



MAR 04 2020

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Oral Question 71-19(2): Oral Health Action Plan

This letter is in follow up to the Oral Question you raised on February 13, 2020 regarding the Oral Health Action Plan.

The integration of oral health services into primary health care refers to licensed practical nurses, registered nurses, nurse practitioners and other healthcare providers conducting a straight forward oral health screen, providing basic oral health information, and making referrals as necessary during routine Prenatal and Well Child Visits. The initiative focuses on pre-school children. The Prenatal Record Users Guide has been updated to provide specific education to primary health care providers in delivering simple oral health screens and providing basic oral health information. The Well Child Record Users Guide is being updated to provide similar instruction for Well Child Record appointments.

To provide further oral health education and training for primary health care providers, the Department of Health and Social Services (Department) is currently working on modifying an online course for non-dental health professionals. Primary health care providers are also able to contact the Oral Health Unit at the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority (NTHSSA) for further guidance and support.

In regards to the status of new oral health positions identified under the Oral Health Action Plan, in Year 1 of the Action Plan (2018/19), the NTHSSA hired one additional Oral Health Professional, a Registered Dental Hygienist in Norman Wells, for a total of five. It is now Year 2 of the Action Plan (2019/20), and the NTHSSA is attempting to hire a sixth Oral Health Professional (a Registered Dental Hygienist in Fort Simpson). This competition is currently at the interview stage. The Department has also hired an Oral Health Consultant and a Project Manager to work on implementing the Northwest Territories (NWT) Oral Health Action Plan objectives. To note, prior to the start of the Action Plan, there were four Oral Health Professionals working in the NWT, all Dental Therapists: one each in Inuvik, Fort Smith, Fort Simpson and Fort McPherson.

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Finally, the NWT Oral Health Action Plan item 2.5.4 commits us to "Establish a Territorial Chief Oral Health Officer role" during the 2020/21 fiscal year. Work on this objective has been initiated ahead of schedule. The Department has commenced an inter-jurisdictional scan to learn about the various approaches that other provinces and territories are taking with regards to this role, including parameters of the role, which will inform the job description. We will use this information to help develop a Chief Oral Health Officer Role that will provide long-term and sustainable oral health leadership for the NWT. The jurisdictional scan is slated to be completed in April 2020.

Thank you.



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Minister of Health and Social Services

c Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Legislative Coordinator
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