



March 6, 2023

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELLING PROVIDERS

Non-Insured Health Benefits Program: Review of Rates and New Prior Approval Period for Mental Health Counselling

A review of the NIHB reimbursement rates in the Mental Health Counselling benefit (“Fee Grid”) is currently underway, and some rate adjustments will be implemented on April 1, 2023, for counselling services provided on or after that date. Prior to April 1, updated fee grids will be posted on the Express Scripts Canada NIHB Provider and Client Website at nihb-ssna.express-scripts.ca/en > [provider](#) > [mental health counselling](#) > [vision care benefit grids](#).

Please note that mental health counselling prior approvals issued by the NIHB Program are tied to the hourly rates in effect at the time the prior approval was granted. As such, claims submitted under that prior approval number must reflect the hourly rates set out in the prior approval.

Therefore, in order to facilitate the implementation of new rates on April 1, the Program will implement a change in approach to prior approvals. There will now be a fixed end date of March 31 for prior approvals, to correspond with rate(s) in effect during that fiscal year (April – March).

This change to the prior approval end date has no effect on client eligibility for services.

Per section [2.3 Provider roles and responsibilities](#) of the NIHB Mental Health Counselling Guide, providers must bill at their usual and customary rate, but no higher than the current Mental Health Counselling Regional Fee Grids. This means that you cannot bill the NIHB Program at higher rates than you charge for other clients.



Fixed end dates for all prior approvals will come into effect on March 6, 2023. This means that:

- for all prior approvals (PA) issued **prior to March 6, 2023**, you can continue to claim against them at the rate stated on the PA document. If your usual and customary (hourly) rate is higher than the rate in your existing PA, and you wish to bill at the new maximum rate for services after April 1, contact the NIHB regional office to have your current prior approval end dated and a new PA reissued. If not, you will only be able to claim up to the rate set out in the prior approval.
- for a PA issued **between March 6, 2023 and March 31, 2023**, the PA end date will be March 31, 2023. Providers are asked to request only the hours they anticipate using by March 31. A maximum of 10 hours will be prior approved for this period, unless exceptional justification is provided.
- for a PA issued **on or after April 1, 2023**, the end date will be no later than March 31, 2024.

Claims will be paid at the rate noted in the PA. Claims payments will not be adjusted retroactively.

Please direct any questions on mental health counselling coverage to your local [NIHB regional office](#).