



News Release: Mental health project aims to improve care and reduce wait times for NWT residents

YELLOWKNIFE (August 11, 2020) – The Government of the Northwest Territories is collaborating with the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) on a two year mental health project to reduce wait times and improve services by providing care to residents when and where they need it.

The project includes the use of both existing traditional supports and Internet and digital technologies like phone apps to offer residents a menu of options they can choose from – as and where needed – regardless of where they live. Matching residents with the appropriate level of care will free up counsellors for those with more complex needs.

The project uses the Stepped Care 2.0 © (SC2.0) model developed by Dr. Peter Cornish and rolled out with success in Newfoundland and Labrador. The model contributed to a reduction in the province’s counselling wait times by 68 per cent, and had a good satisfaction rating among service users and providers. MHCC will be assisting with this project, and has contracted Dr. Cornish to be the lead consultant.

The Stepped Care 2.0 © model represents a tangible way in which the GNWT can implement the Seamless Care Pathway (SCP) approach – a key component of the GNWT [Mental Wellness and Addictions Recovery Action Plan](#) – to transform the NWT mental wellness and addictions recovery system. The SCP and SC2.0 approaches ensure individuals and families have access to the right level of care quickly and receive timely and solution focused support based on their present needs.

Quotes

“Having more options, in addition to on-the-land, peer-to-peer, face to face counselling and facility based treatment, allow residents to choose the most appropriate treatment method they want. By providing residents with flexible, same day care in combination with e-mental health apps and other supports, we will be able to reduce wait times and either step up or step down intensity of services based on the needs of individuals and families.”

- Diane Thom, Minister of Health and Social Services

“Too often, people wait months for mental health services because the only option is specialized care. By diversifying the menu of options available, the people of the Northwest Territories will have more choice. Apps, digital offerings and telephone services are

alternatives that reduce strain on the conventional system and free up pathways to care that can be accessed more quickly and easily. I'm delighted the MHCC is supporting the GNWT as they innovate solutions that are needed now more than ever."

- **Louise Bradley**, *President and CEO of the Mental Health Commission of Canada*

"The diverse peoples of the Northwest Territories value their health and well-being. I have noticed that people seeking help and providers of care are ready for system change. They are intrigued by the Stepped Care 2.0 model and excited by opportunities for expanding culturally relevant service options and increasing access to timely care."

- **Dr. Peter Cornish**, *Project Lead and Honorary Research Professor with Memorial University*

Quick facts

- Stepped Care 2.0 provides rapid, same day, flexible access to mental wellness and addictions recovery supports that include e-mental health apps, online self-help services, and skill-based programming options.
- It is an evidence based system that organizes care based on what each individual person wants and according to the least intensive and most effective options.
- Released in August 2019, the Mental Wellness and Addictions Recovery Action Plan outlines the concrete steps the GNWT is taking to provide culturally sensitive, person-and-family-centred support to individuals, families and communities.
- The Plan identifies four main objectives:
 - Reduce Stigma and Increase Awareness and Prevention
 - Increase Supports and Transform the Culture of Practice within the Mental Wellness and Addictions Recovery System to more fully reflect a Seamless Care Pathway Model
 - Improve Quality, Coordination, and Integration of Services
 - Strengthen Peer Support, Aftercare, and Community-Based Options for People Living with Addictions.
- Mental wellness and addictions recovery supports available to NWT residents include on the land and community-based options, Community Counselling Program, NWT Help Line, and Facility Based Addictions Treatment.
- In 2019-20:
 - There were 220 occasions where NWT residents were approved to attend a facility-based addictions treatment program. Of those, 136 programs were completed.
 - the Community Counselling Program was accessed 16,832 times.
 - For 2019/20, Wait times averaged 10-16 weeks Hay River, 21-26 weeks Yellowknife, 2-4 weeks Fort Smith for non-urgent counselling services.
 - 547 calls were made to the NWT Help Line and 279 residents currently like and follow the NWT Help Line Facebook page.

Related links

- <https://steppedcaretwopoint0.ca/>
- www.mentalhealthcommission.ca
- [Mental Wellness and Addictions Recovery Action Plan](#)

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