



June 5, 2020

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON  
MLA, HAY RIVER SOUTH

**Oral Questions 232-19(2): Mental Health  
support for Staffing at South Mackenzie Correctional Center**

This letter is in follow-up to the Oral Question you raised on May 26, 2020, regarding mental health supports for corrections workers across the territory, and I committed to provide further information on what is available.

The Department of Justice is committed to the mental health and wellness of all employees. Emotional and mental health resources are available to all GNWT employees through the Human Resources website. These supports include access to local community resources in addition to services through Lifespeak and AbilitiCBT. AbilitiCBT provides an interactive and convenient virtual program with a support stream that targets COVID-19 related anxiety for employees. This service is delivered by professionally trained therapists through an online platform and is accessible 24/7 from home or anywhere through smartphone or tablet. Corrections Service staff are encouraged to access these resources as well as the Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP) to assist in managing stress and their mental well-being.

An inter-departmental working group has been formed with officials from the Departments of Justice and Finance to identify issues and develop a workplan to address: training requirements; appropriate tools and resources for employee mental health and wellness; and recruitment and retention within the NWT Corrections Service.

The Department of Justice has also been engaged in discussions with its federal, provincial and territorial counterparts around supporting employee wellness in correctional services across Canada. Jurisdictions have noted increases in work related injuries, predominantly psychological, as well as challenges around recruitment and retention. These discussions have included sharing of promising and best practices that have been undertaken in responding to these issues.

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In service training in Mental Health First Aid, and Compassion Fatigue is currently offered to corrections staff, and to those in the Corrections Northern Recruitment Training Program. The Corrections Service is also currently working with southern contractors on wellness training for front line staff and supervisors/managers. Due to Covid-19 this training was delayed however, the Department is in the process of confirming when new training dates can be secured.

Thank you for your continued interest in the wellbeing of our frontline staff and the services available to them to assist in the management of their mental health and wellness. If you require further information, please contact my office.

Thank you.



Caroline Wawzonek  
Minister of Justice

- c. Mr. Tim Mercer, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly  
Ms. Charlene Doolittle, Deputy Minister, Justice  
Mr. David Hastings, Legislative Coordinator