



What We Heard

Proposed Amendments to the *Health and Social Services Professions Act*

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Regulated health and social services professions in the Northwest Territories (NWT) are currently governed by twelve separate pieces of legislation. The Department of Health and Social Services (Department) is responsible for the regulation of health and social services professionals in the NWT, excluding nurses.

From July 29 to August 30, 2024, Indigenous governments, professionals, stakeholders, and residents of the NWT were invited to provide comments and feedback on the "[Health and Social Services Professions Act Proposed Amendments Key Elements](#)" (Key Elements). The Key Elements set out amendments under consideration by the Department.

Proposed amendments to the *Health and Social Services Professions Act* (HSSPA) are intended to:

- Ensure the Act is reflective of current regulatory practices;
- Enhance measures to protect the public, including a requirement for employers to report unprofessional conduct to the Registrar, and a requirement for the Registrar to provide notice to employers and other regulatory bodies of licence conditions, suspensions, and cancellations;
- Facilitate the mobility of applicants already certified in other jurisdictions;
- Refine the role of the registrar and registration committees;
- Allow for self-regulation of professions under the Act; and
- Modernize language.

Objective

The Department intends to bring all health and social services professionals regulated by the Department under the HSSPA to ensure consistent and comprehensive regulatory frameworks for all health and social services professions.

Methodology

Key Elements for the public engagement were designed to elicit engagement and feedback.

The following document was developed and made available to the public on the [GNWT's Have Your Say](#) website:

- [Health and Social Services Professions Act Proposed Amendments Key Elements](#)

Results

From July 29 to August 30, 2024, the Department sought input and feedback from Indigenous governments, professionals, stakeholders and the public on the proposed changes outlined in the Key Elements. In total, there were eight (8) written submissions received.

Respondents identified support, areas of concern, and raised questions which are summarized below.

Background

The existing HSSPA is an ‘umbrella’ Act that regulates different health and social services professions under one statute. The Act sets the general requirements that apply to each profession regulated under it, such as the responsibilities of the Registrar of Health and Social Services Professions, registration and renewal procedures, appeal processes, and the handling of complaints and discipline.

The profession-specific regulations under the HSSPA cover all the specific requirements related to each profession. For example: protected titles, training, education, and continuing competency.

Together, the HSSPA and profession-specific regulations address the details associated with licensing professionals.

There are currently two regulations under the HSSPA:

- *Naturopathic Profession Regulations*
- *Psychology Profession Regulations*

The Department is currently working to bring other regulated health and social services professions under the HSSPA, with the eventual goal of bringing all regulated health and social services professions under the Act, with the exception of nursing professionals. The Department sought feedback on proposed new *Pharmacy Profession Regulations* from July 29 to August 30, 2024 and proposed new *Dental Hygienist Profession Regulations* from September 12 to October 14, 2024.

Public Engagement

Engagement on proposed amendments took place between July 29 and August 30, 2024, when the [“Health and Social Services Professions Act Proposed Amendments Key Elements”](#) was made available on the GNWT’s website.

The goal of the engagement was to solicit feedback from Indigenous governments, professionals, stakeholders, and NWT residents on the proposed amendments.

This report provides a summary of the feedback received. The views represented in this report reflect

the priorities and concerns of respondents. Responses should not be construed as representative of the Department's position or views. Conclusions or recommendations based on the concerns raised are not provided.

The feedback from this engagement, as summarized in this report, will be considered by the Department in making proposed amendments to the HSSPA.

What We Heard

The Department requested feedback on the Key Elements document and received eight (8) emailed responses.

Summaries of the responses are provided below and are organized by key element as proposed in the Key Elements document. General responses that are not specific to the key elements are also included below.

This report provides a summary of comments received during the engagement period only. Any additional feedback received following the engagement period will still be considered by the Department when moving forward with this work.

Responses

Registration Committees

- A respondent asked about registration committee establishment, composition and process, and the appointment, compensation, mandate, powers and enforcement abilities, qualifications, and accountability of members.

Boards and Panels of Inquiry

- A respondent asked about membership to boards of inquiry, their selection process and compensation.

Mandatory Reporting of Unprofessional Conduct

- Concern was raised that the proposal for mandatory reporting by employers lacks sufficient safeguards against malicious reporting and that there is a significant risk of employees facing wrongful accusations without any protective measures in place.

Approval of Professional Codes, Standards, and Programs

- Concern was raised that the shift of approval authority from the Minister to the Registrar prompts questions about the effectiveness of this change. Questions were asked about mechanisms in place to appeal decisions made by the Registrar.
- Comment was made respecting the requirement for engagement and feedback from professional associations.

Layperson Definition

- A respondent wondered if allowing someone from another profession to be considered a layperson could lead to bias in decision-making if they are inclined to favour the interests of their own profession.

Virtual Care

- Two respondents expressed the importance of outlining what is and what is not virtual care, and the definition of resident.
- Concern was raised about out-of-territory practitioners practicing virtually without understanding the conditions and circumstances of practice in the NWT.

General

- A respondent indicated they agreed with and supported the proposed amendments.
- A respondent gave feedback on prioritization of professions brought under HSSPA.
- A respondent indicated the importance of ensuring the GNWT is keeping up with the expansion of scope of practices in alignment with national best practices.
- A respondent indicated that clarification is needed respecting conditions that are imposed on a license.
- Comment suggesting the Department consider including provisions from the *BC Health Professions and Occupations Act*.
- A respondent questioned the interaction of the *Health and Social Services Professions Act* and the *Nursing Profession Act*.
- A respondent gave feedback on the need to expand the scope of practice for midwives.

Next Steps

The public engagement process represents the beginning stages of proposing amendments to the HSSPA. The results of the public engagement, along with cross-jurisdictional reviews and additional policy research, will inform the proposed amendments.