



Health Benefits – Important Telehealth Updates for Mental Health Providers Regarding COVID-19

Telehealth Guidelines

On March 20, 2020, the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) sent a notice requiring that providers **suspend all travel into communities** to avoid the potential spread of COVID-19 to our clients in remote and isolated communities. Additionally, **all non-urgent, in-person mental health appointments should be cancelled indefinitely.**

Telehealth includes counselling services delivered over the phone or videoconferencing. Text and email communications are not considered telehealth and are not billable services.

Before delivering services via telehealth or telephone, providers must:

- ensure that they have the ability to effectively provide services via telehealth or telephone;
- use professional judgement to determine if telehealth or telephone is therapeutically appropriate for the client;
- ask the client if they are open to receive counselling via telehealth or telephone;
- follow the telehealth standards set by their professional body; and
- document the appointment.

Do you provide telehealth services?

To support continued access to counselling services, we are updating the provider list to identify which providers deliver counselling services over the phone or through videoconferencing. Please fill out this survey to be included in FNHA's provider list offering telehealth services: <https://interceptum.com/si/en/4869168>

This list will be updated on a weekly basis. The deadline to be added to the list will be weekly as of **March 31, 2020.**

Emailing Prior Approvals and Invoices

We heard that many providers do not have access to fax or mail at this time. We are now allowing [prior approvals](#) and [invoices](#) to be emailed during this state of emergency to HB.MentalHealth@fnha.ca.



To invoice telehealth appointments:

- Indicate the client's location (city/community) and the provider's location (city) in the invoice field where the client would normally sign for an in-person session.
- Keep a call log/calendar, confirming that the session occurred, its duration and the client's name for auditing purposes (only submit if requested).

Our team is currently operating with contingency in-person staffing and doing our best to support both clients and providers. We will be prioritizing prior approvals to expedite access to care but service standards for invoices may be slower than usual.

Professional Telehealth Standards and Resources

We want to ensure that providers stay updated with the latest developments related to COVID-19 (coronavirus). The following are recent updates for mental health providers in BC:

- [BC Association of Clinical Counsellors](#)
- [Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association](#) has [guidelines](#) on the use of technology in counselling and psychotherapy and [recommended resources](#)
- [College of Psychologists of BC](#) has provided [checklists for telepsychology](#) and a [telepsychology assessment](#) to guide registrants
- [College of Social Workers of BC](#)

Thank you for your cooperation to safely provide counselling services for our clients during the COVID-19 pandemic. We'll keep you informed of any updates and check our [website](#) for the most up-to-date forms. Please contact Health Benefits Provider Relations at provider@fnha.ca or **1-855-550-5454** if you have any questions.