



# HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLNESS POLICY

## 1. Statement of Policy

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) is committed to the health, safety and wellness of its employees and to providing a healthy and safe work environment that minimizes the risk of workplace injuries, accidents and illnesses. The GNWT is committed to implementing the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace.

The GNWT ensures effective practices, training and supports are in place to protect the safety and complete well-being of its employees, as well as the safety of its guests, volunteers, and any persons granted access to a GNWT workplace.

## 2. Principles

The GNWT will adhere to the following principles when implementing this Policy:

(1) All employees are entitled to work in a healthy and safe environment and have the right to be informed of any physical or psychological hazards in the workplace.

(2) The health, safety and wellness of government workplaces is a responsibility shared by GNWT management and employees. This includes the prevention and mitigation of physical and psychological hazards in the workplace, the prevention of physical and psychological harm, and the promotion of physical and psychological wellbeing.

(3) All employees have the right to refuse unsafe work if they believe there is an unusual danger in the work. Employees refusing unsafe work will not be penalized.

## 3. Scope

This Policy and the applicable guidelines extends to anyone who is present on GNWT workplaces, This includes contractors, volunteers, clients and members of the public.

## 4. Definitions

The following terms apply to this Policy:

**Deputy Head** – as defined in the Public Service Act: the deputy minister of a department, the chief executive officer of a public committee, board or council, or such a person may be appointed or designated as deputy head.

**Health, Safety and Wellness Committee** – refers to a joint workplace committee established under the Safety Act and in accordance with employee Terms of Employment.

**Mental Health** – includes emotional, psychological and social well-being of a person. A state of well-being where the individual realizes their own abilities, is resilient to the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to their community.

**Occupational Health and Safety** – refers to matters related to the health and safety of the employees, contractors, guests of the government and members of the public in the workplace.

**Psychological Health and Safety** – refers to the absence of harm and/or threat of harm to a person's mental well-being.

**Psychological Healthy and Safe Workplace** – refers to a workplace that promotes employees' psychological well-being and actively works to prevent harm to employees' psychological health, including by negligence, recklessness, or deliberate action.

**Unusual Danger** – means, in relation to any work; a danger that does not normally exist in that work, or a danger under which a person engaged in that work would not normally carry out their work.

**Workplace** – refers to a location where an employee is, or is likely to be, engaged in work while performing work duties under the employment of the GNWT.

## 5. Authority and Accountability

### **General**

This Policy is issued under the authority of the Financial Management Board. The authority to make exceptions and approve revisions to this Policy rests with the Financial Management Board. Authority and accountability are further defined as follows:

(a) **Ministers**

Ministers are accountable to the Financial Management Board for the implementation of this Policy.

(b) **Deputy Heads**

Deputy Heads are accountable for the administration of this Policy in workplaces within their own department.

### **Specific**

(a) **Financial Management Board**

The Financial Management Board may approve Health, Safety and Wellness Policy.

(b) **Minister of Finance**

The Minister may recommend amendments and exceptions to the Health, Safety and Wellness Policy to the Financial Management Board.

(c) **Deputy Minister of Finance**

The Deputy Minister of Finance may:

- a. Establish guidelines on the application of this Policy and development of Health, Safety and Wellness Programs relating to both occupational health and safety and psychological health and safety.
- b. Provide support, direction and assistance on the mandate of this Policy and associated procedural and/or guideline concerns.

- c. Act as a champion of health, safety and wellness by sending effective communication on health, safety and wellness to GNWT employees.

(d) Deputy Heads

Ensure that the activities of the department, board or agency are compliant with this Policy.

Ensure the development, implementation and operation of health, safety and wellness programs in their department's or agency's workplaces.

Establish department or agency health, safety and wellness committees to address health, safety and wellness concerns specifically related to their organization's work, if the department or agency determines that this is required.

Monitor the effectiveness of health, safety and wellness programs in their workplaces and provide feedback to the Deputy Minister of Finance.

Act as a champion of health, safety and wellness within their department or agency by ensuring that health, safety and wellness guidelines and programs are effectively communicated to their employees.

Identify and coordinate appropriate health, safety and wellness training for employees in their department or agency.

(e) Health, Safety and Wellness Committees

Health, Safety and Wellness Committees shall be established for all departments and agencies and for all workplaces in the GNWT, consistent with established guidelines that outline the specific authorities and accountabilities of committees, managers and employees.

(f) Department of Finance

Assist, provide guidelines, and advise departments and agencies on the GNWT Health, Safety and Wellness Program.

Monitor the effectiveness of Health, Safety and Wellness Programs.

Lead or assist in investigations of serious workplace incidents, including fatalities, upon request by a deputy head.

(g) Departments

Identify potential workplace hazards and areas for positive change to protect the total well-being of GNWT employees.

Determine if improvements are needed to enhance health, safety and wellness practices.

Take preventative actions to address health, safety and wellness concerns specifically related to their department's work.

Evaluate and re-assess the workplace health, safety and wellness practices with the goal of improving employee health, safety and well-being.

(h) Managers

Promote safe workplace practices and communicate this Policy and associated guidelines to all employees under their supervision.

Take preventative actions to address health, safety and wellness concern specifically related to their employees' work.

Ensure that contractors and guests in the workplace are provided relevant information related to workplace hazards and health, safety and wellness.

(i) Employees

Be familiar with and in compliance with this Policy and associated guidelines.

Actively and meaningfully participate in the health, safety and wellness of the workplace.

Carry out responsibilities relating to health, safety and wellness committees and investigation or emergency teams, as assigned.

**6. Provisions**

**Health, Safety and Wellness Program**

The GNWT Health, Safety and Wellness Program provides processes, guidelines and tools for the management of health, safety and wellness throughout the GNWT.

**Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed by the Department of Finance every three years.

**7. Prerogative of the Financial Management Board**

Nothing in this Policy shall in any way be construed to limit the prerogative of the Financial Management Board to make decisions or take action with respect to the health, safety and wellness of the Public Service outside the provisions of this Policy.