

Partnering Together for Person-and-Family Centric Care

Stepped Care 2.0 in the Northwest Territories

We all have different needs when it comes to mental wellness. When we have access to a diverse range of service options, we're more likely to get the right care at the right time. This is a foundation of the [Stepped Care 2.0© \(SC2.0\)](#)¹ approach.

In March 2020, the Government of the Northwest Territories (NWT) partnered with the [Mental Health Commission of Canada](#) and [Stepped Care Solutions](#) to implement SC2.0. The goal was to increase access to mental wellness and addictions recovery supports and services across the territory by reducing or eliminating waitlists for counselling, expanding options and reducing barriers to care.

Through service improvements, service provider training, community engagement, and the launch of the Mental Wellness & Addictions Recovery Advisory Group, the implementation of SC2.0 has enhanced the way services are delivered to NWT residents. Reach, variety, and flexibility of services has been greatly expanded, including increased access to counselling.

From 2020 to 2022, more than 47,500 counselling sessions were held – with 27 per cent being same-day or drop-in sessions. NWT residents also have access to new e-mental health options they can use on their own or with the support of a counsellor. Service users said these changes have had positive impacts on their lives.

“ Since partnering with the Mental Health Commission of Canada and Stepped Care Solutions in March 2020, we have improved the delivery of NWT mental wellness and addictions recovery services. SC2.0 has helped increase the flexibility of culturally safe mental wellness services available to residents, reducing wait times and increasing satisfaction with their counselling experience.”

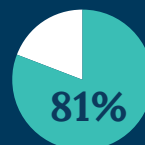
– **Julie Green**, Minister of Health and Social Services, GNWT

OUTCOMES

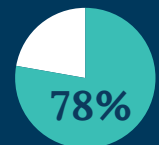
Wait times for mental wellness services were **reduced by 79%** between 2020 and 2022, and long intake processes and precursors to care have been removed.



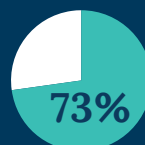
72% of service users surveyed were satisfied with wait times for counselling.



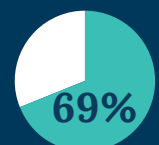
of Indigenous service users surveyed were satisfied with the safety of the counselling environment.



of service users surveyed were satisfied with their involvement in decisions about their care.



of service users surveyed were satisfied with their overall counselling experience.



of service users surveyed were satisfied with overall life changes following counselling.

¹ Stepped Care 2.0©, coined by Peter Cornish, is under copyright. Learn more about Stepped Care 2.0 at <https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/what-we-do/access/stepped-care-2-0/>

THE WAY FORWARD

Implementing SC2.0 in the NWT led to the following recommendations, which will guide the way forward as it continues to strengthen its system of care and can also be applied by other jurisdictions as they implement SC2.0.

“When you are broken and mentally drained and decide to ask for help, you are hopeful that there may be a light at the end of the tunnel. You want to know you are not alone and can overcome your struggles. You seek assurance that with help, you can improve your mental health and lead a 'normal' life. Thankfully, within a Stepped Care 2.0 system, people are provided with a variety of care options to meet their own needs.”

– Service user



Community engagement and partnerships: Continue to reach out, listen to what is needed, and build relationships with communities, Indigenous partners, Mental Wellness & Addictions Recovery Advisory Group, health-system stakeholders, and other organizations. Ongoing relationship building with a focus on continuous quality improvement in anti-racism, cultural safety, and enhanced Indigenous programming will help rebuild trust and create safer spaces.



Leadership: Maintain strong, supportive leadership while offering support for solution-finding and program success. Develop clinical leaders and champions among service providers.



Program effectiveness tracking: Implement an integrated electronic method to streamline data collection and support measurement-based tracking of outcomes, program effectiveness, engagement, training activities, and next steps.



Program promotion, support, communication, and engagement: Communicate consistently about SC2.0, its range of services available across the NWT, and how to access them. Use a multi-pronged approach to reach as many service providers and service users as possible. Request feedback to support service enhancement.



Sustainable continuous improvement: Incorporate opportunities for continuous feedback to support ongoing improvement of services and access to care. Look for ways to enhance workforce capacity, including engaging Elders, and leveraging online services and peer support.

If you are a NWT resident who needs support, please visit the resources available to you here: <https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/en/services/mental-wellness-and-addictions-recovery>.

You are not alone.

To download full report, visit <https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/resource/stepped-care-nwt>

