



# HRHSSA Diabetes Program

The Hay River Health and Social Services Authority's (HRHSSA) Diabetes Program is currently leading the way for diabetes programming in the Northwest Territories. Jennifer Touesnard, Registered Dietician, and Joann Petras, Registered Nurse, currently make up the Diabetes Team at HRHSSA. The two certified diabetes educators have a passion for health promotion and work tirelessly to help residents in and around the Hay River area.

Funded by the Home Care & Community Enhancement initiative, HRHSSA's Diabetes Program is currently the only program within the NWT to have met the Standards for Recognition for Diabetes Education in Canada. Not only have they met this standard once, but three times in a row! Each certificate is valid for up to five years, totalling to fifteen years of recognition, and counting.

Over the past year, there has been substantial growth in the Hay River program's client uptake. This is largely due to the team's increased flexibility in meeting client needs. There are various ways to connect with those seeking support, Jennifer and Joann's goal is to ensure their services are easily accessible.

As of 2018, HRHSSA's Diabetes Program began offering travel clinics to K'atl'odeeche First Nation. Previously, residents would need to travel to Hay River to be seen. Currently tending to about twenty residents in the K'atl'odeeche First Nation, the team continues to actively increase access to care and build strong bonds with their clients. In addition to their travel clinics, the team also conducts diabetes group sessions, school and community outreach, and daily consults through the medical clinic.

The Craving Change Program, offered by Hay River's diabetes team, approaches nutrition and diet through a different angle that focuses on mindfulness. Rather than lecturing clients on how to eat properly, the Craving Change Program arms clients with the tools to think critically about the foods they are ingesting and setting them up for making sustainable changes in their lives.

With only two formal Diabetes Programs in the NWT – located in Yellowknife and Hay River – the duo believes it is vital to share their knowledge with communities around the North. Every three months, they make a point to network with communities to train, educate, and notify their peers of upcoming



*Pictured: Registered Dietician **Jennifer Touesnard**  
and Registered Nurse **Joann Petras**.*



Hay River Health and Social Services Authority  
Administration des services de santé et des  
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conferences to attend. Things in the world of diabetes education are changing quickly, and Jennifer and Joann are ensuring they remain current, along with their counterparts.

One innovation in particular, the Free Style Libre, caught the attention of the team and has been integrated into their treatment plans for local clients with diabetes. This glucose-monitoring system eliminates the need for clients to undergo routine finger pricks and has the ability to connect to a smart phone or tablet for on-demand results. Many Hay River residents have seen success with this new technology.

With eyes set on the horizon, the diabetes team has plans for further program development in the coming year. One of their goals is to develop and facilitate culturally sensitive, on-the-land programming by offering health promotion day camps in consultation with local elders and community representatives. In addition, the HRHSSA diabetes team continues to standardize guidelines to improve diabetes management at the Hay River Regional Health Centre.

It is no doubt that the diabetes team at HRHSSA is dedicated to health promotion for their community and strives to meet best practices with its programming. Thank you, Jennifer and Joann, for all that you do to promote and maintain the health of residents in and surrounding the Hay River area!

To learn more about the Free Style Libre, visit <https://myfreestyle.ca/en/products/libre>.

To contact the Diabetes Program, visit [www.hrhssa.org](http://www.hrhssa.org).