



November 18, 2024

SHERYL YAKELEYA
MLA, DEHCHO**Oral Question 382-20(1): Approval of Non-Medical Escorts**

This letter is in follow-up to the Oral Question you raised on October 29, 2024, regarding the approval of Non-medical Escorts.

It is important to understand that the Department of Health and Social Services (Department) through the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services' (NTHSSA) Medical Travel Office, only administers medical travel benefits for residents eligible under the NWT Medical Travel Policy, the GNWT Métis Health Benefits Policy and, by contract for the federal government's Non-Insured Health Benefits Medical Transportation Policy Framework. The NTHSSA Medical Travel Office does not administer medical travel benefits for GNWT Employee Benefits, teachers, private businesses, etc. Each of these benefit plans may have criteria for approval of non-medical escorts however these criteria are not within our authority.

When the referral and recommendation for a non-medical escort is being processed by the Medical Travel Office, the recommendation for a non-medical escort is measured against the policy criteria under the benefit plan for which the resident is eligible. If the eligible resident meets the criteria for a non-medical escort, the escort is approved.

For residents eligible for the **NWT Medical Travel Policy**, a non-medical escort will be authorized when:

- The eligible resident is under the age of 19 and requires an escort; or
- The eligible resident is breastfeeding an Infant and requires an escort; or
- The eligible resident is pregnant and must travel outside of their home community to deliver their baby and requests an escort; or
- The eligible resident has a mental or physical disability of a nature that he or she is not able to travel unassisted; or
- The referring Health Care Provider indicates the eligible resident, 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
- The eligible resident requires an escort for interpretation during the travel; or

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- 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.

For residents eligible for **Non-Insured Health Benefits Medical Transportation Policy Framework**, a non-medical escort will be approved when the NIHB client:

- Is a minor.
- Requires alternative legal consent or decision making.
- Requires assistance with activities of daily living, such as dressing, eating and bathing.
- Faces a language barrier.
- Is to receive instructions on specific and essential home medical or nursing procedures that cannot be given to the client only.
- Is undergoing a medical procedure (such as outpatient general anesthetic) or has a medical condition that will result in the client requiring assistance during the trip.
- Is a pregnant woman whose trip is for the purpose of childbirth.

The GNWT **Métis Health Benefits Policy** provides the same benefits to eligible NWT Métis as are available to NIHB clients.

While patients can benefit from having the support of family or friends while they are dealing with a medical issue, the medical travel policies are not intended to pay for compassionate supports, but rather to provide specific and defined supports to assist patients travelling to access services.

The Department does not track information related to non-medical escort requests versus denials with the various medical travel benefit plans it administers. As noted earlier, all recommended non-medical escort requests are approved if the request meets the policy's criteria.

Thank you.



Les Semmler
Minister, Health and Social Services

- c. Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Director, Legislative Affairs and House Planning