Frequently Asked Questions-AbilitiCBT Program

What is the AbilitiCBT program?
AbilitiCBT is an online Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) tailored to address mild to moderate anxiety symptoms related to the uniquely challenging aspects of pandemics, like COVID-19.
https://manitoba.ca/covid19/bewell/

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 a priority during this uncertain time.

Many of us have never experienced a pandemic before and are feeling concerned about getting sick, the health of our families, the security of our jobs, being isolated from our loved ones and many other variables.

As part of our emergency response to COVID-19, this convenient digital option is being offered to help support Manitobans. The program 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 AbilitiCBT and what does it offer?
AbilitiCBT is an internet-based cognitive behavioral therapy (iCBT) program offered by Morneau Shepell. It is delivered through an online platform and is guided by a professional therapist. The program being offered to Manitobans is tailored to address 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 program work?
The program starts with a clinically validated assessment including an online questionnaire and a phone or video chat consultation with a therapist. Participants then move through 10 modules, at their own pace, while the therapist tracks and monitors progress. There are scheduled check-ins along the way by phone, video chat or messaging between the therapist and participant.

How effective is the program?
CBT is proven to be an effective and efficient method of therapy. AbilitiCBT is also clinically effective — studies have shown that internet-based CBT is as effective as face-to-face therapy. In addition, 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 aged 16 and over are eligible for the program.

How can Manitobans access the program?
The program will be available through a landing page on the provincial website (details will be finalized over the next two weeks). The online platform is accessible from home or anywhere using a smartphone or a tablet.

What if I don’t have a smart phone or tablet or don’t have internet access?
This is a digital program that requires the use of a smartphone or a tablet. Manitobans who do not own a mobile device would need to gain access through someone they know or a community organization.

Note that this program is not meant to 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 online platform.
What is the cost?
The program is free of charge to residents of Manitoba aged 16 and over. The province is investing a one-time $4.5 million to provide one year of service.

How many Manitobans could potentially be helped?
The program is available to an unlimited number of people aged 16 and over in Manitoba.

What if I am in crisis?
Immediate crisis support resources are offered in Manitoba through other organizations: https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/mh/crisis.html.

Crisis support is also available through Morneau Shepell once an individual has completed their assessment. Note however that 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 to provide this program is part of the province’s COVID-19 emergency response. This program is meant to support anxiety related to the COVID-19 pandemic quickly without using our existing stretched system. We are not implementing anything that affects the system side of health care.

The program complements crisis supports currently provided by a number of mental health organizations funded by the Manitoba government. With the requirements to self-isolate and practice social distancing, AbilitiCBT can 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.