to give me rides to a clinic or office”.

– NetCare client

## Partnerships

The Fraser Health NetCare program team has developed internal and external partnerships to support the program.

Internal partners include the Fraser Health communications department, which supports awareness of the virtual program; the Digital Patient and Provider Experience team, which manages the technical requirements of the virtual program; and other departments in the health region – including rehabilitation staff, older adult and mental health leads in community and acute care – to determine how the program can best support their respective client groups.

The team has developed external partnerships in the community, including:

- **Chilliwack Healthier Community Healthy Aging Task Team** – team engages in meetings to determine roles in supporting healthy communities.
- **Compassionate Neighborhood Health Partners Society in Chilliwack** – connects program participants to community resources and helps build broader community connections, while also promoting the in-person NetCare program.
- **Chilliwack Community Connector, Social Prescribing (United Way)** – provides navigation for program participants to support accessing community supports and to meet specific needs.

This promising practice was co-produced with Fraser Health. Information was compiled in the fall of 2025. In keeping with the changing and evolving nature of care the information may change in the future. We encourage you to reach out to this team for any further information that may be helpful as you work to improve care for those you serve.

## How can I learn more?

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