

For Immediate Release

September 29, 2017

Prescription Drug Benefits for FNHA Clients move to BC PharmaCare on October 1

Coast Salish Territory - Vancouver, BC – First Nations in British Columbia will join the province's drug insurance program, PharmaCare, on October 1, 2017. The change will see drug benefits services for First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) clients move from Health Canada's longstanding federal system to a new made-in-BC PharmaCare plan designed specifically for First Nations clients.

Previously, First Nations in BC received drug benefits from Health Canada's Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program. In March 2017 the Province of BC enacted a regulation change, removing barriers for First Nations to join PharmaCare. The move to the provincial drug insurance program of PharmaCare brings health care decisions about prescribed medications closer to home, from Ottawa to First Nations in BC.

For the vast majority of FNHA's 143,000 eligible clients, drug coverage will remain the same. As before, presenting a BC Services Card and a Status Card is all that is needed at the pharmacy counter.

In the transition to the PharmaCare drug formulary, a small number of clients will see a change related to specific drugs, however FNHA and the Ministry of Health will ensure all patients continue to receive the medications they need. Clients are advised to speak to their prescriber and pharmacist about any changes.

The move to PharmaCare provides an opportunity for clients to discuss their prescribed drug therapy with their doctor or nurse practitioner, to ensure it continues to best serve their current health and wellness needs. Clients preparing to travel out-of-province should plan ahead and fill prescriptions in advance here in BC before leaving. Reimbursement will be available for eligible out-of-province purchases.

Any clients with questions about the PharmaCare transition, are encouraged to call FNHA Health Benefits at 1-855-550-5454 or email at HealthBenefits@fnha.ca.

More information on this transition including frequently ask questions can be found on the FNHA website: www.fnha.ca/pharmacare

Quotes:

Grand Chief Doug Kelly, Chair – First Nations Health Council

“In 2006 the BC government signed the Transformative Change Accord. With this Accord, BC committed to provide the same health services to First Nations as those available to other British Columbians. This change is a significant milestone on the longer journey to transforming health services for First Nations peoples in BC.”

The Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor - Minister of Health

“The best health outcomes for Indigenous peoples are achieved when they design and develop health programs that meet their unique needs. I congratulate the FNHA on bringing health care decisions closer to home for First Nations in BC. Our Government will continue to work with FNHA to help ensure a smooth transition.”

The Honourable Jane Philpott - Minister of Indigenous Services

"I congratulate the First Nations Health Authority in taking another step forward in self-governance over health services in British Columbia. This is a fantastic example of reconciliation in action that will benefit the health and well-being of First Nations peoples of BC."

Richard Jock, Chief Operating Officer - First Nations Health Authority

“The move to PharmaCare, Plan W removes policy barriers for our clients and streamlines the process for prescription approvals. By accessing health-care benefits from the same provincial systems as other British Columbians, the relationship between PharmaCare and health care providers including pharmacists, physicians and nurse practitioners will be strengthened, resulting in safer, more coordinated care for our clients.”

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Backgrounder

- The First Nations Health Authority is responsible for planning, management, service delivery and funding of health programs, in partnership with First Nations communities in BC.
- In October 2013, the FNHA assumed programs, services and responsibilities formerly handled by Health Canada. The Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program was included in the transfer and has since been delivered by FNHA as First Nations Health benefits.
- FNHA is the health and wellness partner to BC's 201 diverse First Nations communities and 143,000 citizens across the province. FNHA serves approximately 99,000 pharmacy clients as the transition to Plan W begins.
- The move to PharmaCare is the first step to ending Canada's NIHB processes that previously delivered health benefits to First Nations in BC. The transfer is part of a longer journey that will eventually see the administration of health benefits for dental, medical supplies and equipment also transferred to FNHA.
- FNHA and the Ministry of Health have committed to making sure patients continue to receive the medications they need. A large majority of patients will notice no change as prescription drug coverage is transitioned to PharmaCare.
- PharmaCare Plan W (Wellness) is the PharmaCare plan designed for First Nations in BC. Plan W will be a 100% paid plan and will be the first payer for FNHA clients at the pharmacy counter. Plan W does not require income testing and has no deductible. Current FNHA clients have been automatically enrolled with Plan W, so there are no new forms to fill out.
- As a provincial program, PharmaCare cannot cover prescriptions purchased outside the province. FNHA clients preparing to travel out-of-province are advised to plan ahead and fill their prescriptions before leaving BC. Any prescriptions filled outside of BC must be paid for when the prescription are filled, but clients may apply for a claims reimbursement.
- Clients with health conditions supported by provincial agencies (BC Cancer Agency, BC Renal Agency, BC Transplant, or BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS) are encouraged speak with their health care providers about getting registered.
- For more information on PharmaCare and Plan W, please visit www.fnha.ca/pharmacare or www.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare/fnha