FINDING HELP FOR MENTAL ILLNESS
1 in 5 Canadians experience mental illness during their lifetime while the other four know someone who has experienced mental illness. Rates of mental illness such as depression, suicide and substance abuse are higher for Aboriginal people.

All mental illnesses are not the same, but are made up of a blend of genetic, personality, biologic and environmental factors. Often those with mental illness do not get help because of shame and discrimination. For Aboriginal people, mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health is all related. For this reason, getting help for mental health issues is a very important step toward improved wellbeing and should never be seen as bad or shameful.

WHAT IS THE ALBERTA MENTAL HEALTH ACT?
Knowing how to help someone with mental illness can be challenging. The Alberta Mental Health Act is a Government of Alberta act which provides rules and rights that apply to apprehension, detention, admission and treatment of persons with mental illness.

WHO CAN ACT ON BEHALF OF, AND MAKE DECISIONS FOR, A PERSON WITH MENTAL ILLNESS WHO IS UNABLE TO MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS?

There are a variety of ways to provide decision-making support for those who are unable to make decisions on their own. The Alberta Mental Health Act explains that, in certain circumstances, the nearest relative can provide decision-making support for those who are unable to make decisions on their own.

The Act is specific about who qualifies as a nearest relative. The nearest relative includes the following:
- spouse or interdependent partner;
- son or daughter;
- father or mother;
- brother or sister;
- grandfather or grandmother;
- grandson or granddaughter;
- uncle or aunt; and
- nephew or niece

If there is no nearest relative available or found suitable, Alberta Health Services may designate a person to act as nearest relative.

The Personal Directives Act works together with the Alberta Mental Health Act. It explains that a Personal Directive can be completed by a person requiring decision-making support. The Personal Directive names a trusted decision-maker and provides instructions to guide decisions made when they are unable to make their own decisions.

The Alberta Guardianship and Trusteeship Act is a Government of Alberta act describing a process of providing decision-making support for those who do not have a personal directive. It also works with the Alberta Mental Health Act.

Although any interested person can apply to be a guardian or trustee, typically they are a close family member or friend. The guardian is appointed by the court. When there is no close family member or friend available, the Public Guardian and Public Trustee can be appointed.

IF SOMEONE IS A SERIOUS DANGER TO THEMSELVES OR OTHERS, CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY.
When can someone with mental illness be apprehended, detained, admitted and treated?

**Apprehension & Detention**

The Alberta Mental Health Act says that a doctor, judge, the police, or peace officer can require a person with mental illness to be brought to a facility without their consent. Once apprehended, they can be detained for up to 24 hours. However, they cannot be treated without their consent.

Apprehension of an Aboriginal person with mental illness on reserve depends on policies put in place by specific First Nations. If the RCMP or First Nations police observe behavior that concerns them, or if they are asked for help by a family member, healthcare worker, or members of the community, they can apprehend an Aboriginal person with mental illness on reserve and take them to a facility off reserve. Regardless of location, a person cannot be apprehended and taken to a facility unless the following three requirements are met:

1. The person must have a mental disorder
2. They must be at risk of causing harm to themselves or others and their mental health must be at risk of seriously getting worse without immediate treatment
3. The only solution for proper care of the person is being admitted to a mental health facility as a formal patient

**Admission & Treatment**

A person with mental illness cannot be admitted to a mental health facility or hospital by a family member or friend. A medical doctor is the only person who can admit them.

If a doctor examines a person, decides they need further care, and they meet the same three requirements above, the doctor can issue a document called an admission certificate requiring them to be detained for up to 24 hours.

If a person decides to seek treatment and admits themselves, they are an informal patient. A formal patient is a person admitted on the authority of two admission certificates signed by two doctors. They can be admitted for up to one month.

Under two renewal certificates a person with mental illness can be admitted for up to six months. Each renewal certificate must also be signed by two doctors.

What rights does a person with mental illness who has been apprehended have?

A person with mental illness does have rights when being apprehended, detained, admitted and treated. It is very important that patients, and those caring for or acting on behalf of those with mental illness, know and exercise their rights. During apprehension, detention, admission and treatment they have the right:

- to know why they are being apprehended and detained
- to know when the admission certificate expires
- to refuse treatment, if mentally capable to make decisions about treatment
- to contact and discuss their situation with a lawyer
- to have regular visitors while being detained
- to confidentiality of all health information
- to contact the Alberta Mental Health Patient Advocate office to discuss their situation with an advocate
- to be taken immediately to a facility for examination if apprehended by a police officer
- to be taken to hospital within 7 days if a judge issues a warrant
- to be examined by a medical doctor within 24 hours stay at a facility
- to stay longer than 24 hours in a facility only if two doctors have signed two admission certificates

Community Treatment Order (CTO)

Treatment is an important part of the journey towards improved mental wellbeing. It is important for a person with mental illness, or those acting on behalf of a person with mental illness, to be aware of all treatment options.

Treatment does not only happen in a mental health facility or hospital. Many people with mental illness are treated in the community. This allows them to still be a part of the community while receiving the support they need.
According to the Alberta Mental Health Act, a Community Treatment Order is a treatment plan tailored for each person that may include requirements such as medications that must be taken and appointments with healthcare providers that must be attended. A patient must always follow the treatment plan or they could risk being apprehended and taken to a facility. This treatment plan is not ordered by the court and must be decided by two separate doctors.

**Review Panel**

As someone caring for or acting on behalf of a person with mental illness, there may be concerns about decisions being made. If so, a Review Panel can review the case. Although review panels are private, when evidence is being given the patient and lawyer can be present. Any decision made by a review panel can be appealed to the Alberta Court of Queen’s Bench within 14 days of the panel’s decision.

To have an application for a review panel sent to you, please contact Alberta Health Services at (780) 427-7164 or for toll-free access in Alberta, first dial 310-0000.

**HOW DO I ACCESS MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ON AND OFF RESERVE?**

**FNHIHB (federal)**

As someone caring for or acting on behalf of an Aboriginal person needing mental health services, the healthcare system can be confusing. It can be difficult to know how to access mental health services and who is responsible for providing them.

Through the First Nation and Inuit Health Branch (FNHIHB), the federal government provides mental health services for First Nations with status on reserve and eligible Inuit. For other Aboriginal people (Métis and non-status First Nations) healthcare is provided by the province. Services provided by FNHIHB may include short-term crisis intervention, counselling, treatment and prevention programs.

To find out more about mental health services provided by FNHIHB in Alberta, please contact:

Regional Director  
First Nations and Inuit Health Branch  
Health Canada  
9700 Jasper Avenue, Suite 730  
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4C3  
Telephone: 780-495-2703  
Facsimile: 780-495-2687  
Toll Free: 1-866-225-0709  
Teletypewriter: 1-800-267-1245 (Health Canada)

**Non-insured health benefits (NIHB)** are also provided through FNHIHB for First Nations with status on reserve and eligible Inuit. These benefits can help supplement those offered by the province or territory. Services offered include dental and vision care, prescription drugs, medical supplies and equipment, transportation to medical services, short-term/crisis mental health counselling, and payment of health insurance premiums in Alberta.

Services that are not covered through NIHB short-term/crisis mental health counselling may include substance abuse counselling, assessment ordered by the court, educational and career counselling, long-term and non-crisis counselling, or assistance that is the responsibility of another program or agency.

To find out more about NIHB benefits in Alberta, please contact:

Non-Insured Health Benefits First Nations and Inuit Health  
Suite 730, Canada Place  
9700 Jasper Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4C3  
Telephone: (780) 495-2694  
Toll free: 1-800-232-7301  
Website: www.hc-sc.gc.ca
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR FORMER STUDENTS OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Mental health and wellness supports and services are provided for former students of residential schools (First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and non-Aboriginal) and their families by Health Canada through a program called Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program. It is offered through Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. These supports are available for those living on reserve, off reserve, on Métis settlements, and in urban and rural areas. These supports and services are available in each province across Canada that had recognized Indian Residential Schools. The three areas of support offered include:

1. **Cultural Support** – This program connects former students of residential schools and their families with a Cultural Support Provider. A Cultural Support Provider is a traditional healer or practitioner in the community who is known to perform traditional ceremony and prayer. Time spent with a Cultural Support Provider is safe, confidential, considerate of your own traditional beliefs, and non-judgemental. If cultural support services are unavailable locally, transportation is provided to access these services.

2. **Emotional Support** – For former students of residential schools and their families, it can be emotionally challenging to discuss experiences and issues related to residential schools. It can be very helpful to have someone to talk to at this time. This program also connects former students of residential schools and their families with a Resolution Health Support Worker (RHSW). Although RHSWs are not therapists, they can help discuss experiences and issues related to residential schools in a safe, confidential, respectful and non-judgemental way. They can also attend Truth and Reconciliation and Commemoration events with you and your family.

3. **Professional Counselling (Individual and Family)** – Talking about feelings with a professional counsellor may be helpful during the healing process. This program also connects former students of residential schools and their families with a professional counsellor. The professional counsellors are knowledgeable about the history and impact of residential schools, have experience working with Aboriginal people, and are registered with Health Canada and First Nations & Inuit Health Branch. If professional counselling is unavailable locally, transportation will be provided to access this service.

**Provincial**
Mental health services for Aboriginal people in Alberta are also offered through Alberta Health Services. Mental health services that can be accessed outside First Nation reserves and Métis settlements may include community mental health clinics, hospitals and psychiatric institutions.

Aboriginal Liaisons, Cultural Helpers and Aboriginal Care Coordinators are available at many healthcare facilities to guide Aboriginal patients through the healthcare system in a culturally sensitive way. To connect with an Aboriginal Liaison, Cultural Helper or Aboriginal Care Coordinator in your community, follow the link to the Aboriginal Health Program website www.albertahealthservices.ca/SERVICES.ASP?pid=service&rid=7805.

In Edmonton, contact:

**Aboriginal Cultural Helper**  
Office phone: (780) 342-7612 or (780) 342-5647

**Aboriginal Care Coordinator**  
Office phone: (780) 342-5262
ALBERTA MENTAL HEALTH PATIENT ADVOCATE

As someone caring for or acting on behalf of a person with mental illness, it can be difficult to know where to go for support. Know that you are not alone. The Alberta Mental Health Patient Advocate (AMHPA) can answer questions and help find information and referrals. It exists to help protect patient rights and advocate for the seriously mentally ill being held without consent. This service is provided free of charge by the Government of Alberta.

The AMHPA is separate from provincial healthcare and is not part of any hospital or clinic. They independently investigate complaints from patients receiving care under the Alberta Mental Health Act. Under the Alberta Mental Health Act, a patient has the right to contact the AMHPA to discuss their situation if being held without their consent. All complaints are investigated and confidential.

To speak with an advocate, please contact:

Alberta Mental Health Patient Advocate
12th Floor, Centre West Building
10035-108 Street, Edmonton, AB T5J 3E1
In Edmonton: 780.422.1812 Toll-Free: 310.0000
Fax: 780.422.0695 E-mail: Info@MHPA.ab.ca
Website: www.mhpa.ab.ca

IMPORTANT MENTAL HEALTH CONTACTS

AADAC (Addictions and Mental Health) Help Line
1 (866) 332-2322

Addiction Help Line (toll-free help line provides drug, alcohol, tobacco and problem gambling support and referrals)
1-866-332-2322

Adult Mental Health Response Team (respond to emotional or psychiatric crisis calls)
780-342-7777

Crisis Support Centre (24-hour support for those in crisis situations)
24-hour Distress Line (780) 482-HELP (4357)

Mental Health Help Line (24/7 toll-free help line; responds to crisis calls, services and support referral)
1-877-303-2642

Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program Alberta Regional Office: 1-888-495-6588
Website: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/services/indigenous/irs-pi-eng.php
Crisis Line (24/7 support available): 1-866-925-4419

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