

Promising Practices for Strengthening Primary Care

Extending Health Centre Hours



The challenge

Community health centres in Nunavut are typically open Monday to Friday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Many residents access the health centre after business hours through a nurse on-call. This may indicate that the current hours are not consistently meeting community care needs. High after-hours call volumes also contribute to on-call staff not getting enough rest between shifts, and increased system costs. Additionally, limited clinical space/infrastructure makes it difficult to increase staffing numbers during regular business hours. Evening hours may allow additional staff to share the limited space effectively.

The promising practice

The Government of Nunavut Department of Health, in partnership with community leaders and providers, is piloting extended health centre hours in three Nunavut communities: Rankin Inlet, Pond Inlet, and Kugaaruk. The implementation of this promising practice is guided by the Inuit Societal Values of Inuuqatigiitsiarniq (respecting others, building relationships and caring for people), Pijitsirniq (serving and providing for community), and Qanuqtuurniq (being innovative and resourceful).

Example impacts

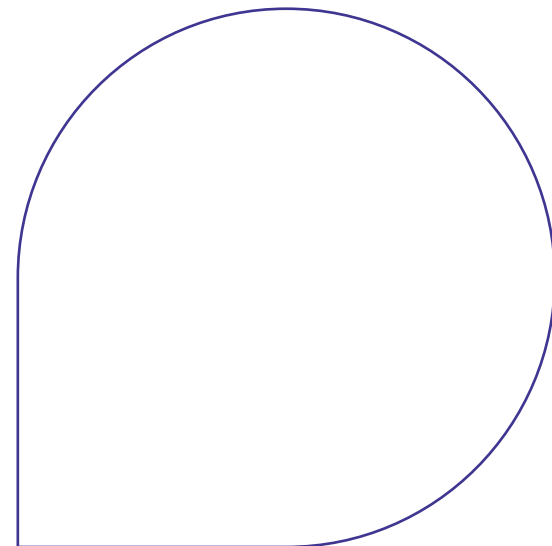
Implementation began in the fall of 2024, with results expected in 2025.

Potential future impacts

- Enhanced community and patient experience (e.g., patients reporting more timely access to health services).
- Reduced after-hours registrations.
- Improved staff experience (e.g., enough time to rest between shifts, improved work-life balance).
- Reduced staff overtime and associated costs.

Keys to success

- **Leadership support:** Executive and community-based leaders have been critical to the project's success by maintaining trusted relationships with communities, strategically prioritizing the initiative, and removing barriers. Their collaboration with health centre staff informed the implementation and evaluation approach and has ensured ongoing support.



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- **Regular communication:** The project team maintained regular contact with pilot communities and key partners, including the mayors of participating communities and members of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut. This has ensured that all parties are informed about the project's status and can share insights.
- **Evaluation:** An evaluation lead has helped to ensure that data are collected and analyzed in a systematic way. Data will be used to inform changes throughout the pilot and the spread of the practice to other communities across Nunavut.

Lessons learned

- Several challenges delayed the start of implementation, including staffing shortages and changes in leadership. Acknowledging that staffing is an ongoing challenge and that shortages may necessitate pauses in implementation, the team developed a resource to inform when and how to make this decision.
- Unanticipated survey submissions from bots or residents outside Nunavut made some responses unusable. Implementing strategies to enhance data integrity going forward will enhance the reliability of the survey data and ensure more accurate insights from the community.

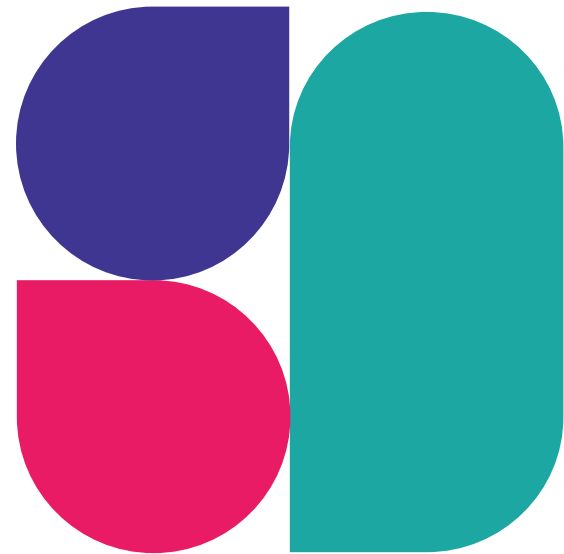
How can I learn more?

Contact the organization.

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Why was this summary created?

The Government of Nunavut, participated in Healthcare Excellence Canada's (HEC) Strengthening Primary Care (SPC) program.

SPC brought together 20 primary care organizations from across Canada to advance practices to improve access to safe, including culturally safe, team-based primary care. This promising practice summary was co-produced with the Government of Nunavut to help others learn about their work and generate discussion about how similar approaches could be adapted and applied elsewhere.

