



IDENTIFICATION

Department	Position Title	
Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority	Senior Indigenous Patient Advocate	
Position Number	Community	Division/Region
48-16806	Fort Smith	Quality Risk and Client Experience / HQ

PURPOSE OF THE POSITION

The Senior Indigenous Patient Advocate is responsible for supporting Indigenous patients and clients in resolving concerns, complaints, and questions; bridging cultural and language barriers; and ensuring access to cultural, spiritual and emotional supports. The Senior Indigenous Patient Advocate contributes to the development and testing of new approaches to improving cultural safety and patient experience through the Office of Indigenous Client Experience, and in alignment with the Health and Social Services system's commitments to cultural safety and anti-racism.

SCOPE

The Senior Indigenous Patient Advocate (Advocate) is part of a team of regionally distributed positions located in the four Northwest Territories Acute Care Units. Located in Fort Smith, the Advocate reports administratively to the Director, Quality, Risk and Client Experience, in the Quality, Risk, and Client Experience division of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority (NTHSSA), and works closely with the Chief Operating Officer/Chief Executive Officer of their administrative region in a matrix reporting relationship. The Advocate participates as a member of the regional management team in their administrative region, and serves as a member of the Council of Indigenous Client Experience established as an action of the Cultural Safety and Anti-Racism (CSAR) division of the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS).

The 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-indigenous persons. Health and social services include 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.



Under the direction of the Minister of Health and Social Services, the NTHSSA was established to move toward one integrated delivery system as part of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) transformation strategy. The NTHSSA leads the clinical standards, procedures, guidelines and monitoring for the entire NWT. The Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) plays an important role in the connectivity between the NTHSSA, the TCSSA and the HRHSSA because it establishes the common policy framework and common standards for the entire system. Operational consistency and collaboration across these three authorities is required to provide a quality, integrated Health and Social Services system for the NWT.

Since 2013, the NWT health and social services system has been engaged in a strategic renewal process that includes a strategic renewal effort of Primary Health Care Reform (PHCR), to shift the system and its care models towards a team and relationship-based approach that is driven through public participation, community feedback, and data; and built upon a foundation of trust and cultural safety. Using a community development approach, PHCR is changing the way the system works with people and communities at every level, to enable public participation in priority setting, planning, and design that integrates the social determinants of health. PHCR is the system-wide initiative being used to implement the vision of a culturally safe and relationship-based HSS system.

The CSAR division is responsible for driving this work across the HSS system, for demonstrating and modeling this new way of working, serving as a centre of excellence for staff at all levels across the HSS system, and for monitoring and evaluation of progress. The QRCE division promotes and supports safe, quality patient/client centered care and services through leading in-depth investigations into all patient safety incidents, critical incidents and unusual occurrences. The QRCE division provides subject matter expertise and education, minimizing risk and facilitating the implementation of best practices and system knowledge. Working in partnership, the CSAR and QRCE divisions provide direction, support the design, implementation and evaluation of the Indigenous Patient Advocate program, facilitating the implementation of wise practices, providing a culturally appropriate lens on the assessment and escalation of Indigenous patient concerns and complaints, and contributing to the continuous learning and growth of the health and social services system in its shift towards an organizational culture grounded in cultural safety and anti-racism.

A cultural safety approach acknowledges that multiple complex factors compound and drive Indigenous health inequities. Historical factors, such as colonization and racism, are well documented social determinants of health for Indigenous peoples. In addition to health implications, historical factors have manifested as systemic racism within mainstream health and social services resulting in inequities in access to services and the quality of care received. Cultural safety is an outcome where Indigenous peoples feel safe and respected, free of racism and discrimination when accessing health and social services.



The Advocate is expected to honour and promote a culturally safe environment at all times and to interact with clients and families, community members, partners and colleagues in a relationship-based approach. This involves being tactful, respectful and humble in order to develop and maintain ongoing and trusting relationships. The incumbent will work at the frontline of the GNWT's efforts in anti-racist approaches, routinely identifying and addressing both conscious and unconscious bias and discrimination at the individual and systemic levels.

The incumbent will experience interruptions, uncontrolled workflow, and competing demands on a daily basis.

The position involves working individually with Indigenous clients and their families, and supports organizational change by identifying systemic barriers and contributing to multiple projects of varying complexity that involve the DHSS and three health authorities (HSSAs). In addition to the Cultural Safety Action Plan and Commitment to Action, the Advocate works within a legislative and policy framework that includes the *Hospital Insurance and Health and Social Services Administration Act*, *Medical Profession Act*, *Nursing Profession Act*, *Guardianship Act*, *Public Health Act*, *Coroners Act*, *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, *Health Information Act*, RNANT/NU Bylaws, NTHSSA Medical and Professional Staff Bylaws, *Mental Health Act*, *Child and Family Services Act*, as well as GNWT, DHSS and NTHSSA policies and procedures.

The Advocate works closely with the Quality and Risk Manager, Regional Managers, and frontline staff in their service location. They will be called upon daily to provide advice, assistance, support and recommendations to the COO/CEO, Senior Executive, Medical, and Territorial and Regional Leadership on Indigenous patient experience, safety incidents, critical incidents, unusual occurrences, and various quality issues, concerns and situations requiring an Indigenous perspective and cultural safety lens.

The Advocate has a significant amount of flexibility and autonomy to advise, direct, problem solve, and develop solutions for individual clients within the policies, guidelines and interests of the GNWT, as well as explicit responsibility to identify when policies, guidelines and interests are in conflict with the objectives of a culturally safe health and social services system and work with colleagues and stakeholders to develop and implement new approaches.

RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Provides direct support and solutions for Indigenous patients and clients, and their families, when accessing services in the NWT's acute care units.

- Leads the collection of feedback from clients, patients, and families through the intake of complaints, concerns and unusual occurrences.



- Utilizes the Territorial Wide RL Datix electronic client feedback module to monitor new complaints, compliments, or feedback, and provides updates on the progress and resolution of concerns.
- Reports patient safety incidents to the regional Quality Risk Manager to be addressed through the NTHSSA Quality Assurance Framework.
- Provides system navigation services to support and track clients in their health and wellness journey.
- Supports and advocates for Indigenous clients in resolving concerns, complaints, and questions.
- Assesses complex situations to support residents ensuring they receive equitable care and service.
- Determines or creates appropriate responses and solutions, providing direction to staff or other supports as required to meet Indigenous clients' needs.
- Assesses and identifies when ethical situations arise and coordinates ethics consults as required, while supporting clients and families through this process.
- Ensures patients and clients are aware of their rights and responsibilities, and that system staff respect and uphold them.
- Provides information on GNWT or Health and Social Services related policies that may affect or influence the care and service provided.
- Attends patient or client planning and decision-making meetings at their acute care centres or region.
- Ensures that clients fully understand written and oral communication and are supported to make informed decisions.
- Assists in bridging cultural and language barriers between Indigenous clients and families, and health and social services providers and staff.
- Provides and/or coordinates access to cultural, spiritual, and emotional support such as connection to family, Elders, and community partners.
- Escalates client concerns which cannot be resolved locally for further investigation and response through the Office of Indigenous Client Experience.
- Provides continuous follow-up with patients/clients and families to ensure concerns are addressed in a reasonable and timely manner.

2. Works directly with Chief Operating Officers and/or Chief Executive Officers (COOs/CEOs) to ensure patient/client and family concerns and complaints are addressed appropriately.

- Participates in meetings as a member of the regional management team and leads discussions where appropriate to discuss and resolve issues impacting the experience of Indigenous patients, clients and families
- Facilitates discussions between health and social services management and clients to share concerns and complaints in a safe space.



- Represents and advocates for Indigenous perspectives and experiences to ensure the design and delivery of care and services are patient, client, and family centered and are designed and delivered using a culturally safe approach.
- Liaises with and supports regional and territorial health and social services Indigenous programs and client experience positions.
- Liaises and coordinates as needed with external Indigenous navigation, advocacy, or cultural support staff including those working with Indigenous governments and organizations.

3. Serves as regional lead in the design and implementation of the territorial pilot project to establish the Office of Indigenous Client Experience and participates in its ongoing operation.

- Uses a Continuous Quality Improvement approach to identify common concerns and bring them forward for investigation and resolution.
- Applies frontline experience and an equity, cultural safety, anti-racism, family-centered and/or trauma informed lens to identify systemic program, policy, and procedural barriers and develops recommendations and solutions for improvement.
- Advances the development and implementation of a territorial compliments and complaints process to better understand client experiences, specifically Indigenous client experiences, to inform quality improvement.
- Contributes to the development and enhancement of client feedback mechanisms, including a client experience survey that reflects cultural safety.
- Assists in the creation of resources and tools to improve client experiences when accessing programs and services in health and social services facilities, including information on cultural safety and relationship-based care initiatives.
- Develops revisions to the existing Client Rights and Responsibilities to promote awareness and encourage mutual respect and trust in relationship-based care between clients and staff.
- Tests new mechanisms, resources and tools; identifies and acts on areas of improvement, and creates new approaches in partnership with other members of The Office of Indigenous Client Experience.
- Monitors and analyzes data to identify themes/trends of complaints, concerns or compliments and prepares recommendations to further inform the design and implementation of operational programs, guidelines and policies.

4. Participates in and informs the development or amendment of policies, procedures, and improvement initiatives at the Regional and Territorial Level.

- Collaborates with other staff in the QRCE division or their acute care centre on initiatives to improve patient, client and family experiences when accessing health and social services in the NWT.



- Identifies needs for quality improvement activities with a focus of cultural safety and facilitates, participates or leads initiatives as required.
 - Assures local implementation of new policies, processes, or other initiatives focused on Indigenous client experience and cultural safety.
 - Supports Indigenous patients to submit feedback using NTHSSA systems to ensure compliments and complaints are captured and themes and action areas are well documented and understood.
- 5. Promotes and oversees the understanding and continuous learning of DHSS and NTHSSA staff about Indigenous client experiences and underlying issues contributing to those experiences – including culturally safe and anti-racist practice, anti-Indigenous racism, and health equity.**
- Assesses frontline and regional requirements for educational materials, tools, and other resources to strengthen staff capacity for cultural safety and anti-racist practice.
 - Supports the CCI division in the development of educational materials.
 - Assists the CCI division in the delivery of workshops, in-service sessions, briefings and presentations.
 - Identifies and facilitates opportunities to integrate approved cultural safety content and activities within their operational environment.
 - Fosters a culture of continuous learning and self-reflection, and encourages staff to navigate discomfort with humility.
- 6. Ensures access to culturally appropriate and welcoming facilities and services, and access to Indigenous cultural, language, and wellness supports and services.**
- Conducts regular assessment of signage in facilities, including Indigenous language and plain language requirements, and provides recommendations to foster the creation of welcoming environments.
 - Conducts needs assessment of interpreter and translation services in facilities, including whether services are available to clients during complaints processes, provides recommendations for improvement, and supports implementation of change.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Physical Demands

No unusual demands.

Environmental Conditions

In the daily provision of advocacy and investigation with patients, families and clients the incumbent may be exposed to infectious diseases.



Sensory Demands

In the role of developing therapeutic person-centered relationships with Indigenous patients who may be experiencing racism or other forms of trauma, the incumbent will be required to use two or more simultaneous sensory inputs to determine their mental and emotional status and maintain appropriate and responsive interventions and interactions.

Mental Demands

The position continuously engages in topics that include interpersonal and systemic racism, and the intergenerational individual and community impacts of colonization, including the legacy of residential schools.

There is the potential for vicarious traumatization.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES

- Knowledge of colonial history and contexts for understanding inequities (social determinants of health) in health outcomes and access to health and social services, including but not limited to the residential school system and systemic racism.
- Knowledge of the health and social services systems within the NWT, including programs, delivery models, and the socio-political and cultural environments.
- Knowledge of how to design and facilitate a change process, including the ability to build and work with groups and teams, planning and implementing change; skilled in group dynamics and conflict resolution.
- Knowledge of research, and monitoring and evaluation principles and techniques.
- Skill and ability in de-escalation and non-violent crisis intervention.
- Computer skills, including ability to use word processing software, spread sheets, E-mail and Internet.
- Organizational, analytical, and facilitation and presentation skills when required.
- Self-care and self-regulation skills.
- Ability to maintain an understanding of Cultural Safety and Anti-Racism frameworks.
- Ability to analyze health and social policies and programs from an equity, anti-racist, and culturally safe lens.
- Ability to apply and develop creative and innovative approaches to project planning, implementation, and evaluation is an asset.
- Ability to build and maintain excellent working relationships with colleagues and external partners in order to communicate program information, elicit and respond to input and feedback, and facilitate and implement change.
- Ability to work effectively in small and large groups and function with minimal direction.
- Ability to effectively prioritize to meet changing demands.
- Ability to work with compressed deadlines and multiple deliverables.



- Ability to apply a high level of sensitivity in responding to and handling patient, client and family concerns.
- Ability to understand the geographical and cultural needs of the people and to apply sensitivity to how community and culture impact the delivery of health care.
- Ability to commit to actively upholding and consistently practicing personal diversity, inclusion and cultural awareness, as well as safety and sensitivity approaches in the workplace.

Typically, the above qualifications would be attained by:

Ten (10) years of experience working with Indigenous peoples and communities in a service-oriented role.

Job candidate must have lived experience interacting with the health and social services system in the NWT.

Equivalent combinations of education and experience will be considered.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

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: Indigenous Language - Not Specified

- ☐ Required
- ☒ Preferred