



MINISTERIAL POLICY

Department of Health and Social Services

Medical Travel – Benefits

1. Statement of Policy

The Department of Health and Social Services will provide medical travel benefits to Eligible Persons who must travel in order to access necessary insured health services, and their authorized escorts.

2. Principles

The Department of Health and Social Services will adhere to the following principles when implementing this Policy:

- (1) All residents of the Northwest Territories (NWT) should have access to the necessary and appropriate Insured Health Services.
- (2) The cost of medical travel should not be an economic barrier to access Insured Health Services.
- (3) The Medical Travel program should be transparent and accountable.
- (4) The Medical Travel program is complementary to other medical travel benefit plans and is considered the payor of last resort.

3. Scope

Eligible Persons may receive assistance with costs associated with medical travel as referenced in the Government of the Northwest Territories' *Medical Travel Policy*.

4. Definitions

Client – could be an Eligible Person, a parent or Guardian.

Co-payment – the portion of eligible medical travel expenses which must be paid by Eligible Persons as determine in accordance with this Policy.

Boarding Facility – Facilities approved to provide accommodation and meals to Eligible Persons and their authorized non-medical escorts.

Eligible Persons – NWT residents with a valid health care card who have a Valid Medical Referral to access necessary and appropriate Insured Health Services.

Health Care Provider - a physician, nurse practitioner, registered midwife or community health nurse licensed to practice in the NWT.

Insured Health Services – services covered by the *Hospital Insurance and Health and Social Services Administration Act* and the *Medical Care Act*.

Low Income – Eligible Persons who can demonstrate being:

- Individuals with an income of \$70,000 a year or less; or
- Individuals who are married or common-law with a combined income of \$85,000 a year or less; or,
- Individuals with one or more minor children living within their household with a combined income of \$100,000 a year or less.

Nearest Centre – the nearest approved facility that is available to provide the necessary and appropriate insured health service required for the patient.

Valid Medical Referral – written authorization from a Health Care Provider to refer an eligible person to the nearest centre for necessary and appropriate insured health services from any community in the Northwest Territories.

5. Authority and Accountability

(1) General

a) Minister

The Minister of Health and Social Services (the Minister) is accountable to the Executive Council for the implementation of this Policy.

b) Deputy Minister

The Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services (the Deputy Minister) is accountable and responsible to the Minister for the administration of this Policy.

(2) Specific

a) The Minister:

- (i) may approve changes to this Policy.
- b) The Deputy Minister or designate:
 - (i) may make recommendations to the Minister regarding the implementation of this Policy;
 - (ii) may delegate the administration and implementation of this Policy;
 - (iii) will monitor the administration and implementation of this Policy;
 - (iv) will evaluate the Policy periodically and make recommendations to the Minister for revisions to the Policy as necessary.

6. Provisions

(1) Intercommunity Travel For Eligible Persons and their Authorized Non-medical Escorts

- a) When the Nearest Centre is in the Northwest Territories and the Eligible Person chooses to travel to another centre within the NWT, intercommunity travel benefits are provided only to the Nearest Centre.

Note: If the Eligible Person chooses to travel to another centre within the NWT, referral must confirm services are available in the other centre.

- b) When the Nearest Centre is in the Northwest Territories and the Eligible Person chooses to travel to another centre outside the NWT, no medical travel benefits are provided.
- c) When the Nearest Centre is outside the Northwest Territories and the Eligible Person chooses to travel to another centre outside the Northwest Territories, intercommunity travel benefits are provided only to the Nearest Centre.
- d) The benefits cover the following forms of transportation, less the co-payment, if applicable:
 - (i) Scheduled airfare.
 - (ii) Bus or taxi fare when that is a reasonable and cost-effective alternative to air travel between communities.

- (iii) Non-emergency ground ambulance when required to transfer an inpatient from one health facility to another.
- (iv) Private vehicle mileage when claimed at the Government of the Northwest Territories' "individual's convenience rate" for recognized distances between communities. Such claims may not include fuel, parking, insurance, repairs, vehicle rental, meals, accommodation, loss or damage. The maximum reimbursed will not exceed the cost of a return commercial airfare for the patient, less co-payment if applicable. Mileage can only be claimed by the Eligible Person or the Non-medical Escort.

(2) Co-payment

- a) The amount of the co-payment shall be determined by the Minister.
- b) No co-payment is assessed on an Eligible Person with Low Income.
- c) The co-payment assessed for medical travel will be invoiced to the Eligible Person, if applicable.

(3) Meals and Accommodation for Eligible Persons Assessed with Low Income and their Authorized Non- medical Escorts

- a) Prior to return on the earliest reasonable available transportation, Eligible Persons with Low Income and their Non-medical Escorts are eligible for boarding benefits according to the following placement priority:
 - (i) Accommodation and meals in a designated Boarding Facility.
 - (ii) If no space is available in a designated Boarding Facility, a daily allowance at a rate established by the Government of the Northwest Territories for commercial accommodation and meals applies.
 - (iii) If the Eligible Person (and Non-medical Escort, if applicable) chooses to stay in a commercial or private accommodation, the private accommodation rate and a daily meal allowance rate established by the Department of Health and Social Services applies.

- b) When an additional Non-medical Escort has been approved, the cost of intercommunity travel is covered. Assistance with accommodations and meals may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

(4) Meals and Accommodation for Eligible Persons whose Income is above Low Income and their Authorized Non-medical Escorts

- a) Eligible Persons whose income is above Low Income, and their authorized Non-medical Escorts, will receive a daily allowance at a rate established by the Department of Health and Social Services for meals and accommodation.

(5) Local Transportation

- a) When local transportation is not provided by a designated Boarding Facility, taxi and bus fares are covered for Eligible Persons and their authorized Non-medical Escort for travel between:
 - (i) place of referral or residence and airport;
 - (ii) airport and place of treatment or accommodation;
 - (iii) place of treatment or accommodation and pharmacy.

(6) Medical Travel Originating Outside of the NWT

- a) Intercommunity travel benefits for Eligible Persons when travel originates outside of the NWT, if:
 - (i) the Eligible Person has an existing, long-standing Valid Medical Referral and the travel is related to continuity of care/treatment plan;
 - (ii) the Eligible Person has a current NWT Health Care Plan Temporary Absence Form on file with Health Services Administration; and
 - (iii) prior approval is received.
- b) The medical travel benefit is covered up to the cost of travel had the travel originated in the home community.
- c) A Non-medical Escort will not be authorized.

7. Reimbursement

If the Medical Travel Office is not directly invoiced when a benefit is provided and an Eligible Person or escort incurs an expense, they may request reimbursement by submitting a list of eligible expenses and original receipts.

8. Persons Not Eligible for Medical Travel Benefits

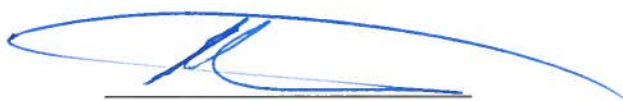
Any person who requires medical travel but who is not eligible under this Policy will be invoiced for the full cost of the transportation provided.

9. Financial Resources

Financial resources required under this Policy are conditional on approval of funds in the Main Estimates by the Legislative Assembly and there being a sufficient unencumbered balance in the appropriate activity for the fiscal year for which the funds would be required.

10. Right to Appeal

Clients have the right to appeal medical travel decisions.



Glen Abernethy

Minister



Date