

Report on NWT Medical Travel Services

NWT Medical Travel services include patient movement coordinated through both the Medical Travel and Med-Response. The NWT Medical Travel Policy and corresponding Ministerial Policies are in place to support residents who do not have access to medical travel benefits through an employer or other third-party insurance plans.

The Medical Travel Office supports residents who must travel to access medically necessary health services not available in their home communities. Med-Response coordinates emergency ground and air ambulance services to ensure residents have access to specialized emergency medical treatment services not available in their home community, ensuring that all eligible residents can receive the medical treatment they need without facing undue financial burdens.

NWT Medical Travel at a Glance

Both the total number of cases and the overall cost of medical travel have continued to increase over the past three years. The number of cases grew from 17,478 to 23,004 cases.

Overall, the costs of scheduled and emergency medical travel increased from \$56,126,432 to \$80,060,121. However, due to corresponding increases in recoveries from third parties, total net spending went down from \$28,283,931 to \$15,879,877.

The figures from 2022-23 and 2023-24 offer a reliable representation of regular service volumes after a year of unusually low travel volume in 2021-22 due to the pandemic. These figures also reflect some of the price

impacts that emerged post-pandemic.

Dental-related travel has been steadily increasing. In 2023-24, dental cases were 17% of all medical travel, but increased to 22.4% in 2024-25. Notably, in 2024-25, 53% of dental travel cases originated from the Beaufort-Delta Region. Of all dental travelers, 87% received treatment in Yellowknife, which has contributed to accommodation shortages – especially during peak tourism seasons.

	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Total – All Medical Travel Cases*	17,478	18,726	23,004
Cases with Escort**	6,302 (36%)	6,276 (34%)	8,169 (36%)
Cases Involving Travel Out of Territory (OOT)	4,422 (25%)	5,890 (31%)	6,011 (26%)
OOT Travel Cases with Escort**	2,052 (46%)	2,371 (40%)	3,020 (50%)
Cases Involving Emergency Travel	1,634 (9%)	1,512 (8%)	1,593 (7%)
	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Scheduled Medical Travel	\$20,313,197	\$27,429,773	\$36,654,411
Escorts	\$8,631,870	\$12,419,917	\$16,514,650
Emergency Travel***	\$27,181,365	\$26,041,163	\$26,891,059
Total Spend	\$56,126,432	\$65,890,853	\$80,060,121
Recoveries****	\$27,842,501	\$54,352,434	\$64,180,244
Net Spend	\$28,283,931	\$11,538,419	\$15,879,877

* Includes scheduled medical travel and emergency travel.

** The majority of escorts were for youth (under 20) and seniors (60+).

*** Includes all air and ground ambulance.

**** Includes 3rd party payments and direct recoveries.

Highlight on Escorts

2024-2025

8,169

TOTAL NUMBER
OF CASES WITH
ESCORTS

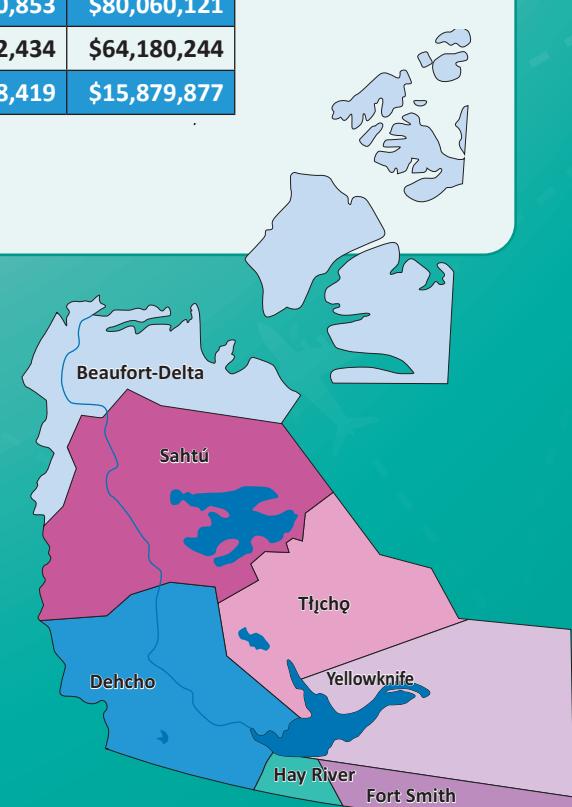
36%

OF ALL MEDICAL
TRAVEL CASES

50%

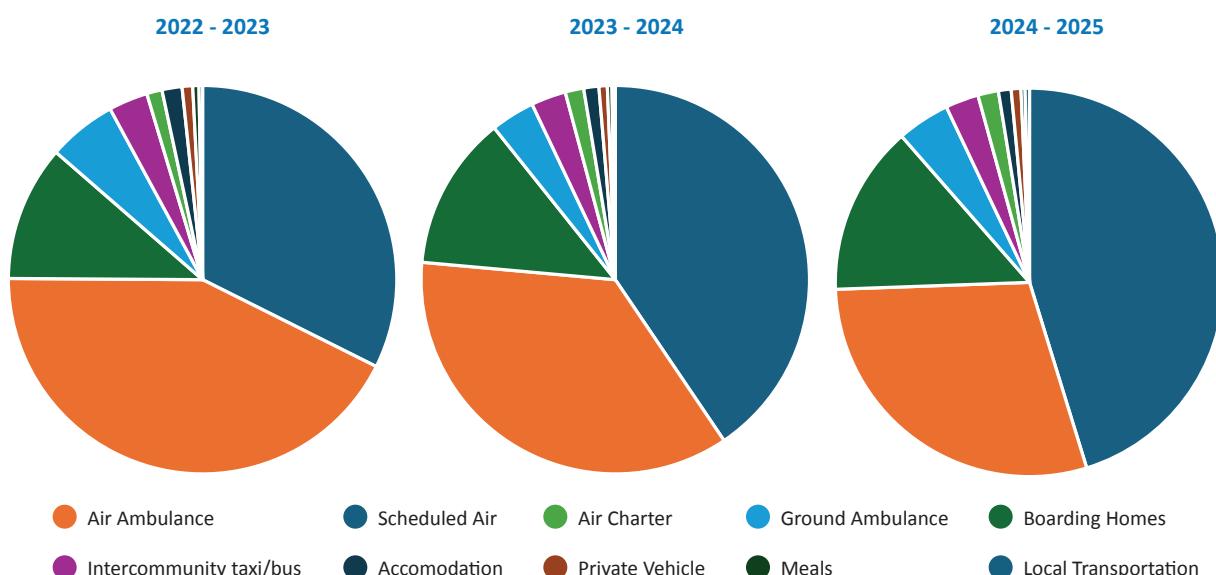
OF OOT MEDICAL
TRAVEL CASES

Cases Per Region	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Beaufort-Delta	4,487 (25.67%)	5,585 (29.82%)	7,522 (32.70%)
Sahtú	2,253 (12.89%)	2,108 (11.26%)	2,594 (11.28%)
Dehcho	2,565 (14.68%)	2,493 (13.31%)	2,735 (11.89%)
Tłı̨chǫ	2,190 (12.53%)	2,262 (12.08%)	2,959 (12.86%)
Yellowknife	3,279 (18.76%)	3,474 (18.55%)	4,029 (17.51%)
Fort Smith	1,093 (6.25%)	1,211 (6.47%)	1,308 (5.69%)
Hay River	1,460 (8.35%)	1,465 (7.82%)	1,696 (7.37%)
Non-resident of NWT	151 (0.86%)	128 (0.68%)	161 (0.70%)



Medical Travel Expenses by Mode

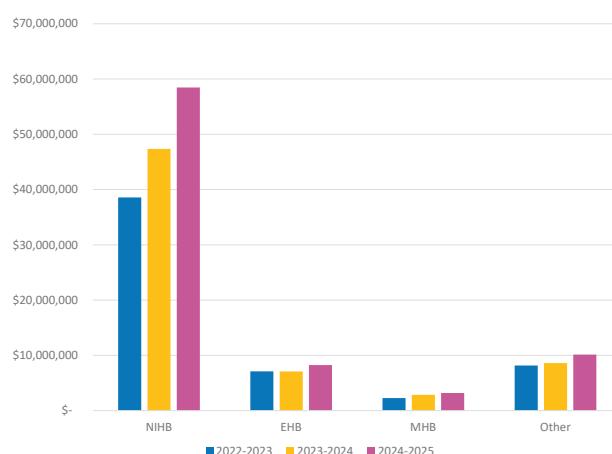
Air Ambulance and scheduled air travel expenses continued to be the highest cost categories.



Medical Travel Expenses by Benefit Program



The Medical Travel Office coordinates access to medical travel for a number of benefit programs such as the GNWT's Extended Health Benefits (EHB) and Métis Health Benefits (MHB). It also administers the federal government's Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) medical transportation program for eligible First Nations and Inuit residents.



Medical travel is essential for supporting residents access to essential health services across the NWT's vast geography, where many communities lack year-round road access. The annual cost varies year to year based on service volumes and market prices.



Demand for medical travel is rising due to specialized service needs, regional staff vacancies, and increase in travel for uninsured health services, particularly those administered on behalf of the Federal Government. To improve sustainability and patient experience, the health system is exploring innovations like expanded virtual care, better coordination of appointments, and streamlined referral.



The Medical Travel appeal process lets eligible residents request a review of policy decisions. This promotes fairness and transparency.

In 2024-2025:

- 32 appeals were submitted
- average response time was 10 business days
- common requests included cost reimbursements, escort re-assessments, and co-payment fee reviews



The GNWT Medical Travel policy is in the process of modernization. This work includes reviewing policy and benefit administration practices to improve client experience. It also aims to enhance reporting on benefit programs. These changes will lead to future improvements in annual reporting.