



## NEWS RELEASE

September 18, 2019

First Nations Health Authority

### **The First Nations Health Authority unveils new benefits plan for BC First Nations**

Coast Salish Territory, Vancouver, BC - This week the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) launched a new health benefits plan with expanded coverage for dental and vision care, and simplified access to medical supplies and equipment.

The transition to a new benefits provider completes FNHA's goal of separating itself from the federal Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program in order to focus on the requirements of BC First Nations in the spirit of self-determination. The new plan will be administered on behalf of the FNHA by BC-based benefits provider Pacific Blue Cross.

The biggest improvement that clients will notice right away will be faster service thanks to the elimination of pre-approvals for many benefits such as reimbursements for prescription glasses, dentures and hearing aids.

The plan has been designed based on existing coverage with additional coverage for several preventive health services and major services.

Coverage for dental services is now aligned with the provincial dental fee guide with a simplified reimbursement process, this means First Nations Health Authority clients will pay less upfront for standard dental work.

The new plan can be accessed through the Pacific Blue Cross App so clients can see what benefits are covered. Details about how to access the new program are available at [www.FNHA.ca/benefits](http://www.FNHA.ca/benefits). Clients can create an online profile using their status number at [www.pac.bluecross.ca/member](http://www.pac.bluecross.ca/member), or use the Pacific Blue Cross mobile app to easily access their benefits. Claiming by mail is still available for clients living in remote areas.

A comprehensive approach was undertaken to involve First Nations and service providers in plan design, including 51 focus groups with First Nations communities across BC. The new plan is the second and final phase of the FNHA transition off the NIHB Program. Phase one was the transfer of non-insured pharmacy benefits to BC PharmaCare Plan W in October 2017.

Clients with questions may contact FNHA Health Benefits at 1.855.550.5454.

#### **Organizations available for comment:**

BC Dental Association – Cary Chan [cchan@bcdental.org](mailto:cchan@bcdental.org) or 604.714.1988

BC Pharmacy Association – Angie Gaddy [angie.gaddy@bcpharmacy.ca](mailto:angie.gaddy@bcpharmacy.ca) or 604.269.2863

Pacific Blue Cross – Carol Boutin [mediarelations@pac.bluecross.ca](mailto:mediarelations@pac.bluecross.ca)

## **QUOTES:**

### **First Nations Health Council Chairperson, Charlene Belleau**

"This announcement means greater and better access to health care for our First Nations citizens in BC, with more transparency about what's covered and increased benefits for prevention and special needs. The FNHC recognizes everyone who enabled us to take this step in our journey to transform health care for BC First Nations."

### **First Nations Health Authority Chief Executive Officer, Joe Gallagher**

"The introduction of this new plan not only provides our clients with better and faster coverage for their wellness needs, it also is reflection of our commitment to listen to our clients and adjust our programming to better serve their healthcare needs."

### **Pacific Blue Cross President and Chief Executive Officer, John Crawford**

"As BC's largest health benefits provider, serving 1 in 3 throughout the province, Pacific Blue Cross is in a unique position to champion the role of benefits in helping to achieve healthy, self-determined communities. We are humbled to join the First Nations Health Authority in furthering a wholistic vision of wellness."

## **Learn more:**

To find out more about First Nations Health Authority, visit: <http://www.fnha.ca/>

For media enquires please call 604-831-4898, or email [media@fnha.ca](mailto:media@fnha.ca)