



## IDENTIFICATION

Department	Position Title	
Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority	Behavioural Health Worker	
Position Number	Community	Division/Region
17-15412	Yellowknife	Mental Health Services & Extended Care /Stanton

## PURPOSE OF THE POSITION

The Behavioural Health Worker (BHW) supports the provision of patient centered care at the Stanton Territorial Hospital by maintaining a safe and therapeutic work environment. Using de-escalation techniques, the BHW maintains a therapeutic milieu by attending to the behavioural needs of the patient and rendering of physical assistance when required. The BHW is a deterrent for violent behavior within the Psychiatry Unit and Emergency Department. Patient, staff and public safety is their primary objective.

## SCOPE

The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority (NTHSSA) is the single provider of all health and social services in the Northwest Territories (NWT), with the exception of Hay River and Tłıchǫ regions, covering 1.2 million square kilometers and serving approximately 43,000 people, including First Nations, Inuit, Metis, and non-aboriginals. Health and social services includes the full range of primary, secondary and tertiary health services and social services including family services, protection services, care placements, mental health, addictions, and developmental activities, delivered by more than 1,400 health and social services staff.

While the Tłıchǫ Community Services Agency (TCSA) will operate under a separate board and Hay River Health and Social Services Agency (HRHSSA) will in the interim, the NTHSSA will set clinical standards, procedures, guidelines and monitoring for the entire Northwest Territories. Service Agreements will be established with these boards to identify performance requirements and adherence to clinical standards, procedures, guidelines and policies as established by the NTHSSA.

Under the direction of the Minister of Health and Social Services, the NTHSSA is established to move toward one integrated delivery system as part of the government's transformation strategy.

Stanton Territorial Hospital (Stanton) is an accredited facility, located in Yellowknife, NWT, and is the referral center for approximately 43,000 NWT residents and 5,900 residents from the Kitikmeot Region of Nunavut (NU). Stanton provides health care services to adults and children on an inpatient/outpatient and outreach basis in order to restore health with dignity.

Located in Yellowknife at the Stanton Territorial Hospital, the Behavioural Health Worker (BHW) reports directly to the Manager, Mental Health Services. The incumbent follows direction from the Clinical Coordinator or Charge Nurse (R Nurse) working in the Emergency Department (ED) and Psychiatry Unit, to ensure that patient care needs are met and a safe, therapeutic environment is maintained on the designated assigned unit.

The Behavioural Health Worker is an unregulated health care worker, functioning as a member of the multidisciplinary team, with their primary role located between the Psychiatry Unit and ED. In the ED, the incumbent will ensure safety of patients who may present in crisis and behave in an unpredictable manner, and will act, at times, as a deterrent for violent behavior through the engagement in verbal and physical de-escalation. The BHW is expected to respond appropriately to potential dangerous behaviors to ensure the safety of the patient and the staff. Patients may abscond and there is a high potential for aggressive behaviour, requiring emergency pharmacological treatment and behavior management techniques up to and including physical restraint.

Stanton is the only acute care hospital that accepts patients with behavior management problems stemming from serious mental illness, organic brain syndromes, dementia, withdrawal from substances, and other types of aggressive behavior related to mental illness. These clients may be unable to make decisions for themselves and the BHW must be able to support these clients using a therapeutic approach. The BHW must apply a trauma informed lens and best practice strategies when providing care. Mental Health clients may be experiencing anxiety, powerlessness, or the inability to think clearly and the BHW must use appropriate strategies to ensure the needs of the clients are addressed to decrease the potential of a violent incident or negative outcome. It is essential that the BHW maintain a client centered approach as, to ensure that therapeutic rapport is preserved throughout the patient experience.

The Psychiatry Unit is the only locked, acute care, Mental Health unit in the NWT/NU. In the Psychiatry Unit the BHW will ensure the appropriate access to the unit by visitors, patients and staff. They will have a key role in the provision of unit programming by supporting patient participation and maintaining general observation of patients admitted. The ED and Psychiatry units provide the only locked seclusion rooms available in the NWT/NU and therefore, when utilized, require the highest level of observation, which will be provided by the incumbent. The ED and Psychiatry Unit provide care to patients who may be diagnosed with a serious mental illness such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, and may be considered a danger to themselves or others. These patients are often dealing with multiple

complex social issues such as homelessness, trauma, poverty, corrections, addiction, FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder) or may be cognitively delayed or under the influence of unknown substances. Patients may be voluntary and/or involuntary admitted (against their will under the *Mental Health Act*). Considering this high risk group of individuals, safety is especially important and must be considered at all times during the assessment, care and treatment patients in these units. The BHW must be skilled at de-escalation of potentially violent situations and have the physical ability to intervene in violent situations (Code White).

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **1. Ensures a safe and secure clinical setting that contributes to a safe and healthy environment for patients, visitors and staff.**

- Responds to Code White alarms throughout Stanton Hospital and takes the Lead as appropriate and/or as directed by the R Nurse or Patient Care Coordinator (PCC).
  - Intervenes in all Code White and violent situations hospital-wide, taking the lead in a Code response as needed.
  - Code White and violent situations occur approximately 1-2 times per month, and last approximately 45 minutes per occurrence.
- Provides the Close/Constant Observation of patients who may be at risk to harm themselves or others as assigned by the R Nurse.
- Builds a rapport with patients and assists in the de-escalation of potentially violent situations using effective strategies.
- Addresses behavioural issues of patients in a constructive and non-threatening manner.
- Identifies alternative approaches or actions when necessary.
- Makes regular surveillance checks of all areas on the designated unit.
- Assists the Registered Nurse (RNs) to perform routine safety checks of the unit.
- Ensures that patients and visitors follow unit access guidelines (e.g. securing belongings and potentially dangerous items), including performing a physical search of each patient and their belongings upon arrival and returning to the unit from outside the Hospital.
- Maintains a log, records all irregularities and reports any issues or areas of concern immediately to the most appropriate staff member e.g. R Nurse, Clinical Coordinator (CC) or PCC for resolution.

### **2. Assists in the day to day management of the Psychiatric Unit activities as a member of the interdisciplinary team under the direction of the CC or R Nurse.**

- Participate in the management of acutely unstable patients that may be violent or agitated on a daily basis and multiple times a 12 hour shift.
- Ensures the safety of the unit by controlling unit access by screening potential visitors for risks (e.g. intoxication or violence).
- Answers the unit phone and transfers calls as appropriate.
- Restocks unit supplies.
- Transports lab specimens as requested.
- Porter's patients as required to and from the units.

- Assists in the transport and escort of patients off hospital property on passes or to appointments as directed by the R Nurse.
- In collaboration with the team, actively participates in the management of patients who are on the unit.
- Notifies the most appropriate RN of any concerns or potential risks they identify on the unit and takes appropriate action to mitigate these risks.
- Documents in the patient record in accordance to hospital protocol.
- Provides direct patient support during unit activities and/or groups as assigned by the R Nurse.

**3. In collaboration with the RN the incumbent is actively involved in the assessment, treatment and care planning of individuals experiencing mental health symptoms.**

- Completion of mental health risk assessments on an ongoing daily basis.
- Communicates risks and concerns to the R Nurse.
- Assists the RN in the creation and implementation of a client centered behavior care plan that mitigates risk and improves outcomes.
- Establishes therapeutic rapport to positively influence patient behaviors.
- Intervenes to prevent self-harm or violent behavior to minimize injury.
- Intervenes to minimize agitation, de-escalate agitated behavior and manage aggressive behavior in the least restrictive manner.
- Uses critical thinking and negotiation strategies to determine the level of risk and coordinate effective interventions.

## **WORKING CONDITIONS**

### **Physical Demands**

As a result of the varied patient population and unpredictable nature of the psychiatrically unstable patient, the incumbent will spend significant amounts of time assessing and treating patients that may be violent or agitated. The incumbent must provide the physical intervention required to restrain individuals as necessary in violent situations.

50-70% of the day is spent standing or walking.

### **Environmental Conditions**

The incumbent will be exposed to some or all of the following for the entirety of each shift: communicable diseases, blood and body fluid, hazardous materials (sharps, toxic cleaning and sterilizing solutions). There is also exposure to a noisy work environment, including angry, loud patients/families and equipment noise on a daily basis.

### **Sensory Demands**

Patients within the Psychiatry Unit are acutely unwell and require extended stays within the unit. This means that the incumbent must be constantly alert (100% of the shift) of the patients' physical and emotional needs in order to provide comprehensive care and ensure safety for patient, staff and other patients within their care. In the Emergency Department

there is a requirement to be constantly alert, with a focused, simultaneous use of sight and hearing for the duration of the shift in order to ascertain and attend to the behavioural needs of the patient, and to ensure the safety of the patient, staff and public.

### **Mental Demands**

Patients within the Psychiatry Unit are often acutely psychiatrically unstable and require extended stays within the Unit in order to receive comprehensive care. The BHW is primarily responsible for directly interacting with these patients during their entire shift (100% of the time), with little time away from patients. They are subject to regular and sometimes constant unwelcoming behaviours.

Patients present with multiple complex needs and the incumbent will be exposed to violence, traumatic histories and other emotionally disturbing experiences. Unpredictable behaviors, violence and aggression occur on a daily basis. Interactions with volatile individuals may vary between short outbursts of high intensity lasting 5-10 minutes to prolonged interactions of varying intensity lasting 30 minutes to 2 hours per occurrence. The incumbent may be kicked, pushed, grabbed or verbally assaulted by patients and or their families.

The Psychiatry Unit, being the only locked unit, is often one of the most volatile nursing units within the hospital with very abusive patients, patients craving alcohol or drugs, or experiencing acute psychosis. With high acuity and a constantly changing environment the BHW is required to update their priorities on a continuous basis while ensuring the safety of the unit.

### **KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES**

- Ability to apply key concepts applicable to best practices in Mental Health Care (Trauma informed, person centered, recovery oriented practice).
- Knowledge of security techniques used when applying environmental or physical restraint.
- Knowledge of and the ability to apply de-escalation techniques.
- Knowledge and ability to maintain patient confidentiality policies.
- Ability to read, interpret and apply legislation such as *Mental Health Act*.
- Ability to influence and motivate actions of others to inspire change and modify behavior.
- Communication skills to effectively de-escalate upset, angry and potentially abusive clients while maintaining therapeutic relationship.
- Ability to work in a culturally diverse environment.
- Physically able to assist staff in the management of potentially violent situations.
- Ability to think critically, and analyze situations methodically to make rational decisions.
- Ability to make rational decisions where management advice is not immediately available.
- Ability to act effectively and compassionately during crisis/stressful situations.

- Ability to work effectively in a timely manner when faced with high volume of workload and frequent interruptions.
- Ability to understand medical terminology and work within a health care team.
- Ability to complete reports and written documentation, understanding the use of computer programs such as word processing, email and incident reporting.
- Ability to remain calm, controlled and professional, in all situations.

**Typically, the above qualifications would be attained by:**

Diploma in Human or Social Services (criminology, social work, public administration) plus one (1) year of related experience working in a mental health, group home setting or security services. OR,

Four (4) + years of experience working with persons with serious mental health and/or intellectual/developmental disabilities in a health care setting, group home, or other social services/justice/security setting. OR,

Equivalencies will be considered on a case by case basis.

**ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

The incumbent must have successfully completed the STH Behavioral Health Worker training program.

The incumbent must pass a physical assessment annually.

**NTHSSA-Stanton Territorial Hospital Requirements:**

- Up to date immunizations
- Non-Violent Crisis Intervention
- WHMIS
- Internet and e-mail applications
- Fire Extinguisher Training
- Certification in basic CPR
- Workplace Safety Awareness Training
- ASIST
- Mental Health First Aid
- FIT Testing
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Social Media Training
- Workplace Bullying/Respectful Workplace
- Emergency Response Training
- Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training

**Position Security**

- ☐ No criminal records check required
- ☐ Position of Trust – criminal records check required
- ☒ Highly sensitive position – requires verification of identity and a criminal records check

**French language** (check one if applicable)

- ☐ French required (must identify required level below)

Level required for this Designated Position is:

ORAL EXPRESSION AND COMPREHENSION

Basic (B) ☐ Intermediate (I) ☐ Advanced (A) ☐

READING COMPREHENSION:

Basic (B) ☐ Intermediate (I) ☐ Advanced (A) ☐

WRITING SKILLS:

Basic (B) ☐ Intermediate (I) ☐ Advanced (A) ☐

- ☐ French preferred

**Indigenous Language:** 

- ☐ Required
- ☐ Preferred