

**Child and Family Services Quality Improvement Plan**

Mr. Speaker, today I will be tabling the Child and Family Services Quality Improvement Plan. The Quality Improvement Plan sets out actions that we are taking to address issues identified as part of our internal reviews, the 2018 Auditor General's Report and from feedback from staff, Indigenous governments and other stakeholders in our system. Our number one priority is the safety and wellbeing of children and youth in our care, and this Plan provides clear direction, priority areas and actions for improving our Child and Family Services system in order to achieve better outcomes for children, youth, and their families while ensuring our system operates in compliance with legislation.

The Plan integrates four underlying strategic directions; enhancing a culture of quality; human resource planning, building staff capacity; and engagement; into ten priority areas that the Department and Health and Social Services and Health Authorities have been focussing on to improve the Child and Family Services system.

We have begun embedding quality improvements into the foundation of the Child and Family Services system. Based on the new approach for quality improvement, planning, monitoring, and acting on the findings, we are establishing a culture of accountability and responsiveness.

Feedback from our stakeholders over the past several months, including a face-to-face meeting with Indigenous governments in May, helped reprioritize and refine the action items in this Quality Improvement Plan. We have a total of 70 action items, of which 19 are completed and 51 are on track.

We piloted enhanced investigation skills training in April to ensure staff have the skills needed to conduct critical interviews and investigations to better serve our children, youth, and families. We also developed an enhanced Child and Protection Worker Statutory Core Training program in May, which includes a partnership with the Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation to enhance cultural safety. In June and July, the Foundation delivered a full day of On-The-Land learning experiences, and facilitated in-person testimonial from a former youth in care.

Human resources planning is another strategic driver of the Plan. To decrease the number of vacancies of Child and Family Services staff, we developed a comprehensive human resources recruitment and retention plan in May. We also acquired 21 new child and family services positions in April that will help us address capacity and staffing challenges across the NWT. By reducing vacancies, staff will have smaller caseloads which will allow them to provide better support to the children, youth and families they serve.

In February and April, refresher training on the four established Structured Decision Making® Tools was also provided to all supervisors and managers, and frontline staff in the Sahtu and Beaufort-Delta as well as the piloting of advanced interviewing training with 15 child and family services staff.

An oversight mechanism for the practice of transferring guardianship was also established in April. This mechanism gives the Statutory Director increased oversight over the practice of transferring guardianship and ensures that files are reviewed and completed in a timely manner.

Quality improvement is a process and not an event. We have built flexibility into our Plan to help make sure that we are on the right path, are adjusting our approach when needed, and are considering all options for success. The actions I've detailed are just some of the highlighted improvements that we have already made in the system since we began our work in developing the Quality Improvement Plan. Many of the actions identified are ongoing to ensure that they are integrated and sustained into how we provide these important services, instead of simply becoming check marks on a list.

Mr. Speaker, transparency and partnership are the foundation of our quality improvement approach. To ensure the public and key stakeholders are kept up-to-date on the progress on each of the action items identified in the Plan, we have launched an online Progress Tracker that can be viewed on the Department of Health and Social Service's website. This tracker will be used to report regularly on how we are doing in meeting our improvement outcomes.

It is important to acknowledge that there is still a lot work to do on our quality improvement journey. The Quality Improvement Plan is intended to be a living document that will allow us to continuously respond to, learn from, adjust and improve our services to children and their families over the longer term.

To realize our goal of better outcomes for children, youth and families, we will need the continued support and engagement of our partners to inform our quality improvements. Through ongoing engagement with frontline staff, Indigenous governments and organizations, the Foster Family Coalition of the NWT, Standing Committees, key stakeholders and those in our care, we can ensure that we remain on the right path.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize and thank those who have contributed to the development and implementation of the Quality Improvement Plan. This work is reflective of our staff as well as many stakeholders and partners who are deeply committed to improving outcomes for children, youth and families, and is a commitment to working together to ensure the safety, wellbeing and future successes of those in our care.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.