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**NUTAQQANUT INULRAMIRNULLU**  
UQAQTIKHAANIK

REPRÉSENTANT DE  
**L'ENFANCE ET DE LA JEUNESSE**

REPRESENTATIVE FOR  
**CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

July 7, 2020

### **Government of Nunavut's proposed actions to address mental health needs of young Nunavummiut deemed "entirely unacceptable" by Representative for Children and Youth**

**Iqaluit, NU** – Responses received from the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Arctic College (departments) detailing their proposed actions to give effect to the youth-informed recommendations made in *Our Minds Matter: A Youth-Informed Review of Mental Health Services for Young Nunavummiut (Our Minds Matter)*, as a result of the Representative for Children and Youth's Office systemic review of mental health services for young people, are "entirely unacceptable".

At the time of the report's release in May 2019, departments were advised that they were to provide a response including the steps they proposed to take to give effect to the recommendations by September 30, 2019.

The Representative for Children and Youth, Jane Bates says, "My office has exercised patience and persistence when departments did not respond to requests for feedback, missed numerous deadlines to provide responses, when the responses provided inadequate information on the steps departments were taking to give effect to the recommendations, and when the information changed from one response to the next." A final response was not provided until February 28, 2020.

Through correspondence received, we determined that there was agreement with six, partial agreement with five, and disagreement with one of the 15 recommendations made. For three recommendations, it is still unclear if there is agreement or disagreement. Attached are copies of the comments made by departments regarding the recommendations.

"I have given the departments' responses consideration and find that the proposed actions lack substance, commitment, collaboration, and a sense of urgency that the mental health of young Nunavummiut deserve."

The RCYO has raised the matter to the attention of the Commissioner in Executive Council, as per Section 34(2) of the *Representative for Children and Youth Act*.

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**About the Representative for Children and Youth's Office (RCYO):** The RCYO is an independent child and youth advocacy office that ensures the Government of Nunavut supports and protects the rights and best interests of young Nunavummiut. Please visit our website at [www.rcynu.ca](http://www.rcynu.ca)

**Summary of responses and commitments made by departments  
to give effect to recommendations made in  
*Our Minds Matter: A Youth Informed Review of Mental Health Services for Young Nunavummiut***

|    | <b>Recommendation made</b>   | <b>Recommendation accepted</b>  | <b>Response and commitments made to recommendation</b>   |
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|    |  | <p>Information taken from the from the October 24, 2019 response from the deputy ministers of the Department of Health and Department of Education on behalf of the Government of Nunavut, the February 11, 2020 response from the deputy minister of the Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs on behalf of the Government of Nunavut, and the response received from the Department of Education dated February 28, 2020, "RE: Government of Nunavut Response to "Our Minds Matter" – Correction to Recommendation 4 Response."</p> |  |
| 1. | <p>The Department of Health and the Department of Education collaborate to ensure a full range of mental health services, including universal programming, targeted interventions, and intensive interventions are delivered in Nunavut schools.</p> | <p>Partially Agree</p> <p>"The Department of Health (Health) agrees that collaboration with the Department of Education (Education) is important to ensure that a full range of mental health services are available to children and youth. [The Department of Health recognizes that school settings may not be the appropriate location to provide some of the services that may be required."</p>  | <p>"Departments have been actively collaborating on several initiatives aimed at ensuring that a full range of mental health services," such as:</p> <p>The Government of Nunavut (GN) is "in the process of developing a comprehensive interdepartmental protocol for the coordination of services. The Departments of Health and Family Services are co-leading this work as the co-chairs of the Inuusivut Committee (formerly the Quality of Life Committee), and it is anticipated that the protocol will be finalized by June 2020."</p> <p>and</p> <p>"The Department of Education and the Department of Health met in January 2020 to re-establish a working group to focus on collaboration on several issues, including the provision of mental health services in schools."</p> |
| 2. | <p>The Department of Education ensure that all school staff,</p>   | <p>Agree</p>  | <p>The Department of "Education ensures that all school staff...</p>   |

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| <p>including <i>Ilinniarvimmi Inuusilirijit</i>, guidance counsellors, teachers, support staff, and principals, receive basic mental health training on how to connect children and youth with appropriate mental health services and how to support them while this connection is being made.</p> |  | <p>receive basic mental health training on how to connect children and youth with appropriate mental health services and how to support them while this connection is being made.”</p> <p>Although there are a number of mental health-related training opportunities, the department “does not track how many and which school staff have received the basic mental health training indicated.”</p> <p>“Training in identifying the pathways to mental health support was delivered to student support teachers and ilinniarvimmi inuusilirijit in fall 2019.”</p> <p>The Department of Education committed to providing ASIST training in Whale Cove in February 2020. Further, “the department is providing Trauma Informed Practice, Our Children, Our Responsibility, and safeTALK training to school staff in Kugaaruk, Gjoa Haven, Igloodik, Hall Beach, Pond Inlet, and Pangnirtung in spring 2020”, and is working on providing training in these areas to all schools over the next few years.</p> <p>The Department of Education requested the “Quality of Life Secretariat to provide the Indigenous Cultural Competency workshop to school staff in Baker Lake, Grise Fiord, Resolute Bay,</p> |
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|    |  |                 | Arctic Bay and the high school in Rankin Inlet during the 2019-20 school year.” The Department of Education is working on delivering this workshop to all school staff over the next several years.   |
| 3. | The Department of Education enhance mental health literacy in schools.   | Agree           | <p>The Department of Education is “hiring a Team Lead for Aulajaaqtut.”</p> <p>The Department of Education is “ensuring that social-emotional learning and language (vocabulary) is being developed in Inuktitut.”</p> <p>The Department of Education plans to pilot Zippy’s friends, an evidence-based mental health promotion program for ages five to seven during the 2019-20 school year.</p>  |
| 4. | The Department of Education, in consultation with the Department of Justice, immediately address the consent barrier that exists when students who may benefit from mental health services are identified in the school environment.                             | Partially Agree | <p>“The issue of mature minors and the consent barrier for young people under the age of 16 is something that requires further discussion and decision making within the Department of Education, in consultation with the Department of Justice.”</p> <p>The Department of Education’s Education Support Services Directive was revised and finalized in July 2019 to align with the Interagency Information Sharing Protocol as it relates to consent.”</p> <p>“Changes to the Education Support Services Directive were communicated to student support teachers and Ilinniarvimmi Inuusilirijit during their annual conferences in October 2019.”</p> |
| 5. | The Department of Health ensure that contracts that adequately meet service demands are established for out-of-territory mental health services for children and youth where these services are not currently available in Nunavut, and ensure that children and | Agree           | “An individual returning to their home community after receiving [out-of-territory] mental health and/or addictions treatment can expect follow-up support and treatment from community mental health staff, who will work with the care providers  |

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|    | <p>youth receive appropriate aftercare and follow-up upon return to their home communities.</p>   |                                   | <p>from the respective [out-of-territory] facility to ensure that a plan for continued wellness is put in place.”</p> <p>“While Health does deliver aftercare and follow-up upon return to their home communities on a case-by-case basis, Health will consider how to include follow-up options in contracts with out-of-territory facilities.”</p> <p>“While there are eight facilities on the current [Standing Offer Agreement] that offer specific treatment services for children and youth, there is a significant demand for beds for clients under the age of 19 across Canada.”</p> |
| 6. | <p>The Government of Nunavut establish an in-territory facility that offers residential mental health treatment for children and youth, including, but not limited to, psychiatric, psychological, behavioural, and counselling services. These services should incorporate family engagement and healing and be grounded in Inuit knowledge, culture, and parenting practices.</p> | <p>Neither agree or disagree</p>  | <p>The Department of “Health is committed to developing a continuum of mental health and addiction services based on best practices. This may or may not include a mental health facility in-territory.”</p> <p>“Programming and target populations for the Nunavut Recovery Centre (NRC) have not been decided yet. However, it is very unlikely that the NRC will be providing the full spectrum of mental health services for children or youth.”</p>  |
| 7. | <p>The Department of Health implement recommendations iii(4) and iii(5) from the 2015 Coroner’s Inquest into Suicide, and apply these recommendations in cases of suicidal ideation in addition to suicide attempts. These</p>  | <p>Neither agree nor disagree</p> | <p>“Recommendations iii(4) and iii(5) are reflected in the new Mental Health Act before Standing Committee on Legislation.”</p> <p>The proposed Act “allows for the selection of an alternative</p>   |

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|    | <p>recommendations state, in part, that the Government of Nunavut,<br/> Recommendation iii(4)<br/> Establish a formal follow-up protocol for individuals who have attempted suicide by April 2016.<br/> Recommendation iii(5)<br/> Change the Mental Health Act to allow for family to be contacted and immediately involved after a suicide attempt regardless of the age of the person who has attempted suicide. This should be systematic, and it requires also that Mental Health workers receive training and re-orientation to always develop safety plans and conduct counselling with the family present. This is a new recommendation that involves allotment of resources to re-training and a change in orientation to a more family and community intervention approach.</p> <p>To supplement recommendation iii(5), we further recommend adding the option of an alternative adult if a family member is deemed inappropriate.</p> |   | <p>adult in the case of a mature minor” and “in the case of a minor, the tikkuqtaujuit [selected representatives] are the minor’s parents, or other person who are lawfully entitled to give consent to the minor’s medical treatment.”</p>  |
| 8. | <p>The Department of Health clarify the position titles, roles, responsibilities, and reporting structure of all mental health-related positions to ensure children and youth are connected with the existing services that best fit their needs.</p>  | <p>Partially agree<br/> “Health has reviewed the roles and reporting structure... and staff work to connect children and youth with services to fit their needs.”</p> | <p>As a result of the completed review of roles and reporting structure, “a Mental Health and Addictions (MHA) Program Supervisor has been created for each region.”<br/> “Every community has a youth program facilitator and the [Mental Health and Addictions] territorial team has dedicated youth specific funds to support the</p> |

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|     |   |  | implementation programming by these staff.”   |
| 9.  | <p>The Department of Health:</p> <p>a. finalize and deliver a comprehensive training program, that includes a substantial focus on delivering supports to children and youth, to mental health and addictions outreach workers; and</p> <p>b. ensure that in communities with more than one mental health and addictions outreach worker, one of these positions is dedicated to working with children and youth.</p> | <p>Partially Agree</p> <p>“Health agrees that mental health workers should be able to support children and youth. Care is provided through a team and not siloed individuals.”</p>                                 | <p>“The training manual has been completed with the first group of staff trained.”</p> <p>“The plan is that each community dedicates at least one of their outreach positions to youth.” The Department of “Health, however did not name the outreach positions to specifically state ‘child and youth’, but instead put it in the job description.”</p>  |
| 10. | <p>Nunavut Arctic College, in partnership with the Department of Health, offer professional education programs that build the capacity of the mental health workforce in Nunavut, and that these programs offer a focus or specialty related to child and youth mental health.</p>  | <p>Partially Agree</p> <p>“Health agrees with providing training and programs for current and potential staff”. “There are however limitations via the Nunavut Arctic College (NAC) for specialized programs.”</p> | <p>The Department of “Health will do what is feasible and based on identified priorities.”</p> <p>“During its next formal curriculum review, the Social Service Worker Program is committed to reviewing its curriculum to ensure child/youth mental health material is integrated into program content.”</p> <p>“NAC [Nunavut Arctic College] is open to working with partners to develop content and curriculum specific to child and youth mental health in currently offered programs, or in other programming.”</p> <p>“NAC welcomes a discussion on the development of a mental health related professional program.”</p> |
| 11. | <p>The Department of Health, or any other department hiring a mental health service provider:</p> <p>a. engage the services of Elders or cultural consultants to guide</p>  | <p>Neither agree nor disagree</p>  | <p>“Cultural consultants or elders can help to inform practice but can’t necessarily be involved in specific cases.”</p>  |

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|     | <p>the delivery of mental health services; and</p> <p>b. offer an ongoing spectrum of cultural competency training and ensure that a minimum of one component is completed prior to the start of employment.</p> |       | <p>“The [Mental Health and Addictions] division has made Indigenous Cultural Competence (ICC) training mandatory for mental health staff, starting with professional staff.” As staffing levels change on near daily basis, it is challenging for [The Department of] Health to provide an accurate figure of the staff who have completed the training.</p> <p>“Mental Health Outreach workers are hired locally in all Nunavut communities to support the delivery of mental health services.”</p> |
| 12. | <p>The Department of Health increase public and service provider awareness of existing mental health services available for children, youth, and their families.</p>   | Agree | <p>“Health and Addictions Outreach workers provide outreach support to schools and other areas within the community where youth are present.”</p> <p>“The [Mental Health and Addictions] and the Quality Life divisions will continue to work with health promotion to increase awareness.”</p>  |
| 13. | <p>The Department of Health develop a youth-informed public awareness campaign for children, youth, and their families to reduce mental health stigma.</p>   | Agree | <p>In 2019-2020, “the Quality of Life Secretariat is funding Embrace Life Council to develop a youth informed public awareness campaign for children, youth and their families to reduce mental health stigma.”</p> <p>“Embrace Life Council is utilizing a youth-centered mixed gender working group representative of communities across Nunavut for this project.”</p>  |

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| 14. | The Government of Nunavut, under the leadership of the Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs, develop and implement an interdepartmental service coordination protocol for the delivery of child and youth-related services. | Agree    | <p>The Government of Nunavut is developing a comprehensive interdepartmental protocol for the coordination of services, which will be finalized in June 2020.</p> <p>The Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs (EIA) needs to consult with departments and then the protocol will need Cabinet approval.</p> <p>As of February 2020, EIA was working with an “interagency group on policies that will affect this initiative directly” by “looking at options for a general protocol for information sharing and/or incorporating mental health programs and services into existing protocols.”</p> |
| 15. | The Department of Community and Government Services, in partnership with the Department of Culture and Heritage, hamlets, and young Nunavummiut, develop and implement a territorial child and youth recreation strategy and action plan.    | Disagree | <p>“The Department of Community and Government Services does not agree with the recommendation to develop a strategy and action plan <u>specific to children and youth at this time.</u>”</p>   |