



Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority Inc.



November 19, 2020

TO: NITHA Partner Community Mental Health & Addiction Departments

Re: Recommendations for Mental Health Counselling Guidelines Update

The new Public Health Measures effective November 19, indicates that face to face counselling is permitted with masks worn in session, however, due to the increasing cases of COVID-19 in our First Nation communities, it is with prevention measures that we look at counselling services of our Mental Health & Addiction staff.

It is recommended that our Partners **return to distanced support services via e-counselling and telephone counselling until further notice.** We are supporting the use of telephone sessions going forward to avoid coming into contact with anyone potentially exposed to COVID-19. Furthermore, please refer to the following guidelines as per Non-Insured Health Benefits – Mental Health Providers:

Providers must meet the standards and code of ethics of their respective legislated regulatory bodies and Provincial/Territorial regulations in the provision of mental health services through telehealth, including client privacy and confidentiality.

- 1) *Providers must ensure their ongoing competence with service delivery technologies for mental health, and to mitigate any potential negative impacts of the technology on the client.*
- 2) *Providers must determine the suitability of telehealth services for delivering mental health services for the client. This determination should be based on the provider's professional judgment that takes into consideration such factors as client safety and the accomplishment of therapeutic goals.*

In addition, in cases where there are emergent needs of a client facing suicidal ideations, psychosis, anxiety and depression, please implement social distancing efforts (2 meters apart), and complete the suicide assessment with these protective measures being followed only when assessed to be high-risk.

In the case of a pandemic, no teams will be deployed, due to high-risk exposure until Public Health deems risk to be low.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Mental Health & Addiction Advisor.

Sincerely,

Glenda Watson BHSc., M.Ed. (Psych), CCC
Mental Health & Addiction Advisor