



MINISTERIAL POLICY Department of Health and Social Services Medical Travel – Escort Criteria

1. Statement of Policy

The Department of Health and Social Services will provide benefits for individuals who are authorized as a non-medical escort in accordance with this Ministerial Policy (Policy).

2. Principles

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

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

3. Scope

The criteria outlined in this Policy are to be used to determine whether or not an escort will be authorized for an Eligible Person as referenced in the Government of the Northwest Territories' *Medical Travel Policy*.

4. Definitions

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

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

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

Guardian - A person who is lawfully entitled to make decisions on behalf of another.

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

Infant – is a child up to 12 months of age.

Non-medical escort – a person authorized to accompany an Eligible Person, who is capable and willing to provide assistance to the Eligible Person for the duration of the medical travel period.

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;
and

(iv) will evaluate the Policy periodically and make recommendations to the Minister for revisions to the Policy as necessary.

6. Provisions

(1) Requirement for Non-medical Escorts

- a) The referring Health Care Provider recommends the need for a Non-medical Escort.
- b) Authorized Non-medical Escorts:
 - (i) must accompany the Eligible Person to all appointments, when applicable;
 - (ii) must stay at the same facility for accommodation, when applicable;
 - (iii) may be required to assist the Eligible Person with his or her needs, such as physical mobility assistance and/or personal care at all times, unless otherwise advised by a Health Care Provider in writing;
 - (iv) may be required to translate/interpret between the Eligible Person's language and that of treatment and care providers.
- c) Should a Non-medical Escort only be authorized to travel with the Eligible Person to the Nearest Centre and not for the entire stay, they are expected to return home on the first available flight.

(2) Criteria for Non-medical Escorts

A Non-medical Escort will be authorized when:

- a) the Eligible Person is under the age of 19 and requires an escort; or
- b) the Eligible Person is breastfeeding an Infant and requires an escort; or
- c) the Eligible Person is pregnant and must travel outside of their home community to deliver their baby and requests an escort; or
- d) the Eligible Person has a mental or physical disability of a nature that he or she is not able to travel unassisted; or
- e) the referring Health Care Provider indicates the Eligible Person, travelling for an initial diagnosis or an initial appointment for a life-threatening illness requires a non-medical escort to assist with understanding plan of care and/or treatment options; or

- f) the Eligible Person requires an escort for interpretation during the travel; or
- g) the attending physician at the treatment facility provides a written request for a Non-medical Escort to participate in a treatment program in order to learn how to care for the patient following discharge. Such requests require prior approval.

Notes:

- Additional Non-medical Escorts are only provided in rare situations when prior approval has been obtained.
- An Eligible Person may not bring a breastfeeding Infant on medical travel if:
 - the Eligible Person will be an inpatient in the treatment facility; or,
 - the medical treatment would pose a health risk to the Infant.

7. 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.

8. Right to Appeal

Clients have the right to appeal medical travel decisions.



Glen Abernethy
Minister



Date