



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

Mental Wellness and Counselling: Client Frequently Asked Questions



The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) works closely with funding partners and community to carefully evaluate the sustainability and cultural safety of First Nations Health Benefits and Services (FNHBS) programs for Clients. As a result of this review, there have been several updates to the Mental Health programs and services, effective April 15, 2024.

Note: FNHBS recently announced changes to pre-determinations effective July 1, 2024. Please see below for more information.

What are the July 1, 2024 changes to pre-determinations?

Previously approved pre-determinations will be reissued under the Mental Wellness and Counselling (MWC) program for 22 hours if they meet the following criteria:

- The pre-determination was issued within the last 12 months; and
- The last date of service was within the last 12 months.

How do I know if these changes impact me?

To determine if you are impacted by these updates, you may use one of the following options:

- 1) Contact your Provider;
- 2) Log in to your PBC Member Profile to review your active MWC hours; or
- 3) Call FNHBS at 1-855-550-5454.

What if I had more than one approved Provider?

If you were seeing more than one Provider, the Provider with whom you had the most recent counselling session will be renewed if they meet the criteria outlined above. If this is not your preferred Provider, please contact FNHBS at 1-855-550-5454.

What if I need more than 22 hours of counselling?

The MWC benefit provides 22 hour pre-determinations for counselling with an FNHA-registered Provider. If you require additional counselling hours, they may be provided through an exception request. Your Provider will be able to submit this request on your behalf.

What if I still have questions?

The FNHBS team is here to support you through these changes. If you have any questions about your mental health benefit coverage, please contact FNHBS at 1-855-550-5454.

What are the changes?

1. **Mental Health program eligibility.** Mental Health programs and services will now have the same eligibility as all other FNHBS programs. These services will be available for Status First Nations who meet the Medical Service Plan definition of residency in BC (three months). For more information about eligibility and enrolling with FNHBS, click the link [here](#).
2. **MWC program.** FNHBS now serve Clients under one MWC program.
3. **Mental Health Provider eligibility.** In addition to existing Provider eligibility, new Providers must have a minimum of five years' counselling experience and a minimum of three years' counselling experience serving First Nations people.

Why is the FNHA making these changes?

The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement concluded on March 31, 2021. At that time the FNHA no longer had access to the registry of those entitled to receive benefits related to their attendance at Indian Residential School (IRS). This resulted in an inability to verify IRS counselling eligibility and led to a corresponding increase in Clients and subsequent costs.

After a review of program usage and available funding, a decision was made to align MWC eligibility with the rest of the FNHBS' eligibility criteria. First Nations people living in BC with Status are eligible for FNHBS coverage under the FNHA's funding agreement with Canada. The FNHA continues to work closely with funding partners and community programs to support IRS Survivors and their family members across BC.

I have a Métis Membership number, is that considered Status under the MWC program?

A Métis membership number does not meet the eligibility criteria for the MWC program. The MWC eligibility requires that Clients have a Status number as defined by the Indian Act. You can learn more about registering for Status [here](#).

For further information about Client eligibility, please visit the Health Benefits [website](#).

I am an Indian Residential School (IRS) Survivor without Status. My family and I were previously accessing counselling services through FNHBS, am I eligible for the MWC program?

Effective immediately only First Nations Clients with Status will be eligible for the Mental Wellness and Counselling program. Additional FNHA-funded supports are available to all IRS Survivors and family members. You can find the supports at the link [here](#).

How does FNHA's MWC program compare with Non-insured Health Benefits (NIHB) eligibility and coverage for First Nations people in other provinces and territories?

The NIHB program provides coverage to First Nations people who are registered under the Indian Act, commonly referred to as a "Status Indian". The MWC benefit provides 22 hour pre-determinations for counselling with an FNHA-registered Provider. If you require additional counselling hours, they may be provided through an exception request. Providers will be able to submit this request on your behalf.

I still have other questions, who do I contact?

If you have any other questions please contact the relevant resource below.

FNHA contacts

FNHBS phone: 1-855-550-5454

Email: mhProviderreg@fnha.ca

Regional health authority mental health support contact

The following regional health authority supports are available to all BC residents.

Fraser Health

Phone: [1-866-766-6960](tel:1-866-766-6960)

Website: <https://www.fraserhealth.ca/health-topics-a-to-z/indigenous-health/indigenous-mental-health-and-wellness>

Interior Health Region

Phone: 310-MHSU (6478)

Website: <https://www.interiorhealth.ca/health-and-wellness/mental-health-and-substance-use/mental-health/adult-mental-health-services-and-resources>

Island Health

Phone: 1-888-885-8824

Website: <https://www.islandhealth.ca/our-services/mental-health-substance-use-services>

Northern Health

Phone: 310-6789

Website: <https://www.northernhealth.ca/services/mental-health-substance-use/get-help-now>

Vancouver Coastal

Phone: 8-1-1

Website: <https://www.vch.ca/en/health-topics/mental-health-substance-use>

A Mental Wellness and Counselling frequently asked resource for Providers is available [here](#).