

Social Services

Within Nunavut

The Role of the Social Worker in Nunavut

Social Work in the Community

Community Social Work in Nunavut is a unique and rewarding experience, where social workers have greater autonomy and additional responsibilities. Health and Social Services Managers / Supervisors oversee the provision of program delivery by Social workers and Community Social Services Workers in the communities throughout Nunavut.

Social Services program delivery is generic in nature allowing the social worker exceptional freedom to provide immediate intervention in the context of an interdisciplinary team approach.

The Programs

- Child and Family Services
- Services for Adults
- Mental Health Services
- Community Corrections (some communities)
- Adoption Services
- Public Guardian and Trustee Services

The Legislation

- Child and Family Services Act
- Adoption/s Act
- Aboriginal Custom Adoptions Act
- Guardianship and Trusteeship Act

The Duties

- Identifying high risk children/families
- Aggressive provision of services
- Community development
- Foster parent recruitment and support
- Child protection investigations
- Apprehension and placement
- Court process and attendance

- Adoptions work
- Services for aged / challenged
- Addictions
- Plan of care / Voluntary agreements
- Referral residential care
- Family Violence Response

The Programs:

Child and Family Services:

Child Protection Services: Protection services - including investigations, interventions, and residential services are provided by child protection workers, under the Child and Family Services Act, to ensure a child's safety, security and development when parents are unwilling or unable to care for children.

Residential placements may be made for reasons of illness, neglect, abuse, abandonment, behavioral/emotional difficulties, and pre-adoption placement. Provisional, regular and specialized foster parents are recruited, trained and occupied as required within Nunavut. Some children are placed in foster homes out of Nunavut including medically fragile children based on individualized need.

Beliefs & Principles:

The fundamental principles guiding the provision of services to children and families are:

- The best interests of children are a fundamental responsibility of society.
- The family is the basic unit of society and its well-being should be supported and preserved.
- The family is the basic source of care and nurture of children and parents have the primary responsibility to ensure the well-being of their children.
- Families and children have the right to the least interference with their affairs to the extent compatible with the best interests of children and the responsibilities of society.
- Children have a right to a continuous family environment in which they can grow.
- Families and children are entitled to be informed of their rights and to participate in the decision affecting them.
- Families are entitled to receive preventive and supportive services directed to preserving the family unit.
- Families are entitled to services which respect their cultural

heritage.

- Decisions to remove or place children should be based on the best interests of the child and not on the basis of the family's status.
- Communities have a responsibility to promote the best interests of their children and families and have the right to participate in services to their families and children.
- Aboriginal peoples are entitled to the provision of child and family services in a manner which respects their culture, language and traditions.

Mental Health and Voluntary Services for families and children:

In conjunction with the Child & Family Services Act and other Acts and Policies, information on family harmony/counseling is offered on a one to one / group basis, or within the family. Support is given for changes and planning for change in the long term. A range of the following services may be offered and provided based on availability within the specific community or region:

- Mental Health/Wellness Counseling
- Child Sexual Abuse Counseling
- Addictions Counseling and Services
- Home Care, Special Needs Items
- Family Violence intervention and Counseling
- Psychiatric Care and Awareness
- Parent and Family support
- Psychological assessment services
- Respite Care/Day Care

Services For Adults:

Adults with a variety of disabilities and related needs are provided a range of counseling and support services. Due to the long-term nature of these disabilities, families are often included as recipients of services. Without the availability of many services for this group, most often clients are placed in programs and facilities outside of Nunavut. Adult foster care and supported independent living programs are two needed areas of services for this group. Due to the complex nature of these problems, e.g. homelessness, solutions require interdepartmental collaboration with creative solutions in light of limited resources. More community-based facilities are required in light of the increasing proportion of aged members in the population.

Family Violence:

Social Workers and Mental Health workers provide family violence prevention services; interventions, individual and group counseling, support groups, referrals to other services, transportation to safe location including families in or out of the community, safe homes, and emergency shelters.

Extensive involvement government and non-governmental organizations, e.g. Justice, Education RCMP, support groups, referrals to mental health and community care is necessary to provide this program.

Mental Health and Support Services:

Adults with a variety of needs including intellectual, physical or emotional challenges, addictions, violence, homelessness, criminality and poor parenting skills to name a few, are offered a range of counseling, respite and support services. Due to the complex nature of these problems, solutions require interdepartmental collaboration with creative solutions in light of limited resources.

A range of the following services may be offered based on whether the service is available within the community:

- Mental Health/Wellness Counseling
- Mental Health (suicide) Interventions
- Sexual Abuse Counseling
- Sheltered Workshop/Job Training
- Family Violence intervention and counseling
- Psychiatric Care and Awareness
- Parent and Family support
- Psychological assessment
- Drug and Alcohol addictions re-hab
- Home Care/Respite Care
- Anger Management

Residential Care – Adults:

Group homes are available for adults requiring services and unable to care for themselves. As required and available, adult foster homes are recruited and used. Clients are placed where services are available including outside of Nunavut. Services required are for intellectually challenged, physically and mentally challenged with an assortment of behavioral difficulties. To encourage independence clients are also assisted in supported independent living.

Community Corrections Services:

In communities where Justice has not assumed the work, and at the request of Justice, the Probation Officer's roles are performed by social workers such as: supervision of offenders sentenced to periods of probation, conditional sentence or conditionally released from imprisonment; surveillance of the conduct of released offenders to ensure conditions are met; counseling; assisting and supporting the offender; taking action with regard to serious breaches or required modifications to the probation order; preparation of reports for Court, supervision of youth under probation and monitoring of community services performed by young offenders; restitution and victim-offender reconciliation programs; co-

operating with parole authorities to suspend conditional release of offenders as appropriate; and organizing and developing community service work. .

Adoption Services:

The Department of Health and Social Services, under the Adoptions Act and the Aboriginal Custom Adoptions Act, is responsible for all adoption services in the Territory. The Director of Adoptions is responsible for departmental, private, family, stepparent, and international adoptions in the Territory. The Director is involved, as required by each of these types of adoptions identified above, as educator and facilitator. The Director is also responsible for filing court documents for Departmental Adoptions.

Adoption is a lifelong experience that affects adopted children, and adults, and birth and adoptive families. It is both a legal and a social process. The purpose of adoption is to provide every child legally available for adoption with the stability and security of new and permanent family ties, giving paramount consideration to the child's best interest.

Beliefs & Principles:

The following values guide adoption practice for children who are legally available for adoption:

- Children require permanence, and the earlier this occurs, the more beneficial it is for them
- Every child needs a permanent legal family; therefore adoption must be thoroughly considered for every child
- All types of families and parent compositions should be actively explored as potential adoptive placements.
- Children, birth parents, prospective adoptive parents and caregivers should be provided with an understanding of the lifelong implications of adoption with complete information to assist them in making informed decisions.
- Openness in adoption enables members of the adoption circle to maintain family and cultural connections and relationships and assists the child in developing a strong, healthy identity.

Special considerations for Inuit children:

- In no way does the adoption of an Inuit child limit or add to any existing aboriginal rights that a person may have.
- Services to ensure that the cultural identity of Inuit children in care is preserved are provided within the context of the importance to the child of having a permanent life plan.

Intercountry adoptions:

- The Convention of Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoptions (The Hague Convention) has the force of law in Nunavut and guides adoption practice for children who are involved in intercountry adoption.
- When working with countries in which the convention is not in force, the principles and practices outlined in The Hague convention are honoured and followed wherever possible.

Interprovincial Adoptions:

Practice in interprovincial adoption is guided by the Adoption Act and the “Provincial/Territorial Protocol on Children and Families Moving Between Provinces and Territories” (March 2001).

Public Guardian and Trustee Services:

Under the Guardianship and Trusteeship Act, the Office of the Public Guardian reviews all guardianship applications and documents before they are presented to the Court. The Public Guardian can be appointed by the Court to represent a person who has no family members or friends who are willing, suitable or able to act as guardians. Guardians make decisions regarding activities of daily living other than financial affairs. Guardian NU works with Guardians of other jurisdictions to ensure best interests of Nunavut clients are met outside of Nunavut and that clients be repatriated where possible.