



Government of Yukon

Government of Yukon » May 2011 » News Release #11-061

Newsroom

Latest news releases

News by theme

News by department

- Community Services
- Economic Development
- Education
- Energy, Mines and Resources
- Environment
- Executive Council Office
- Finance
- French Language Services Directorate
- Health and Social Services
- Highways and Public Works
- Justice
- Public Service Commission
- Tourism and Culture
- Women's Directorate

News by corporations

- Yukon Development Corporation
- Yukon Energy Corporation
- Yukon Housing Corporation
- Yukon Liquor Corporation
- Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board

Joint news releases

Premier's News

News by date

2017 news releases

- January
- February
- March
- April
- May
- June
- July
- August
- September
- October
- November
- December

News archive



NEWS *release*

FOR RELEASE #11-061

May 16, 2011

Yukon's hearing services ahead of Canadian Paediatric Society recommendation

WHITEHORSE—Yukon is one of three Canadian jurisdictions that did not wait for a recommendation from the Canadian Paediatric Society to introduce universal newborn hearing screening program: Yukon has had such a program since 2002.

"Nine years ago, Yukon recognized the importance of having every infant screened for hearing loss shortly after birth," Health and Social Services Minister Glenn Hart said.

Working with Hearing Services and maternity staff at Whitehorse General Hospital, Yukon government introduced the universal program aimed at screening all newborns at the hospital where approximately 365 babies are born each year.

"We know testing infants can prevent severe and costly developmental delays and it also means these babies are diagnosed long before they start to speak and can get help and support that much earlier," Hart added.

Yukon, Ontario and British Columbia have universal programs, and Quebec has announced plans to create one. Other provinces only test babies at high risk of hearing loss, premature infants and those suffering serious infections like meningitis. In Yukon, infants are tested as early as 12 hours old by maternity nurses with special training.

Hearing loss is one of the most common congenital disorders, affecting about five in every 1,000 newborns, but about half of those affected have no obvious risk factors.

May is Speech and Hearing Month in Canada.

-30-

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