



Joint News Release – New program to bring housing, wellness, and education supports under one roof to assist vulnerable NWT youth

YELLOWKNIFE (February 17, 2026) – A new program in Yellowknife is bringing housing, wellness, and education supports together under one roof to assist youth in crisis who require coordinated, wraparound services while continuing their education.

The Home Base Stabilization Education Program (STEP) is a collaborative initiative between Home Base Yellowknife, Yellowknife Education District No. 1, Yellowknife Catholic Schools, and the Government of the Northwest Territories. The program is designed for youth across the Northwest Territories (NWT) whose complex needs — including trauma, housing instability, mental health challenges, and substance use — make it difficult to succeed in traditional school settings.

STEP will operate within Home Base Yellowknife and is expected to open in September 2026 for the 2026–27 school year. The program will serve up to 12 students at a time, with approximately 30 per cent expected to come from outside Yellowknife. Participants may include youth already receiving services through Home Base Yellowknife or those temporarily in Yellowknife from smaller communities for short-term mental health or addictions treatment.

Education will emphasize practical, individualized learning rather than traditional classroom models. Two dedicated teachers — one from Yellowknife Education District No. 1 and one from Yellowknife Catholic Schools — will provide on-site instruction tailored to each student. Educators will assess literacy and numeracy skills and develop personalized learning plans to build foundational skills, support credit recovery, and prepare students for re-entry into high school, alternative programs, training, or work.

Instruction will include one-on-one and small-group learning in literacy, numeracy, life and work skills, and pre-employment or trades exposure. Learning will be hands-on and flexible, with progress measured through demonstrated skills and credits earned rather than seat-time requirements.

Youth will also have access to trauma-informed clinical services, including mental health and addictions supports, early recovery and relapse-prevention programming, counselling, and group-based interventions. Cultural programming led by Elders and Knowledge Keepers will support healing, identity development, and trust-building, while restorative approaches will help youth reconnect with education and community in safe and respectful ways.

The next step to develop this program is a Memorandum of Understanding between Yellowknife Education District No. 1, Yellowknife Catholic Schools and Home Base Yellowknife. This is expected to be signed in the coming months.

Quotes:

“Every youth deserves meaningful access to education, no matter their circumstances. Through STEP, Home Base, YK1, and Yellowknife Catholic Schools are joining forces to remove barriers that have kept some of our most vulnerable learners from reaching their potential. This partnership reflects our shared belief that with the right supports – trauma-informed, culturally grounded, and flexible – every student can succeed. I am grateful for the commitment of our partners and optimistic about the futures this program will help unlock.”

- Caitlin Cleveland, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Government of the Northwest Territories

“This important partnership has been a long time in the making and represents a significant step forward. Over the past few years we have been working diligently at Home Base to strengthen supports for youth who are at risk of experiencing homelessness. Despite the many barriers they face, these young people have consistently expressed a desire for educational opportunities. I am confident they are ready!”

- Tammy Roberts, Executive Director, Home Base Yellowknife

“STEP reflects what we believe at YK1: education must meet young people where they are, recognize their strengths, and create pathways that align with their goals. When we combine flexible programming with strong community partnerships, we create real opportunities for youth to see themselves as we see them; capable, valued, and successful.”

- Barbara Bell, Chairperson, Yellowknife Education District No. 1

"The STEP program represents a meaningful shift in how we support our most vulnerable learners across the Northwest Territories. By embedding education within a supportive housing and wellness environment, we are actively removing the barriers that too often separate trauma from achievement. Yellowknife Catholic Schools is proud to be part of this collaborative approach, delivering flexible, individualized instruction that supports healing, builds resilience, and helps students transition toward healthy, successful adulthood!"

- Tina Schauerte, Board Chair, Yellowknife Catholic Schools

Quick facts

- The Home Base Stabilization Education Program will bring together education, housing, clinical care, and cultural supports in one coordinated setting so that youth can stabilize, heal and eventually re-engage in learning.
- Funding for the program is provided under the Magnet Facilities section of the Government of the Northwest Territories School Funding Framework.
- For the 2026–27 school year, the projected notional allocation for 12 full-time equivalent students is approximately \$394,956. This includes funding for teacher salaries, education assistant support, and operations and maintenance.
- Magnet Facility funding is flexible, allowing partners to allocate resources where they are most needed to support youth. This allocation is sufficient to support two full-time teaching positions beginning in August 2026.

Related links

- [Home Base Yellowknife](#)
- [Home Base Stabilization Education Program \(STEP\)](#)

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