



CANADIAN COUNSELLING AND  
PSYCHOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION  
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DE  
COUNSELLING ET DE PSYCHOTÉRAPIE

# Reinstate CCCs as Eligible Providers in the Non-Insured Health Benefits Program

There is a significant need for improved access to qualified professional mental health support for the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. Attempts at assimilation have contributed to mental health challenges for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, which, in turn, have led to harm in Indigenous communities. The loss of their culture, identity and self-determination has had profound and lasting impacts on their mental well-being.

The Non-Insured Health Benefits Program (NIHB) and the Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support (IRS RHS) Program provide registered First Nations and recognized Inuit with coverage for a range of health benefits, including mental health counselling.

CCPA's Canadian Certified Counsellors (CCCs) were eligible service providers under NIHB and IRS RHS programming until May 2015 when the designation was delisted in all provinces and territories where the profession of counselling/psychotherapy is not regulated. CCCs are only accepted in exceptional circumstances in rural and remote areas and on a limited basis.

This decision has significantly reduced appropriate, universal access to mental health counselling services for Indigenous Peoples and communities across the country, and disadvantages those requiring care in unregulated provinces and territories.

By restricting access to CCCs, who are eligible providers in various other Federal health benefit programs as well as through the First Nations Health Authority which is NIHB's counterpart in BC, the Federal Government is not providing equitable access to mental health care for all Indigenous Peoples.

The current NIHB policy prevents Indigenous practitioners from working in their communities and traditional territories, and within the cultural areas in which they are experts. The mental health benefit is the fastest-growing benefits area in the plan. Indigenous People must have access to practitioners who are from their own community with lived experience and understanding of the socio-political influences that impact Indigenous lives and mental health every day.

In September 2015, in response to the delisting of CCCs in unregulated provinces, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) - First Nations Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) NIHB Joint Review Steering Committee recommended immediately reinstating CCCs as eligible providers in provinces and territories that have not regulated the profession.

As highlighted in rights instruments and national commissions on Indigenous people, like the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the National Inquiry on Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls, each item demonstrates increasing access to mental health supports. However unilateral decisions are still being made by federal and provincial leadership on Indigenous communities and access to essential services.

In the interest of equitable accessibility to mental health services for Indigenous Peoples of Canada, it is recommended that Indigenous Services Canada implement the call to action from the AFN-FNIHB Joint Review Steering Committee and immediately reinstate CCCs in unregulated provinces as eligible providers under the NIHB program, adding over 1,500 eligible providers in the unregulated provinces.

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