

THE HONOURABLE R.J. SIMPSON  
MINISTER OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND EMPLOYMENT

**Delivering the Child and Youth Care Counselling Program**

Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question asked by the Member for Great Slave on October 26, 2022 regarding Delivering the Child and Youth Care Counsellor Program.

This program has recently been rebranded from Child and Youth Care Counselling to Child and Youth Counselling. The purpose of this rebrand is to improve recruitment efforts and increase the number of candidates we receive for these positions. Throughout this response I will use this updated language.

**1. Can the Minister explain what engagement or consultation the Department of Education, Culture and Employment conducted with counsellors already working in the school system prior to implementing the new child youth care counsellor positions?**

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment, or ECE, engaged Superintendents through the NWT Superintendent Association, where Superintendents bring the concerns of Education Body staff to the table and suggest ways to resolve issues moving forward.

Prior to the introduction of the Child and Youth Counselling, or CYC, initiative, there were 18 counsellors employed in the school system. Affected employees were considered for the new CYC initiative positions if they could demonstrate they:

- Met the qualifications of the job description, which requires a master's degree in Child and Youth Care, Counselling, Clinical Social Work or Education with a focus on therapeutic counselling;
- Had equivalencies in terms of education and experience; or
- Had similar qualifications for a developmental transfer into the position.

Education Bodies were informed within a year of the initiative being launched. As the initiative was rolled out incrementally across regions, Education Bodies had between one and four years of notice.

Existing counsellors were given the opportunity to seek additional qualifications to meet the criteria of the CYC position.

**2. Can the Minister detail the qualifications typically accepted for child and youth care counsellors in place in our school system?**

The current job descriptions require a master's degree in Child and Youth Care, Counselling, Clinical Social Work, or Education with a focus on therapeutic counselling. The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority is currently in the process of updating the qualifications and screening criteria included in the CYC job descriptions to allow for a larger hiring pool. This may include expanding the description to allow for local counsellors who can demonstrate equivalencies that meet the requirements of the position.

**3. Do school principals get to evaluate the child and youth care counsellors?**

School principals are not involved in the performance evaluation of the Child and Youth Counsellors, as they are employees of the Health and Social Services Authorities. ECE has an Education Body Committee System through which Education Body input and feedback is provided; within this system, Education Bodies inform ECE of both successes and issues so that the department can collaborate with regions and with the Department of Health and Social Services to address issues and provide support. ECE recognizes there is a need for a formal and direct communication mechanism between Clinical Supervisors and school principals.

**4. Is there a way for school administrators to speak formally to the effectiveness of this program operating in the schools?**

As members of the CYC Steering Committee, Education Body Superintendents can raise concerns and ideas for improvement during those regular meetings, as well as through the NWT Superintendent Association and the Student Support Subcommittee meetings.

There is also a monitoring and evaluation plan for the CYC initiative in place, which includes formal mechanisms for feedback. I'll speak to the monitoring and evaluation plan, and the associated formal mechanisms for feedback, in my next response.

**5. What evaluative feedback mechanisms are in place to assess the effectiveness of the child and youth care counsellor's program?**

When the CYC program was launched in the 2019-2020 school year, a monitoring and evaluation plan was launched along with it. Annually, ECE and the Department of Health and Social Services gather monitoring data about the CYC initiative that speaks to regional successes and challenges, in the regions where the initiative was implemented. As part of the monitoring and evaluation plan, these annual monitoring activities are then used to inform the CYC initiative evaluation, which is currently taking place.

Examples of monitoring information that have been collected include: turnover rates, number of monthly sessions by session type, average weekly hours that CYCs spend in schools, and number of individual students seen by school, by region. This data is collected and shared annually with the CYC initiative team for the purpose of ongoing program improvement. Due to its sensitive nature, this data is not reported publicly.

The monitoring information that the CYC initiative partners collect does not include annual feedback from children, youth, and families. Child, youth, and family feedback, as well as feedback from CYCs, educators, and administrators, is instead built into the evaluation stage of our monitoring and evaluation approach the CYC initiative. That evaluation phase is taking place this year. The department has begun gathering feedback from CYCs, educators, and administrators, as well as Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations. The department is also working with a consultant and a youth advisory committee on the child, youth and family portion of the engagement and feedback, which will take place between February and April 2023.

As part of the evaluation taking place this year, in May 2022, ECE and the Department of Health and Social Services surveyed health and education stakeholders, including school administrators, on the CYC initiative. An internal "What We Heard" report was prepared and this information will also be used as part of the evaluation process and report to inform the overall program design updates.

Another mechanism for child, youth and family feedback, for those families that participate in the CYC initiative is the NWT Community Counselling Program Client Satisfaction Questionnaire. This tool is part of the Department of Health and Social Services' regular monitoring and reporting processes. Client Satisfaction is an indicator of the extent to which services and supports meet the needs of individuals and families and is considered a key dimension of service quality. The questionnaire is administered regularly, every two to three years.

The most recent survey was issued in 2021 and a targeted effort was made to include the CYC initiative. Results of the questionnaire will be used to support monitoring of the CYC initiative. Responses from children and youth, or their parents or guardians, who have experience receiving services from CYCs also help to inform levels of satisfaction with the initiative.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.