



May 24, 2020

LISA SEMMLER  
MLA, INUVIK TWIN LAKES**Oral Question 111-19(2) Mental Health and Suicide Resources for Students**

This letter is in follow-up to the Oral Question you raised on February 28, 2020 regarding programs and services the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) provides to students that struggle with mental health and suicide. The mental health and well-being of students is a priority of the Department, and we offer a variety of resources to support our stakeholders in the school system.

Mental health literacy for students is addressed in the mandated curriculum through the Northwest Territories Health Program for Kindergarten to Grade 9, and the Career and Life Management course for high school students. These courses build student capacity in managing personal wellness, supporting peers at an appropriate level, and identifying how to reach out to professional resources when necessary.

ECE collaborates with the Department of Health and Social Services (HSS) to offer *Talking About Mental Illness (TAMI)*, a mental health literacy program for teachers and students that includes an interactive presentation for students from local residents who have lived experience with mental illness. Additionally, HSS offers two other mental health related programs available to community groups and the public upon request: the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training Program (ASIST), and Mental Health First Aid for Northern Peoples.

Through our partnership with Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority (NTHSSA) and HSS on the Child and Youth Care Counsellor (CYCC) initiative, a variety of confidential counselling supports are available in schools across the territory to children, youth and their families.

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These professional counsellors provide individual, group and family therapy in a school and/or community setting and are trained in dealing with mental health topics, such as suicidal ideation. During the current public health crisis, CYCCs have increased their engagement with students and families through various methods to ensure continued access to counselling services.

It is imperative for educators to have support for mental health concerns in the school and classroom, as well as professional development opportunities. ECE has a Territorial-based Support Team (TBST) consisting of interdisciplinary professionals who support the clinical work provided by DHSS clinicians. The TBST aims to build capacity of school staff to support students with complex needs, including those related to mental health.

In addition to the formalized mental health programs described above, existing programming in schools also contributes to protective factors for student mental health. These programs include Elders in schools, on-the-land activities, Indigenous language programs, self-regulation and mindfulness, healthy relationships, youth equity and leadership programming.

I appreciate your questions and clear demonstration of care for youth and families. ECE will continue to work with our partners to improve the mental health and wellness of children and youth in our schools and provide quality, professional supports that are meaningful, evidence-based, and rooted in best practice.

Thank you for your questions and interests in this matter.



R.J. Simpson  
Minister, Education, Culture  
and Employment

- c. Minister, Health and Social Services  
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly  
Deputy Minister, Education, Culture and Employment  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services  
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