

## **Yukon's response to national Shared Health Priorities**

### **Backgrounder**

We support the Shared Health Priorities released by the Canadian Institute of Health Information (CIHI). Since CIHI began tracking the data for the Shared Health Priorities, Yukon government has made a number of advances to improve services and access for Yukoners. Many of the initiatives have just recently begun or are starting now, so it is too early to measure their impact. We will continue or work to ensure that Yukoners have access to the services they need, when and where they need them.

### **Mental wellness and substance use services**

In 2018, Yukon government integrated three separate services to create the Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services branch. MWSU streamlines the services previously provided by Alcohol and Drug Services, Child and Adolescent Therapeutic Services and Mental Health. Integrating three previously separate programs has resulted in a single intake process, more comprehensive treatment plans and decreased wait times.

#### **Since the launch of MWSU:**

- Four community hubs have opened in Watson Lake, Dawson City, Haines Junction and Carmacks. These hubs provide specialist services to the surrounding communities.
- A variety of counselling staff have been hired in communities throughout the territory.
- In Whitehorse, counselling staff have started rapid access counselling services five days a week.
- A full-time psychiatric nurse was hired to work in the emergency department at Whitehorse General Hospital.
- MWSU has begun working collaboratively with Corrections to develop a Forensic Complex Care team that will work in the community and inside the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.
- The Early Psychosis Intervention team and Psychiatric Outreach Program are working in collaboration with the Referred Care Clinic (RCC) and the psychiatric nurse at the hospital to provide collaboration and continuity for clients.
- The Canadian Mental Health Association – Yukon Division now has drop-in services available two days a week, Tuesdays and Saturdays.
- A Youth Outreach Team was developed to support youth struggling with substance use and/or mental illness.

In Fall 2018, the territory's first ever Opioid Action Plan was released. The report outlines a number of actions that have been, or will be, taken to help combat Yukon's high rate of opioid-related deaths. These actions are closely tied to the work that MWSU does in the territory.

### **Highlights from the plan:**

- The Opioid Overdose Prevention Coordinator is now a full-time position. They oversee the Take-Home Naloxone program and provide services throughout the territory. Over 2700 naloxone kits have been distributed.
- A pilot program to test drugs for fentanyl has been running since summer 2018 at Blood Ties Four Directions.
- MWSU will be providing harm reduction supplies at all MWSU sites throughout the territory. Staff will be educated in providing information and supplies to clients.
- The Opioid Surveillance Officer gathers information about opioid prescriptions, drug-related ER visits and hospitalizations to inform prevention and treatment responses.
- Treatment for opioid dependence is provided by the Opioid Treatment Services (OTS) program in Whitehorse. OTS provides medical services with a strong social support component and is now located with the Referred Care Clinic, under MWSU.
- A Mental Health Nurse has been hired to work with the OTS program. They coordinate with the health team and MWSU at the Whitehorse Correctional Center to identify inmates on OTS at the correctional facility. This will help ensure continuity of care when the inmate is released.

## **Home care services**

The median length of hospital stays while waiting for home care services in Yukon was 13 days (statistically, this is the same as the Canadian median length of stay).

In Fall 2017, our Home and Community Care Program began operating with a Home First philosophy. This philosophy represents a shift from acute and institutional care to the enhancement of home and community based integrated care. The Home First philosophy supports aging in place and is meant to relieve pressures on hospital beds and provide a better experience for clients and their families. The Home Care Program will continue to promote and practice from a Home First philosophy.

In 2018/2019, more than 1225 clients received services through our Home and Community Care program. This is an increase of almost 30% over 2017/2018.

The 2019/20 budget included an enhancement of \$500 thousand to the program in addition to the previous enhancements of \$1 million in 2018/19 and \$550 thousand in 2017/18. These funds have been used to increase frontline services to Yukoners, provide more options to meet their needs, and add more direct therapy and in-home support. This includes hiring 15 new, full-time (FTE) Home and Community Care staff.

The Home and Community Care program will use the enhancement of \$500 thousand in 2019/20 to develop and staff a rapid response team. A rapid response team will provide transitional support on hospital discharge for clients and families dealing with complex medical conditions.

Our Home and Community Care programs work closely with the new Thomson Centre Reablement program to support individuals to return to their home in the community. The reablement program opened in December 2018 and is focussed on improving a person's functioning by providing targeted supports to increase their independence and by helping them learn or re-learn the skills necessary for daily living.

As of the end of May, 32 clients have been supported through both the respite and reablement programs that opened at Thomson Centre in December 2018.

The Home and Community Care program will continue to work collaboratively with Yukon Hospital Corporation and the First Nations Home and Community Care programs to support clients to return home as soon as possible.