



MEETING SD 20-20-24

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 3, 2024
DET'ANCHOGH KÚÉ - EAGLE ROOM / ZOOM
1:00 PM**

AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Prayer
3. Review and Adoption of Agenda
4. Declarations of Conflict of Interest
5. Public Matters: Briefing with Minister of Health and Social Services on Medical Travel
6. In Camera Matters:
 - a. Debrief
 - b. Briefing Request
 - c. Healthcare Sustainability and Accountability Project Draft Terms of Reference
 - d. Internal Briefing on Correspondence 2024-06-11 Hon. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment
 - e. Work Plan
7. New Business
 - a.
8. Date and Time of Next Meeting: At the Call of the Chair
9. Adjournment



Standing Committee on Social Development Medical Travel Benefits in the NWT

July 2024

Briefing Agenda

Agenda:

- Medical Travel Benefits - Background
- Eligibilities
- NIHB Agreement Update





BACKGROUND

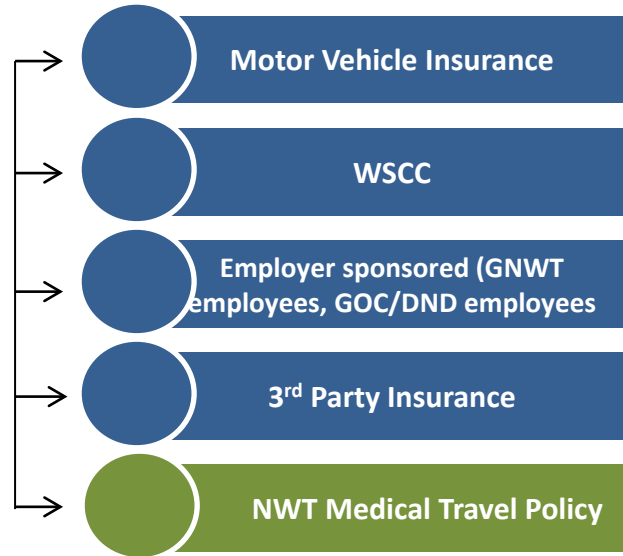
Context

Medical travel is a benefit that is covered by the insurance provider.

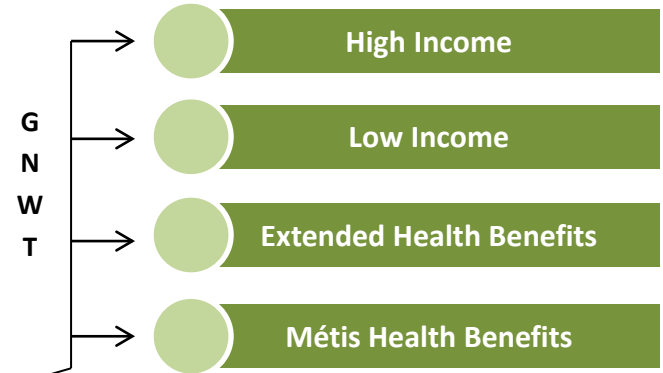
The GNWT sponsors only the NWT Medical Travel Policy, one of the many medical travel benefit insurance accessed by NT residents.

MT Office administers the NIHB Medical Travel Benefits on behalf of the federal government in accordance with the NIHB Medical Transportation Policy.

Benefit Provider (payer)



NWT MT Beneficiary



Overview of NWT Medical Travel Policy Framework

Medical Travel Policy

*Executive Council's
Medical Travel
Policy (49.06)*



Ministerial Medical Travel Policies

The Ministerial Policies establish parameters related to eligibility, benefits, escorts, exceptions and appeals.

ELIGIBILITY

BENEFITS

ESCORT CRITERIA

EXCEPTIONS

APPEALS



Current Principles (Medical Travel Program)

- Access to insured health services should be provided to maintain and improve the health and well-being of residents of the Northwest Territories
- The cost of medical travel should not be an economic barrier to insured health services.
- Medical Travel program should be transparent and accountable.



Changes/Updates *(NWT Medical Travel Policy Framework)*

Updates (FEB 2024)

- Ministerial Directive to formalize the delegation of the implementation and administration of the NWT Medical Travel program to the NTHSSA on behalf DHSS.
- DHSS no longer delegates the implementation and administration of the Exceptions Policy to the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority

Most Recent Policy Changes (JUNE 2019)

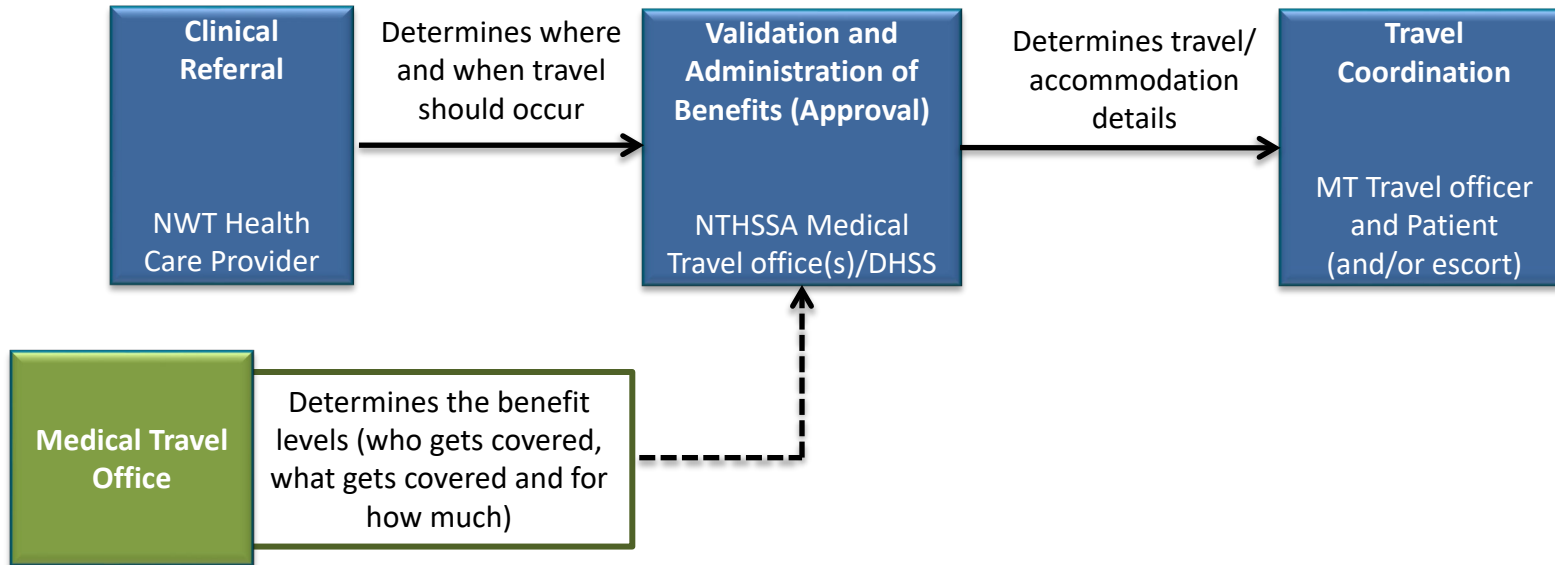
- The Medical Travel Co-payment fee increased as of June 1, 2019 from \$125 to \$200 (total \$400 for round trip)
- Changes to the Low Income definition to recognize family composition / size; and
- Introduction of a new Exceptions Policy to allow for consideration of exceptional circumstances
- A number of other changes to the four existing Ministerial Policies (Appeals Process, Benefits, Eligibility Criteria and Escort Criteria) were made at this time, and were primarily administrative in nature.

Executive Council	Requirements Of Cabinet Policy	Ministerial Policy
Medical Travel Policy	Designated Boarding Facilities	<u>Guidelines are in Place</u>
	Approved Treatment and Care Facilities	Proposed for Future Policy:
	Nearest Centre for insured health services	Nearest Centre and Approved Facility Policy ⁷



MEDICAL TRAVEL ELIGIBILITY

NWT Medical Travel Flow



Eligibility

Federal NIHB Medical Transportation Policy

Airfare or scheduled bus/taxi (less \$400 round trip co-pay)

Co-Pay (\$400 billed to supplementary benefits program)

Boarding Home (accommodations, meals, ground transportation)

Ground transportation between home, airport, hospital, pharmacy



Eligibility

GNWT Sponsored MT Benefits (EHB, MHB)

Airfare or scheduled bus/taxi (less \$400 round trip co-pay)

Co-Pay (\$400 billed to supplementary benefits program)

Boarding Home (accommodations, meals, ground transportation)

Ground transportation between home, airport, hospital, pharmacy



NT Medical Travel Policy Eligibility - Low Income

Airfare or scheduled ground bus/taxi (full)

Boarding Home (provides accommodations, meals, ground transportation)

Accommodation allowance of \$50/night and meal allowance of \$18/day if they opt out of the boarding home

Ground transportation between home, airport, hospital, pharmacy



NT Medical Travel Policy Eligibility - High Income

Airfare or scheduled bus/taxi (less \$400 round trip co-pay billed to patient)

Accommodations (\$50/night for each patient and escort)

Meals (\$18/day for each patient and escort)

Ground transportation between home, airport, hospital, pharmacy

Private vehicle (flat rate of \$0.33/km up to cost of airfare less co-pay)



Eligibility Criteria for Non-Medical Escorts

- Eligible Person is **under the age of 19** and requires an escort;
- Eligible Person is **breastfeeding an infant** and requires an escort;
- Eligible Person is pregnant and must travel outside of their home community **to deliver their baby** and requires an escort;
- Eligible Person has a **mental or physical disability** of a nature that he or she is not able to travel unassisted;
- 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
- Eligible Person requires an escort for **interpretation** during travel;
- Attending physician at 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.

NTHSSA Medical Travel Operations

NWT Medical Travel Offices

NTHSSA Medical Travel Office (Yellowknife):

- Provides approval for all out of territory medical travel. Administers medical travel benefits for clients from the Sahtu and Yellowknife regions. Provides urgent after-hours support for all regions within the NT.

NTHSSA Regional Medical Travel Offices (Inuvik, Fort Simpson, Behchoko, Hay River, Fort Smith)

- Administers medical travel benefits in accordance with applicable policies for all travel within their respective region.

NWT Medical Travel Process

Patient is referred from an NWT health care provider

NWT Health Care Provider submits travel request form to Medical Travel office for processing

Medical Travel office reviews and identifies benefits to administer

Medical Travel office books travel and accommodation

Share travel information with Patient



NWT Medical Travel Common Issues:

Eligible NWT residents with a valid health care card, who have a **valid medical referral** with **prior approval** to access necessary and **appropriate insured health service**.

Common Issues:

- Escort decisions
- Valid medical referrals
- Prior approvals
- Nearest Centre
- Flying out early
- Preferred airline/accommodations



Medical Travel – Next Steps

- Gap Analysis on the current state of Medical Travel Policies
GNWT/NIHB:
 - Medical Travel Escort Criteria
 - A review of per diem rates
 - Examine long-term medical travel policy options
- Develop Policy Options to be used as a part of engagement with Indigenous Governments, Standing Committee and other Interested Parties.





NIHB NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE

NIHB Negotiations Update

- Department of Health and Social Services entered into a new agreement with Indigenous Services Canada on March 28, 2024.
- The two-year agreement provides annual funding of \$47.1 million for 2023-24 and 2024-25.
- Of this amount, \$22.9 million is allocated for NIHB program delivery, while \$24.2 million is earmarked for what ISC is calling the “Special Purpose Allotment Fund,” and is intended to offset additional medical travel costs for eligible First Nations and Inuit residents in the NWT.



NIHB Next Steps

- Advocating for ISC to accept its responsibility for the full costs of the NIHB program.
- With full cost recovery comes multiple opportunities for Indigenous Governments to participate directly in the delivery of the NIHB program.
- Targeting an agreement in principle in Fall 2024.
- Next agreement to address broad range of policy issues and will be an iterative work in progress.





Questions?