

Framework for Action

Framework for Action

Primary Health Care – Nurse Practitioner

June 2004

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	1
NWT Approach	2
Background	3

Northwest Territories Approach

The NWT faces similar challenges as the rest of Canada in recruiting and retaining Nurse Practitioners with the increased difficulty resulting from placement in small isolated communities. The competition to hire and retain professional nurses in any capacity is intense and requires a focused and determined effort.

The Department of Health and Social Services and the eight Health and Social Service Authorities will continue to work together with employees, the RNANT/NU and Aurora College to identify, develop and implement initiatives that will support the recruitment and retention of Nurse Practitioners within the NWT Health Care System.

The Nurse Practitioner Working Group was established to develop and monitor the implementation of this Nurse Practitioner Action Plan. The NP Action Plan addresses the development of existing nurses for Nurse Practitioner roles within the Northwest Territories as well as guides the integration of the Nurse Practitioner role into the NWT Health and Social Services system.

The Working Group was given the following tasks:

1. To develop a comprehensive Action Plan which makes recommendations to the Department of Health and Social Services and Aurora College with respect to the Nurse Practitioner Educational Programs as well as the implementation of the NP Role within the NWT Health & Social Services system.
2. To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Action Plan and make suggestions for updates or improvements as required.
3. To serve as a resource in the development of appropriate materials and work strategies to use during the implementation of the Nurse Practitioner Action Plan.

Background

The Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), in cooperation with the regional and territorial health and social services authorities, has undertaken to increase the role of Nurse Practitioners in the provision of services in the Northwest Territories.

To date it has been relatively difficult to recruit fully trained Nurse Practitioners from other jurisdictions. As a result in 1999 the Department of Health and Social Services undertook the following arrangements to begin the process of training Nurse Practitioners in the North:

- The Department contracted Aurora College to develop and deliver a full sixteen month Nurse Practitioner Program. This program is delivered as a brokered program in conjunction with the Centre for Nursing Studies from St. John's, Newfoundland.
- Funding was provided to students and Authorities so that program participants would receive financial assistance in the form of salaries and/or bursaries while attending the program as a full time student.

Given the level of importance placed on the role of Nurse Practitioners in the future delivery of health services, there is a need to ensure investment in the training of these prospective employees is maximized.

To better accomplish the objective of effectively training existing nurses for advanced levels of practice and to ensure further investment is maximized, the Department contracted with Whiteworks Policy, Planning and Evaluation to complete a preliminary review of the nurse practitioner and nurse practitioner bursary programs. The primary focus of this assessment was placed on improved coordination of the program, stronger enrolment participation and more effective placement into the workplace. The proposed preliminary review was intended to accomplish the following specific objectives:

- **Recruitment** - Review the current recruitment process and make recommendations on approaches that could be used to improved future student intakes.
- **Coordination** – This aspect of the review was to make recommendations on the duration of the program and options for co-op delivery, distance technology assisted programs, etc. Methods to improve participation, while recognizing the severe shortage of nurses faced by authorities, were considered.
- **Enrollment** – Make recommendations to help increase the number of suitable nurses applying for and being accepted into the NP Program

- **Workplace Integration** – Make recommendations that will assist individuals with a smooth transition from student into a full-time Nurse Practitioner positions.

On June 27, 2003 Whiteworks Policy, Planning & Evaluation completed their preliminary review of the Nurse Practitioner Program and submitted the final report to the Department of Health & Social Services.

In addition, on September 19, 2003 the Integrated Service Delivery Model for the NWT Health and Social Services System (Version II) was released. The need for an integrated system of health and social services delivery in the north was identified in the GNWT planning document, the NWT Health and Social Services System Action Plan 2002-2005. As a result of this commitment, the Task Team for the Service Delivery Model for Health and Social Services was established to address the issues of core service delivery, improving services to the people, and formalizing an Integrated Service Delivery Model.

The ISDM established by the NWT envisions a full range of service and systems integration in the NWT, from the level of primary community care through to secondary and tertiary level services. The ISDM can best be defined as:

A primary, vertically integrated health and social services organization based on the Regional Health and Social Services Authority / Departmental structure; that has formal linkages with other health and social service providers in the NWT and elsewhere; and that has established delivery system processes, procedures, and tools that are rooted in a collaborative approach to client care in all core service areas, particularly at the primary community care level, but radiating outward to secondary and tertiary levels of care.

The ISDM is driven by the vision established in the Department of Health and Social Services' Strategic Plan (1998) and reinforcement in the Minister's Action Plan (2001):

Our children will be born health and raised in a safe family and community environment, which supports them in leading long, productive, and happy lives.

The ISDM includes two sets of principles. The first set is the broad principles articulated in the GNWT document *Shaping our Future: a strategic Plan for Health and Wellness (1998)*. The second set is the specific ISDM principles recently developed by the Task Team for the Integrated Service Delivery Model for Health and Social Services and articulated in the Task Team's report:

- Patient and client focus
 - ✓ Continuity of care
 - ✓ Seamless transition of services
 - ✓ Comprehensiveness
- Ease and equitable access to services
 - ✓ Simplicity of design wherever possible
 - ✓ Clients understand system
- Competent care
 - ✓ Trained and health staff
 - ✓ Adequate support for staff
- Information driven
 - ✓ Quality assurance
 - ✓ On-going evaluation and feedback
- A sustainable and single system of services
- Personal responsibility
- Adaptability
- Accountability
- Transparency in communications

Under the Diagnostic and Curative Services (one of six Core Services) identified within the ISDM primary care is the level of care provided at the first point of contact with the health and social services system.

In the NWT, primary care is most often provided through a combination of primary community care teams and regional support teams. Primary community care teams operate at the community level and make referrals to regional support services, as required and according to proper referral protocols.

The preferred future sees increased personal responsibility for health and well-being and less reliance on diagnostic and curative services for common health problems. All residents of the NWT will have access to basic or first responder level of diagnostic, medical travel, and treatment services in their community.

Diagnostic and curative services provide residents with the basic treatment and assessment services. A level of service must be available in the home community of the resident, regardless of community size.

The Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner (PHC – NP) is an integral part of this system. Within a Community Health Centre setting PHC – NP's will be the on site clinical supervisor and will be responsible for the diagnosis and treatment of a variety of medical conditions, within their scope of practice, and referral out for more serious medical problems.

Ultimately, it would be beneficial for all nurses within Northern communities to be PHC – Nurse Practitioners in order to provide a full range of health services to residents of the NWT. As a first step, the Department of Health and Social

Services is committed to establishing and filling at least one PHC – NP position in every Community Health Centre, Clinic and Emergency room throughout the Northwest Territories by 2010.

As part of this PHC – NP Action Plan the Department and Authorities / Boards will be addressing the steps that will be required to meet this target and support the ongoing development past 2010.