

Wellness Court process

1. Referral to Wellness Court

- Chronic offender charged.
- Referred to Wellness Court.
- Suitability assessment.
- Guilty plea – sentence deferred until program is completed.

2. Wellness plan

- Developed in collaboration with the client.

3. Treatment, programming and supervision

- Offender is intensively supervised over 12–18 months while participating in required therapeutic treatment.
- Offender is connected to community resources & supports.

4. Court review and sentencing

- Wellness plan completed. Offender appears before Wellness Court judge for sentencing. Progress in the program is considered

5. Aftercare

- Offender moves into aftercare phase with established community support.

Wellness Court of the Northwest Territories

Contact us:
wellnesscourt@gov.nt.ca
873-7807
or toll free at:
1-844-873-7807



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A journey toward change

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What is the Wellness Court?

The Wellness Court is an alternative to the regular system. This Court focuses primarily on chronic offenders who have mental health issues, addictions or cognitive challenges that contribute to their offending behaviour.

In a regular court, a person charged comes before a judge who will look at the offence, listen to the evidence and make a ruling on the case before them.

In Wellness Court, a case manager provides intensive support and supervision to the offender as they work to make positive changes. The team helps to access services such as housing, income support, and mental health and addictions programs.

Some significant factors that can affect a person's risk of reoffending:

- Criminal history
- Education and employment
- Finances
- Family
- Accommodation
- Alcohol and drug use
- Mental health
- Attitudes

How does the Wellness Court work?

The accused must want to make a change, and must plead guilty to at least one charge. The defence lawyer will work with the accused and the Crown to see if the case can be referred to the Wellness Court. Once referred, a case manager will assess the individual for suitability for the program. Consents and commitments to participation must be made.

Offenders are subject to release conditions to guide them as they go through the program. Should they break these conditions, they will need to work with their case managers to remain in the program or return to the court to be sentenced.

What is different about the Wellness Court?

By having a person accept responsibility for their actions and supporting them as they do the hard work necessary for change, specialized courts have shown that chronic offenders can succeed and change their criminal behaviour.

Once the accused has been accepted to the Wellness Court Program, they are assigned a case manager and a team to work with them. The team also assists with access to services such as alcohol or drug treatment, housing options and income support programs.

Throughout the process, the offender is under court supervision and at the end of the program will be sentenced. The judge will consider the progress they have made. Ongoing support will be provided to continue their success.