

School Wellness Specialist

An overview of the role





CASA – Dedicated Wellness Counsellor or Similar

- Comprehensive Mental Health and Wellness Approach for Yukon Schools
 - Identified need for additional supports in schools
 - Importance of connection to culture
- CASA supported this work
 - All schools will have access to “dedicated wellness counsellor or similar” positions

*Time-limited positions for 5 years; starting in 2023-2024



CASA – Dedicated Wellness Counsellor or Similar

- Will be served by two positions:
 - School Wellness Specialist
 - Minimum qualification is a Bachelor of Social Work
 - Wellness role
 - Will be developed with individual First Nations government
 - Could be elder, traditional healer, etc
- Schools will have access to both
- Two world views and approaches to Wellness (First Nation and Western)



Wellness role*

* envision the role being responsible for providing culturally appropriate services and resources to address the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and academic needs of students.

Their key responsibilities may include:

1. Wellness planning: developing wellness plans for individual students
2. Cultural events and ceremonies: Facilitating cultural events and ceremonies to promote Indigenous cultural practices.
3. Counselling and support: Providing supportive counselling and support services to students.
4. Education: Educating both staff and students about Indigenous history, culture, and health practices.



Wellness role

- Position will bring expertise in First Nation values, traditional healing, and cultural and traditional practices.
- Depending on the needs of the community as identified by First Nation partners, this role may be filled by Elders, Traditional Healers, or support workers. First Nation Wellness Support can work closely with the School-Based Team.



School Wellness Specialist (SWS)

The role is broad, and varies depending on the needs of individual schools.

In general, they can provide services in 6 categories:

1. Assessment (ie. threat/risk, mental health)
2. Treatment (ie. Individual/group/family counselling)
3. Consultation and Programming (ie. School based team meetings)
4. Case Management (ie. High risk/needs students; comprehensive supports needed)
5. Communication and Advocacy (ie. Home-school liaison; outreach)
6. Education and Prevention (ie. Professional development; school wide strategies)



Duties/Responsibilities may include:

Direct Support to Students

- Providing counselling, support and advice to students (individual or group) who are experiencing problems which are interfering with their success in school, their attendance, or struggles of a behavioural, emotional or social nature
- Providing crisis consultation and intervention for student mental health and well-being concerns



Duties/Responsibilities may include:

Direct Supports to Schools

- Consulting and collaborating with the School Based Team, parents and other professionals to develop supportive strategies and establish plan to enhance and student success
- Developing and providing information, resources, and in-person presentations for parents/guardians, school council, community groups, and school staff to raise awareness and ensure education of pertinent current subjects
- Providing classroom and staff support as a resource person on social/emotional development, prevention programs, mental wellness, bullying prevention, restorative practices
- Providing support to the Risk/Threat Assessments (VTRA) and Crisis Response (including Critical Incidents) processes; responding to emergency or crisis situations; ensuring follow up services are identified and in place
- Providing case management services for students identified as priorities (ie. VTRA, complex needs, significant partners/supports involved)
- Support and implement approved policies, protocols and procedures for addressing sensitive issues (ie. Child abuse, VTRA, Critical Incidents, Suicide Guidelines)



Duties/Responsibilities may include:

Direct Supports to Families

- Working with families to resolve struggles that a student is experiencing (ie. attendance, behavioural, emotional or social struggles), which interfere with their ability to achieve success within the school.
- Making home visits to develop a positive and supportive relationship between parents/guardians and the schools
- Connecting students to other professionals, when necessary; assists parents in the referral to outside agencies, including mental health and community agencies
- Acting as a liaison between school and parents/guardians



Mental Health Supports in Schools

- School Counsellors
- Clinical Counsellors
- School Wellness Specialist
- First Nation Wellness role
- ALL educators



Mental Health Supports in Schools

School Counsellors

School Counsellors are **teachers**; minimum qualification is a teachers certificate. They have two main roles in supporting students:

1. Personal development: School Counsellors help students develop social-emotional skills, life skills, decision-making abilities, and overall health and wellness. They also assist with self-regulation, conflict resolution, and personal growth.
 2. Academic support: School Counsellors aid students in achieving their academic potential through academic planning and career exploration.
- School Counsellors make referrals to community resources, including clinical counsellors, when necessary. School Counsellors are an integral part of the School-Based Team.



Mental Health Supports in Schools

Clinical Counsellors

- Clinical Counsellors are provided by Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services. Clinical Counsellors offer a range of services to children, youth, adults, and families facing mental health issues, diagnosed mental illnesses, problematic substance use, and addiction.
- Clinical Counsellors work under the supervision of a licensed clinical supervisor. A Master's degree in Counselling or Social Work is typically the minimum educational requirement, although a Bachelor's degree may also be acceptable in some cases.



Next Steps

- Recruitment efforts are underway for School Wellness Specialist positions
- Developing the reporting structure, training and communication plans
- Working with each individual First Nation governments to develop First Nation Wellness Support positions



Questions