



SUMMER 2023

CHIEFS
OF ONTARIO



Health Newsletter



Highlights:

- A Message from the Director
- NIHB Updates
- Public Health Updates
- Home & Community Care Training Opportunities
- Long Term and Continuing Care
- Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte Long Term Care Home Ground Breaking
- Medical Assistance in Dying Engagement
- Health Human Resources
- First Nations Digital Health
- OW & ODSP Cooling Devices



[Click to access Chiefs of Ontario Health Portal](#)

A Message from our Health Director



She:kon/Greetings,

I hope everyone had a great summer! Here at the COO Health Sector we have been quite busy with events such as assemblies and meetings, whilst also helping clients with their NIHB claims. I would also like to take a moment to congratulate Tyendingaga on breaking ground on their new long-term care centre!

In this edition of our newsletter we have included our usual updates on the files, as well as upcoming events that may be of interest. I would also like to announce that we will be pausing with the usual format of our annual Health Forum. Instead of our usual Health Forum, this upcoming year, we will be working with the other sectors within COO to host a larger gathering that will be focused more on social determinants of health. This forum is slated to be held on March 19-21, 2024, in Toronto, Ontario. More information will be coming the following months, so please keep an eye out.

Nia:wen/Thank you,

Tobi Mitchell, Director of Health



Non-Insured Health Benefits Updates



NIHB Express Scripts Canada

Express Scripts Canada (ESC) is hosting the ESC NIHB Provider and Client Website with self-service options for provider and clients.

Since June 2020, NIHB has launched the Provider Client Portals hosted on the Express Scripts Canada website. Providers can create online accounts which allows them to submit prior approval requests and view the status of their requests; submit claims online in real time, view claim history and claim statements.

To get started, NIHB clients will need an email, status card number, and information from status card to create their account. Please be sure to have a computer or phone to verify the portal.

NIHB clients can create online accounts which will allow them to view the status of claims, submit requests for reimbursement, submit appeals, and more.

Check out the Express Scripts Canada website and create your secure account today: <https://nihb-ssna.express-scripts.ca/>.

You can also watch this video, <https://youtu.be/NI86wZPHX3U> to learn how to create an account and get more information about Express Scripts Canada.

If community members and/or local Health Providers have any questions or need additional support, they may contact NIHB Express Scripts Canada at the numbers below.

Client Number: 1-888-441-4777

To submit claims by fax: 1-888-249-6098

Provider: 1-888-511-4666

Fax Number for Provider Enrolment: 1-855-622-0669

RECOGNIZE. REFORM. RENEW.

Compensation for First Nations Child and Family Services and Jordan's Principle

For decades, the Government of Canada discriminated against First Nations children and their families by underfunding the First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) Program and failing to properly implement Jordan's Principle.

On June 30, 2022, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Executive Committee approved a final settlement agreement of \$20 billion in compensation for children and their families impacted by this profound discrimination. The final settlement agreement is the result of decades of advocacy and dedication by the AFN alongside First Nations leadership, advocates, Elders and youth.

Please note: Compensation and final eligibility details will not be available until the FSA has been approved by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal and the Federal Court of Canada.

After the final settlement agreement has been approved by the CHRT and the Federal Court, the following individuals may be eligible for compensation:

- Those who were unnecessarily removed from their homes on-reserve and in the Yukon as children from April 1, 1991 to March 31, 2022.
- Those who faced a delay, denial or service gap for an essential service that they needed as a child because of Canada's narrow application of Jordan's Principle, between April 1, 1991 and November 12, 2017.
- The primary caregivers of eligible individuals in these groups may also qualify for compensation.

For more information and to register for updates, visit www.fnchildcompensation.ca

If you need immediate support during the compensation process, the Hope for Wellness Helpline offers free, anonymous counselling and crisis intervention 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by telephone at **1-855-242-3310**.

Children and youth can call Kids Help Phone anytime at **1-800-668-6868**.



What is EG.5? (Sub variant of Omicron)



Omicron remains the most common version of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in Canada. EG.5, is a sub variant of Omicron.

Angela Rasmussen, a virologist at the University of Saskatchewan's "Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization," says that Omicron is like the "great grandparents" of all the sub variants that have followed.

"They are all essentially Omicron – you can think of it as like a family and they're the children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren in this family," she said.

EG.5 has been circulating in Canada since at least May 2023, according to the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). While it is unclear how widespread the Sub variant EG.5 is in Canada, experts say people should look to get a booster shot and wear masks in crowded indoor areas. PHAC also indicated that it is aware that modelling data from the U.S. estimates that EG.5 has made up 17.3 per cent of all cases in the country over the last two weeks, making it the most common strain.

Everyone must continue to assess and manage their own personal risk and continue to use public health precautions that can decrease the risk of contracting or spreading any variant of COVID-19. This includes "basic healthy behaviours such as washing hands, limiting contact with those at severe risk of more severe illness and staying home when sick.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) strongly recommended individuals get another booster shot this fall if it's been at least six months since their last dose or infection.

Summary of the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) Statement on July 11, 2023: Guidance on the use of COVID-19 vaccines in the fall of 2023: Public Health Agency of Canada



- On July 11, 2023, the Public Health Agency of Canada released guidance from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) on the use of COVID-19 vaccines in the fall of 2023. This guidance is based on current evidence, vaccine principles and NACI expert opinion.
- Beginning in the fall of 2023, NACI recommends a dose of the new formulation of COVID-19 vaccine for people in the authorized age groups who have previously received a COVID-19 vaccine, if it has been at least 6 months since the last COVID-19 vaccine dose or known SARS-CoV-2 infection (whichever is later). Immunization is particularly important for those at increased risk of COVID-19 infection or severe disease, for example:
 - Adults 65 years of age or older;
 - Residents of long-term care homes and other congregate living settings;
 - Individuals with underlying medical conditions that place them at higher risk of severe COVID-19;
 - Individuals who are pregnant;
 - Individuals in or from First Nations communities;
 - Members of racialized and other equity-deserving communities; and
 - People who provide essential community services.





WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- Although seasonality of the SARS-CoV-2 virus has not been established, other respiratory viruses such as influenza and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) typically increase in the fall and winter months. COVID-19 vaccination can help increase protection and reduce the impact of COVID-19 on the health system while these other viruses are circulating.
- Vaccine manufacturers are developing updated formulations of COVID-19 vaccines to provide better protection against currently circulating variants. These vaccines are expected to be available in the coming months.
- An additional dose of vaccine starting in the fall of 2023 is also particularly important for those who have not been previously infected and have protection from vaccination alone.
- COVID-19 vaccines may be given concurrently (i.e., same day), or at any time before or after, non-COVID-19 vaccines (including live and non-live vaccines).
- Vaccination of health care providers and others who provide essential community services is expected to be important in maintaining health system capacity.
- NACI will review available information on updated vaccine formulations expected for the fall and will update recommendations as needed.

For more information on recommended vaccine products, dosages per age group, and overall immunization guidance please view the following links:

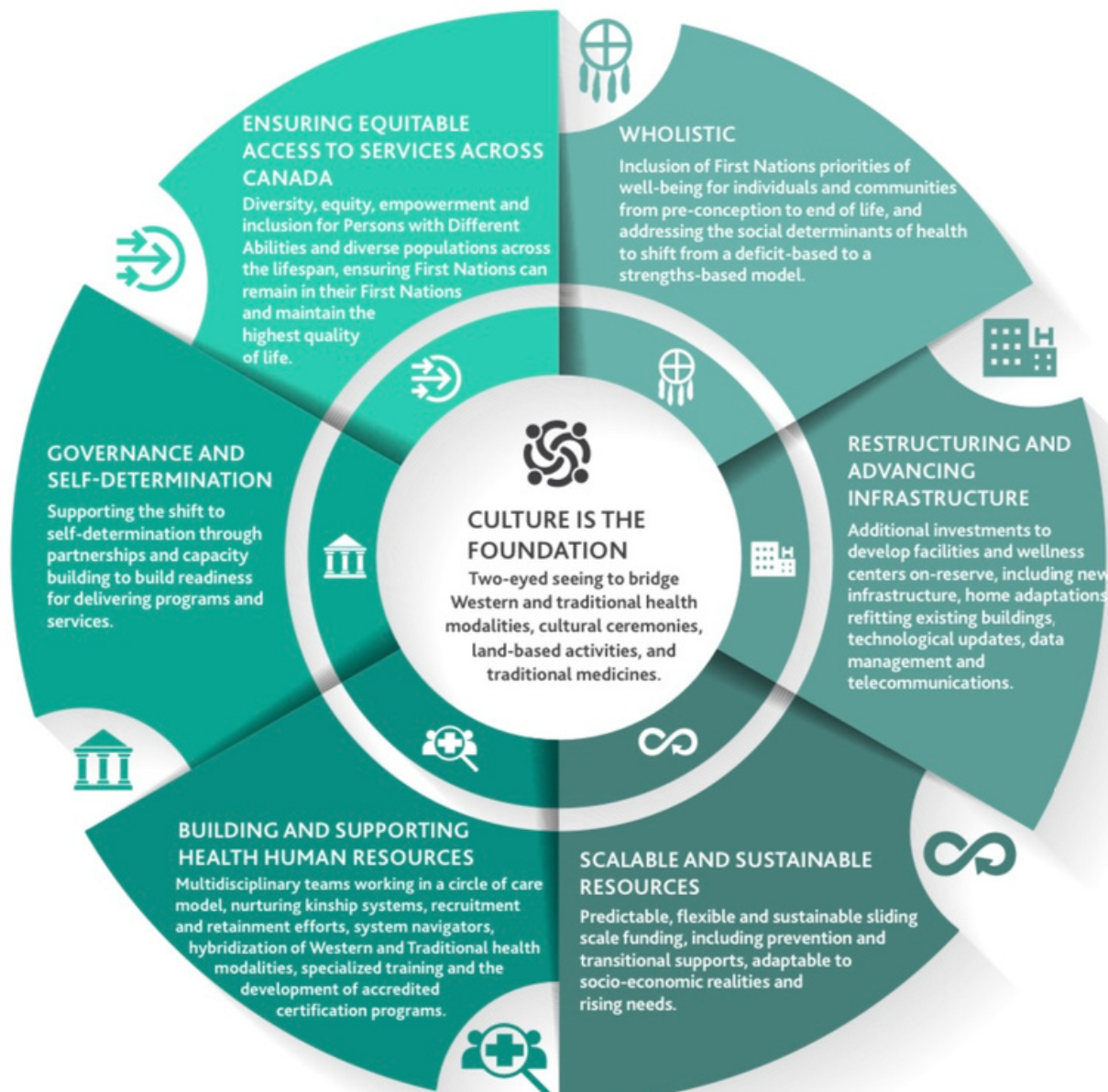
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci.html>
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/canadian-immunization-guide-part-4-active-vaccines/page-26-covid-19-vaccine.html>
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/canadian-immunization-guide.html>
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci.html>



Building a First Nations Wholistic Long-term and Continuing Care Framework

The Assisted Living (AL) and First Nations and Inuit Home and Community Care (FNIHCC) Programs were developed to provide long-term care services for First Nations residing on-reserve. The federal government is not mandated to provide long-term care services to First Nations on-reserve, resulting in a patchwork of services and supports. First Nations residing on-reserve do not have access to long-term care services which has resulted in gaps, inequitable access to services and supports, as well as barriers to access services that can enhance First Nations qualities of life. In 2019, the Government of Canada invested \$8.5 million for engagement on long-term and continuing care in First Nations and Inuit communities, which resulted in a National Engagement Summary Report with recommendations for reform.

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is mandated through AFN Resolution 44/2022, *Co-Development of Policy Options with Indigenous Services Canada for a Memorandum to Cabinet on the Wholistic Long-term and Continuing Care Framework* to ensure First Nations are supported to age comfortably in their home and community, receiving equitable healthcare regardless of where they live. The AFN's Technical Working Group on Social Development (TWGSD), with oversight from the Chief's Committee on Health (CCOH), is supporting the development of a Wholistic Long-Term and Continuing Care Framework that is First Nations-led. The AFN has identified 7 priorities for reform informed by the National Engagement Summary Report:



NWO PALLIATIVE CARE CONFERENCE



OCT 3rd-5th 
NOR'WESTER HOTEL 
AND CONFERENCE CENTRE

FEATURED SPEAKERS



Dr. Sammy Winemaker
MD



Dr. Hsien Seow
PhD

*"Navigating the
Journey Together:
Providing Care
for Ourselves &
Others"*



Dr. Kathryn Mannix
MD



Holly Prince
MSW, PhD (c.)



Dr. Jeff Myers
MD

IN-PERSON EVENT!

**CLICK HERE OR SCAN
FOR MORE INFO & TO
REGISTER NOW!**



**Northwestern Ontario Personal Support Worker
Certificate Program – October 2023 Intake.
Applications are now being accepted!**



Personal Support Worker Certification Program

Applications Are Now Being Accepted for the October 2023 Intake

PSW Blended Delivery Offering

Please [click here](#) for the course information.

[Click here](#) to review the admission criteria for the program and listing of required documents

Application Deadline:

Date: October 2, 2023

Application Submission Instructions:

Submit the completed “Application Form.” [Click here](#) for the PSW Certification Program - Blended Delivery Application Form.

Submit the completed “Immunization and Physical Fitness Form.” [Click here](#) for the Immunization and Physical Fitness Form.

Please do not fill out the forms in Adobe Acrobat. Please download them, fill them out, and submit all documents via e-mail or confidential fax by the application deadline to:

Candice Sanderson
Education Liaison
SE First Nations, Inuit and Métis Program
T: 431.338.5936
E-mail: CandiceSanderson@sehc.com
Fax: 1-844-883-2091



Lakehead
UNIVERSITY

Centre for
Education and Research
on Aging & Health



PALLIATIVE CARE FOR FRONT-LINE WORKERS IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

In partnership with Indigenous Services Canada, First Nations & Inuit Health - Ontario region, Lakehead University's Centre for Education and Research on Aging & Health (CERAH) is pleased to offer education to health and social care staff from across the province of Ontario

The three workshops listed below are all the same. Please choose one.

OTTAWA

Oct 10-11, 2023

8:30 AM to 4:30 PM
(both days)

**Alt Hotel
Ottawa**

185 Slater Street

*Please register before
September 20*

THUNDER BAY

Nov 6-8, 2023

Nov 6: 1:00 - 5:00 PM
Nov 7: 8:30 - 5:00 PM
Nov 8: 8:30 - 1:00 PM

**TownsPlace Suites by
Marriott**

550 Harbour Expy

*Please register
before October 27*

PETERBOROUGH

Nov 21-22, 2023

8:30 AM to 4:30 PM
(both days)

**Holiday Inn
Peterborough Waterfront**

150 George St N.

*Please register
before November 3*

Registration is required for all. Register HERE

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/OntarioRegion23>



All information (preferred name in full, email address, dietary restrictions) is required to confirm registration. There is often a waitlist for this workshop; please contact jlwyatt@lakeheadu.ca if you need to cancel your registration for any reason so that we may fill the spot with another person.

WORKSHOP INFORMATION

WHY?

This 15-hour course is introductory-level, providing an overview of key palliative care concepts, tools and resources.

WHO?

The intended audience are front-line care providers working in Indigenous communities, with registration priority being given to Home & Community Care staff who have not previously attended.

LEARNING TOPICS

- Understanding the Palliative Approach to Care
- Working with Individuals & Families
- Advance Care Planning
- Pain & Other Symptoms
- Last Days and Hours
- Grief and Loss
- Helping Relationships and Self-Care
- Community Care Teams

MORE INFORMATION

Click here to [watch this short video to learn more about this workshop.](#)

Workshop will be held in-person and facilitated by a team of registered nurses, social workers, and a local Elder or Knowledge Carrier.

All learning resources will be provided at the event with additional resources shared by email.

Please see attachments for more details regarding travel reimbursements.

knowledge collaboration action

Questions? Contact jlwyatt@lakeheadu.ca



Digital Health Funding for Home and Community Care Teams

Who is Eligible?

NEW THIS YEAR - Home and Community Care teams with existing FNIHCC funding agreements that have not submitted Costing Templates for Digital Health in the last three years.

What is Funding Available For?

- Software licenses (e.g. electronic medical record systems, wound care, scheduling)
- Server and cloud hosting costs
- Virtual care tools
- Technical upgrades (e.g. servers, networks, modems)
- Technical equipment (e.g. laptops, desktops, tablets, printers, scanners, faxes)
- Mobile phones, phone plans, hot spots, satellite connectivity
- IT and digital health support services

Ready to get started on requesting funding?

Not sure if you're eligible? Have other questions?

Contact info@fndho.ca. Submission deadline is Sept. 15, 2023, and is dependent on funding availability.

** If your Home and Community Care team submitted a Costing Template in the last three years, there's no need to submit again this year!
HCC teams that previously submitted Costing Templates will receive funds for digital health within their existing funding agreement with FNIHCC.

Launch of Online Engagement: Indigenous Perspectives on MAID



The Health Canada Indigenous End-of-Life Care Policy team is pleased to announce the launch of the first stream of engagement on medical assistance in dying (MAID) in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples.

Together with Indigenous Partners, we have developed an online engagement platform as a first step in gathering your thoughts, views and perspectives on MAID. We understand that culture and community are foundational in end-of-life care for Indigenous Peoples, families and communities. Through this survey we hope to learn more about and honour your perspectives and experiences on illness, dying, death, grief, loss and bereavement in the context of MAID.

The online platform has multiple options for giving feedback – a quick poll, a story sharing space, and a more in depth survey, as well as some basic information on MAID.

In participating with this online tool, your voice can help inform and guide how MAID policies are shaped across the country, and support greater awareness of culturally appropriate end-of-life care services, including MAID.

The online survey will be open until November 17, 2023. We would be grateful if you could share the link within your networks, including with your family, friends and communities.

In addition to this survey, Health Canada is partnering with Indigenous organizations that wish to lead engagement on MAID within their own communities. As well, Health Canada will be supporting the engagement by working with an Indigenous firm to plan and facilitate knowledge exchange roundtables in 2024. Updates on all engagement activities will be posted on the Engagement on Indigenous perspectives on medical assistance in dying webpage.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/programs/engagement-indigenous-perspectives-medical-assistance-dying.html>

Advancing Digital Health Capacity for First Nations in Ontario

FNDHO supports First Nation health teams across Ontario to improve their digital health capacity as systems continue to digitize.

Our work is guided by First Nations community needs, provincial digital health strategies, and opportunities as they arise.

200⁺

Digital health learners.

Digital Health Training and Education

Last year FNDHO supported over 200 learners from health teams across the province to gain digital health knowledge and skills. We have a growing collection of training and education videos, online courses and learning tools to help your team take advantage of digital health opportunities.



Using Journey Maps to Improve Care Coordination

“Journey Mapping” is a visual, interactive way to look at current care processes and identify improvements – especially where clients are accessing healthcare outside of the community. We can help you “map” out and implement updates to make things better for everyone involved.

We Support First Nation Health Teams Across Ontario

FNDHO’s digital health support services are available to all First Nation health teams in Ontario at no cost. We’d love to hear from you.

09

Journey Maps were created for First Nation health teams last year

08

FNDHO helped 8 health teams gain access to provincial eHealth systems last year

Access to Provincial eHealth Systems

Your clinical health team members need good information to make good care decisions, and to stay involved when community members interact with provincial health services. Access to Provincial eHealth Systems, such as Ontario’s Electronic Health Record Viewers and eReferral tools, can help your clinical team be an active part of a community member’s extended circle of care.



Community Support and Engagement

The FNDHO team is always looking for the best way to support communities and their health teams. We're hoping to keep the digital health discussion going so we can help you identify and support your evolving needs. Last year, a big focus was on electronic charting, virtual care tools and training. Please let us know what you're interested in.

“ This program has cut down the need for our clients to drive 90 km to the nearest hospital or do a 4-6 hour commute to see a specialist. We can now support clients from the comfort and safety of their own homes. ”

Virtual Care Access & Literacy program survey respondent

Site visits Conferences
eNewsletters
FNDHO.ca Instagram
YouTube Webinars Facebook
Phone calls Emails

93

iPads supporting virtual health care are now in communities.

Virtual Care Access & Literacy

This pilot program offered First Nation health teams free iPads pre-loaded with data plans, tutorials and apps. The iPads can be loaned to community members to support access to virtual health care.



Privacy & Security Challenge

P&S is a big area of interest these days. Last year, we launched the P&S Challenge to help health teams find a fun way to talk and learn about P&S best practices. The challenge included fun activities that review and broaden privacy and security policies and that encourage discussions with clients about confidentiality. We'd be happy to hear from you about other ways we can support your P&S needs.

133

133 Privacy & Security Challenge Packages were sent to First Nation health teams across the province.

Home and Community Care Digital Health Expansion Initiative

For a third year, ISC Ontario Region First Nations and Inuit Home and Community Care (FNIHCC) worked with us to deliver and manage a funding model to support digital health advancement for home and community care teams. Dozens of First Nations Home and Community Care teams are taking advantage of this program and we'd be happy to work with you to figure out how you can too.

82

First Nations engaged.

Contact us at info@fndho.ca
www.fndho.ca

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Distinction-Based Indigenous Health Legislation



Since Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's 2019 national election campaign and 2020 Speech from the Throne, the Chiefs of Ontario continue to monitor and disseminate information to our respective First Nations as provided by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) regarding the proposed Distinction-Based Indigenous Health Legislation (DBIHL).

The COO Health Sector has hosted a number of First Nation open dialogue sessions, both online and in-person, to share and discuss how First Nation Leadership, providers, and communities can effectively respond to this federal government's proposed initiative.

In late May 2023, Ontario Regional Chief Glen Hare, Grand Council Chief Reg Niganobe, COO Health Staff and many First Nation members attended the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) national Meeting on Indigenous Health Legislation. It was resoundingly clear that there remains tremendous dissatisfaction with ISC regarding the lack of information, proposed timelines and opportunities for meaningful input that all First Nations across Canada require.

Throughout July-August 2023, ISC hosted a series of national "Sharing Calls" and these concerns were reiterated. As per COO Resolution 13/19 regarding co-development concerns, our Ontario Chiefs Committee on Health passed a Motion on June 13, 2023, to support exploring background research and potential legislation and/or legal options for DBIHL, NIHB and Jordan's Principle Discussions.

ISC announced in July that they will be providing a "Key Elements" document on DBIHL for August 21, 2023, intended to "reflect the proposed measures to address issues raised during engagement and further developed through co-development tables, including but not limited to addressing anti-Indigenous racism, supporting traditional approaches to health and wellness, and protecting Treaty and Inherent Rights".

The COO Health Sector will ensure that this document and associated materials will be forwarded as soon as they become available.

Key Elements Document - Engagement



We are pleased to share the “Federal Distinctions-Based Indigenous Health Legislation Key Elements” document for review and input. This document outlines the potential measures that reflects the 2.5 years of engagement and co-development discussions with First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and Intersectional Peoples, organizations and governments. Feedback will inform upcoming Cabinet discussions and guide further development of the distinctions-based Indigenous Health Legislation. We anticipate further opportunities to review and provide feedback in late fall 2023-early winter 2024, prior to the tabling of the legislation in winter 2024.

We are also offering 1-1 calls to discuss the key elements document in greater detail. Should you be interested, please inform us as soon as possible and we will work to find a meeting opportunity of mutual convenience. As a reminder, there will be 5 open calls for First Nations to discuss the key elements document should you prefer to attend one of those sessions. Meeting details can be found below:

First Nations Open Call Meeting Details:

Zoom link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85449757414?pwd=SkVFWjEzNETtnbZZbUxZT3QyRFMIUT09>

Meeting ID: 854 4975 7414

Passcode: 644298

Dates: September 11, 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. EST – English only session

September 12, 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. EST – French only session

September 12, 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. EST – English only session

In the meantime, we look forward to receiving your input and ask that those who are interested to please share feedback by **Friday, September 22, 2023**. We recognize that while there are deadlines internal to the federal government that must be met in order to go to Cabinet in the fall, we must also allow time for partners to provide meaningful input.

Contact:

Nathalie Lachance

Director, Engagement, Indigenous Health Legislation

Strategic Policy, Planning and Information, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch

Indigenous Services Canada / Government of Canada

nathalie.lachance@sac-isc.gc.ca / Cell: 780.231.1593

Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte Long Term Care Home Ground Breaking Ceremony



Health Human Resources Strategy



In the Spring 2023 Newsletter, the COO Health Sector provided a brief outline of the proposed HHR Strategy development. This includes:

1. Surveys sent to the First Nations and Tribal Councils/AHAC's to note changes or similarities between this community scan and the last one completed almost 10 years ago;
2. Creation of the Task Force from within COO's Health, Social, Education, Economic Development, and Youth Sectors to assist guiding the HHR Strategy development;
3. Working with the PTO's/Independent First Nations/Non-Affiliated First Nations to gain their insight as to how they may see the development of the HHR Strategy proceeding;
4. Developing the proposed HHR Strategy once all background and current information on the Provincial and National HHR landscape is up to date, once surveys are collected/submitted and once consultation has been completed via in-person and virtual methods. Once these steps are complete, the results will be compiled and will inform the additional resources for communities to utilize in implementing the proposed HHR Strategy; and
5. Developing training tools for communities to roll out the HHR Strategy and accompanying resources.

Currently, we have representation from 5 Sectors within Chiefs of Ontario, whom act as both representation of the Task Force that meets on a monthly basis, and as the mediator between communities and departments in their corresponding Sectors.



We have closed the surveys as of Friday, August 18, 2023. We thank everyone who were able to complete the surveys that were sent out between June-August 2023. Congratulations to the winners of the draws as well. The data collection and report development have begun and will be completed before the in-person/virtual meetings commence.

Once the report based off survey responses has been complete, they will be presented to the PTO's/Independent First Nations/Non-Affiliated First Nations to get their feedback virtually or in-person regarding the findings of the surveys and to gather their input for the development of the HHR Strategy, and the specific resources to be developed to help unroll the HHR Strategy within communities and affiliated organizations.

The development of key components of the resources have begun development, and will be released with the HHR Strategy. We will continue to develop additional resources as determined by those in attendance at upcoming meetings.

If you have any questions regarding this initiative, please contact Frances Pine, at frances.pine@coo.org, or via telephone, at 1-416-200-0299. Thank you all for your assistance with the data collection and creation of the proposed HHR Strategy and resources development.



Chiefs of Ontario




SAVE THE DATE

Ottawa Rally - First Nations' Opposition to the Passing of Bill C-53

The Chiefs of Ontario is formally inviting all First Nations Leadership, technicians, and grassroots people to attend a demonstration on Wednesday, September 20, 2023, in Ottawa, ON, to oppose the passing of Bill C-53. We encourage First Nations across the Ontario region, and in other regions across the country, to stand in solidarity against Bill C-53, which affirms that all Métis Communities represented by the MNO have the right to self-determination, including the right to self-government under s. 35. The legislation will also recognize MNO as a Métis Government and an Indigenous Governing Body.

Date:	September 20, 2023
Time:	9:30 a.m.
Location:	Parliament Hill, Ottawa, Ontario
Who should attend:	First Nations Leadership, Technician, Communities, Grassroots organizations

For more information, please contact Jackie Lombardi, Director of Justice, at Jackie.Lombardi@coo.org, Chris Hoyos, Director of Policy and Communications, at Chris.Hoyos@coo.org or visit <https://fnrightsatrisk.ca/>.

 @ChiefsOfOntario



Ontario Works &/or Ontario Disability Support Program Discretionary Benefits: Cooling Devices

OVERVIEW

As the frequency of extreme heat events occurs, the need for cooling devices increases. Those without access to cool spaces during extreme heat events can be subjected to prolonged exposure. Such exposure can cause loss of internal temperature regulation which can lead to various negative health effects or, in some cases, death.¹

The impacts of extreme heat events disproportionately effect certain vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, low-income earners, and individuals with existing health vulnerabilities.² Members of these groups may be benefactors of Ontario Works (OW) or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).

Recipients of OW or ODSP may be eligible to obtain a cooling device as a discretionary benefit.³ The ability to do so, including eligibility requirements and other restrictions, will be explored in detail below.

1. DISCRETIONARY BENEFITS FOR PERSONS RECEIVING OW &/or ODSP

Persons receiving support through any of the following programs can apply for discretionary benefits for needs other than financial assistance:

- *Ontario Works Act, 1997*
- *Ontario Disability Support Program, 1997*
- *Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities*

Discretionary benefits can cover medical devices, supplies, and items not covered by any of the aforementioned programs.⁴ Discretionary benefits are provided on a case-by-case basis and at the discretion of the Administrator.⁵ The Administrator also

¹ Jacqueline E. Cardoza, "Heat-Related Illness Is Associated with Lack of Air Conditioning and Pre-Existing Health Problems in Detroit, Michigan, USA: A Community-Based Participatory Co-Analysis of Survey Data" (2020) 17:16 *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 5704.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ontario Works Policy Directives* [https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-works-policy-directives/71-summary-benefits#:~:text=Discretionary%20benefits%20are%20provided%20on,Assistance%20\(%20TCA%20\)%20is%20being%20paid](https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-works-policy-directives/71-summary-benefits#:~:text=Discretionary%20benefits%20are%20provided%20on,Assistance%20(%20TCA%20)%20is%20being%20paid)

⁴ Don Valley Legal Clinic, *Discretionary Benefits for Recipients of Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program* (April 2023), online: <https://www.donvalleylegal.ca/blog/discretionary-benefits-for-recipients-of-ontario-works-and-ontario-disability-support-program/>.

⁵ Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, "Ontario Works Policy Directives" (08 September 2022), online: [https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-works-policy-directives/71-summary-Canadian Environmental Law Association](https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-works-policy-directives/71-summary-Canadian%20Environmental%20Law%20Association)

determines the amount provided.⁶ Importantly, discretionary benefits are intended to cover one-time costs and are not provided on an ongoing basis. As such the cost of running and operating the air conditioner, including any necessary repairs, is not covered as a discretionary benefit.⁷

2. COOLING DEVICES AS DISCRETIONARY BENEFITS

Cooling devices, such as air conditioners, can be obtained with a prescription from a nurse practitioner or physician. A diagnosis is required and it must indicate that a cooling device is required as a part of a treatment plan. It is pertinent that the prescription indicates that failure to obtain this device would result in a hospitalization or a severe risk to life.

Current medical conditions that are recognizing as requiring a cooling device include:

- cancer
- chronic heart or chronic lung conditions such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
- heart or neurological conditions
- HIV
- people on dialysis
- people with chronic mental disorders on medication
- severe asthma

If a prescription can be obtained the expense of an air conditioner or portable fan may be covered in whole. However, there will be a maximum limit on the expenses and only one air conditioning unit per family will be covered.

The legislative authority for discretionary benefits comes Section 59 of Regulation 134/98 of the *Ontario Works Act, 1997* which enables Ontario Works delivery agents to provide a program of discretionary benefits to eligible recipients.⁸

3. FOR MEDICAL CONDITIONS NOT LISTED

The above list of eligible medical conditions is not exclusionary. If a person can obtain a prescription from a health care provider, they may still qualify for an air conditioner.

[benefits#:-:text=Discretionary%20benefits%20are%20provided%20on,Assistance%20\(%20TCA%20\)%20is%20being%20paid>](#)

⁶ Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, “*Ontario Works Policy Directives*” (08 September 2022), online: <[https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-works-policy-directives/71-summary-benefits#:-:text=Discretionary%20benefits%20are%20provided%20on,Assistance%20\(%20TCA%20\)%20is%20being%20paid](https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-works-policy-directives/71-summary-benefits#:-:text=Discretionary%20benefits%20are%20provided%20on,Assistance%20(%20TCA%20)%20is%20being%20paid)>

⁷ Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, “*Ontario Works Policy Directives*” (08 September 2022), online: <<https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-works-policy-directives/77-other-benefits#>>

⁸ *Ontario Works Act, 1997*, S.O. 1997, c. 25, Sched. A.; O. Reg. 134/98, s. 59 (1).

Administrators have discretion to authorize items on a case-by-case basis. A variety of other health conditions can be severely exacerbated by prolonged exposure to extreme heat. For example, elderly populations may have existing conditions and age specific factors that can make them particularly vulnerable.⁹ Therefore, it is important to disclose any relevant medical conditions to the physician or nurse practitioner when seeking a prescription for this purpose.

Depending on the nature of the request, it is possible that one or several steps may be necessary. For those receiving OW, only a letter is required. For ODSP recipients, a letter is first required. It is then possible that they will be asked to complete a Mandatory Special Necessities Benefit Request Form which will require a signature from the party providing the prescription.¹⁰

4. HOW TO SUBMIT A REQUEST

Recipients of OW or ODSP must submit a form to the Administrator for the geographic area where they reside.¹¹ Along with the form, applicants must also submit a prescription from a health care practitioner and an estimate of the item requested.¹² Evidence to support the cost of the item can include advertisements from local stores. Upon submitting the request, applicants must ensure that their names and Member IDs are clearly written on all documents.¹³ OW and ODSP recipients across the province are eligible.

5. FOR THOSE NOT RECEIVING SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Many municipalities across Ontario also offer similar programs to those who are non-social assistance recipients but who are still considered low-income.¹⁴ Individuals applying for cooling devices through these programs must complete municipality specific forms.

⁹ National Institutes of Health, “Heat-related health dangers for older adults soar during the summer” (27 June 2018), online: <<https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/heat-related-health-dangers-older-adults-soar-during-summer>>

¹⁰ Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, “Ontario Disability Support Program policy directives for income support” (08 September 2022), online: <<https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-disability-support-program-policy-directives-income-support/912-mandatory-special>>

¹¹ *Ontario Works Act*, 1997, S.O. 1997, c. 25, Sched. A, 59 (3).

¹² City of London, “Ontario Works” (2023), online: <<https://london.ca/living-london/community-services/ontario-works>>

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

NATIONAL OVERDOSE RESPONSE SERVICE

1-888-688-6677

WWW.NORS.CA

NORS is a virtual safer use overdose prevention service. Anonymous, non-judgmental support whenever and wherever you use drugs. Available 24/7 ° 365. Canada wide.

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Health Coordination Unit



The Health Coordination Unit (HCU) is the technical advisory body supported by the coordinating capacity of the Chiefs of Ontario office. It is comprised of the Health Directors of the PTOs, Six Nations of the Grand River and one representative from the Independent First Nations. The Health Coordination Unit is accountable to the Ontario Chiefs Committee on Health (OCCOH), the Leadership Council and the Ontario Chiefs-in-Assembly. The Health Coordination Unit identifies health issues, prepares briefing papers and develops and recommends health strategies that require political support and action.

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Chiefs Committee on Health



The Ontario Chiefs Committee on Health (OCCOH) is comprised of Political Leadership from the PTOs, Six Nations of the Grand River and one representative from the Independent First Nations. The OCCOH is supported by the coordinating capacity of the Chiefs of Ontario office. The Ontario Chiefs Committee on Health works with the Health Coordination Unit to identify health issues from the communities they represent and provide political support to advocate to all levels of Government. The OCCOH members are accountable to and provide direct updates to the Chiefs-in-Assembly.

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