

Therapeutic Operations during COVID-19

COVID-19 restrictions has resulted in significant changes in the way we do business. In order to protect the spread of this disease we have altered and adjusted programs to support physical distancing protocols. As a result, alternative administrative processes have been put in place to support continued court operations. This report outlines how the Therapeutic Courts will continue with operations during the COVID-19 pandemic and outlines protocols for an interim process. It further outlines the current services being offered by the JWC at this time.

Ordering Suitability Assessments – Email Process

Requests for Suitability Assessments can be made by way of a desk order. Upon agreement between Crown and defence, a desk order will be created by the Crown and sent to Judges' Chambers by email. Included in the email will be correspondence from both Crown and defence indicating their consent to the order. Upon receipt, the order will be signed by a Judge, filed with Court Registry and forwarded to the JWC.

Once the Suitability Assessment is ordered by the court, the JWC will assign the file to a Case Manager. JWC staff will require 2 full weeks to write the report, where a client attends all interview dates and participates in the process. Delays in the SA will occur when a client does not attend their appointment times or when 4 or more SA's are ordered per week. The Case Manager will forward the finalized SA report by email to the Crown and defence.

Entering the Program

Once the SA is received by the Crown and defence, discussion will take place between the parties to determine eligibility of the client. Where a client chooses to opt into the Therapeutic Court, the matter will be brought forward for the client to enter pleas. Upon entering the plea the client will be released on Therapeutic Court conditions.

Clients who enter the CWC or DVTO court will be instructed to make an appointment to attend the court registry in person to sign and obtain a copy of their release order.

Client Monitoring, Court Appearance and Client Accountability

It is recognized that client accountability to the court program is enhanced by regular case management, supervision and court check-ins. As such, the Therapeutic Court program will be returning to regular check-ins for CWC and DVTO clients. Client appearances will be brought forward to recommence a regular check-in schedule on a staggered basis, based on the recommendations of the Case Managers. Court check-ins may take place with client

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attendance by telephone, by video from the JWC meeting room, or in person. Given COVID-19 restrictions, check-ins should be by telephone, unless a client is unable to participate by telephone or unless there is a therapeutic benefit to the client appearing by video or in person. Where video or in person check-ins are recommended, counsel and the Treatment Team will ensure the numbers of video and in person appearances allow for appropriate social distancing to be maintained. Clients will be expected to participate in their check in by phone, by video conference or in person, as the case may be, unless there is a reasonable explanation why the client is unable to participate.

Bi-weekly updates on client progress will continue to be provided to the court as per the regular court schedule for all CWC and DVTO clients, regardless of whether they are scheduled to appear for check-in. These updates will temporarily take a modified format to ease the administrative burden on JWC Case Managers. The JWC Case Manager will provide information in each update recommending a date for each client to attend a court check-in and preferred mode of appearance. Priority will be determined based on client need to ensure a phased-in transition back to regular court check-ins. Provided counsel are in agreement with the recommended dates, counsel will contact the Trial Coordinator's Office to bring the matter forward for a check-in appearance.

If a client incurs new charges, a case conference will be held to discuss the file. The matter will be brought forward to the next available DVTO or CWC court date for appearance. A case conference can be requested at any time by the Wellness Team or by counsel. All case conferences will take place by teleconference.

CWC and DVTO Client Exit and Sentencing

For those clients who choose to opt out of the program or who have completed programming and are wanting to fix a date for sentencing, defence can make a request to bring the matter forward to fix a date and request a Treatment Summary. Once the request for a Treatment Summary is ordered by the court, JWC staff will require approximately 1 month to complete the report and provide it to the Wellness Team for sentencing. Therapeutic Court dates from May through to July are as follows:

DVTO Dates

May 4	DVTO
May 25	DVTO
June 8	DVTO
June 29	DVTO
July 13	DVTO
July 27	DVTO

CWC Dates

May 11	CWC
June 1	CWC
June 15	CWC
July 6	CWC
July 20	CWC

Note *May 18 and June 22 - statutory holiday, no court in session.

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JWC Operations and Staffing

Current protocols for staffing at the JWC include a minimum of 2 staff in the building at all times. We have allocated the staff as follows:

- 1) One staff covering the admin desk at all times – this desk is being covered by either Robyn Pope or Joanne Green (rotating a work from home schedule week on week off).
- 2) One Case Manager at all times – this position is rotated amongst the 3 case management staff and includes an alternating work from home schedule.

A health screening tool is conducted on all persons entering the JWC. Those showing signs of symptoms related to COVID – 19 are not permitted entry to the building. Hand sanitization stations are in place at the service window and immediately upon entering the office. A safe spacing policy has been put in place for all staff and clients. Safe distancing stickers have been placed on the floor throughout the office, and the boardroom has been temporarily converted into a meeting room for client appointments. The television, computer, coffee/tea, painting and beading programs, book exchange, and food supports have all been suspended at this time.

The JWC remains open and client access is permitted to the Centre. Our drop-in client numbers have reduced from the typical 160 visits per month to approximately 15-20 visits a month. The majority of those clients attending the Centre are those directed to report in person.

Client Supervision

The majority of JWC clients have moved to a telephone check-in process with Case Managers. However, where a client is expressing or showing signs of difficulty, they are directed to attend check-ins with their Case Manager in person at the Centre. JWC staff acknowledge that the reduction in formal therapeutic services currently being offered in the community is having an impact on client stabilization, particularly for those who are new to the program and have not yet attended formal treatment programs. Increased client contact by JWC staff has been put in place to mitigate arising client needs during this time. Client referrals continue to take place to all existing services and partner agencies where available.

Overall collaborative case management protocols are still in place to ensure:

- 1) Clients are attending sessions with partner service providers in compliance with referrals,
- 2) Information sharing related to client stabilization continues amongst partner agencies and the Wellness Team, and

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- 3) Clients are able to access all existing and available services related to their individual needs.

This collaborative case management process provides an integration of information, including collateral fact gathering, to assist the Case Managers in supervising clients during this time. Information gathered will continue to be provided to the court through bi-weekly court updates. Case conferences will be requested on clients showing signs of disengaging with services.

Programming Offered at JWC

The JWC continues to offer services and programming to clients. There have been modifications to programming for both CWC and DVTO clients at the JWC in order to meet COVID-19 restrictions. Those modifications are as follows:

- 1) Suitability Assessments are being conducted over the phone or in person depending on client circumstances.
- 2) Intake processes for all new clients are being conducted in person. This process is mandatory for all new clients entering the program.
- 3) Breath testing has been suspended as this process cannot be done in compliance with physical spacing requirements.
- 4) Urinalysis continue to be conducted on clients.
- 5) Risk assessments are being conducted in person.
- 6) Case Conferences are occurring by phone.
- 7) Wellness plan development meetings are occurring by phone or in person depending on client circumstances.
- 8) Counselling is offered to any client in crisis if they call or attend the JWC for support.
- 9) Client needs assessments and referrals are being conducted in person or over the phone for clients to access services and programs from other agencies.
- 10) One-on-One Respectful Relationships programming is continuing to be offered. Additional small group sessions for core programming are currently being developed and will be considered as we move forward.
- 11) Integrative case management process amongst community resources for clients occurs daily.
- 12) Case Management and collateral compliance checks are being conducted both in person, over the phone and by e-mail.

There has been a reduction in services offered by all partner agencies. The JWC continues to assess client needs and make referrals to other programs, where available. The following provides a brief description of the services currently offered by partner agencies:

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- 1) Mental Wellness Substance Use Services
 - a. Rapid Access Counselling (RAC) sessions are available by phone. This offers immediate crisis service to clients. The client may access a different counsellor every time they call.
 - b. Intakes are still taking place for clients over the phone. Where clients identify upon intake as needing supports, a designated counsellor will be assigned to provide one-on-one counselling over the phone.
 - c. Anxiety group, depression group, trauma group, intensive residential treatment programs are currently suspended.
 - d. The Early Psychosis Intervention Team is still taking referrals for at risk clients and are providing phone and in person counselling and psychiatry appointments.
- 2) Community Agency Referrals
 - a. Challenge is accepting referrals for work placements, but some projects have been delayed or scaled back. As a result, they are accepting limited client referrals at this time.
 - b. FASSY is still open to services with a reduced capacity and Creative Works is still providing counselling for FASD clients at FASSY one day a week.
 - c. Most other organizations are closed or offering reduced services including Inclusion Yukon, Independent Learning Centre, Yukon College, Learning Disabilities, etc.
- 3) Clinical Assessments
 - a. Creative Works is providing psychological assessments to all JWC clients upon referral. A modified work space has been set up to conduct in person meetings and assessments.
 - b. They are providing one-on-one counselling appointments by phone, by web link, and/or in person where physical distancing can be applied.
 - c. Client post-assessment debriefing meetings are being held by web link from JWC to Creative Works or in person in the JWC meeting room.
- 4) Housing
 - a. JWC clients residing at the YARC have moved to the new John Howard Society program located in the WCC building. A process for new client referrals is being developed.
 - b. Housing and Outreach Services are supporting clients in a reduced capacity. The decrease in support services has had an impact on new client referrals.

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Conclusion

As recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic occurs modifications to operations and subsequent protocols will ensue. This interim report will be reviewed monthly to ensure protocols are operationalized relevant to the existing restrictions in place. Information related to JWC programming will continue to be shared with the governing committees for the Therapeutic Court and with court users.