



Northwest
Territories

Policy

49.06
Medical Travel

1. Statement of Policy

The Government of the Northwest Territories will provide medical travel benefits to eligible persons in the Northwest Territories who must travel in order to access necessary and appropriate insured health services.

2. Principles

The Government of the Northwest Territories will adhere to the following principles when implementing this Policy:

- (1) The Canadian health care system is based on universal access to insured health services.
- (2) The cost of medical travel should not be an economic barrier to insured health services.
- (3) The Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to reducing the economic barriers to insured health services.

3. Scope

This Policy applies to eligible persons in the Northwest Territories who require medical travel.

4. Definitions

The following terms apply to this Policy:

Co-payment - the portion of eligible medical travel expenses which must be paid by eligible patients as determined in accordance with this Policy.

Insured Health Services - services covered by the *Territorial Hospital Insurance Services Act* and the *Medical Care Act*.



Medical Travel:

- (1) travel originating within the Northwest Territories which is required to allow eligible persons to access necessary and appropriate insured health services; or
- (2) travel, originating within the Northwest Territories, of escorts authorized for travel with the patient or authorized to stay for part or all of the medical treatment.

Metis and Non-Natives - Northwest Territories residents who are not Registered Indians or Inuit.

Registered Indians and Inuit - Indians registered under the *Indian Act* or persons recognized as Canadian Inuit.

Senior Citizen - a Metis or Non-Native who is 60 years of age or over.

Valid Medical Referral - the referral of a patient by a physician or community health nurse to another centre for necessary and appropriate insured health services.

Verified Indigent - Metis and Non-Native persons in need of financial assistance as determined by the Social Assistance Regulations of the Northwest Territories.

5. Authority and Accountability

(1) General

This Policy is issued under the authority of the Executive Council. The authority to make exceptions and approve revisions to this Policy rests with the Executive Council. Authority and accountability is further defined as follows:



(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 to the Minister and responsible to the Minister for the administration of this Policy.

(2) Specific

(a) Minister

The Minister may:

- (i) approve program provisions; and
- (ii) determine the amount of a co-payment.

(b) Deputy Minister (or designate)

The Deputy Minister (or designate) may:

- (i) accept applications for medical travel assistance in accordance with this Policy;
- (ii) approve treatment and care facilities for the purposes of this Policy;
- (iii) determine the nearest centre for necessary and appropriate insured health services;
- (iv) designate boarding facilities and approve private medical boarding homes for the purposes of this Policy;
- (v) approve a physician's request for a non-medical escort to participate in a treatment program in order to learn how to care for the patient following discharge;



- (vi) approve a second non-medical escort; and
- (vii) establish a rate of subsidization for meals and commercial accommodations in accordance with this Policy.

6. Provisions

(1) Exclusions

Medical travel benefits will not be authorized for medical travel originating outside the Northwest Territories.

(2) Metis and Non-Natives

(a) Eligibility

Eligibility is restricted to Metis and Non-Native residents who require medical travel to the nearest centre for necessary and appropriate insured health services and who meet the following criteria:

- (i) The patient must hold an effective registration with the Northwest Territories Health Care Plan.
- (ii) The reason for travel is a valid medical referral and there are clinical reasons why the travel cannot be deferred until the patient is travelling for other reasons.
- (iii) The patient who is employed, or the dependent of an employee, and has medical travel benefits through the employer, directly or through an insurance plan, must use the employer or insurance plan first.

This requirement applies whether or not the employer or insurance plan contains a provision excluding coverage for benefits that may be available under government plans or programs.

- (iv) The patient, parent or guardian must obtain prior approval for the applicable medical travel benefits.



(b) Terms and Conditions

Eligible Metis and Non-Natives may receive:

- (i) Intercommunity transportation benefits as defined in Schedule 1 of this Policy for travel to insured health services.
- (ii) Escort benefits as defined in Schedule 2 of this Policy.
- (iii) Patient boarding benefits as defined in Schedule 3 of this Policy.

(3) Registered Indians and Inuit

(a) Eligibility

Eligibility is restricted to Registered Indians and Inuit who require medical travel to the nearest centre for necessary and appropriate insured health services or other federally approved benefits, and who meet the following criteria:

- (i) The patient must hold an effective registration with a provincial or territorial health care plan.
- (ii) The reason for travel is a valid medical referral and there are clinical reasons why the travel cannot be deferred until the patient is next travelling for other reasons.
- (iii) The patient who is an employee, or the dependent of an employee, and has medical travel benefits through the employer, directly or through an insurance plan, must use the employer or insurance plan first.

This requirement applies whether or not the employer or insurance plan contains a provision excluding coverage for benefits that may be available under government plans or programs.

- (iv) The patient, parent or guardian must obtain prior approval for the applicable medical travel benefits.



(b) Terms and Conditions

Eligible Registered Indians and Inuit may receive intercommunity transportation benefits as defined in Schedule 1 for air travel in order to obtain insured health services or other federally approved benefits.

Note: The Government of Canada provides Registered Indian and Inuit patients and authorized escorts with benefits for transportation co-payment, intercommunity ground travel, boarding and local transportation. These benefits are administered by the Government of the Northwest Territories on behalf of the federal government.

Note: The full cost of air travel for Registered Indians and Inuit who are not registered with the Northwest Territories Health Care Plan is billed to the Government of Canada.

(4) Verified Indigent

(a) Eligibility

Eligibility is restricted to Canadian residents, who are Metis or Non-Native, who are verified indigent in the Northwest Territories and who require medical travel to the nearest centre for necessary and appropriate insured health services and who meet the following criteria:

- (i) The patient must be a Canadian resident, registered with a provincial or territorial health care plan.
- (ii) The reason for travel is a valid medical referral and there are clinical reasons why the travel cannot be deferred until the patient is travelling for other reasons.
- (iii) The patient who is an employee, or the dependent of an employee, and has medical travel benefits through the employer, directly or through an insurance plan, must use the employer or insurance plan first.



This requirement applies whether or not the employer or insurance plan contains a provision excluding coverage for benefits that may be available under government plans or programs.

- (iv) The patient must be verified indigent at the time of medical travel by a community Income Support Worker and obtain prior approval for the applicable medical travel benefits from the Deputy Minister (or designate).

(b) Terms and Conditions

Eligible indigent persons may receive:

- (i) Intercommunity transportation benefits as defined in Schedule 1 of this Policy for travel to insured health services;
- (ii) Escort benefits as defined in Schedule 2 of this Policy;
- (iii) Patient boarding benefits as defined in Schedule 3 of this Policy; and
- (iv) Local transportation for indigent patients benefits as defined in Schedule 4 of this Policy.

(5) 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.



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. Prerogative of the Executive Council

Nothing in this Policy shall in any way be construed to limit the prerogative of the Executive Council to make decisions or take action respecting the provision of assistance to Northwest Territories residents for medical travel outside the provisions of this Policy.

Premier and Chairman of the
Executive Council



SCHEDULES

Intercommunity Transportation	Schedule 1
Escorts	Schedule 2
Patient Boarding	Schedule 3
Local Transportation for Indigent Patients	Schedule 4



SCHEDULE 1

INTERCOMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION

1. Benefits for Eligible Persons:

- (1) When the nearest centre for necessary and appropriate insured health services is in the Northwest Territories and the patient chooses to travel to another centre, no benefits are provided.
- (2) When the nearest centre for necessary and appropriate insured health services is outside the Northwest Territories and the patient chooses to travel to another centre, intercommunity travel benefits are provided only to the nearest centre.
- (3) Subject to the co-payment, if applicable, the benefits cover the following forms of transportation:
 - (a) Scheduled aircraft at economy airfare.
 - (b) Charter aircraft in emergency situations or when chartered aircraft is a reasonable and cost-effective alternative to scheduled aircraft.
 - (c) Bus or taxi fare when a reasonable and cost-effective alternative to air travel between communities.
 - (d) Ground ambulance when required to transfer an inpatient from one health facility to another.
 - (e) Private vehicle 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 return economy airfare, less co-payment, if applicable.



2. Co-payment

- (1) The amount of the co-payment shall be determined by the Minister.
- (2) No co-payment is assessed on the costs of ground ambulance for inter-facility transfers, or when the eligible patient is:
 - (i) verified indigent;
 - (ii) a Senior Citizen; or
 - (iii) an infant under two years of age who is travelling on a scheduled aircraft and who is not required to purchase a ticket.

Note: The co-payment for Registered Indians and Inuit registered with the Northwest Territories Health Care Plan will be invoiced to Government of Canada.

- (3) For regular medical travel on a scheduled aircraft, the patient must pay the co-payment when exchanging a Medical Travel Warrant for a ticket.

No co-payment is required when the eligible patient is in need of medical travel assistance but no community Income Support Worker is available at the time to certify indigency. In such cases, the Government of the Northwest Territories will invoice for the co-payment and other costs if it is determined that the patient did not qualify to be verified indigent.

- (4) For emergency medical travel and all travel on chartered carriers, the Government of the Northwest Territories will invoice the patient, parent or guardian for applicable co-payment when the warrant is processed.

3. Financial Conditions

Normally, Medical Travel Warrants will be used to authorize transportation with carriers.



SCHEDULE 2

ESCORTS

1. Requirement for Escorts

The referring health professional recommends the need for an escort. Escorts may be of two types:

- (1) medical escort - normally a doctor or a nurse required to provide professional care to the patient while travelling; or
- (2) non-medical escort - an adult authorized to accompany a patient who is unable to travel without some assistance or who is authorized to stay for part or all of the medical treatment.

2. Criteria for Non-Medical Escorts

A non-medical escort will be authorized when:

- (1) the patient is under the age of 19 and requires an escort; or
- (2) the patient is an infant who is being breast fed by the mother who is the non-medical escort; or
- (3) the patient has a mental or physical handicap of a nature that he or she is not able to travel unassisted; or
- (4) the patient requires an escort for interpretation during the travel; or
- (5) 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 the prior approval of the Deputy Minister (or designate).

A second non-medical escort is only provided in rare situations when prior approval has been obtained from the Deputy Minister (or designate).



3. Return of Escorts

- (1) All escorts are expected to return by the earliest reasonable available transportation, either scheduled or charter, unless authorized for an extended stay.
- (2) If an escort decides to stay longer at the destination, he or she is responsible for all additional costs.
- (3) Unless there is a medical reason to justify it, a non-medical escort will not receive medical travel benefits to return to the treatment facility to escort the patient home, unless no other suitable escort can be found.

4. Authorized Extended Stays of Non-Medical Escorts

Non-medical escorts will be authorized to stay for part or all of the patient's treatment when:

- (1) the patient is under the age of 19 and requires an escort; or
- (2) the patient is an infant who is being breast fed by the mother who is the non-medical escort; or
- (3) the patient has a mental or physical handicap of a nature that he or she requires assistance during the treatment stay; or
- (4) the escort is required to provide interpretation for the patient and the patient referral officer at the treatment destination verifies that appropriate local interpreters are not available; or
- (5) the escort is authorized to stay as part of a treatment program in order to learn how to care for the patient following discharge. Such cases require a written request from the attending physician at the treatment facility and the prior approval of the Deputy Minister (or designate).



5. Escort Expenses

Escort expenses are authorized as follows:

- (1) For Medical Escorts:
 - (a) transportation between communities, usually covered by Medical Travel Warrants;
 - (b) accommodation at approved commercial facilities and meals at Government of the Northwest Territories duty travel rates, when required; and
 - (c) local ground transportation as required between residence, health facilities, accommodation and airports.

- (2) For Non-Medical Escorts of Eligible Metis and Non-Native Patients:
 - (a) transportation between communities, usually covered by Medical Travel Warrants;
 - (b) private vehicle expenses as defined in Schedule 1, Section 1(3)(e), only if not claimed by the patient;
 - (c) prior to return on the earliest reasonable available transportation, accommodation at approved commercial facilities and meals at Government of the Northwest Territories duty travel rates;
 - (d) airport bus or taxi from airport to place of treatment or boarding facility and between the place of treatment or accommodation to airport;
 - (e) during authorized extended stays:
 - (i) accommodation and meals in a Government of the Northwest Territories-designated boarding facility;



- (ii) if no space is available in a Government of the Northwest Territories-designated boarding facility, accommodation and meals in an approved private medical boarding home;
 - (iii) if no space is available in Government of the Northwest Territories-designated or approved boarding facilities, a daily allowance at a rate established by the Department of Health and Social Services for commercial accommodation and meals;
 - (iv) if there is space in Government of the Northwest Territories-designated or approved boarding facilities and the escort elects to stay in a commercial facility, accommodation and meals are not covered; and
 - (v) if the escort chooses to stay with family or friends, the Government of the Northwest Territories private accommodation rate applies and no meal allowance is paid; and
 - (f) when a second non-medical escort has been approved, the cost of intercommunity travel is covered. Accommodation and meals are not covered.
- (3) For Non-Medical Escorts of Verified Indigent Patients:
- (a) transportation between communities is usually covered by Medical Travel Warrants;
 - (b) private vehicle expenses as defined in Schedule 1, Section 1(3)(e), only if not claimed by the patient;
 - (c) prior to return on the earliest reasonable available transportation, accommodation and meals at Government of the Northwest Territories duty travel rates;
 - (d) during authorized extended stays:
 - (i) accommodation and meals in a Government of the Northwest Territories-designated boarding facility;



- (ii) if no space is available in a Government of the Northwest Territories-designated boarding facility, accommodation and meals in an approved private medical boarding home;
 - (iii) if no space is available in Government of the Northwest Territories-designated or approved boarding facilities, accommodation and meals at Government of the Northwest Territories duty travel rates at approved commercial facilities;
 - (iv) if there is space in Government of the Northwest Territories-designated or approved boarding facilities and the escort elects to stay in a commercial facility, the escort is not entitled to claim for accommodation and meals; and
 - (v) if the escort chooses to stay with family or friends, the Government of the Northwest Territories private accommodation rate applies and no meal allowance is paid; and
- (e) when a second non-medical escort has been approved, the cost of intercommunity travel is covered. Accommodation and meals are not covered; and
 - (f) local ground transportation by bus or taxi when required as part of the escort duties.

6. Reimbursement

When escorts incur expenses, they may request reimbursement by submitting a list of eligible expenses and original receipts.



- (2) If no space is available in a Government of the Northwest Territories-designated boarding facility, accommodation and meals in an approved private medical boarding home.
- (3) If no space is available in Government of the Northwest Territories-designated or approved boarding facilities, accommodation and meals at Government of the Northwest Territories duty travel rates at approved commercial facilities.
- (4) If the patient chooses to stay with family or friends, the Government of the Northwest Territories private accommodation rate applies. No meal allowance is paid.



SCHEDULE 4

LOCAL TRANSPORTATION FOR INDIGENT PATIENTS

1. Benefits for Verified Indigent Patients

When local transportation is not provided by a designated boarding facility or patient referral service, taxi and bus fares are covered:

- (1) from place of referral or residence to airport;
- (2) from airport to place of treatment or accommodation;
- (3) from the place of treatment or accommodation to airport; and
- (4) from airport to place of residence in community of origin.

2. Reimbursement

If the provision of local ground transportation is not invoiced directly to the Department of Health and Social Services, the patient may claim by submitting a list of eligible expenses and original receipts.

Stanton Territorial Health Authority Out of Territories Medical Travel Specialist Authorization Process SCHEDULED TRAVEL



