



Mental Health Practitioner coverage available to Active & Retired NSTU members

As a follow-up to a recent article placed in *The Teacher*, with respect to Paramedical Practitioner coverage available through the NSTU Total Care Medical Plan, the NSTU Group Insurance Trustees want to inform members of the availability of mental health practitioners both through the NSTU Total Care Medical Plan and the Nova Scotia MSI program.

Mental health practitioners play an important role in managing the well being of society as mental health issues become more and more prevalent.

Through the Total Care Medical Program, the following services are available to both active and retired NSTU members:

Psychologist Coverage

Psychologists study the human mind and human behaviour. Psychologists apply their knowledge to a wide range of practice including health and human services, management, education, law and sports. In addition to a variety of work settings, psychologists usually specialize in one of a number of different areas. Counselling psychologists use various techniques, including interviewing and testing to advise patients on how to deal with problems of everyday living.

Master of Social Work Coverage

Many of the roles performed by social workers are common to all mental health disciplines. Work in the area of mental health provides an opportunity for social workers to practice collaboratively with allied professionals while maintaining the integrity of their knowledge and skill base. Social workers provide direct services to individuals, couples, families and groups, in the form of counselling, crisis intervention, and therapy, as well as advocacy, co-ordination of resources and case management.

Social workers in the mental health field are also involved in the planning and delivery of a variety of services such as building partnerships among professionals, caregivers, and families; collaborating with the community, usually with the goal of creating supportive environments for patients.

Benefit

Psychologist/Master of Social Work coverage is 80 per cent of the usual and customary charges per treatment to a maximum of 20 visits per calendar year. A Master of Social Work is considered as an eligible service provider under the psychologist services benefit. The psychologist or Master of Social Work must be one approved by Medavie Blue Cross.

Services available through the Nova Scotia Teachers Union

As an NSTU member, you have access to counselling services through the Nova Scotia Teachers Union internal counselling staff. All counsellors have their Master of Social Work and provide counselling and other services to NSTU Members. These services can be accessed through the NSTU office in Halifax. It is important to note that the services offered by these professionals are not part of the NSTU Group Insurance Program.

Psychiatrist coverage available through the Nova Scotia MSI Program

Residents of Nova Scotia have access to mental health services through the Medical Services Insurance (MSI) Program. The Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness provides policy direction for these programs. Your family physician may be able to provide mental health counselling services or may decide that it is best to make a referral to a psychiatrist.

Psychiatrists are physicians who enhance a person's quality of life by providing psychiatric assessment, treatment and rehabilitation care to people with psychiatric disorders to prevent, reduce and eliminate the symptoms of subsequent disabilities resulting in a mental illness or disorder. Psychiatrists are informed and uniquely skilled in the integration of medicine, psychiatry, neuro-science and the psycho-social sciences.

A psychiatrist is trained primarily as a clinician to diagnose, treat, and provide ongoing care for mental disorders to patients of all ages. Psychiatrists not only provide direct care to patients, but often act as consultants to other health care professionals such as family physicians. Psychiatrists use a mix of treatment options, including medications and psychotherapy, depending on the psychiatric conditions. Often part of the treatment or rehabilitation plan will include referral to, or collaboration with, a range of social and support services.

Benefit

Psychiatrist services are covered by MSI if, in the opinion of your attending physician, you require the services of a specialist, a proper referral to the specialist is necessary. Payment through MSI at the specialist rate is based on a valid referral by the attending physician.

It is important to note that for NSTU members who suffer from a mental health disorder and are insured for Long Term Disability coverage, a specialist's report will be required to be submitted to the insurer as part of the LTD claims submission process.

Summary

The NSTU Group Insurance Trustees hope that the information provided with respect to the various Paramedical and Mental Health service providers has provided helpful information to you as you work to achieve your wellness goals.

If you have any questions with regard to the above, please do not hesitate to contact Johnson Inc. at 453-9543 (local) or 1-800-453-9543 (toll-free).