

Community Wellness Court Theory of Change

Executive Summary

The Yukon Community Wellness Court is designed to offer a therapeutic alternative for offenders with substance abuse problems, mental health problems, and/or fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) or other cognitive impairments that are related to the commission of their offence(s). The partners of the CWC have adopted a theory of change that describes the purpose of the court and the process and therapeutic interventions required to achieve that purpose. The theory of change serves as a guide to ensuring that the court's approach to working with offenders is systematic and it serves as a tool for monitoring the court's effectiveness.

The primary objectives of the CWC are as follows:

1. The "revolving door" of recidivism and re-offending is reduced for the individuals who participate in the Community Wellness Court.
2. The safety of Yukon communities is enhanced by providing individuals who participate in the CWC with supports that reduce their risk to re-offend.
3. The needs of those victimized during the commission of the offences(s) before the Community Wellness Court are adequately addressed.
4. The capacity of the core partners of the Community Wellness Court is adequate to the roles they must play and partnerships are fostered with other key stakeholders in support of the Court's objectives.
5. The use of and effectiveness of alternative justice approaches in the Yukon, including community-based justice, therapeutic or problem solving approaches and restorative justice, is increased.

In order to meet these objectives, the CWC has identified seven crucial therapeutic elements that need to take place.

1. **The offender takes responsibility for his/her action:** the participant must plead guilty and agree to abide by certain conditions, including consent to random drug testing. He/she must be willing to work with a team of service providers and supports to address some of their identified problems/needs.

2. **Intense supervision:** judicial supervision and intensive bail supervision and case-management will hold participants accountable for their actions and provide intensive support to help participants pursue wellness.
3. **Therapeutic treatment and supports:** these are provided to participants so they can meaningfully address the underlying issues that contribute to their offending behaviour, with an emphasis on addictions, mental health problems and FASD.

Services and supports should be culturally relevant to improve outcomes for First Nations offenders who form the majority of the Yukon corrections population.

In recognition that participants live in families and communities and will transition from justice supports to the community, participants will be assisted to build healthy personal support networks.

The CWC will also work towards building partnerships with justice and non-justice services in the community to further support participants' wellness journeys.

4. **Personal and skills development:** once a participant's immediate treatment needs are initiated and the client is stabilized and making consistent progress, he/she will require further supports to gain the personal and vocational skills required to become a productive and self-reliant member of the community. This can include accessing anger management programs or literacy supports, attaining higher levels of education, developing employment-related skills and finding and maintaining work.
5. **Social determinants of health:** the CWC recognizes the importance of helping participants build a pattern of life that is positive and allows people to meet their basic needs with dignity. Wellness requires having access to a wide range of supports that cross all life areas and includes housing, income security, spirituality and sense of purpose, cultural integrity, learning opportunities, and strong families and communities. Many of these areas present significant challenges for participants in the CWC and the court will assist participants to identify their needs holistically and to access appropriate services and supports
6. **Incentives and sanctions:** the CWC will use incentives and sanctions as a method of encouraging participants to seek wellness.

7. **Graduation and transition:** the CWC is a temporary program that clients can use to begin or continue a path to wellness. Participants will graduate from the program and receive a sentence that reflects their progress. Participants will be supported to make a smooth transition to other community-based services once they have completed their personal program.

In addition to the seven elements of a therapeutic program for participants, the CWC will pay attention to the process through which it delivers its program. Process characteristics necessary to the success of the CWC include:

(1) Providing culturally relevant programs through the inclusion of Yukon First Nations in the development of programming; using culturally and First Nation appropriate healing models, strategies and resources; and, building partnerships with First Nations that help build capacity;

(2) Use of a holistic and integrated approach that targets individual needs and that includes the needs of victims. In adopting a restorative justice approach, the CWC recognizes the needs and rights of victims. The CWC will provide support related to the trauma of being harmed; support for understanding and participating in the criminal justice process; and, where appropriate and desired, support for achieving reconciliation with the offender;

(3) Working with participants' families and communities wherever possible to support individual participant wellness;

(4) Use of a trauma-based approach in recognition that trauma is at the core of many addictions and mental health problems. Participants with FASD have often also experienced trauma. Participants will need to have opportunities to work on core issues such as sexual abuse, grief, loss of identity, domestic violence, and poverty and dependency, in order to successfully break the pattern of repeat offending.

(5) Take a learning-centered approach to developing the CWC. The partners are "making the road by walking". To support this journey, the partners need to take a capacity-building approach that focuses on building a community of practice and working in collaboration with non-justice specific agencies to better support offenders in the broader community.