



IDENTIFICATION

Department	Position Title	
Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority	Family and Community Social Worker	
Position Number	Community	Division/Region
48-14617	Fort Smith	Child, Family and Community Wellness /Fort Smith

PURPOSE OF THE POSITION

The Family and Community Social Worker is responsible for the effective and efficient delivery of the Child and Family Services and programs in the Beaufort Delta region of the Northwest Territories. This position provides leadership and consultation to staff and community members and coordinates and manages direct program delivery within the context of appropriate legislation, policies and standards.

SCOPE

The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority (NTHSSA) is the single provider of all health and social services (HSS) in the Northwest Territories (NWT), with the exception of Hay River and Tłı̨chǫ regions, covering 1.2 million square kilometers and serving approximately 43,000 people, including First Nations, Inuit, Metis, and non-aboriginals. HSS 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 HSS staff.

While the Tłı̨chǫ 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 NWT. 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.

Cultural safety is an outcome where Indigenous peoples feel safe and respected, free of racism and discrimination, when accessing health and social services. Relationship-based care is fundamental to cultural safety because it prioritizes the need for trusting, caring and ongoing relationships between patients and clients with providers. Embedding a culturally safe approach in Health and Social Services has been identified as critical to supporting equitable access to care with the long term goal of improving health outcomes for Indigenous peoples.

For Indigenous residents of the NWT, who represent over 50% of the population, these shifts are particularly significant because despite some improvements over time, there remains significant disparities in their overall health status in comparison to non-Indigenous residents. Health disparities are largely attributed to inequalities in the social determinants of health, which for Indigenous residents include the legacies of colonization and systemic racism. Indigenous families and their children are disproportionately overrepresented in the Child and Family Services (CFS) system. Most of the children who are involved with Child and Family Services are Indigenous, a fact that can be attributed both to the historical legacies and systemic racism as mentioned above, but also to the lack of culturally safe and accessible supports. These factors have impacted the way health and social services are delivered and accessed by Indigenous peoples in the NWT, contributing to additional complexities in Indigenous health disparities. When Indigenous peoples feel culturally safe after interacting with staff in the Health and Social Services system they are more likely to access care when needed, leading to improved health outcomes.

Located in Fort Smith and reporting directly to the Regional Supervisor, Child and Family Services (Supervisor), the Family and Community Social Worker (FCSW) is responsible for intake and investigation, voluntary services, support services, family preservation and family re-unification, permanency planning, court procedures, child placements, as well as after-hours emergency services. This position receives and investigates reports, and intervenes with children, parents and families to ensure the healthy development, protection and safety of children in the least intrusive manner possible, while respecting the rights of children and families, the best interests of the child, and the importance of the child's community and culture as environmental elements that are necessary to the wellbeing of the child and family. The incumbent is expected to practice from a perspective that is trauma- and violence-informed, anti-oppressive, strengths-based and family centered approach and the position requires that interaction with clients and families, community members, partners and colleagues is tactful, respectful and humble. This position frequently provides services to other regions from across the NWT, as clients may move communities.

The following legislation, policy documents, and protocols serve as foundation for the Family and Community Social Worker's role: the *Child and Family Services Act* (2016, C.9); *Child and Family Services Regulations* (2021); *Adoption Act* (2016, c. 12); *Adoption Regulations* (2018); *Aboriginal Custom Adoption Recognition Act* (2016, c.12); *Aboriginal Custom Adoption Recognition Regulations* (2013); *An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families* (2019, c. 24); Child and Family Services Standards and Procedures Manual; NWT Child Abuse Protocol; Canadian Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics; and NTHSSA Standard Operating Procedures Pertaining to Child Protection.

The legacies of colonization, assimilation policies such as residential schools have impacted Indigenous health outcomes and the way HSS are delivered and accessed. The incumbent is expected to honour and promote a culturally safe environment at all times.

Colonization has a continuing and profound impact on NWT Indigenous families today; therefore, the Family and Community Social Worker position is responsible to promote and support a system-wide shift towards prioritizing family support, culturally-based prevention and intervention, and family and community-driven programming that supports the health and wellbeing of all families who are struggling with multiple barriers to safely stay together.

RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Screen and investigate reports regarding child protection during office hours and provide emergency services in response to a wide range of crises, including child protection, family violence, and children mental health on a 24-hour basis.

- Receive reports from the community, follow structured decision making screening process, and in consultation with the supervisor, determine the required response, formulate and implement an action plan.
- Gather information from a wide range of sources, including collateral agencies, the Matrix System or the Child and Family Information System, available file information and colleagues.
- Provide education and awareness to families, the public and other agencies regarding the mandate and responsibilities of child protection services in the community.
- Conduct forensic interviews with children, witnesses, parents and other relevant family members, and ensure proper documentation, data entry, and file management.
- Consult with, and develop a collaborative partnership with local RCMP detachments, and coordinate all investigations of child abuse reports in conjunction with the RCMP.
- Consult, coordinate with, and partner with schools, medical professionals, day care personnel, and other relevant government and non-government agencies.
- Conduct risk assessments to determine the degree of protection risk for children.
- Assess the ability of parents and/or caregivers to provide appropriate care and protection to their children.
- When children are placed in the care of the Director, CFCW and a search for placement is imminent, seek out extended family members as placement options, and/or match children appropriately, followed with a perusal of parent/caregiver's identified placement with particular community members whereby a provisional placement may take place. The last option is to place children in an approved regular foster home or in a group home setting.
- Develop and implement agreements and consensual written safety plans in conjunction with families whenever possible; Priority must always begin with safety plans whereby apprehension is avoided.
- Provide emergency services in response to reports that occur after working hours, 24 hours a day/365 days per year.
- De-escalate crisis situations through negotiation and mediation with parents, children, youth, extended family members, community advocates, and lawyers.

- Refer children and families for services to other community resources, as required.
- Provide back-up support, including the completion of politically sensitive investigations on behalf of other Regions upon their request.

2. Provide case management functions aimed at maintaining children in the care of their parents, and work with children and families to address child protection issues so that children can be safely returned to their parents care.

- Develop and implement short and long term plans with children and families.
- Facilitate multi-disciplinary care conferences with families and supportive agencies, and chair case conferences to facilitate the development of realistic goals, tasks, and outcome measurement criteria.
- Provide counselling to families to assist them in identifying and resolving issues and enhancing their support system.
- Assess families continually, based on their progress in making positive changes, the ongoing protection risk to children, families progress in addressing protection issues, and modify plans in response to the changing needs of children and families.
- Promote and facilitate collaborative working relationships with families, advocates, community agencies, extended family members, and other Regions.
- Advocate on behalf of children and families with government, community members, businesses and non-government organizations to ensure access to appropriate services, including advocating for housing, employment, income assistance and treatment.
- Provide and/or coordinate services aimed at enhancing the families ability to provide appropriate protection to their children, including but not limited to family support, counselling, specialized treatment programs, financial assistance, medical treatment, programs aimed at enhancing child development.
- Communicate with Departmental specialists and provide staff with information and recommendations on complex cases, in consultation with the supervisor.
- Facilitate and supervise family visits as required, and transport children and families to special meetings and appointments within, or outside the NWT as required.
- Negotiate services with families through the implementation of Voluntary Service Agreements, Plan of Care Agreements, Support Service Agreements, or apply for Supervision Orders, Temporary Custody Orders, Permanent Custody orders, and rescind orders and agreements where appropriate.
- Provide Extended Support Services Agreements to young adults, aged 19-23 as outlined in the CFS Legislation and Standards.
- Provide support to children, youth and families who have been seriously impacted or traumatized by events or circumstances.

3. Provide Case Management functions aimed at supporting children in permanent care and ensure that all children in care receive appropriate permanency planning.

- Make decisions as a legal guardian about significant areas impacting children, including but not limited to education, medical and dental care, family contact, after-school activities, and extra-curricular activities.

- Make recommendations regarding the placement of children within families who are interested in departmental adoptions.
- Interview children, families, extended family members and/or collateral resources, complete assessment documentation on behalf of children under permanent care and custody, and complete family social histories.
- Formulate and present permanency planning recommendations to the Regional Supervisor, Child and Family Services.
- Prepare and counsel children in anticipation of adoption placement.
- Complete cultural plans in conjunction with child(ren), youth and families.
- Negotiate and mediate access and care arrangements.
- Provide support and services to children in order to preserve placements.
- Provide information to parents considering the possibility of relinquishing their children for adoption.
- Negotiate and provide pre and post-adoption support services to adoptive families, as required.
- Ensure that children have appropriate contact with their family, when it is in their best interest, while ensuring cultural connections are maintained and supported.
- Provide crisis counselling and support to adoptive families and adopted children when an adoption breakdown has occurred or is imminent, as required.
- Research and consult with specialists and advisory groups regarding permanency planning strategies that may be effective with children.
- Provide independent living programming and support to youth.

4. Support the recruitment, support, and monitoring of foster care resources to ensure effective and nurturing care for children with a wide range of special needs.

- Promote foster care in the community.
- Assist foster parents in meeting the care requirements of children.
- Promote and build collaborative relationships with foster families.
- Provide foster families with information about the progress of case work with the family, and support foster families in building collaborative relationships with the child's biological family, and with other community resources.
- Receive and investigate reports of inappropriate behaviour or child protection concerns against foster parents, provide intervention and follow-up.
- Ensure that foster parents have access to appropriate services and programs that help increase their capacity to provide effective care to foster children.
- Provide mediation and advocacy for foster families in situations where they feel their capacity to provide effective care to foster children has been compromised.

5. Accountable to perform all required court duties.

- Apply for court orders when necessary.
- Complete Affidavits, Originating Notices, Notice of Motions, and Case Plan Reports, according to the rules of the court, outlining the history of child protection concerns, the facts of the case and the recommended conditions or plan to address the child protection concerns.

- Serve and inform parents/guardians, children over the age of 12, applicable Indigenous representatives and other relevant parties about relevant legislation, policy, the court process, and the legal rights and obligations of parties.
- Carry out terms and conditions outlined in court orders, monitor compliance of all parties, and request reviews when required.
- Prepare for and provide testimony in court, and/or upon subpoena in non-child protection related matters.
- Testifying at Child Protection trials as required.
- File court documentation as required.
- Prepare and present child protection cases in court on behalf of the Director, when the family declines their right to a lawyer.
- Advise and consult with an agency counsel for the purpose of presenting the case in court, when the family requests a lawyer.

6. Strengthen community resources and capacity through community development initiatives.

- Provide information and education to schools, RCMP, medical personnel, and other relevant agencies and members of the public on child protection legislation, policies, services and programs.
- Develop collaborative relationships and partnerships with relevant government and non-government agencies for the purpose of enhancing service delivery to the community.
- Provide liaison to the community agencies as necessary (ie. School, hospital, health center, RCMP, etc.).
- Participate on committees for the purpose of planning and implementing emergency social services in response to catastrophic events.
- Advocate for new or improved approaches, services, programs, or methods of service delivery in order to more effectively serve clients.
- Participate on social/health committees, to addressing a specific social or community need, and/or assist other agencies in the development and implementation of psycho-educational groups.
- Participate in joint projects with other government and non-government agencies
- Promote community wellness with the public and in collaboration with other social/health agencies.
- Collaborate with other NTHSSA programs/services personnel.

7. Accountable to provide services to adults, and those with disabilities.

- Action referrals to family violence shelters and assist in the application for Emergency Protection Orders as required.
- Provide Indigent community service benefits financial needs assessments as related to funeral and burial costs.
- Complete OAS, GIS, and CPP applications as necessary.
- In collaboration with the Adult Services Case Manager, provide assessment and planning for residential placement, finances and safety.

8. Provide emergency social services after normal working hours and weekends.

- Receive after hour calls from the public and community agencies such as RCMP, Health Centre, the Public on child abuse and neglect situations and other emergency calls relating to services provided
- Investigate and assess the report and take action
- In the absence of other available service providers, provide and crisis intervention, and emotional support at the request of RCMP, Health Centre/hospital, etc.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Physical Demands

No unusual demands.

Environmental Conditions

Approximately, fifty percent (50%) of each day will involve exposure to communicable diseases while in home situations and while seeing clients/patients in the office.

Sensory Demands

A significant part of the incumbent's day will be spent providing direct therapeutic services for clients, requiring the use of the combined senses of touch, sight, smell, and hearing during assessment and provision of services.

The incumbent will spend approximately forty (40%) of the day providing services to families in emotionally distressing situations which can distort communication, requiring the incumbent to be highly sensitive and accurate in their communication, balancing the need for intense listening and observation.

Mental Demands

Professionals providing child and family services will be exposed to hearing traumatic situations (i.e., sexual abuse, physical and emotional abuse, neglect, multiple losses, family violence, parental addictions, etc.).

Situations involving various services and programs may create conflictual relationships with co-workers which may require mediation and interpersonal skills to manage.

Incumbent will be exposed to clients in public places, after hours, and in some instances subjected to threats and verbal harassment.

Approximately, ten percent (10%) of incumbent's week may involve travel outside of the community in poor road conditions and/or in unsafe weather conditions, including travel by small aircraft.

Job holder will be required to respond to crisis at any time, day or night, often without the foreknowledge of the situation they may be walking into.

Incumbent is aware that decisions that affect children's and families' future must be made in stressful situations; there is also an on-going awareness of potential for physical assault when responding to calls in unsecured situations to investigate child abuse allegations and/or apprehend children.

Incumbent may experience being the subject of reviews and/or investigations by management, the Authority, Human Rights organizations, the press and/or the public.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES

- Knowledge of social work standards of practice, ethics and policies.
- Knowledge of *Child and Family Services Act*, *Adoptions Act* and their regulations, standards and guidelines.
- Knowledge and ability to implement social work theories, practices and procedures.
- Knowledge of child development, family dynamics, risk assessments, resiliency, and the impact of trauma and child protection theories and models of practice.
- Knowledge and/or the ability to acquire knowledge relating to colonization, Canada's assimilation policies, and the residential school legacy in Canada and the impacts upon Indigenous populations.
- Ability to draft written documents, which are clear, concise and easy to understand by both professionals and non-professionals.
- Computer skills specific to word processing and use of Excel.
- Counselling skills, specifically short-term and solution focused counselling.
- Case management skills.
- Investigation skills.
- Skills in interviewing, conflict resolution and mediation.
- Skills and abilities to deal with crisis management as it pertains to life threatening situations, such as domestic violence and the prevention of suicide.
- Ability to work as a team member in a multi-disciplinary setting.
- Time management and organizational skills.
- Ability to communicate (orally) effectively in a cross-cultural setting.

Typically, the above qualifications would be attained by:

A Diploma in Social Work with a minimum of two (2) years of direct practice in the field of Child and Family Services or a Bachelor Degree in Social Work.

Equivalencies may be considered.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Proof of immunization in keeping with current public health practices.

The incumbent must be able to license under the *NWT Social Worker Profession Act*, must maintain a valid class 5 Driver's License and must successfully be appointed as a Child Protection Worker.

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: Select Language

- ☐ Required
- ☐ Preferred