



STRONGEST FAMILIES INSTITUTE (SFI) QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Strongest Families Institute

Q: What is Strongest Families Institute (SFI)?

A: SFI is a not-for-profit organization based in Nova Scotia that provides support to children and families seeking help for mental health and other issues that impact wellbeing.

Care is provided to families through telephone coaching sessions. Educational materials and tools to supplement the telephone coaching sessions are mailed to the family home.

SFI services are currently available in 8 Canadian jurisdictions.

Q: Why did the Department choose Strongest Families?

A: Through engagement activities throughout the North, the Department continued to hear that NWT residents were asking for additional options and modalities for support.

SFI was identified as a potential option for the NWT through our relationship with the Mental Health Commission of Canada, through research and engagement with other jurisdictions who already use it across Canada, and additional engagement with residents. In addition, there was an opportunity for a financial partnership with Bell Let's Talk, who has been working to make Strongest Families available to people across the country in all provinces and territories.

The partnership with Bell is an exciting opportunity to bring new services to residents.

Q: Is there an NWT company that could provide this service?

A: At this time, there is no comparable service in the NWT or elsewhere in Canada.

SFI programming is evidence-based and coaches are highly trained and specialized in providing this type of distance support to families and individuals. It is exciting for NWT residents to have access to this specialized programming.

Q: How is Bell Let's Talk involved in the delivery of Strongest Families in the NWT?

A: Bell Let's Talk is dedicated to moving mental health forward in Canada by promoting awareness and action.

Bell Let's Talk is contributing \$50,000 per year over five years for a total of \$250,000 to support the implementation of Strongest Families in the NWT. The Department of Health and Social Services will be matching this investment by also contributing \$250,000 over five years.

This combined investment will provide access to programming for approximately 100 families per year.

Q: Why is the Department pursuing eMental Health options in the NWT?

A: Making eMental Health programs, like Strongest Families Institute (SFI), available across the NWT, means that individuals and families have more options to meet their unique needs.

This work directly responds to the feedback from residents telling us that they want and need different approaches to care, and options for how to receive services.

Strongest Families is the first of a handful of eMental Health program options that are being introduced as part of the Seamless Care Pathway approach to mental wellness and addictions recovery service delivery and the two year Mental Wellness and Addictions Recovery Action plan.

It is about matching people with the most appropriate type of care, at the right time, in the right place, by the right person – as defined by them.

Strongest Families Institute Programming and Access

Q: What kind of programs does SFI offer?

A: SFI offers a variety of programs that are designed for families. There are 6 key program areas that families can access depending on their needs:

- **ICAN (Conquer Anxiety and Nervousness) – Anxiety Program (18-30 years of age)**
 - Educates adults about anxiety and guides them as they learn skills to overcome anxiety, excessive worry and how to cope with major life stressors. This program is effective at decreasing anxiety and stress; and increasing confidence and independence.
- **Parents Empowering Kids – Behaviour Difficulties Program (3-12 years of age)**
 - Helps parents learn to deal with common childhood behaviour problems such as temper outbursts, not listening, verbal and physical aggression and difficulties paying attention.
- **Chase Worries Away – Anxiety Program (6-11 years of age)**
 - Educates parents and children about anxiety and guides them as they learn relaxation skills and how to face worry in real life. The program typically deals with difficulties separating from loved ones, worry about performance, and specific fears.
- **Defeat Anxiety – Anxiety Program (12-17 years of age)**

- Educates youth and their parents about anxiety and guides them as they learn relaxation skills and how to face worry in real life. The program typically deals with difficulties/worry about performance, social anxiety, and specific fears.
- **Dry Nights Ahead – Nighttime Bedwetting (5-12 years of age)**
 - Helps children overcome bedwetting with the use of a urine alarm, reward system, and weekly telephone support from a coach.
- **Chase Pain Away – Recurrent Headache/Abdominal Pain (9-16 years of age)**
 - Focuses on teaching stress management, avoidance of triggers, dietary modifications, appropriate use of over-the-counter medication, and with weekly telephone support from a coach.

Q: How is SFI different than what is being offered in the NWT already?

A: Implementing SFI programming in the NWT provides children and families in the North with more options for care. Residents have told us that they want more options and different ways of receiving support. Implementing Strongest Families is one way that we are responding to this need.

SFI programming is delivered primarily through telephone coaching sessions and also includes physical materials being sent to the family in the mail.

SFI is easy to access – families do not need to take time off work or school or get childcare to access the program. There is no waitlist for the service and it is delivered in a flexible manner including the ability to schedule sessions in the evening.

Parents could finish off a work day, have their children in bed, and sit down with a cup of tea and spend some time talking with their SFI coach.

There are no concerns around confidentiality because families receive the service on the phone in the comfort and privacy of their home.

Q: What languages is SFI programming available in?

A: English and French.

Q: Is Strongest Families now the only option available to families?

A: SFI is not a replacement to any current programs or services available in the NWT. Families and individuals can access SFI programming separate from other services or in addition to them.

Families also have the option not to access SFI if they do not think it is the right choice for their needs.

Q: When will SFI programming be available to NWT residents?

A: Following the SFI launch event on January 15, 2020, training sessions are scheduled with staff across the Territory. NWT residents will be able to access the program beginning on January 20, 2020.

Q: How will NWT residents be able to access SFI programming?

A: Initially referrals to SFI will be made through the Community Counselling Program (CCP). If a resident feels that they can benefit from the programming offered by SFI, they can self-refer to a counsellor by calling their local or regional CCP office.

Over time the plan is to increase the numbers and types of Health and Social Services professionals who can make referrals to SFI.

Q: How will wait times in the Community Counselling Program impact access to SFI?

A: Most communities do not have wait times for counselling services. Wait times exist mainly in some of our regional centres.

In larger communities that do have a wait time, same day appointments are offered. An individual wanting to discuss a referral to SFI could see a counsellor through a same day appointment.

By providing a greater number of service options, the implementation of programs like SFI will help to decrease wait times in communities that do have them.

Q: How will this program work in small communities?

A: As a distance service, SFI will be available across the NWT, even in our smallest communities.

NWT residents can self-refer to their local counsellor. In the communities that do not have a counselor available, residents can call their regional CCP office for a referral to SFI.

Q: How has the Department prepared SFI to deliver services to NWT communities?

A: All SFI certified coaches are all highly skilled in working with children and families and they are all diversity trained.

In addition, the Department has created and shared some education and awareness materials to orient SFI staff and coaches to the unique context and culture of the NWT and the realities of our small northern communities.

SFI leadership has travelled to the NWT already and will travel here again as necessary throughout our partnership.

Q: How will this program make a difference?

A: SFI is an enhancement to existing NWT services - it does not replace any services or supports nor does it limit an individual or family in the number and/or type of support(s) they choose to access.

SFI is being introduced in the North as an addition to the existing options available to NWT residents. Having another option for support allows families to choose what works for them and their needs. This is in line with a person and family centered culturally safe approach to care.

Offering a greater number of options for NWT residents will improve access to services and help to reduce waitlists for counselling services (where they exist).

For a family that lives in a small community without a counsellor, SFI programming could provide support in that family's own community, in their own home, at a time that is convenient for them.

Q: How many people will benefit from the implementation of SFI in the NWT?

A: Through the partnership with Bell there are sufficient resources to support approximately 100 NWT families to access Strongest Families each year.

The implementation will be monitored and tracked to identify future direction and needs.

Q: What benefits do we expect people to experience through the use of SFI?

A: SFI offers expert and specialized support for a variety of moderate mental health and behavioral issues for children, adults and families.

SFI programming can provide care in a way that is highly accessible, without waitlists and other barriers, and is centered around people's lives, providing choice and option that expands beyond face-to-face care.

If you would like this information in another official language, contact us at 1-855-846-9601.

Si vous voulez ces informations dans une autre langue officielle, téléphonez-nous au 1-855-846-9601.