

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS – iCBT**What is the province offering Manitobans?**

The province has partnered with Morneau Shepell, the leading provider of technology-enabled HR services, to provide Manitobans access to an online program that addresses anxiety symptoms linked to COVID-19.

Why is there a need for the program?

Pandemics bring about a high level of stress and anxiety, and the health and well-being of Manitobans continues to be the priority during this uncertain time.

Many of us have never experienced something like this before and are feeling concerns over whether we'll get sick, the health of our families, the security of our jobs, being isolated from our loved ones and many other variables.

As part of the government's emergency response to COVID-19, it is introducing a convenient virtual option to help support Manitobans that can be accessed from home during this period of self-isolation and social distancing.

What is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)?

CBT is the most effective and commonly used therapy for a wide range of mental health concerns. The 'C' is for cognitive and refers to what and how we think. The B is for behavioural or how we act. Put together, cognitive-behavioural is about the relationship between our thoughts, our emotions and our behaviours.

What is iCBT?

Morneau Shepell's internet-based cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) program is delivered by a therapist through an online platform accessible from home.

What does this program offer?

As part of its overall AbilitiCBT programming, Morneau Shepell launched a new digital therapy program last week in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The virtual therapy program addresses anxiety symptoms related to the uniquely challenging aspects of pandemics: uncertainty, isolation, caring for family and community members, information overload and stress management. The program is guided by professional therapists who are trained to support and ask precise questions to guide people through the program's modules in the context of a pandemic.

How does the online program work?

The program starts by assessing needs through an online questionnaire and consultation with a professional therapist – either by phone or video chat.

People complete 10 modules at their own pace, while the therapist monitors progress and regularly checks in along the way.

How effective is the program?

CBT is proven to be one of the most effective and efficient therapy methods.

AbilitiCBT is clinically effective – studies have shown that internet-based CBT is as effective as face-to-face therapy. AbilitiCBT therapists are experienced in dealing with the psychological impact of various traumatic events, such as SARS, natural disasters, acts of terrorism or aggression.

Who is eligible for this program?

All residents of Manitoba over the age of 16 can immediately access the program upon date of signing and completion of mental health screening

How can Manitobans access the program?

The program will be available through a landing page on the provincial website (details being finalized over the next two weeks).

The online platform is accessible from home or anywhere on smartphone and tablet. Professional therapists and a 365-day, 24-7 crisis line support it.

What if I don't have a cellphone or tablet or don't have internet access?

This is a digital program that provides virtual access and content to individuals in the program, so a cellphone or tablet is required. Manitobans who don't own a smart phone may gain access through someone they know or a community organization.

This program does not replace current phone-in supports offered by many organizations in Manitoba. Those remain available to Manitobans.

What languages are available?

English and French.

Do I need to be referred to the program by a doctor?

No, you can start the program at any time by completing the online assessment on the website.

What is the cost?

The entire program is free over charge to residents of Manitoba age 16 and older. The province is providing a one-time \$4.5-million investment to provide one year of service.

How many Manitobans could potentially be helped?

With a flat fee of \$4.5 million, the program is available to an unlimited number of cases in Manitoba.

What if I am in crisis?

Immediate crisis support resources are offered in Manitoba through other organizations: www.gov.mb.ca/health/mh/crisis.html.

Crisis support is also available through Morneau Shepell once an individual has completed their assessment. However, this program is intended to support mild to moderate anxiety symptoms related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

How is the program connected to Manitoba's health system?

The partnership with Morneau Shepell iCBT is part of the province's COVID-19 emergency response. This program is meant to support anxiety related to COVID quickly without using our existing stretched system. The Manitoba government is not implementing anything that affects the system side of health care.

The program will be offered as a complement to the crisis support currently provided by a number of mental health organizations funded by the Manitoba government. With the requirements to self-isolate and practise physical distancing, AbilitiCBT will allow the Manitoba government to provide meaningful support to people while they must remain at home.

Who is Morneau Shepell?

Morneau Shepell is the leading provider of well-being and mental health services in Canada, with the largest network of therapists across the country experienced in dealing with the psychological impact of various traumatic events, such as SARS, natural disasters, acts of terrorism or aggression.

Why did the province select Morneau Shepell as the service provider?

The program offered by Morneau Shepell was already developed and ready to implement in Manitoba. Its teams are mobilized and ready to support the Manitoba government with all aspects of launching this program to the public.

Morneau Shepell has more than 5,000 counsellors trained in iCBT delivery across the country. More than 80 therapists are located in Manitoba and the organization is recruiting for more. Morneau Shepell currently provides employee assistance services to several public-sector entities in Manitoba (MPI, MBLL, U of M, City of Winnipeg).

How will Manitobans learn about this resource?

The program will be communicated publicly via media release and social media, as well as shared with stakeholders in the health and mental health-care systems who could point Manitobans towards the resource.