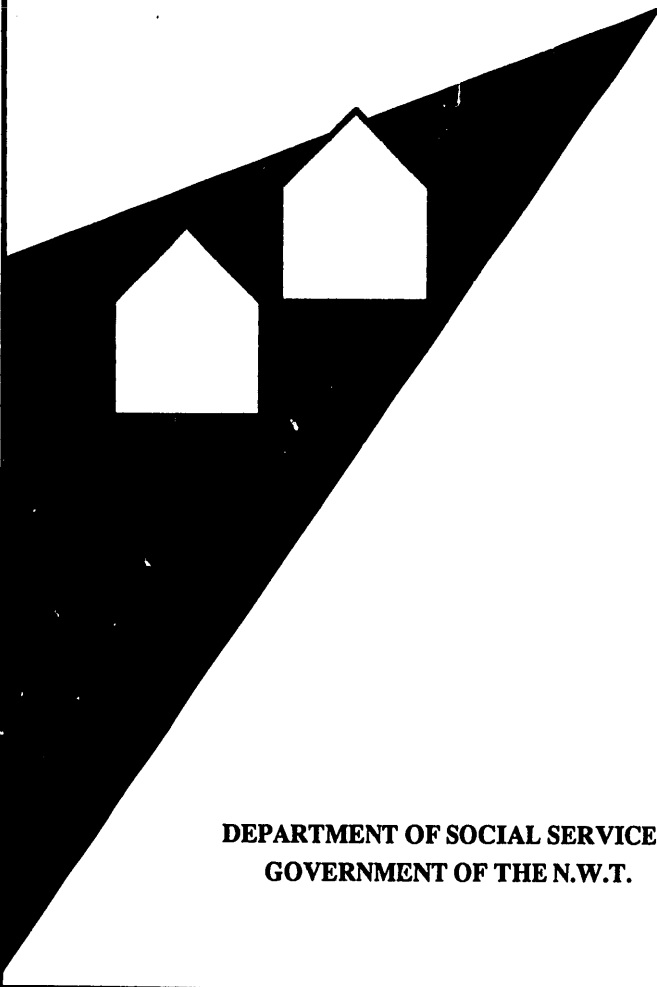


**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
10TH ASSEMBLY, 9TH SESSION**

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TABLED ON JUNE 16, 1987

**DEVOLUTION OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES**



**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
GOVERNMENT OF THE N.W.T.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TITLE:

DEVOLUTION OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

SUMMARY:

This is an information package for communities interested in assuming responsibility for delivering some or all Social Service programs in their community. It is a concise summary of the process, roles and responsibilities involved in devolving programs.

The package includes the following information:

1. The steps to be followed in seeking devolution of Social Service programs.
2. The role of Advisory Committees and Program Committees, and an explanation of the levels of devolution.
3. Policy guidelines on the devolution of Social Service programs to local authorities.
4. The respective responsibilities of the Municipal Council and the Department of Social Services in the devolution of programs.
5. The purpose of an "agreement" made between the Minister and the Municipal Council.
6. A statistical sheet to be completed by the Regional Superintendent on the number of clients, by program, in the community seeking devolution.
7. A description of each program offered by the Department of Social Services.

The information package is to be distributed to all communities and Regional Social Service offices in the N.W.T.

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HOW TO GET STARTED

1. Municipal Councils interested in assuming responsibilities for Social Service programs are to contact the Regional Superintendent to initiate the process.
2. The Regional Superintendent will provide the Community Council with an information package which will include a statement on each program offered by the Department, the steps to be followed in seeking devolution of services, a statistical sheet on the number of clients, by program, in their community, an explanation concerning the levels of devolution and the policy statement.
3. In discussion with the Regional Superintendent, Community Councils may decide on what programs and at what level of involvement, if any, they wish to proceed with in accordance with the stated policy.
4. The municipality may invite officials from the Department to discuss devolution of services and to work out an agreement to the mutual acceptance of both the Municipal Council and the Minister of Social Services.

ADVISORY COMMITTEES

On the recommendation of the Municipal Council, residents may be appointed by the Minister as a committee to give advice and guidance concerning the complete range of Social Service programs.

The advice and guidance of the committee may take the following forms:

- a. by supporting the role of the social worker in their community;
- b. by assisting the social worker through identification of community problems;
- c. by advising the social worker on the best approach to problems that the social worker has identified;
- d. by making recommendations to the Municipal Council, M.L.A., or Minister on changes required to legislation, policy or regulations as they affect their community.

PROGRAM COMMITTEES

Larger communities may wish to establish/maintain separate committees or sub-committee structures to handle the Social Assistance Appeal function, operate/oversee Alcohol and Drug projects, or to perform the functions of Youth Justice Committees. Committee members may be appointed by the Minister on recommendation from the Municipal Council, to perform active functions in the area of Social Service program delivery in addition to the advisory functions performed by advisory committees. It is preferable if only one Social Service committee exists for the sake of continuity and program coordination, however, that committee may well have several functions as both advisory and program committees.

- a. **Social Assistance Appeal Committee:** This committee is the first level of appeal for people who feel that they have been unjustly treated by the decision of a social worker with respect to their receipt of social assistance. The committee will decide whether or not the social worker's decision was made according to the regulations. If not, an adjustment to the benefits will be made.
- b. **Youth Justice Committee:** This committee can decide what a young person who has broken the law and has been referred to them by Crown Counsel should do in the community to pay for the crime. They may also be involved in establishing community programs to prevent crime by youth.
- c. **Alcohol and Drug Education Committee:** This committee is often established in response to community concerns to do something about alcohol and/or drug abuse by petitioning for a liquor control plebiscite, or requesting funds to operate a community treatment or prevention program.

PROGRAM DELIVERY BY AGREEMENT

An agreement between the Minister and the Municipal Council allows the community, in any program of interest to them, to:

- a. run a program or part of a program in their community;
- b. decide how to use resources such as staff and money within the existing program regulations;
- c. maintain the program at the standard established by the Minister of Social Services.

In an Agreement for program delivery, the Municipal Council is ultimately responsible to the Minister for the operation of the program.

TOTAL MUNICIPAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROGRAM

The Municipal Council operates all Social Service programs, and the Department of Social Services provides consultation and all of the resources required. The community is expected to have its own Social Services office. The Council, generally through a committee structure, will be responsible for:

- a. reporting to the Minister
- b. operating and staffing the programs.

The Municipal Council in agreement with the Minister assumes responsibility for all programs presently delivered in the community by the Department.

POLICY GUIDELINES

1. Negotiations by the Department of Social Services for the devolution of programs to the municipalities will be undertaken only with the Prime Public Body of the community.
2. The agreement to devolve programs shall in no instance exceed those programs of the Department of Social Services which are offered in the community at the time of signing the agreement without the express permission of the Minister of Social Services.
3. The transfer of resources to the community will not exceed the totality of resources presently committed for the operation of the program under consideration in either operational and maintenance costs, infrastructure costs or person/years, with the exception of an agreed-to amount for an administration fee.
4. Planning for devolution of services to a community will be a joint Headquarters/Regional responsibility.
5. The administration of agreements for total program delivery by a town or city will be a Headquarters responsibility. In all other instances, administration of the Agreement will be a Regional responsibility.
6. Communities which have limited departmental resources will be constrained in entering agreements with regard to the delivery of Social Service programs as a whole. For example, communities with no more than one worker would be constrained by the exclusion of partial program delivery by the community, since only one person/year is available to deliver services in relation to all programs. Similarly, communities with no resident community social service worker, which rely on a monthly (or less frequent) fly-in service for Social Assistance Administration, supplemented by infrequent emergency statutory services, would only receive consideration for limited program initiatives justified by the assessment of need/demand for a particular service (e.g., Alcohol and Drug Project).
7. Initial agreements will be for a one-year 'trial period' to ensure the successful operation of the program and to ensure the continuing interest of the community.
8. No agreement shall confer powers upon any party which are not in accordance with the Government of the Northwest Territories legislation, regulations, policy or directive.
9. All agreements shall require acceptance of the terms and conditions by both the Municipal Council and the Minister of Social Services.

CASE STATISTICS

Community of _____ Date _____

Social Assistance:

Ill health/disabled _____
Dependent Children _____
Unemployed but able _____
Not enough income _____
Other _____
Total _____

Child Welfare:

Child-in-Care _____
Foster Homes _____
Adoptions _____
Protection _____
Total _____

Young Offenders:

Probation _____
Community Service Order _____
Open Custody _____
Secure Custody _____
Total _____

Aged and Handicapped:

In own homes _____
In Personal Care Facility _____
Total _____

Corrections:

Probation _____
Parole _____
Pre-dispositions _____
Total _____

**Support Services to
Individuals & Families:**

Information & Referral _____
Crisis Intervention _____
Counselling _____

**Administrative Assistance
to the Unemployed and
Residents Requiring Access to
Federal Benefits:**

OAS/GIS Applicants _____
Unemployment Insurance _____
Family Allowance Applicants _____

SOCIAL SERVICE PROGRAMS

Helping and Protecting You and Your Community

The Department of Social Services believes that every person in the Northwest Territories has the right to a healthy lifestyle that provides hope for the future and a chance to be self-sufficient.

Social Services supports people going through a bad time and helps them take charge of their own lives again.

Some receive financial help. Others are given practical advice or special counselling to help solve a difficult emotional situation.

Social Services provides emergency help during a time of family crisis. This could be severe sickness, sudden unemployment or episodes of violence involving spousal assault or child abuse. Those in need of long-term care, especially elderly or disabled people, are also helped by Social Services.

The Department has other important areas of responsibility. It deals with alcohol and drug problems in the north and with people who break the law. It also develops programs aimed at preventing problems.

Because it must handle so many different needs and problems, the Department of Social Services is divided into seven programs or divisions. They include: **Financial Assistance, Family and Children's Services, Alcohol and Drug Services, Corrections, the Aged and Handicapped, Family Violence Prevention Programs and Young Offenders.**

Here is what these programs do if you need a helping hand or if people in your family and community need protection.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Providing a Financial Safety Net

Social Assistance or Welfare is for people unable to provide for themselves. This may happen because of illness, disability, unemployment, responsibility for young children or sudden misfortune such as a bad accident or death in the family. Special financial benefits are also available for the elderly or for those with permanent physical or mental handicaps.

Those who qualify for Social Assistance receive money to help pay for food, clothing, rent, fuel or other household expenses. In special circumstances, people in need may get extra money for child-care or health needs such as eye glasses, prescription drugs or the cost of a funeral and burial. In cases of urgent need, other assistance may be given.

Apart from financial help, this program offers counselling to those who have difficulty managing a budget and paying off debts. People are taught how to spend money wisely so that they can be as comfortable as possible on a limited income.

Learning how to develop employment skills and find work is also important. Depending on the community, Social Services refers people to an outreach worker, job counsellor or adult educator who provides advice on academic upgrading, training programs for finding and keeping a job.

The aim of the Financial Assistance program is to help people improve their life skills and financial resources so that they can live with dignity and independence.

FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS

To Live Free of Fear

The emphasis of **Family Violence Prevention Programs** is on supporting community self-help groups in dealing with family violence at the local level.

Social Workers in all N.W.T. communities are helping to form action plans and support groups to deal with spousal assault. They are part of a team which usually includes a member of the R.C.M.P., a priest or minister, a nurse and community volunteers. In crisis situations, Social Workers can advise victims about emergency money that is available and help them find temporary shelter. They may arrange for transportation out if there is no safe place within the community.

These programs also provide financial support for Safe Houses in smaller communities and for Transition Houses in larger centres. Program staff help to decide where such places are needed and how to get them started.

Funding from different sources, including **Family Violence Prevention Programs**, is being used for community workshops and conferences where people can talk about their own experiences, share information and learn more about dealing with family violence. There is a growing recognition of the urgent need for anger-control therapy and family counselling which will help the person committing the assault as well as the victim.

For those dealing with family violence, the aim is to find ways to keep a family together. If this is impossible, the next challenge is to help the victims and their children rebuild their lives and live free of fear.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Youth and the Law

The new Young Offenders Act became official across Canada on April 1, 1985. It applies to young people from 12 to 17 years old who break the law. This legislation recognized that society must be protected but says that young people in trouble with the law have special rights and needs. They cannot be punished in the same way as adults yet they must take some responsibility for their actions. The Young Offenders division of Social Services deals with those affected by this new Act.

The Young Offenders Act stresses that parents should provide the guidance, discipline and supervision that young people require but when they cannot and an offence has been committed, a Youth Court may have to order the young person into custody.

When a young offender is found guilty in court, the Judge has many options. The person can be required to do community work, take an alcohol or drug treatment program, or get psychiatric help. She/he may be placed on probation, ordered to compensate the victim or be sent to an open custody facility such as a private home, bush camp or group home. When protecting the community is of concern, the young person can be placed in a closed custody facility.

But instead of going to court, a young offender can be asked to appear before a Youth Justice Committee, which is a group of respected and concerned adults from the community. This Alternative Measure means that the committee and the offender work out ways to correct the wrong and change his/her lifestyle. This might involve doing community work, getting treatment for an alcohol or drug problem or spending time in a wilderness camp.

Several N.W.T. communities now have bush and wilderness camps and others are planned. Here young people experience a traditional way of living and learn skills which can help them live more productively.

AGED AND HANDICAPPED

Staying Home

This program is geared towards helping elders stay in their own homes and communities. To make this possible, financial assistance as well as home support services are provided. Depending on the community, this may include home delivered meals, home nursing or regular visits from program staff to see that all is well.

Along with trained homemakers, members of the community are encouraged to help. Neighbourhood assistance is organized by a local Social Services agency, church group or volunteer committees. Volunteers run errands, provide transportation or do "handyman" jobs for a confined person. They may also take people out of their homes to help decrease their loneliness or sense of isolation.

Another part of this program involves defining how life for elderly and disabled people can be improved in each region. This may mean making community facilities more accessible, upgrading the quality of home support or lobbying for funds to build better homes for elderly and handicapped people.

If the disability is not too great, handicapped children and adults are also helped to stay at home. As with the aged, the assistance may include financial support, family counselling and homecare services such as Meals on Wheels.

Job training is available through the VRDP (Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons) program. It funds projects like the Abe Miller Workshop in Yellowknife where handicapped adults are taught pre-employment and life skills. Staff in N.W.T. group homes also offer life skills courses. Disabled people are taught how to dress, make meals, manage money and do other basic tasks necessary for independence and feeling of self worth.

When aged and handicapped people are unable to live alone or in the family home, program staff recommend placement in an appropriate Senior Citizens' Home, Group Home, chronic care unit, or sometimes, a southern institution.

ALCOHOL AND DRUG SERVICES

What Else is There to do Besides Drink?

This program exists to reduce the use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs throughout the N.W.T. It does this by creating educational material, running advertising campaigns about problem drinking and training alcohol and drug workers in the communities. The key words in the battle against alcohol abuse are: education, advertising and training.

Through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), counselling is provided to people in the workplace who are having trouble with alcohol. Each year an Alcohol and Other Drugs Awareness Week highlights a problem area or age group and sponsors community events such as films, panel discussions and "dry" dances.

Two alcohol treatment centres, Northern Addiction Services in Yellowknife and Delta House in Inuvik, are funded by this program. Alcohol and Drug Services also works closely with the N.W.T. Alcohol and Drug Coordinating Council to set up community programs and resource centres.

Although treatment continues to be important, the main emphasis is on prevention and positive lifestyles. Colourful posters promoting alternatives to drinking (sports, music, outdoor activities) have been distributed to all N.W.T. communities. Assisted by community-action groups, an advertising campaign is urging northerners to help prevent fetal alcohol syndrome and impaired driving. Encouraging responsible bartending is another important concern of Alcohol and Drug Services.

An alcohol and drug curriculum is being introduced in all N.W.T. schools, from kindergarten to grade 12. Children will learn about the dangerous effects of alcohol and drugs. Older students will study alcohol facts and figures, how advertising encourages drinking and the devastating impact of drug addiction. An important component of the curriculum explores alternative options such as how to say NO to social drinking and drug use.

A new Youth Program, to train young people as alcohol and drug prevention workers and to encourage healthier personal and social lifestyles, is underway. The youth workers will assist alcohol and drug staff in communities and concentrate on helping young people.

CORRECTIONS

Protecting the Public

When adults break the law or become dangerous to others, they may be charged with an offence, sentenced by a court and placed in custody. Corrections is responsible for people after they are sentenced to a period of probation, a prison term, or are released on parole.

There are usually about 200 inmates in the N.W.T.'s four custodial centres, the Yellowknife Correctional Centre, the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre in Hay River, and the Baffin Correctional Centre in Iqaluit.

While inmates are in custody, Corrections makes sure that they receive proper food, medical care and treatment leading to rehabilitation. Treatment programs include: counselling, psychiatric help, arts, crafts, recreation and work programs within the centre, in the community and in remote areas. Inmates also have a chance to improve their education and life skills.

When a prison sentence is complete, Corrections puts together a release plan and directs offenders to support agencies which help them make the adjustment back to the community. At any one time, about 400 people in the N.W.T. are on probation or parole and must be supervised by Corrections staff.

New ways of dealing with offenders are being tried. Sometimes people who break the law can make amends without going to prison.

Plans are underway for a Victim/Offender reconciliation program. Depending on the offender's age and previous record, a Judge may order an offender to meet with the victim and work out a way to pay him back through work, cash payments or by repairing the damage done.

Under the new Fine Option Program an offender would normally receive a fine or, if unable to pay, a jail sentence. But instead of imprisonment, the offender now has the choice of paying off the fine by doing volunteer work in the community such as working in a park, a Friendship Centre or a Senior Citizens' Home. The goal is to steer those with lesser offences away from the prison system.

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

A Child in Need

Children cannot change their own lives and if their parents or close relatives are unable to provide adequate care, Social Services must act for them. The Department has a legal obligation to ensure the well-being of all children in the N.W.T. and to prevent child abuse and neglect. But before a child is removed from home for these reasons, every effort is made to improve the family life.

Parents who are finding it difficult to raise their children can receive a certain amount of counselling, financial assistance and home support through Social Services programs. These services may begin immediately after a birth if the mother is single and without an income but wants to keep her baby.

Any complaints about the way a child is being treated are followed up carefully by a Social Worker. If a child is being neglected or abused, the Superintendent of Child Welfare uses the legal authority of the Child Welfare Ordinance to remove the child from home. This action is designed to be temporary. It is recognized that parents may need short-term treatment for alcoholism or time to get their lives back in order because of a death, severe sickness or emotional problem. They may also need help to learn how to be good parents.

Children who must be removed are placed in a foster home, group home or, if these resources are not available, an institution. While in care, the child's progress is checked by a Social Worker who also meets with the parents to try and help them solve their problems and prepare for the child's return. Parents or relatives are allowed to visit the child or the child may go home for weekend visits depending on the circumstances.

If there is no hope that the child can return to the natural parents, a court order is obtained for the child to become a permanent ward of Social Services and he/she can then be legally adopted by another family.

When a mother wishes to give up her baby for adoption at birth, Social Services staff select suitable adoptive parents, make several home visits and finalize the legal process for adoption. If the natural mother decides on a custom adoption in which she selects the adoptive parents herself, the Department of Social Services completes the necessary paperwork but does not evaluate the home.

Social Workers also assess applications from parents wishing to adopt or to foster, visit their homes and complete a report approving them as adoptive or foster parents. Although many families want to adopt a healthy baby, the Department works to publicize the constant need for adoptive or foster homes for older children or children with handicaps. Help in completing the necessary legal forms is also provided to parents wishing to undertake a custom adoption.