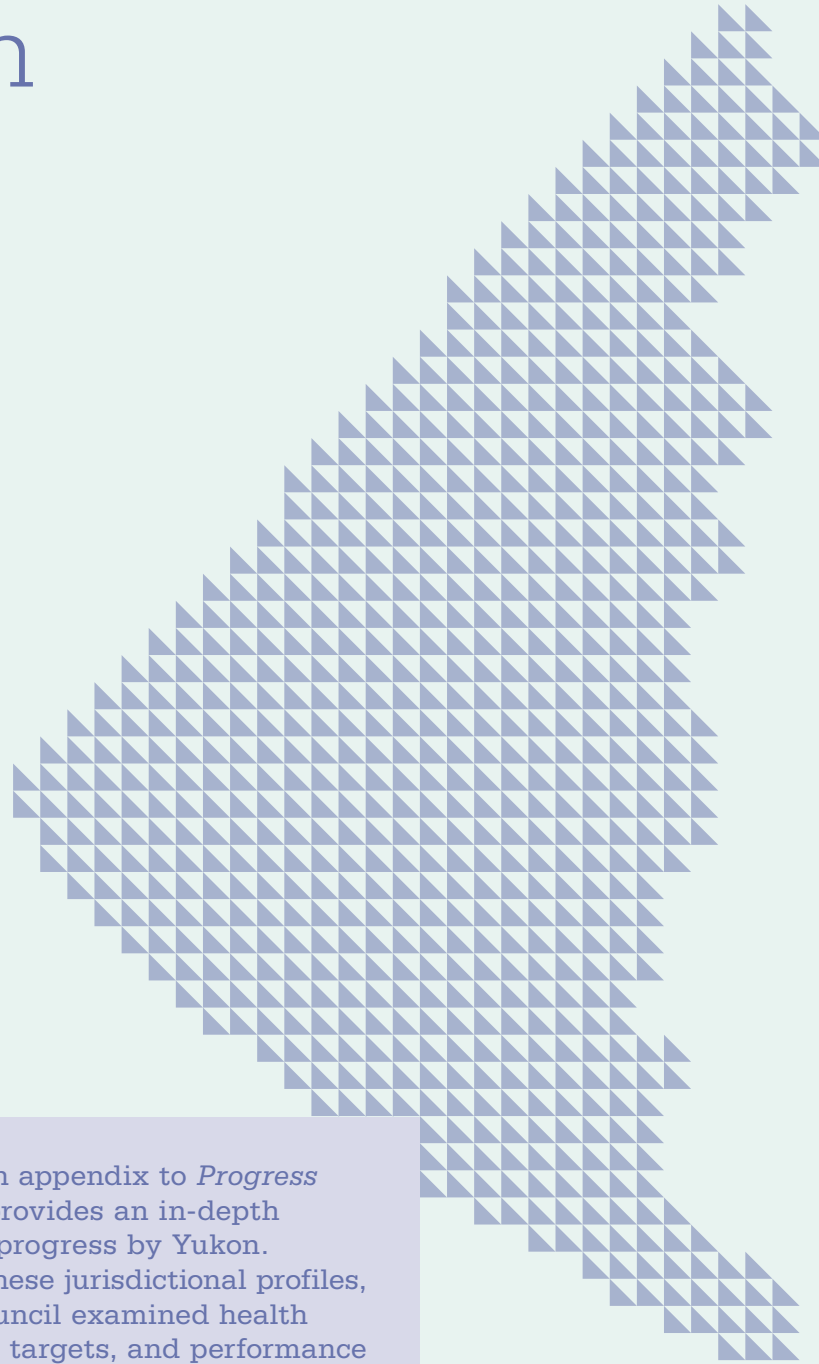


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# Yukon



This profile, an appendix to *Progress Report 2013*, provides an in-depth review of the progress by Yukon. In preparing these jurisdictional profiles, the Health Council examined health care priorities, targets, and performance reports; gathered information from government websites, annual reports, and news releases; consulted with government representatives, stakeholders and experts; and requested information directly from federal/provincial/territorial ministries and departments responsible for health. All profiles are current up to March 31, 2013. [healthcouncilcanada.ca/progress](http://healthcouncilcanada.ca/progress).



# Yukon




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## Access and Wait Times

In 2009, the Yukon Health Care Review identified the need to address wait times to see a specialist and to receive surgery.<sup>1</sup> Wait times may be affected by the travel distance to receive health care services in the Yukon or in another jurisdiction. For example, some specialty care services are provided at Whitehorse General Hospital by visiting specialists from outside of the territory, while other advanced and specialist services such as cancer care and cardiology are provided in facilities in British Columbia and Alberta.<sup>2</sup> Whitehorse General Hospital is the Yukon's primary acute care facility; together with a smaller regional hospital in Watson Lake, it currently serves all Yukon communities. A new regional hospital in Dawson City will open soon.<sup>3,4</sup> The Wait Time Alliance and the Canadian Institute for Health Information do not report on wait times in the territories.<sup>5,6</sup>

Federal wait time funding was provided to Whitehorse General Hospital in 2009 to implement an electronic system to allow clinical results to be distributed to physicians.<sup>2</sup> However, no further information is available about the implementation and outcomes of this initiative. Wait times in the Yukon are examined and addressed through a committee composed of physicians, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and Yukon Health and Social Services.<sup>4</sup> However, target and actual wait times and strategies to reduce them are not publicly reported. The lack of data in the Yukon is largely due to heavy reliance on services provided outside of the territory.<sup>4</sup>

### Health human resources

Bursaries are available for students pursuing medicine, nursing, or other health professional education. In addition, individuals working in the health and social services field who wish to improve their skills have access to a professional development fund.<sup>7</sup>

### Access to ambulatory and community care

No information on access to ambulatory care and community care programs in the Yukon is currently available.

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## Primary Health Care Reform and Electronic Health Records

Fifteen community health centres across the Yukon provide primary care services, including daily medical clinics, community health programs, and 24-hour emergency services. These centres are usually staffed by nurses and auxiliary staff, and they are directly managed by the Department of Health and Social Services.<sup>2,8</sup>

Whitehorse and three other communities have resident physicians. In Whitehorse, several clinics provide drop-in physician primary care for patients who do not have a family doctor, and a pilot project is underway to provide interprofessional, team-based care in a clinic designed to serve individuals with multiple complex needs. Residents of most

Yukon communities outside Whitehorse access primary care through the community nurses in the community health centres, with some service from visiting physicians.

The Yukon HealthLine is available free of charge to all Yukon residents 24 hours a day to provide advice and answers to health questions. The HealthLine is staffed by registered nurses, and callers are directed to other community providers or after-hours pharmacists as needed.<sup>9</sup>

There is no information available on the proportion of residents who have access to a primary care provider or team in the Yukon. Multi-year targets, indicators, and progress in advancing access to primary care are not reported on publicly.

### Electronic health and medical records

In 2005, Yukon began implementing e-health initiatives with funding from Canada Health Infoway. Although there is no territory-wide initiative to implement electronic health records (EHRs) in physicians' offices, it is estimated that approximately 70% of doctors already use electronic medical records. These records often include links to laboratory tests, diagnostic imaging, and other health records.<sup>2</sup>

In 2012, the Department of Health and Social Services sought public input on proposed health privacy legislation that will protect the privacy of individuals while at the same time allowing personal health records to be shared via an EHR. The legislation will facilitate implementation and coordination of various components of the EHR system, such as a drug information system. The legislation is expected to come into force late in 2013.<sup>4,10</sup>

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## Pharmaceuticals Management

### Catastrophic drug coverage

Catastrophic drug coverage refers to drug coverage for individuals and families whose drug costs cause undue financial hardship. The Yukon has a number of drug coverage programs, which are usually based on a specified medical condition. There is no catastrophic drug coverage available for those with high drug costs unless they are covered by these drug programs.<sup>4</sup>

### Drug formulary and approvals

The Health Services Branch compiles the list of drugs approved for coverage on the Yukon Drug Programs Formulary on the advice of the Yukon Formulary Working Group. The work of this group is informed by the national Common Drug Review.<sup>11</sup>

### Drug pricing strategies

In 2010, Western premiers signed a memorandum of understanding agreeing to collaborate on reducing pharmaceutical prices through joint purchasing initiatives<sup>12</sup>; this commitment was renewed in 2011.<sup>13</sup> In July 2012, the Council of Federation Working Group on Health Care Innovation announced that premiers will be collaborating on a number of strategies to reduce pricing of brand-name and generic drugs.<sup>14</sup> Yukon collaborates with other jurisdictions and organizations in purchasing and price negotiations. In the Yukon, a generic formulary is in place that only pays for the lowest-cost generic. Due to the challenges accessing wholesalers, the pharmacies must place orders with wholesalers in Alberta and British Columbia to receive prices in effect in those provinces.<sup>4</sup>

The Council of the Federation has also announced that the provinces and territories are collaborating to set prices for six widely used generic drugs at 18% of the price of the corresponding brand-name drug. This collaborative initiative is expected to save up to \$100 million for provincial and territorial drug plans. The new prices came into effect on April 1, 2013.<sup>15</sup>

There is currently no generic drug pricing policy in effect in the Yukon. Pharmacies in the Yukon place orders with wholesalers in Alberta and British Columbia and are charged the prices that are in effect in those provinces.<sup>16</sup> The Yukon has a policy to provide the lowest-cost alternative for prescription drugs. Individuals wishing to use more expensive brand-name drugs pay the difference between the generic and the brand-name prices.<sup>4</sup>

### Prescribing

Pharmacists in the Yukon do not have any authority to provide expanded services to their clients.<sup>17</sup> E-prescribing and a drug information system are currently being discussed and developed as part of a broader plan for the implementation of e-health in Yukon.<sup>4</sup>

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## Prevention, Promotion, and Public Health

### Infectious diseases and public health emergencies

Yukon Communicable Disease Control is responsible for monitoring and controlling all infectious diseases.<sup>18</sup> An online course developed by the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Canadian Public Health Association, and Memorial University provides tools and strategies for health care providers to deal with outbreaks of infectious disease.<sup>19</sup>

In 2009, the Department of Health and Social Services released a Pandemic Health Response Plan, which outlines a coordinated response for pandemic influenza. This response focuses on minimizing health impacts, maintaining critical public services, and minimizing disruption of social and economic activity. The Emergency Organization coordinates the pandemic response with involvement from each government department.<sup>20</sup>

### Immunizations

Yukon provides immunizations to its residents using an immunization schedule; drop-in immunization clinics offer wide access to necessary immunizations. Schedules and information sheets about the vaccines are available on the immunization webpage.<sup>21</sup>

### Public health and integrated disease strategies

The Yukon's Chronic Conditions Support Program focuses on improving chronic disease care and promoting disease self-management. A toolkit is available for physicians, community nurse practitioners, and care teams to help them follow clinical guidelines in the care of patients with chronic conditions. Health professionals involved in the program attend educational sessions, use the toolkit, and monitor and improve their practice to facilitate better chronic disease care.<sup>22,23</sup>

In November 2012, the federal government announced it would provide \$130,000 until March 2013 to the Yukon under the Canadian Diabetes Strategy to develop a comprehensive strategy to prevent and manage chronic disease. This strategy will identify chronic disease services and health care providers, review strategic approaches to chronic disease prevention and management, and establish a chronic disease strategy working group.<sup>24</sup> The Yukon Nutrition Framework was created in 2010 for the Yukon government, First Nations organizations, health professionals, schools, and other agencies to help plan, coordinate, and make decisions about healthy eating in the Yukon. Goals include promoting healthy eating practices, improving food security, supporting the nutrition needs of special populations, and addressing major health and nutrition issues in the territory. This framework outlines specific goals, describes current initiatives, and proposes next steps.<sup>25</sup>

In July 2012, the Yukon announced an initiative to improve the health and well-being of residents. The Pathways to Wellness project is a short-term planning initiative intended to address a variety of issues, including rising rates of chronic conditions and obesity. It approaches well-being in a holistic manner, including physical, emotional, social, occupational, and spiritual well-being. A focus on children and families is expected to facilitate good health and well-being beginning at an early age. The project launched a wellness website and video and released a background paper. The Pathways to Wellness project will result in a Child and Family Wellness Plan by March 2014.<sup>4,26</sup>

A new report from the Department of Health and Social Services, *Kids Count: Measuring child and family wellness in Yukon: An indicator framework*, presents an indicator framework for monitoring the health and well-being of children and families in the Yukon. The framework addresses six domains: health, learning and development, safety and security, family circumstances, social connection, and health-related behaviours. Each indicator is supported by robust, reliable, and available measures. The report identifies gaps in available measures and information and makes recommendations for moving forward.<sup>27</sup>

In February 2013, the Yukon government announced a \$250,000 annual investment in active living programs to increase levels of physical activity among residents of all ages and to help address the rising rates of childhood obesity.<sup>28</sup>

### Healthy schools

The International Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children study is conducted every four years in 42 countries. Canadian data are collected by researchers at Queen's University in partnership with the Public Health Agency of Canada and Health Canada. Students in grades 6 to 10 in most Yukon schools were surveyed in 2009. The findings of this survey provide the territory with health and social data in a variety of areas, including risky behaviours, healthy living, and eating and diet.<sup>29</sup> The Department of Health and Social Services is responding to the data in various ways and has engaged in related knowledge translation activities, including disseminating the findings to government departments, educators, school administrators, First Nations, and other relevant stakeholders.<sup>4</sup>

In the Yukon, the Health Promotion Unit works with the Department of Health and Social Services to advance school health, and the Departments of Health, Education, Community Services, and the Recreation and Parks Association are collaborating to address priority areas. The findings of a study on health-related behaviours in youth have been used to develop a youth engagement workshop. The purpose of the workshop is to encourage youth to address key issues in their communities. Youth resiliency and strengths were assessed by the Department of Education, and these results are expected to be compared with the study on health-related behaviours.<sup>30</sup>

## Aboriginal Health

The Health and Social Development department of the Council of Yukon First Nations acts as a liaison and advocate on health and social issues that affect the health and well-being of First Nations people in the Yukon.<sup>31</sup>

### The Aboriginal Health Transition Fund

In Yukon, the Aboriginal Health Transition Fund (AHTF) supported four adaptation projects, two integration projects, and one pan-Canadian project.<sup>32-34</sup> The AHTF enabled the Council of Yukon First Nations to work with the territory's 14 First Nations communities to identify the strengths and gaps in the delivery of health and social services in their communities.<sup>35</sup> A report from this initiative addresses priority themes such as access, communication, and barriers.<sup>36</sup>

### The Aboriginal Health Human Resources Initiative

The Aboriginal Health Human Resources Initiative funded a number of projects to develop resources and tools for health professionals working with and for First Nations,<sup>37</sup> but it is not clear to what extent these funds were used to increase the supply of First Nations health care professionals in the Yukon.

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