



**Fair Haven Homes Society  
Family Council  
Tuesday, March 27, 2025  
6:15 – 7:30 p.m.**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Topic:** Hearing Loss Awareness and Support for Residents

**Guest Speaker:** Jennifer Abbott, Hear at Home Mobile Hearing Clinic

**Chair:** Susan Schuurman

**Staff Liaison:** Anne Shatkin

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

- Susan welcomed everyone and introduced Jennifer.
- Jennifer discussed her training and background and offered her support and availability for private consultations with families.

**2. Overview of Hear at Home Mobile Hearing Clinic**

- Jennifer shared the background of Here at Home Mobile Hearing Clinic, which she founded in 2009.
- It is the first fully mobile hearing clinic in BC, focusing on reaching clients in care homes or those unable to travel.
- She emphasized her flexibility in responding to requests from families, even outside her standard service area.

**3. Understanding Hearing Loss**

- Jennifer explained the main types of hearing loss:
  - Sensorineural: Often age-related.
  - Conductive: Caused by blockages (e.g., earwax).
  - Mixed: Common in care home residents.
- She shared a projection that by 2030, 25% of adults over 65 will have some form of hearing loss.

**4. Hearing Loss and Dementia**

- Jennifer discussed the link between hearing loss and cognitive decline.

- She emphasized the importance of using hearing aids or amplifiers during cognitive assessments.
- Hearing loss can impact cognitive processing but is not a direct cause of dementia.

## **5. Communication Challenges Related to Hearing Loss**

- Hearing loss can cause fatigue and social withdrawal.
- Jennifer shared a personal story of her grandmother, who struggled in social settings due to embarrassment about her hearing loss.
- Loss of specific sound frequencies leads to misunderstandings and can strain family relationships.
- Caregivers were encouraged to use clear, empathetic communication.

## **6. Earwax Management**

- Jennifer noted that earwax buildup is common in older adults and frequent earbud users.
- She recommended that medical staff check residents regularly and perform hearing tests as needed.
- Comfort and individual preferences should be considered when scheduling procedures.

## **7. Hearing Loss Solutions and Assistive Devices**

- While hearing aids are often recommended, not all individuals will use them.
- Jennifer suggested pocket talkers as a user-friendly alternative for short visits or interactions.
- These devices can improve communication but require support to use effectively.

## **8. Hearing Aids and Family Involvement**

- Fitting hearing aids can be challenging, especially for individuals with dementia.
- Familiarity with hearing aids prior to cognitive decline can help.
- Jennifer emphasized the family's role in maintaining hearing aids, including cleaning and battery replacement if required, to prevent resident frustration. Staff put in the hearing aids each morning and remove each evening, but families need to do the cleaning and maintenance. Good communication between staff and families is crucial.

## **9. Financial Assistance for Hearing Aids**

- Jennifer shared that while premium hearing aids can be helpful, basic models may be sufficient for independent living.
- She outlined available funding programs and extended health benefits. For third party in BC, there is WorkSafe BC, Veteran Affairs, First Nations, and Disability, but most people are not covered.
- An attendee mentioned that there is a support program for low-income individuals through the Ministry of Economic Development and Poverty Reduction, which provides financial help if a medical professional deems hearing loss a health risk.

## 10. Discussion on Communication Aids and Technical Setup

- Jennifer emphasized the need for amplifiers or pocket talkers for residents who do not use hearing aids, suggesting Amazon as a potential source. As well, there are protective covers that can be purchased to support infection control protocols.
- White boards can be helpful to improve communication.
- Voice to text apps can be useful – Jennifer recommended trying it on a larger screen tablet so that the font can be made larger.

**ACTION:** Anne to share recording of meeting with attendees.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:35 p.m.