



Version 1

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 12

THE SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAM FRAMEWORK

Fostering Resilience in Children, Youth and Families through School-based Mental Health Services

Government of
Northwest Territories

K'áhshó got'jne xádá k'é hederi ɬeđihtl'é yeriniwé ni dé dúle.
Dene Kádá

'is Dëne Sųłiné yati t'a huts'elkér xa beyáyatı the?ą ɔat'e, nuwe ts'ei
Dëne Sųłiné

Ɂondı dehgáh got'je zhatié k'éé edat'éh enahddhé níde naxets'é ed
Dene Zhatié

wandak izhii ginjik vat'atr'ijahch'uu zhit yinohthan ji', diits'at ginohl
Dinjii Zhu' Ginjik

Uvanittuaq ilitchurisukupku Inuvialuktun, ququaqluta. Inuvialuktun

kīspin ki nitawihtīn ē nīhiyawihk ōma ācimōwin, tipwāsinān.
nēhiyawēwin

Tł̄chǫ yati k'ęè. Dı wegodi newq dè, gots'o gonede.
Tł̄chǫ

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Une version française de ce document est disponible.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Challenging Stigma.....	4
The Model	5
Working Together	5
Providing Context	6
What Schools Are Already Doing	6
Moving Forward.....	6
Vision for School-based Mental Health and Wellness Services	7
Objectives	7
Guiding Principles	8
Trauma-Informed	8
Culturally-Informed.....	8
Wise Practices	9
Compassionate Leadership.....	9
Person-Centered Relationships	10
Inclusive Education.....	10
School-based Mental Health and Wellness Services	11
Level 1: Mental Health and Wellness Promotion	11
Level 2: Mental Health Prevention and Intervention.....	12
Health-based Mental Health and Wellness Services	14
Level 3 & 4: Clinical Counselling, Acute, and Specialized Mental Health Care	14
Accountability Standards for School-based Mental Health Services	15
Privacy, Confidentiality and Consent	15
Referral Processes.....	17
Supportive Mentorship.....	18
Training and Professional Development.....	18
Data Collection	19
Reporting Responsibilities	19
Definitions	20
Definitions	22
APPENDIX A	23

Introduction

Mental health experts in Canada recognize the significant role that schools play in promoting the well-being of students. As children and youth spend a considerable amount of their time in school, it serves as a crucial partner in the nurturing of their mental health and wellness. This framework serves as a guide for schools to effectively implement their mental health and wellness programs, which aim to foster the mental well-being of students. These programs include mental health promotion and prevention interventions that build positive mental health practices, foster student resilience, and equip them with skills to navigate stressful and challenging situations.

School staff are in a unique position to positively impact the mental health and wellness of their students. They are well-placed to identify early signs that a student may be struggling. With early identification, timely interventions and support can be provided proactively to help students receive the help or level of services they need before reaching a point of crisis. The Department of Education, Culture, and Employment (ECE) has developed the School-Based Mental Health and Wellness Framework to guide the regional development of school-based mental health and wellness programs in support of the students in the Northwest Territories (NWT).

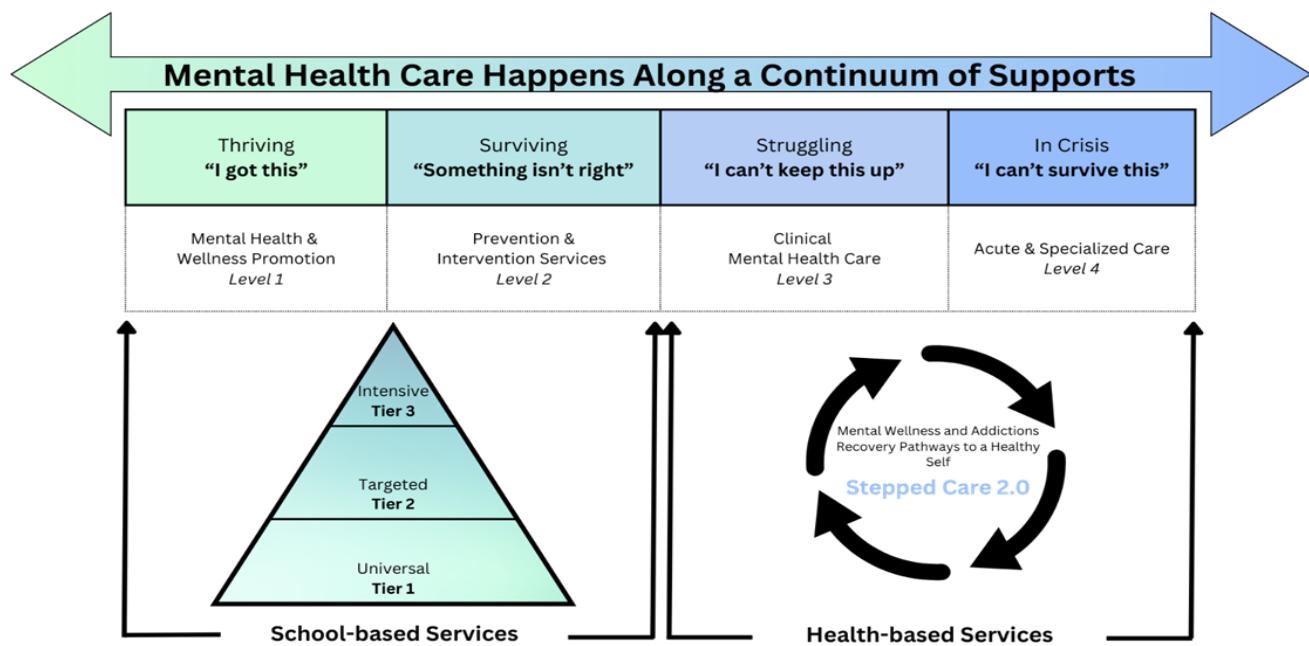
Challenging Stigma

Mental health is a crucial aspect of overall well-being; it's essential to ensure that everyone has access to the support they need. Unfortunately, mental health stigma can prevent individuals from seeking help, leading to isolation and even worsening mental health conditions. Schools can play a vital role in challenging this stigma by creating inclusive and supportive environments. By promoting mental health and wellness as universally necessary and demonstrating empathy and understanding to those struggling, schools can encourage children, youth, and families to take steps toward seeking help when needed. This approach leads to better mental health outcomes for students and a more engaging and inclusive school community overall. Together, we can work towards creating an environment where mental health is universally valued and supported.

The Model

By working together, the Departments of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) and Health and Social Services (HSS) can support a range of mental health and wellness supports for school-aged children and youth, including a continuum of services that spans mental health promotion, preventative intervention, clinical counselling, and specialized clinical services (Figure 1). The use of levels within this model intends to encompass both the ‘Tier System’ used within the education system to support students in schools and the ‘Stepped-Care 2.0’ approach used within Health and Social Services to operationalize mental health support across the NWT. This is further detailed in Appendix A.

Figure 1



Working Together

Effective collaboration between schools and the Community Counselling Program (CCP) relies on ongoing relationships and a shared understanding between the two systems. Referral processes and pathways, accompanied by a shared understanding of **informed consent** and information-sharing legislation and protocols, allow for an impactful partnership in service provision across all levels of the continuum of mental health support. Promoting the continuation of care between school and health services, where consent is provided, aims to support the mental health needs of children and youth in a wrap-around and effective manner.

Providing Context

NWT Education Bodies are responsible for providing quality mental health and wellness programs and services through multi-levelled supports integrating the guiding principles of trauma-informed, culturally informed, person-centered, compassionate leadership, inclusive education, and wise practices, as outlined in this framework.

What Schools Are Already Doing

Education Bodies recognize that student learning is enhanced when student mental health and wellness are supported. Across NWT schools, Education Bodies are utilizing various evidence-informed, outcomes-based mental health and wellness promotion resources such as:

- Safe School Plans
- Healthy Relationship Programming (HRP)
- Social Emotional Learning (SEL)
- Self-Regulation
- Trauma-informed practice
- Restorative practices
- Anti-bullying training
- Anti-racism training
- Living Well Together training for staff
- Ongoing staff training

Moving Forward

ECE recognizes the need to work closely with Health and Social Services (HSS) to ensure mental health and wellness resources are available to students at all levels of need.

ECE will provide system-level leadership and guidance to Education Bodies in the development, implementation, maintenance, and monitoring of outcomes of school-based mental health and wellness services for students from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 in the NWT.

This Framework aligns with the *NWT Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 School-Based Mental Health and Wellness Services Policy* and accompanying *Guidelines* to ensure the effective delivery of mental health and wellness programs and services at the school level.

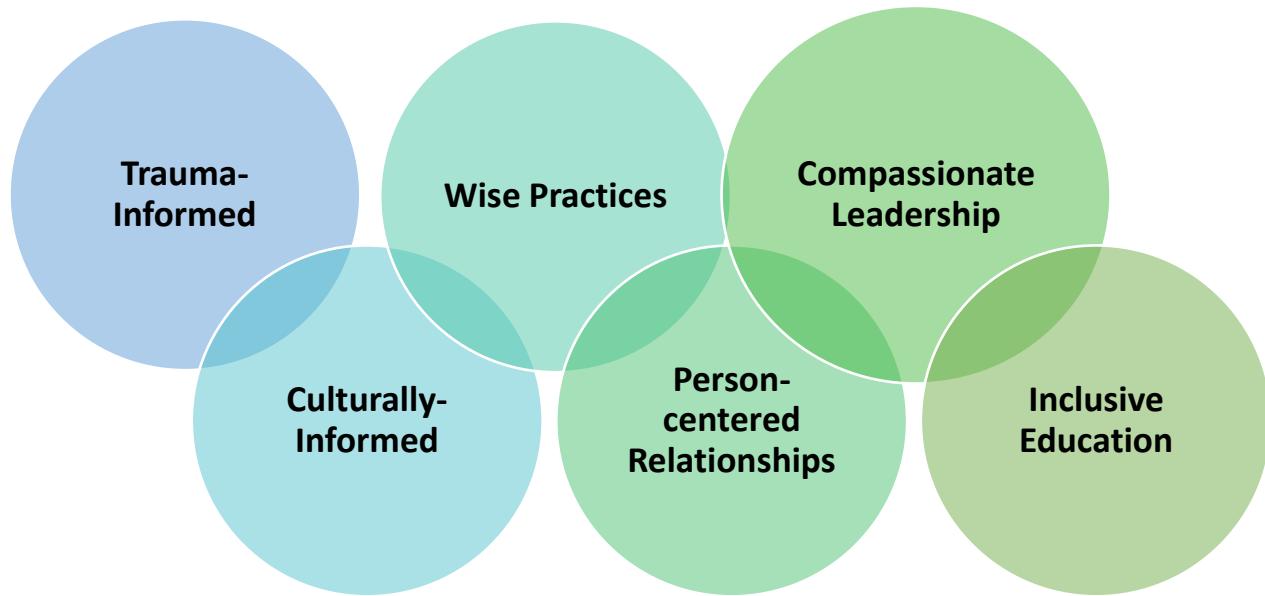
Vision for School-based Mental Health and Wellness Services

In the NWT, students have access to essential mental health and wellness support and a nurturing learning environment in school. The available resources within schools prioritize mental health and wellness using a strengths-based and comprehensive approach to promotion, prevention, and intervention.

Objectives

1. Implement a whole-school approach to safe and caring schools through a lens of mental health and wellness promotion.
2. Provide students with access to developing positive mental health behaviours and preventative interventions such as emotional regulation, coping, interpersonal relationships, and problem-solving strategies and skills.
3. Respond early and effectively to the mental health needs of students.
4. Partner with families, communities, and health and social services professionals to enhance system capacity in supporting the mental health needs of all students.

Guiding Principles



Trauma-Informed

In fostering mental health and wellness, it is fundamental to acknowledge the role of traumatic stress in the lives of staff and students. Therefore, trauma-informed practices intended to manage all stress levels and responses are crucial to building positive mental health and a successful learning environment in schools. **Mental Wellness Providers** and educators can work together to understand the effects of stress and trauma on themselves and students, realize the impacts of stress and trauma on emotional and behavioural well-being, and recognize signs and symptoms of stress. They can respond to students in a meaningful way that supports them in feeling seen, heard, and valued. When proactive measures are used to create a supportive school environment that encourages resilience and strengths, schools positively contribute to their students' overall mental health and wellness while minimizing the risk of re-traumatization.

A trauma-informed approach uses consistent practices from educators and school-based mental wellness providers to establish an environment that promotes a sense of safety and trust for students while fostering opportunities for them to develop coping skills and healthy relationships. This, in turn, sets up students for success both within and beyond the school context.

Culturally-Informed

Cultivating meaningful connections with family, community, cultural identity, and the land through the preservation of cultural practices and traditions is essential for promoting and maintaining optimal mental health and overall well-being for all. Such practices and traditions serve as a vital source of comfort, guidance, and inspiration, enabling individuals to feel a profound sense of belonging and purpose in their lives. By honouring and preserving these practices and traditions

through a culturally-informed lens, the lives of students are enriched, relationships are deepened, and spirits are nurtured, empowering students to thrive in every aspect of their lives.

Efforts to promote mental health and wellness in schools should prioritize cultural sensitivity, safety, and humility toward all cultural backgrounds. To create a safe and inclusive environment for promoting mental health and wellness in a culturally-informed manner, it's important to approach the topic of cultural safety with an open mind and willingness to learn about students' cultural beliefs and practices. This approach is highly effective in promoting a strong sense of identity and belonging among students, which can significantly boost their self-esteem and positively impact their academic and mental well-being.

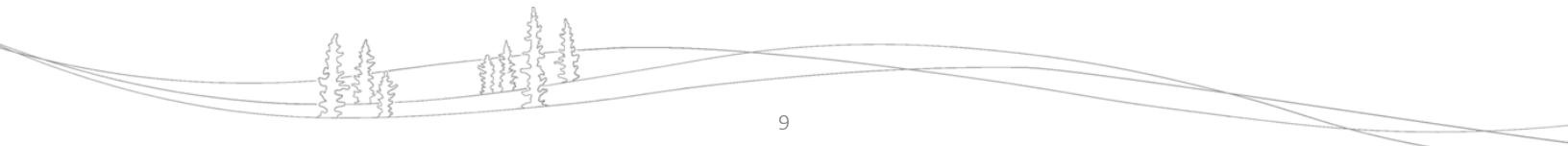
Refer to the [NWT JK-12 Indigenous Languages & Education Handbook: Our People, Our Land, Our Ways, Our Languages](#) for a deeper look at the cultural context of the NWT.

Wise Practices

Effective school-based mental health and wellness services require a holistic understanding of the individuals and communities being served, encompassing their physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being. **Wise practices** incorporate local and Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and experiences to go beyond usual best practice models. When providing mental health services to children and youth in schools, it's critical to implement culturally relevant practices and services that are supported through **evidence-informed** approaches. This encourages practical and effective interventions for students. These services should be grounded in objective knowledge and delivered thoughtfully and considerately to meet each individual's unique needs. By tailoring techniques and approaches to the specific needs of each child or youth, they can receive meaningful and relatable help that enables them to manage their mental wellness and thrive in their daily lives.

Compassionate Leadership

It is essential for adults to be encouraged to prioritize their own mental health and well-being, as it positively influences the educational system by serving as an example for students and allowing educators to respond effectively to student needs. Compassionate leadership allows and advocates for self-reflection, mindfulness, and stress management. Educators are encouraged to balance their mental wellness with the use of effective tools and practices that enhance mental health. This benefits educators and creates a healthy and conducive environment for students to thrive academically and emotionally. Prioritizing mental health in the educational system requires the inclusion of every individual present in the school environment.

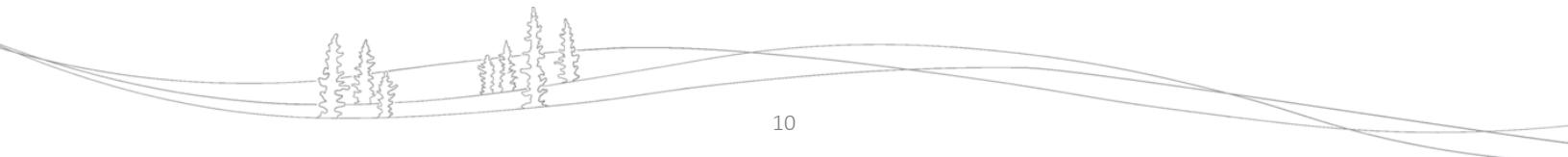


Person-Centered Relationships

Person-centered relationships focus on the unique needs of each individual taking into account their personal experiences, values, needs, and preferences when making decisions and providing care. This approach seeks to understand the individuals' experience from their point of view. Embracing an approach to person-centered relationships in schools means school staff and leaders are expected to uphold this practice by maintaining respect, dignity, and compassion in interactions and relationships with peers, staff, students, and families. To achieve this objective in relationships, the person is put at the center of decision-making and is provided the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to effectively meet their individualized goals in the learning environment.

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is crucial to promoting mental health in schools. It involves creating a welcoming and accepting environment where all students feel valued and supported, regardless of their background, culture, or abilities. Inclusive education in mental health means recognizing and respecting diversity and addressing the unique needs of all students, including those with mental health challenges. It involves providing a range of mental health services that are accessible to all students, regardless of their abilities or socio-economic status. By promoting inclusive education in mental health, schools can help reduce stigma and foster a sense of belonging and connectedness among students, which are essential factors in promoting positive mental health.



School-based Mental Health and Wellness Services

Promotion means proactive initiatives that foster positive mental health behaviours, lifestyles, and relationships by supporting the growth and development of the whole child/youth. The ultimate goal of mental health promotion is to cultivate resilient students who can cope with life's stressors and challenges.

Prevention involves addressing risk factors and promoting proactive steps to mitigate mental health concerns from progressing into mental illness through early identification and intervention in fostering protective factors in students and their environment. The ultimate goal of prevention is to reduce the number of future mental health concerns in the school population.

Mental health promotion, prevention and intervention are at the core of establishing positive mental health and wellness for all children and youth.

Level 1: Mental Health and Wellness Promotion

Mental health promotion services are universal, proactive strategies designed for all students. They include, but are not limited to, routines and structures that promote health and wellness, social and emotional learning, educational opportunities for staff and students, availability of self-help and regulation tools, anti-bullying, and anti-stigma campaigns.

All aspects of the school community seek to embrace mental health promotion by fostering resilience to reduce **internalizing** and **externalizing** struggles through positive mental health and wellness strategies. This includes:

- Promoting positive mental health skills such as social, emotional and regulation competencies in students.
- Utilizing evidence-informed programs to provide a positive school climate and promote student skills in dealing with bullying and conflicts, solving problems, developing healthy peer relationships, engaging in activities to prevent suicide and substance use, etc.
- Implementing programs and delivering training focused on life promotion, mental health and wellness routines, mental health literacy, and reducing mental health stigma (e.g., encouraging help-seeking behaviour).
- Implementing social and emotional learning programs, practices and services designed to enhance student's skills in emotional regulation, problem-solving and social interaction.
- Implementing programs and interventions designed to improve cultural safety and inclusion and addressing racism and discrimination of students, including two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex (2SLGBTQIA+) students and others.

Level 2: Mental Health Prevention and Intervention

Mental health prevention services in schools are an essential part of supporting students' well-being. These services complement universal promotion services and provide essential additional support for students with specific needs or vulnerabilities. These interventions are targeted to mitigate internalizing (e.g., excessive worries, social withdrawal, persistent low moods, etc.) and externalizing (e.g., restlessness, acting out, oppositional, etc.) behaviours for students at risk of poor mental health.

Intervention services for prevention intend to support skill development in managing emotions, reducing excessive worry, focusing attention, coping skills, resolving conflict, and problem-solving strategies, and are best implemented through 1-1 support or small groups of students. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Developing a school culture in which educators and other school staff are trained to recognize the early warning signs of mental health concerns with students and navigate local mental health resources.
- Assessing and evaluating a student's specific needs to implement the appropriate targeted prevention strategies and supports in collaboration with the student.
- Developing early intervention services for students in need of additional support such as:
 - Groups to learn about stress, grief, anger, worry, sadness, etc.
 - Additional small groups and 1-1 support to students utilizing a "skills-in" approach to target skills around coping, emotional regulation, problem-solving and interpersonal relationships.
- Developing Wellness, Emotional Support, and Safety Plans
- Navigating mental health services to support students in accessing local mental health resources (i.e., referral processes) and e-mental health services.

A "skills-in" approach focuses on teaching students new skills and empowering them to use the skills. Further therapeutic intervention in skill development requires a mental health professional's skills, credentials, and knowledge. In other words, school-based mental health services support students in building skills and practices in their day-to-day lives that support them in their mental health and wellness. Examples of this would include open conversations about all feelings, and not being afraid to approach children and youth who might be visibly upset or emotionally dysregulated. Therapeutic interventions seek to further "unpack" a student's previous experiences, emotions, thought processes, etc. that must occur in a safe and skilled way.

Often, enhanced coping skills are required to enter a therapeutic relationship meant to "unpack" stressors and previous experiences. In this sense, school-based mental health and wellness services play a key role in preparing students for this next step in their mental health journey when they are ready to take it.

Therapeutic services provided in clinical counselling must be delivered by a trained mental health professional who holds the required designations in order to uphold the intent and validity of the intervention. If schools hire or contract clinical counsellors, their primary role will be to deliver level 1 and 2 services to students. Schools must provide their own clinical supervision if they hire a clinical counsellor. In most cases, students requiring level 3 and 4 services will need to follow the external referral process to Health and Social Services.

Only with the consent of the student, caregiver, and/or guardian can ongoing information sharing between Health and Social Services and the school or outside contractors occur.

Health-based Mental Health and Wellness Services

Level 3 & 4: Clinical Counselling, Acute, and Specialized Mental Health Care

The Health & Social Services System will provide:

- Clinical counselling support to individuals and families (i.e., for individuals living with comorbid mental health disorders, eating disorders, addiction and substance use issues, complex trauma, complex grief, , living with family violence, intergenerational trauma)
- Family therapy
- Therapeutic groups (i.e., Dialectical Behavioural Therapy, grief, etc.)
- Specialized mental health consultations
- Integration and collaboration with health system – Psychiatry, physicians, acute care, etc.

Accountability Standards for School-based Mental Health Services

Privacy, Confidentiality and Consent

In the education system, it is mandatory for every individual within the education system to follow their legal requirements and professional ethical standards that outline the rights of students to privacy and confidentiality. It is crucial for students to be informed and understand the role of the individual providing services along with the limits to their privacy and confidentiality within School-based Mental Health and Wellness programs. Limits to confidentiality clearly define what information any education staff must legally share and with whom. Special attention must be given to ensure students understand who is authorized to their information within the School-based Mental Health and Wellness team. This is necessary to ensure ongoing safe and secure relationships when accessing mental health services in the NWT. Further information on responsibilities and procedures can be found in the ECE School-based Mental Health and Wellness operating procedures.

Informed Consent

Informed Consent is a right that every student possesses and must be respected within a therapeutic relationship when accessing therapeutic services. It means that the student has the right to choose whether to disclose information or not and whether or not they want to access the services. Students and/or Guardians have the right to be informed of the available options for services, such as school-based mental health and wellness programs, e-mental health programs, local community counselling programs (such as Community Counselling Program, Indigenous community supports, community wellness programs), etc. They also have the right to make decisions around sharing information. Informed consent is an ongoing and dynamic process where the student and/or guardians must be given relevant information regarding the role of school-based mental health services and requests for information sharing between health and education mental health services.

Consideration of Age-to-Access Service

There is no general age of consent in the NWT for providing school-based mental health and wellness care; instead, it depends on whether the young person can provide informed consent. A young person will be found to have the capacity to consent or to withdraw consent if they both:

1. Understand the information relevant to the proposed treatment, and
2. Appreciate the reasonably foreseeable consequences of consenting or refusing consent.

NOTE: Under s. 25(1) of the Education Act, a parent is entitled to be informed of the progress, behaviour, and attendance of a student and to be involved in making decisions that significantly affect the education, health, or safety of the student.

What it means for a decision to “significantly affect” the education, health, or safety of a student and what “decisions” are captured by this section are not specified. Each potential decision would need to be evaluated to determine whether the impact would be significant, and students must be informed of these information-sharing requirements (the limits to their confidentiality). It is recommended these decisions be made through a team process such as the school-based support team or consultation.

Any policy which governs access to service would need to balance the entitlement of parents to be involved in significant decisions about the health, education, and safety of a student with the privacy concerns addressed through s. 32 and Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (ATIPPA), as well as the common law doctrine of “mature minor” and ensuring that the best interests of the students are maintained.

A mature minor is a child or youth who has not obtained the age of majority (19 years old) but who understands the nature and consequences of their decisions and, through ongoing assessment, has been deemed sufficiently mature to make decisions about their care.

Sharing Information

The sharing of information must occur within federal and territorial legislation governing confidentiality and privacy, established organizational protocols, processes of informed consent, secure methods of information transfer and only shares necessary details with the essential individuals. Further information regarding these responsibilities and procedures can be found in the ECE School-based Mental Health and Wellness Program standard operating procedures.

Therapeutic Space

In order to offer mental wellness services within a school environment, it's important to have suitable areas available for activities related to promotion and prevention, whether it's a group session or one-on-one. The comfort, safety, and privacy of students should always be taken into account when choosing a space, keeping in mind high-traffic areas, windows, doors, and sound levels. The selected area should create a welcoming, comfortable, and safe atmosphere that ensures privacy is maintained for students while also being easily accessible.

Documentation Standards and Storage

It is important to allocate specific time for the mental wellness provider to document the services and interventions they provide to meet legal and ethical professional standards of practice. Additionally, these providers must have access to secure storage options for their documentation and records.

Consistent with best practices in Information and Privacy Protection, Education Bodies should employ electronic file storage systems that are encrypted and/or password protected. If a school/Education Body elects to maintain hard copy files, all confidential documentation must be stored in a locked cabinet, secured in a private and locked office. Further information regarding these responsibilities and procedures can be found in the ECE School-based Mental Health and Wellness Program standard operating procedures.

Referral Processes

Internal Referral Processes

- *Will attach Flow Chart as an Appendix once approved*
- Mental Health and Wellness interventions are completely voluntary. Students must be willing to access services without risk of consequence or penalty for declining.
- Informed consent and confidential processes must be followed in the referral process.
- Each region and/or school is responsible for establishing a consistent internal referral process that:
 - Identifies students who may benefit from level 2 mental health prevention interventions. Students referred must be open and willing to access these activities/services voluntarily.
 - Students and families can request access to Level 2 services (i.e., self-referral).
 - Community Counsellors can refer to Mental Wellness Providers for Level 2 services.

External Referral Processes and Community Partners

- *Will attach Flow Chart as an Appendix once approved*
- Referral to the local Community Counselling Program through the applicable Health and Social Services Authority (HSSA) has multiple points of access through the school, a health provider, family, or self-referral. All counselling services provided by the HSSA are on a **voluntary** basis and require consent from the individual or guardian to participate in services. Appropriate consent to release information is required to share information between HSSA and education staff.
- Additional support can be provided to students during the referral process to help with:
 - Navigating the referral process with the student or family to support students in receiving needed and desired levels of mental health service.
 - Supporting students in following through with external referrals and ways to overcome physical and psychological barriers to accessing external mental health supports.

Supported Transitions

- Promoting partnerships between Health and Social Services and education as students move across systems for mental health support with appropriate consent detailing information-sharing privileges and limits.
- Promoting consistent practices that schools are already using between classrooms and schools to promote mental health support.

Supportive Mentorship

Mental health and wellness services delivered by school-based mental wellness providers can be emotionally and psychologically demanding. Supportive mentorship is a mechanism by which wellness and nonspecialized providers receive ongoing guidance, mentorship, and emotional support from a **mental health specialist**.

Effective delivery of school-based mental health and wellness programs and services is crucial for students' well-being. Regular and supportive mentorship can help achieve this by ensuring that services are delivered in a contextual, ethical, and evidence-informed manner. It also provides a platform for school-based providers to evaluate the effectiveness of their services, apply evidence-informed practices in the local school context, and tackle complex case scenarios. By embracing regular and supportive mentorship, schools can ensure that their school-based mental health programs and services deliver the highest quality care to children and youth.

Quality supportive mentorship is a highly effective approach to building capacity and mitigating vicarious trauma within school-based mental wellness providers. Its importance lies in its ability to enhance problem-solving skills around the mental health concerns of students, promote creativity in service delivery, encourage personal reflection for emotional awareness, and improve the quality of Level 1 and Level 2 mental health services.

What makes Supportive Mentorship important?

- It strengthens the skills and knowledge of school-based providers;
- It increases mental health literacy for school-based providers;
- It helps to reduce gaps in services between level 2 and level 3 services;
- It promotes better mental health and wellness outcomes for students.

NOTE: NWT Education Bodies are required to ensure this level of support is made available to positions hired under the School-based Mental Health and Wellness Program. The ECE School-based Mental Health and Wellness Program policy and operating procedures provide further information on responsibilities and procedures.

Training and Professional Development

Investing time in professional development is vital to the success of mental wellness providers in the school environment. Allocating time to research and access up-to-date, evidence-based practices through attending training, supportive mentorship, and course completion is essential to effective mental health support for students. Neglecting professional development for mental wellness providers in schools can lead to job dissatisfaction and missed opportunities for growth in capacity and beneficial interventions for students.

The school-based mental wellness provider and the principal or regional coordinator should include plans for professional development opportunities throughout the school year. The school-based mental health and wellness coordinator and the person leading supportive mentorship can help identify areas for learning and growth.

Data Collection

Data collection and program evaluation are essential parts of the ongoing monitoring plan for school-based mental health and wellness programs. The ECE School-based Mental Health and Wellness Program standard operating procedures provide further information regarding data collection tools, responsibilities, and measures.

Data collection is a necessary step for reporting purposes at various levels of the education system:

- ECE uses data collection to inform policies, improve guidelines, request funding, and allocate financial resources effectively.
- Education Bodies use data collection to make informed decisions regarding resource allocation and effectively plan for meeting the mental health needs of the schools within each region.
- At the school level, data collection supports the school administration and mental wellness provider in identifying patterns and trends that can inform approaches to implementing multi-level mental health support.
- Data helps identify areas where additional support may be needed to improve individuals' or groups' outcomes and measure progress over time.

Reporting Responsibilities

Mental Wellness Provider to Principal

Reporting responsibilities must ensure all confidentiality and privacy laws are followed while also ensuring **students are aware of their limits to confidentiality within school-based mental health and wellness services**. Consistent practice standards are required to facilitate the ongoing relationship between the mental wellness provider and principal and maintain the trusting relationship between the mental wellness provider and the student. Further details of these responsibilities and processes are determined in ECE School-based Mental Health and Wellness Program standard operating procedures.

Education Body to ECE

Education Bodies will be required to include details regarding school-based mental health and wellness programming within their annual operating plan and annual report for each of their schools and communities. They must use established indicators and timelines as defined in ECE's School-based Mental Health and Wellness Program standard operating procedures.

Definitions

Education Body: A District Education Authority (DEA), a Divisional Education Council (DEC), commission scolaire francophone (CSF), Tłı̨chǫ Community Services Agency (TCSA) or all of them.

Evidence-Informed: Using the best available evidence from research, along with expertise, and preferences of the individual being served, to inform decision-making in the delivery of mental health services. It involves critically reviewing and synthesizing current research literature to determine the most effective approaches to services. An evidence-informed approach aims to provide the highest quality care possible, based on the most current and reliable evidence available.

Externalizing Mental Health Concerns: Behaviours and issues that are directed outward and disrupt normal functioning in life. These behaviours may include impulsiveness, opposition, difficulty in forming relationships, trouble with attention, and aggression.

Internalizing Mental Health Concerns: Emotional and psychological struggles that are directed inward and significantly impact an individual's daily function and overall wellness when left unaddressed. It is easy to overlook these struggles as they are not overtly evident. Individuals struggling with internalizing mental health concerns often exhibit signs of excessive worry, social isolation, low mood, low self-esteem, and a lack of interest in activities they once enjoyed.

Mental Health Concern: Concerns about an individual's mental health arise when they present with abrupt changes to their baseline behaviour or demonstrate poor mental health practices. For example, individuals respond to challenging life situations (such as relationship breakdowns, job loss, etc.) with unhealthy behaviours such as substance abuse, social withdrawal or extreme anxiety. Other individuals may develop persistent negative thinking patterns (such as distrust of others and low self-confidence) that impede their ability to maintain healthy relationships, function independently or enjoy life.

Mental Health Specialist: A mental health specialist is a professional with training and expertise in assessing, treating, and preventing mental health disorders. They may include psychiatrists, psychologists, mental health counsellors, and other healthcare professionals who specialize in mental health.

Mental Health Prevention: Taking action or intervening to minimize the progression of mental health concerns by addressing risk factors and building protective factors (i.e., skills in emotional regulation, coping, problem-solving, etc.) before a specific mental illness has been identified.

Mental Health Promotion: Encourages and facilitates protective factors and behaviours that support overall mental health and wellness. It involves empowering individuals to cultivate and sustain healthy routines, relationships, and lifestyles that contribute to positive mental health outcomes, even when faced with life's stressors and challenges.

Mental Wellness Provider: Plays a proactive role in preparing students to respond to and manage life's challenges. Mental Wellness Providers promote a positive sense of self, spirit, and belonging for students through skill development and promoting positive mental health behaviours.

Voluntary: When the child or youth being offered mental health services understands, agrees, and consents to receiving support.

Whole-School Approach: A cohesive and collaborative action by a school community that is being strategically and continually constructed to improve student learning, mental health, and wellbeing.

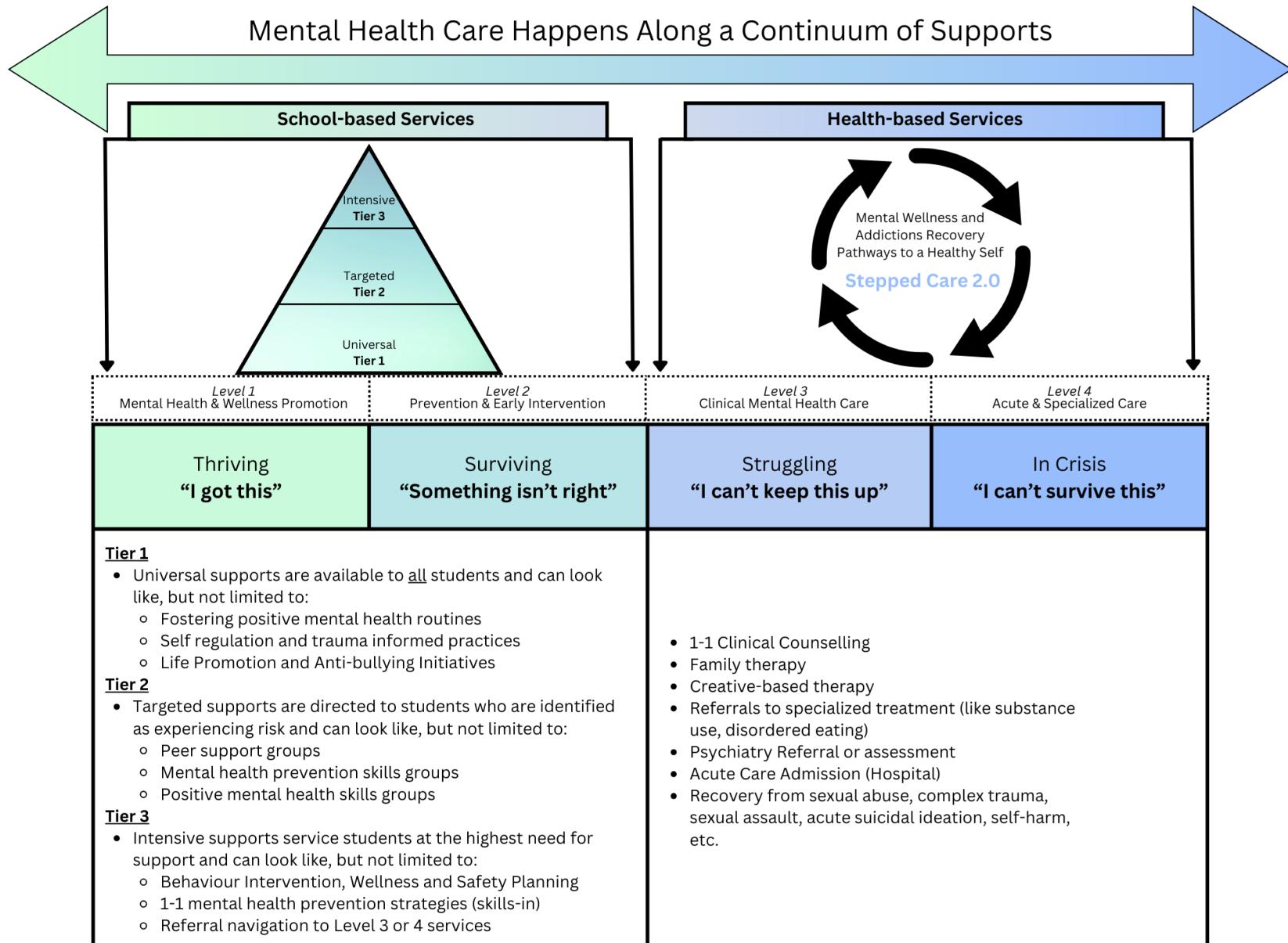
Wise practices: Practices that recognizes the wisdom held in each Indigenous community in caring for the whole person (physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual).

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APPENDIX A

Mental Health Care Happens Along a Continuum of Supports



Students may be accessing multiple supports across the continuum at any given time