

Eligibility for Employment as a Health Improvement Practitioner

The national Integrated Primary Mental Health and Addiction (IPMHA) services team within Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand has recently received several enquiries about eligibility for employment as a Health Improvement Practitioner (HIP), as well as requests for exceptions to current criteria. This document sets out the eligibility criteria for working in a HIP role and the process for seeking approval to support new graduates into a HIP role.

The national IPMHA services team **will not** be approving exceptions to the eligibility criteria so we would appreciate it if you could familiarise yourself with the information below and apply these before offering anyone employment in a HIP role.

A HIP is part of a general practice team and Te Whatu Ora requires all HIPs to hold registration under one of the following:

- a) fully registered under the [Health Practitioner Competence Assurance \(HPCA\) Act 2003](#) with a scope of practice that is appropriate to working as a mental health and addiction clinician e.g. nurse, psychologist, psychotherapist, occupational therapist **or**
- b) a fully registered alcohol and drug and/or gambling practitioner member of the [Drug and Alcohol Addiction Practitioners' Association Aotearoa](#) - New Zealand (dapaanz); **or**
- c) a fully registered [Social Worker](#) **or**
- d) a full member of the [New Zealand Association of Counsellors \(NZAC\)](#) who has received from NZAC a Te Whatu Ora Accreditation certificate authorising them to work within Health-funded mental health and addictions services.

In addition, people employed in these roles must hold a full current annual practicing certificate and the relevant skills and experience for working in mental health and addiction services including knowledge and skills to undertake mental health and addiction clinical assessments and have training in providing talking therapies with the specific population group/s being served by IPMHA services.

Please note:

- Candidates must have **full registration** with the appropriate body (provisional registration is not sufficient).
- Accredited NZAC counsellors will hold an annual health subscription certificate issued by NZAC.
- Candidates ideally will have three years' experience in a health setting, preferably in mental health and addiction. Candidates with less experience may need a support plan to supplement Te Pou training, which should be created by the employer prior to registering the candidate for training. The HIP role is not typically suited to new graduates, however in certain circumstances new graduates may be employed with a comprehensive support and professional development plan in place. Please seek advice from Te Pou before offering an employment contract if a candidate has less than three years' experience.
- Training in providing talking therapies includes training in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT), Motivational Interviewing, Acceptance and Commitment therapy (ACT) and Focus Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (FACT). Candidates should be able to show some history of having provided talking therapy within a health setting.

- It is important to note that whilst there is strong behavioural health element to the HIP role, people working in these roles are also expected to assess and provide therapeutic services for people with a wide range of mild to moderate (including moderate) mental health and addiction needs (including being able to recognise and respond to risk, and to identify when someone is experiencing a serious mental health and/or addiction concern)