

Office of the Auditor General of Canada  
Mental Health Services in Rural Communities  
Performance Audit

## **Yukon Health and Social Services Action Plan**



# OAG Mental Health Services in Rural Communities Performance Audit - Action Plan



Recommendation	Response	Actions	Timeline	Status
<p><b>38. The Department of Health and Social Services should regularly consult with a broad representation of residents and rural communities to identify and implement adjustments and improvements so that the department provides the mental health services that are most needed.</b></p> <p><b>Agreed</b></p>	<p>1. Yukon's rural communities each have their unique needs for these services and the Department of Health and Social Services will work in partnership with rural communities to provide the mental health and substance use services they require.</p>	<p>Health and Social Services (HSS) is working with all Yukon First Nations governments on engaging in cultural and wellness events in respective communities.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>This action is ongoing. Some examples of activities to date include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caribou Days in Old Crow.</li> <li>• Culture Camp in Old Crow.</li> <li>• Wellness Week in Mayo (First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun) – monthly.</li> <li>• Youth Culture Camp in Dawson (Tr'ondëk Hwëchin) – June, yearly.</li> </ul>
		<p>HSS is actively working in partnership with the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society in Watson Lake to provide support during the demolition of the residential school site in Lower Post.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>This work is ongoing. MWSU is also actively working with Liard First Nation to provide support for the pandemic response.</p>
	<p>2. The Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services Branch will continue to seek to adjust and improve its services in rural communities by working with community partners and residents in the following ways: Regularly scheduled meetings with First Nations health directors and other community representatives.</p>	<p>Meetings with First Nations governments are occurring regularly.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>Regular meetings began in winter 2020-2021. COVID-19 and capacity challenges have made this a challenge in the past year, but it is a mutual goal to meet quarterly.</p>

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	3. HSS will continue to seek to adjust and improve services via involving local First Nations health directors in hiring Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services staff for their communities.	Representation (usually health directors) from First Nations governments to be included on hiring panels when hiring into positions on traditional territories.	Ongoing.	Since October 2020, six competitions included First Nation representation on the hiring panel for counsellors.
	4. HSS will continue to seek to adjust and improve services via quarterly client satisfaction surveys.	A Community Hub Performance Measurement Plan has been developed. This will include surveys to capture client and staff experiences.	Fall 2021; quarterly thereafter.	The surveys are being developed and will launch in fall of 2021.
	5. HSS will continue to seek to adjust and improve services via regular meetings with the Council of Yukon First Nations.	Regular in involvement and attendance at the First Nation Health and Social Development Commission.	Quarterly.	Ongoing – meetings take place quarterly.
	6. HSS will continue to seek to adjust and improve participation in trilateral processes with Yukon First Nations and the Government of Canada such as quarterly meetings of the Trilateral Table on Health and the identification of community needs through the Administration of Justice Agreement negotiations.	HSS, Canada, Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN) and Yukon First Nations governments continue to meet on a quarterly basis.	Quarterly.	Ongoing – HSS works with Canada and Yukon First Nations governments to establish meeting agendas and provide regular program updates.

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<p><b>68. The Department of Health and Social Services should complete and implement a recruitment and retention strategy for mental health service providers that considers the unique challenges faced by the rural communities and propose innovative solutions to address these challenges.</b></p> <p>Agreed</p>	<p>1. Since the completion of the audit the Department of Health and Social Services has put a focus on recruitment and retention.</p>	<p>The Recruitment and Retention Advisory Council has been struck, with leadership from HSS Human Resources.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>The Terms of Reference for the advisory council are currently being finalized. Due to challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic, the last meeting took place in December 2020; meetings are expected to begin again soon.</p>
	<p>The department has been developing a robust recruitment and retention strategy for positions in rural communities across Yukon, including a focus on mental health service positions in the Mental Wellness and Substance Use hubs.</p> <p>Implementation started in the fall of 2020.</p>	<p>Establish an HSS Retention Working Group.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>New Human Resource Consultant III has been hired and work has started on the recruitment and retention strategy.</p> <p>HSS Retention Working Group has been established, with representation from MWSU, Family and Children’s Services and Care and Community.</p>
	<p>The Recruitment and Retention Advisory Council, with representatives from Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, Community Nursing, Yukon Hospital Corporation and First Nations Health programs, has worked with human resource professionals to develop and begin implementation of the strategy.</p> <p>The initial focus will be on the hard to fill positions, including nurses, social workers, mental health nurses, and clinical counsellors.</p>	<p>Partner with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and multiple Canadian universities to provide practicum social work and nursing students’ placement opportunities in regional communities.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>Partnerships have been established with identified organizations, which has already led to successful recruitment post-graduation. HSS will continue to work with our partners to provide placement opportunities as frequently as possible.</p>

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	2. Going forward, the department will take innovative approaches to recruit for these hard to fill positions and then to retain the employees, including flexible work arrangements.	Create a boutique website to assist in recruiting and retaining talented health care professionals. The website will provide information about job opportunities and regional communities, including the remuneration package (e.g. Northern Living Allowance, registration fee coverage, locum supports) and other benefits of working in region. Employee spotlights and testimonials will be included in the website.	March 2022.	Currently in the process of hiring a vendor to develop the website. Website expected to be completed by March 2022.
	3. HSS will develop and implement innovative approaches to retain employees, including flexible work arrangements.	Create a Strategic Human Resource Consultant position. This position will be dedicated to creating a recruitment and retention strategy specifically for rural communities.	Fall 2021.	Position was created and hired in July 2021.
<p><b>82. The Department of Health and Social Services should develop and implement a plan to work with First Nations to improve cultural safety in service delivery on an ongoing basis.</b></p> <p><b>Agreed</b></p>	1. The Department of Health and Social Services sees client centred care as foundational to therapy and to the mental health and substance use services provided. HSS (MWSU branch) will continue to work with each Yukon First Nation to determine the most suitable, culturally relevant training for MWSU staff in their community is whether it is a formal	HSS to work with Yukon First Nations governments on the development of culturally relevant training for staff/service providers.	Ongoing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HSS staff continue will be required to participate in courses related to Yukon First Nations culture and history.</li> <li>HSS is actively working with the Public Service Commission and Saṅ'yas: Indigenous and Cultural Safety Training Program to develop a Yukon-specific cultural training program.</li> <li>Depending on the needs of individual Yukon First Nations, HSS staff will</li> </ul>

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	<p>course, land based training, learning from First Nations elders, or other ways specific to each First Nations community.</p>			<p>continue to participate in on-the-land and cultural activities.</p>
	<p>2. HSS will develop and implement a plan over the next two years, in partnership with Yukon First Nations, which describes how cultural safety is addressed in service delivery through Yukon First Nations –directed training for MWSU staff and how MWSU staff use the knowledge and understanding of the local context to increase cultural safety in the delivery of mental health and substance use services.</p>	<p>Active collaboration with Yukon First Nations government partners on crisis response when incidents happen in a community.</p> <p>Create a Mental Wellness and Substance Use Patient Advisory Committee.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>Ongoing – a response is provided based on developing community situations. To date, supports have been provided in several communities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carcross;</li> <li>• Ross River;</li> <li>• Carmacks;</li> <li>• Watson Lake; and</li> <li>• Mayo.</li> </ul> <p>Discussions with CYFN commenced in December 2020; Terms of Reference have been reviewed and approved the Health and Social Development Commission in spring 2021; in spring 2021 CYFN issued a call for representatives for the committee.</p>
		<p>Active case coordination with First Nations governments' health and wellness staff for complex cases with overlap in services provided by multiple governments.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>This is an ongoing activity that is undertaken on an as-needed basis for complex clients.</p>

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<p><b>94. The Department of Health and Social Services should establish, measure, and report on the performance of its mental health services in rural Yukon.</b></p> <p><b>Agreed</b></p>	<p>1. The Department of Health and Social Services concurs that this is an area in which the department can strengthen and improve on the use of information and data in relation performance of mental health and substance use services in rural Yukon.</p> <p>The Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is in the first year of using a new electronic medical record, which enables the department to gather data more efficiently and across a greater spectrum than what possible previously.</p> <p>The Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services will work with the departments newly established Population and Public Health Evidence and Evaluation Branch over the next year to determine appropriate performance measures and reporting for mental health and substance use services.</p>	<p>A Community Hub Performance Measurement Plan has been developed.</p> <p>The Population and Public Health Evidence and Evaluation Branch was created in 2020-21, and will support evaluation work going forward.</p>	<p>Fall 2021 and ongoing.</p>	<p>The survey will include information about client and staff experience. The plan includes delivering client surveys for a one-week period every three months. The surveys will launch in fall of 2021.</p> <p>The department is actively working with the Population and Public Health Evidence and Evaluation Branch to determine appropriate performance measures and reporting for MWSU taking into account the existing actions underway and future actions that may need to be added.</p>