

# Retaining Ontario NNADAP Workers

## Ontario Regional Addictions Partnership Committee

November 2013

Advocacy Series

The Ontario Regional Addictions Partnership Committee (ORAPC)

- a voice for Ontario NNADAP
- provides advice/guidance/recommendations to leadership, FNIHB, Ontario NNADAP
- Through review, evaluation and monitoring assists to address issues of addictions and holistic approaches to healing

## Certification of Ontario NNADAP

We want our addiction workers to be competent in providing the best and most appropriate addiction services and contribute to better outcomes for our First Nations people. Provincial, Federal and International agencies require their addiction workers to be certified to ensure clients are receiving the best and most appropriate services and ensure the best possible outcomes to their clients. Certification is one way to ensure addiction workers have and maintain the skills and competencies necessary to effectively support individuals with substance use issues. Through certification, workers build awareness of the latest developments in the addictions field and strengthen their skills and competencies. Maintaining certification requires continual training and re-certification every 2 years and demonstrates a worker's expertise in the addictions field.

Information collected by ORAPC indicates a very high turnover rate of Ontario NNADAP Workers. Reasons cited include lack of

resources, low programming budgets, high case loads, being on call 24/7, being the sole addiction worker in the community, high stress, high crisis, not enough pay for the nature of the work and non-competitive salaries in NNADAP positions. If we want the best and most appropriate services for our people, we need to encourage our workers to maintain certification and keep them working in our First Nations communities by compensating them accordingly. We are losing certified Ontario NNADAP Workers to mainstream agencies and organizations that can offer competitive salaries, lower caseloads and more appropriate operating budgets.



The National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP) is a Health Canada program with a goal of helping First Nation and Inuit communities operate programs to reduce high levels of alcohol, drug, and solvent abuse on-reserve.

Ontario has 10 NNADAP-funded Treatment Centres and approximately 117 First Nation Communities receiving NNADAP funding by way of a contribution agreement. Some of the very small communities do not receive NNADAP funding, while some of the largest communities receive enough funding for more than one addiction worker. NNADAP Workers may also be known as Addiction Counsellors or Prevention Workers.



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**[www.OntarioNNADAP.org](http://www.OntarioNNADAP.org)**

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**In the Spirit of Health & Healing!**

## **The Progression of NNADAP**

NNADAP began 30 years ago as a prevention program and has progressed to encompass crisis intervention, assessment and referral, treatment planning, supportive and therapeutic counselling and therapy, both one-on-one and group models, case management, home visits, aftercare, prevention and education presentations and workshops, community event/activity coordination, suicide education/prevention/intervention, grief counselling and support, gambling, smoking cessation, FAS/FAE, cultural programming, lateral violence, health promotion, sexual abuse, family violence, mental health and concurrent disorders, diabetes & nutrition, and the abused substances of the day. In most communities, one NNADAP worker is expected to address these many issues on their own with little to no funding.

Ontario NNADAP Workers have had to fill gaps and take on these increased responsibilities which require increased qualifications while, unfortunately, funding has remained the same. For example, more Ontario NNADAP workers have achieved their post-secondary education since the 1990's and many have achieved their addictions counselor certification to gain necessary knowledge and meet community needs, yet NNADAP funding has remained stagnant leaving no room for increase in salary or programming. NNADAP remains chronically underfunded despite an overwhelming need for community-based addiction services.



## **Retention Incentives for Certified NNADAP Workers**

ORAPC and the Chief's of Ontario have advocated for bringing Ontario NNADAP Worker salaries in-line with mainstream addiction workers and increasing access to certified addictions training. This advocacy has been ongoing since 2006.

An announcement regarding a "Retention Incentive" for certified NNADAP Workers through the National Anti-Drug Strategy funding was released by Health Canada in May 2008 stating, "Funding will provide for training opportunities towards certification, and once achieved, for salary enhancement."

Each year ORAPC accepts and reviews proposals for certified training of NNADAP workers from the National Anti-Drug Strategy funds. As a separate, yet related initiative, proof of certification is requested from NNADAP Workers for distribution of "Retention Incentives" meant for **salary enhancement**.

Many certified community-based NNADAP Workers in Ontario have experienced difficulty receiving their retention incentive from their employer First Nation. Just over half received the incentive as a lump sum or as an addition to their salary. Those who did not receive the incentive report that incentive money went back into programming, was absorbed by the First Nation or was spent on training. In some cases the worker is unsure where the incentive money went.

These situations have created conflict between the employee and their supervisors and/or leadership over

the retention incentive. NNADAP workers have had to justify why they should receive the money and have come away from such discussions feeling undervalued and unsatisfied. The retention incentive issue has, in some cases, contributed to NNADAP Workers' decisions to leave their positions due to non-receipt of the monies.

### **Recommendations**

All Ontario NNADAP services should receive **additional annualized** funding to improve addictions services in Ontario First Nation communities and better meet the needs of our communities.

Retention incentives are **not** "bonuses" they are recognition of a worker's qualification and skill level and a short-term step to achieving wage parity for Ontario's NNADAP Workers.

ORAPC recommends retention incentives be disbursed **directly** to NNADAP Workers until a long-term wage parity strategy is developed.