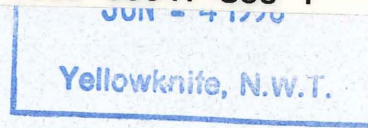




A Strategic Plan For Health And Wellness — Summary



Introduction

“Our children will be born healthy and raised in a safe family and community environment which supports them in leading long, productive and happy lives.”

This vision of a strong and vibrant northern society is our ultimate goal, a vision we wish to achieve in a time of historic change. Next year, two new territories will be created. *Shaping Our Future: A Strategic Plan for Health and Wellness* summarizes challenges the new governments of Nunavut and the Western Territory face as they work with the people of the North to improve health and well-being. With the help of our partners in the health and social services system, we looked extensively at those challenges and identified many exciting opportunities. Although specific issues differ greatly between east and west, the broad directions of this plan provide a framework for planning for the transition and the future of the two new Territories.

Shaping Our Future reflects the interests and concerns of the public, boards and various groups. Many people collaborated in the creation of this plan, including department staff, boards, professional groups and nonprofit associations. Health and social services boards each undertook extensive consultations in their respective communities. We thank all involved for their hard work. We also thank the members of the public who participated in community meetings and other consultation activities.

We look forward to continuing our work with our partners and the public to develop a system of health and social services that truly reflects the priorities and needs of the people we serve.

Strategic Planning: A New Approach

Effective planning is essential for responding to needs and emerging issues. The department has taken a strategic approach to planning, one that emphasizes finding solutions to the root causes of health and social problems. We began by reviewing the issues facing the health and social services system. We examined our programs and services, and focused on how they fit together. Consultations with health and social services boards, stakeholder groups and the public have shaped priorities and contributed to the development of this plan.

The plan is the department’s commitment to deal with health and social issues in a well-defined way. The department will use the plan to improve the services we provide and the way we manage them.

Building Blocks for a Strong System

The health and social services system is complex and, currently, somewhat fragmented. Many different agencies and individuals help people with diverse needs in a variety of ways. We heard consistently throughout our consultations that a strong, cohesive system can do a better job of meeting people's needs. Three themes emerged during consultations. There is an urgent need for:

- **building *strong partnerships* between workers and agencies;**
- **building a *continuum of health and social services*; and**
- **improving decision making by *developing public policy* with health and well-being in mind.**

Strong partnerships, healthy public policy and a continuum of programs and services are the basic building blocks for a system that can meet people's needs and respond to change. Strong links between these building blocks will result in a strong system.

Building the Foundation: Improving the System of Care

Publicly-funded health and social services are provided by a system of agencies and individuals: the Department of Health and Social Services, health and social services boards, private service providers and nonprofit organizations. Past efforts to improve services have concentrated on changing government. In our consultations, we heard that there are opportunities to improve how the system works as a whole. People want the roles of volunteers, nonprofit groups, and private service providers to be recognized, supported, and integrated with the role of the department and boards.

The following is a summary of the most critical issues in delivery and management of services, and our strategies to deal with them.

Our Vision

Our children will be born healthy and raised in a safe family and community environment which supports them in leading long, productive and happy lives.

Our Mission

- to promote, protect and provide for the health and well-being of the people of the Northwest Territories.

Our Goals

- to improve health status;
- to improve social and environmental conditions;
- to improve integration and coordination of health and social services, including services by government, non-government agencies, and private and volunteer sectors; and
- to develop more responsive, responsible and effective methods of delivering and managing services.

There will be significant changes to public government over the next few years. The system of health and social services will be shaped by these changes. We have an opportunity to organize the system in a way that better reflects the needs and values of people in Nunavut and the Western Territory. The size and number of public institutions must be appropriate for the size and make-up of our population. These institutions should reflect the best way to deliver and manage services.

Everyone wants to have the best possible services to prevent, detect and treat health and social problems. We are interested in setting and maintaining high standards for all services. We also wish to improve the effectiveness of these services. This may mean changing or creating services so they reflect need better or are more culturally appropriate. It may also mean finding ways to improve collaboration between workers, agencies and communities.

Problems with service coordination and integration can mean service delivery is fragmented. It can also mean gaps in service. We need to look at the current network of programs and services to see where the problems are. We must build on the strengths of this network while we tackle the weaknesses.

Our system focuses mostly on providing treatment and responding to crisis. Many health and social problems, and demands on the system, could be greatly reduced if problems could be avoided or detected at an early stage. We want to balance our focus on treatment by emphasizing promotion, prevention and early intervention services. We want our partners to work towards greater wellness through their policies and programs.

Not all services can be provided in all communities. For many services, there are simply too few people to maintain service quality and keep costs affordable. It is important that agencies work together so people get the services they need.

We need to create stability in our workforce. We also need to increase the number of Northerners qualified to fill health and social services positions. Quality care can only be achieved when all workers are familiar with the communities they serve and the system they are working in.

Improve management of the system by clarifying roles and responsibilities of the department, boards, private service providers and nonprofit organizations.

Improve the quality and effectiveness of programs and services through increased partnerships among service providers and improved monitoring and quality assurance activities

Improve the continuum of programs and services by removing gaps and duplication, increasing integration and improving coordination of services.

Support greater emphasis on promotion and prevention through policies that balance treatment services with promotion and prevention services.

Improve the overall functioning of the public system of health and social services by promoting strong relationships between agencies and governments.

Improve quality of care by creating a stable, northern workforce.

Workers' roles and scopes of practice should reflect the working conditions unique to Nunavut and the Western Territory. The isolated working conditions for many frontline workers mean these employees need to be able to handle a broad range of issues and problems. They need to carry out their responsibilities with confidence and work as part of a team.

Improve service delivery by developing the role and scope of Northern frontline professions in the health and social fields.

A priority of government is to make sure programs and services are affordable and sustainable. The health and social services system must be structured so people receive the care they need in the most effective way. Funding needs to be managed wisely and fairly so all core services are delivered and service quality is kept high.

Create a financially sustainable system through effective planning and management of financial resources.

The department needs to improve the process of allocating funds for health and social services across the Territories. Funding to boards should reflect the population they serve, both in terms of their characteristics and needs. The method of setting funding levels should be fair and understandable. Financial responsibilities should match service delivery and management responsibilities.

Improve allocation of financial resources to boards through funding methods which reflect population characteristics and board responsibilities.

Health and Wellness: A Shared Commitment for Life

Many things shape well-being. Different factors are more important during certain life stages. Nutrition and good parenting, for example, are very important for childhood growth and development. Strong social supports and good role models are important for youth as they move from childhood into adulthood. Meaningful work and self-sufficiency are important to adults. Seniors need strong social ties to family, community and culture. Problems in any of these areas can lessen well-being.

Traditionally, government services have treated health and social problems but not their underlying causes. As a result, problems would remain or return. By dealing with root causes, we can prevent health and social problems before they happen.

What are the root causes of poor health and social problems for our children, youth, adults and seniors? For our families and communities? We identify the main issues and show areas where we think improvements are possible.

Children

Children deserve the best possible start in life. Many health problems can be prevented by encouraging expectant mothers and parents with young children to make healthy choices. Screening programs can prevent diseases before they happen, or detect and treat problems at an early age.

Personality, social skills and intellect are shaped by a child's experiences during the first few years of life. Strong connections with parents and a stable, nurturing, home environment help children grow and develop to their full potential. Some parents do not have the supports, skills or resources to provide for their child's needs. This may be true when parents are inexperienced or when the child has complex needs. For these children, support programs can improve early childhood development.

Child neglect and abuse can have serious immediate and long-term consequences for children's health and social development. We need to find ways to identify children who may be at risk. Programs need to be developed, or improved, to prevent neglect and abuse by dealing with root causes. We need to improve child protection services by working with families and communities.

Youth and Young Adults

Youth and young adults base many of their attitudes and behaviours on the examples of others in their family and community. Programs to promote healthy lifestyle choices and good personal health care should be improved for this age group.

High risk behaviours, like unprotected sex, alcohol and substance abuse, and tobacco use, often lead to health and social problems later on in life. High risk behaviour is often a signal of deeper mental or social problems. Left untreated, these problems can lead to injury, illness or death. We need to improve the continuum of programs for high risk youth and young adults.

Prevent illness and disease in infants and children through greater emphasis on health promotion, disease prevention and early intervention programs.

Help children reach their full potential through effective childhood development programs.

Make sure infants and children are raised in stable, caring environments by improving early intervention and child protection programs.

Promote healthy lifestyle choices in youth and young adults through health promotion programs.

Reduce high risk behaviours in youth and young adults through effective early intervention programs.

Sexual, physical and emotional abuse can lead to many health and social problems. Abusers can be family members, peers or others in the community. We need to increase awareness about the signs of abuse. We need to be sure homes and communities are safe. Programs that increase awareness and improve detection of abuse will help protect our youth and young adults from immediate and long-term problems.

Protect youth and young adults from sexual, physical and emotional abuse through increased involvement of youth, family, and community in protection and awareness programs.

Youth and young adults need strong social supports as they develop into adults. They need opportunities to become responsible, respected members of their families and communities. Programs are needed that foster strong links between youth and their families and communities.

Develop strong social supports for youth and young adults through increased involvement of youth, family, and community in youth leadership and development programs.

Adults

Many adult health problems are preventable and related to lifestyle choices, behaviours and experiences. Effective programs can modify key behaviours and reduce the risk of certain types of illness and disease.

Modify adult lifestyle choices through programs aimed at reducing the risk of health problems.

During our adult years, health problems can start to show up as a result of poor lifestyle choices or because our bodies are getting older. Left untreated, mental health problems and addictions can lead to serious health and social problems that can affect our ability to look after ourselves or our families. We need to improve our ability to detect problems early and treat them effectively.

Improve adult health and well-being by improving detection and treatment services.

Seniors

Seniors can become isolated from family, peers and community as a result of reduced physical and mental abilities. They may require more assistance in daily living. Some seniors may also feel a loss of cultural connection. Mental and physical health may decline due to this isolation and loss of independence. Seniors need strong social supports with family, peers and community to remain physically and mentally healthy. Health, social and cultural programs should help build strong social connections and supports for seniors.

Develop strong social supports for seniors through increased involvement of family and community in the development of appropriate health, social and cultural programs.

Long-term care for seniors is often located far from family and community. Quality of life may suffer because of limited contact with family and friends. We need to provide long-term care services closer to home so social ties between seniors, their families and their communities remain as strong as possible.

Improve quality of life for seniors by providing health and social services closer to home.

Families and Communities

Many of the social problems in families and communities require local solutions. We need to provide opportunities for families and communities to build on their strengths and develop social supports to deal with these issues.

Increase partnerships within communities to improve service delivery and strengthen social supports.

Many families struggle to meet their basic need for food, clothing and shelter. Families lacking these things experience health and social problems that are preventable. Government departments need to work together, with people and their communities, to be sure the basic needs of all families are met.

Improve partnerships across government to be sure the basic needs of families are met.

Moving Forward

Shaping Our Future lays out the most important challenges to improving the health of our people and our system of health and social services. These challenges reflect the main concerns and interests expressed by the public, stakeholder groups, boards and other departments.

Shaping Our Future sets broad direction for planning to meet these challenges. We must develop strong partnerships to create healthy families and communities. Our policies must support our vision of a strong and vibrant society. Our network of services must reflect the needs and priorities of our people.

Our strategic plan gives us a strong foundation to keep our commitment to Northerners at the centre of all we do. Some of the work has already begun. Other work is just starting. All of the work will continue to reflect the needs and values of Northerners.

We will collaborate with our partners to move this plan into action. The department will develop annual business plans and projects that are consistent with the directions in this document. Health and social services boards and other organizations will be able to align their work with the department's strategic directions. In this way, the day-to-day activities of all agencies will work towards achieving our long-term goals.

During the next few years, the new governments of Nunavut and the Western Territory will develop, reflecting the priorities of the people they serve. These emerging governments will be able to use this plan as a starting point to address the health and social issues of their people. They will be able to keep their focus on meeting health and social needs during this time of transition.

Improving the well-being of our people, families and communities requires a collective effort. We look forward to working with the public and our partners to meet these challenges with innovation, cooperation and collaboration.

For more information on strategic planning or to request copies of the strategic plan in English, Inuktitut or French, please contact:

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Assistance with translation of the strategic plan and summary into other official languages is available upon request.

Visit our website at www.hlthss.gov.nt.ca for more information about the health and social services system. Information about ongoing planning activities will be posted to the site regularly.

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