



March 10, 2022

KATRINA NOKLEBY  
MLA, GREAT SLAVE

**Oral Question 918-19(2): Mental Health**

This letter is in follow up to the Oral Question you raised on February 23, 2022, regarding Mental Health.

In response to your question about the status of the actions housed within the Child and Youth Mental Wellness Action Plan 2017-2022, I can advise that updates are forthcoming. The Action Plan is still active, and the Department of Health and Social Services (Department) is gathering reporting from partnering departments, who have until April 30, 2022, to complete and submit their final progress reports. Once all the reporting is received, the Department will create a report that will be available in the Summer of 2022.

In the interim, I can advise that the Department has implemented many exciting and important initiatives as a part of this Action Plan that are meant to provide ongoing support to children, youth, and their families, including, but not limited to:

- The implementation of Child and Youth Care Counsellors across the NWT
- The implementation of free virtual service options for children, youth, and their families (including Breathing Room and Strongest Families Institute)
- The ongoing implementation of the Stepped Care 2.0 approach to care which ensures quick and easy access with no or minimal wait times to a range of support options including counselling and virtual care/eMental health options
- The implementation of the Suicide Prevention and Crisis Response Network which includes community-based funding, standardized assessment tools, and an approach to crisis response
- The expansion of the Talking About Mental Illness (TAMI) Program to additional NWT communities as well as the development of a monitoring and evaluation plan for the program
- Extensive trauma informed training for service providers working with youth
- The integration of youth focused messaging into the *What Will it Take?* family violence social marketing campaign
- The ongoing promotion of the Kids Help Phone, which includes text and live chat options for NWT children and youth (and more recently adults as well) and increased communications via all schools in the NWT

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In follow up to your question about how many children and youth are accessing the mental health system and how their progress is tracked and recorded, this is not a straightforward answer. There are a variety of pathways whereby a child/youth may access different types of supports and there are many areas where data is stored. As such, providing one, single overarching number would likely not be possible. Similarly, progress is an individualized concept and looks different for each child/youth based on their unique and changing needs.

The Health and Social Services system does track access to mental wellness services in several areas, including counselling, eMental health, overdoses, suicide attempts and medivacs. Service providers work together to share pertinent information to support coordinated care and tracking of progress with service user consent. Some key pieces of access data are as follows:

- In 2020-2021 there were a total of 1222 referrals for children/youth to the Community Counselling Program (which includes the Child and Youth Care Counsellor initiative). This accounts for 30% of the total referrals received that year
- So far in 2021-2022, there have been 421 referrals for children/youth to the Community Counselling Program, accounting for 24% of the total referrals received thus far
- As of as of February 14, 2022, there were 519 current users of Breathing Room
- As of January 24, 2022, there have been 53 referrals to Strongest Families Institute, with 27 program completions and 14 active cases being carried over into the fourth quarter

I note that you asked written questions on March 8 about staffing counseling positions and rates of self-harm among youth. These questions will be answered by March 29.

Thank you.



Julie Green  
Minister of Health and Social Services

c Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Legislative Coordinator  
Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs