

October 13, 2020

RE: Permanent Changes to the Public Service Health Care Plan

Dear President Duclos,

We are jointly writing to you on behalf of the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association (CCPA) and the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) to discuss recent temporary changes to the Public Service Health Care Plan (PSHCP). Our two associations represent approximately 30,000 members nationally that, regardless of immediate potential risk, are addressing the compounding mental, psychological and emotional consequences that our families, communities, and our nation are experiencing at this time of great uncertainty.

On April 24th, 2020 Treasury Board announced temporary changes to the PSHCP. These changes were in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and designed to help PSHCP members and eligible dependants access health care benefits. Notable for our organizations was that social workers, psychotherapists, counsellors and counselling therapists were allowed to work directly with plan participants as mental health practitioners under the PSHCP, albeit with a temporary designation.

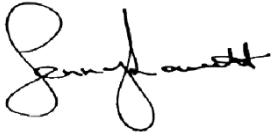
As this crisis deepens, the health impacts of COVID-19 will be considerable. The compounding consequences will have profound and ongoing repercussions on federal public servants. Given that reality our members will and should be there to support the mental health recovery of PSHCP members and their families. Subsequently, CCPA and CASW are advocating for this temporary acceptance of our members as mental health practitioners under the PSHCP to become permanent for several reasons.

First, we understand that before the pandemic, 50% of all approved claims under the Public Service Health Care Plan (PSHCP) fell under the category of mental health. PSHCP members that enter into a therapeutic relationship with a counsellor/psychotherapist or social worker due to this temporary measure, may have their journey of recovery placed at risk when coverage arbitrarily ends, thereby presenting providers with an ethical dilemma regarding continuity of care. This is professionally and ethically unacceptable as PSHCP members will be forced to either stop therapy or transition to a new mental health practitioner in a system with already extremely limited access

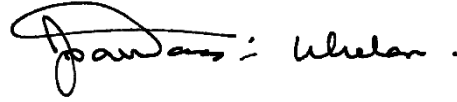
It is critical to utilize the most appropriately trained mental health professionals, either as individual practitioners or as members of multi-disciplinary teams. Permanently including these resources in the continuum of care helps address the shortage, growing demand, and increasing costs of mental health services. Allowing members of the public service to permanently bill costs of these services would increase the range of treatment options and allow for appropriate access to healthcare that all Canadians deserve, regardless of their province or territory of residence.

We thank you for hearing our concerns and look forward to engaging in conversations with you and your staff on this matter further. Please let us know if you have availability to set up a call in the coming weeks to discuss further. Thank you for all the support you have given Canadians during this challenging time.

Sincerely,



Jenny L. Rowett, PhD, CCC-S, LCT
President, CCPA



Joan Davis-Whelan , MSW, RSW
President, CASW



Background:

Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association

The CCPA is a national bilingual association of professionally trained counsellors engaged in the helping professions. Since 1965, CCPA has provided leadership and promotion to the counselling profession.

Canadian Association of Social Workers

Established in 1927, CASW is a national association, with over 20,000 members, dedicated to promoting the social work profession and advancing issues of social justice.