



Policy: 2101 Ground Ambulance Service Fee Appeals

Originating Branch:

Original Approval Date:

Approved By:

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Dr. Peter Vaughan, Deputy Minister Health and Wellness

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1. The purpose of this policy is to identify the criteria and process for appealing a Ground Ambulance Service Fee.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. Applicant: the individual appealing a service fee invoice, or their authorized representative.
- 2.2. Authorized representative: is defined to mean: any person acting on the applicant's behalf where the applicant has given written permission; or a person with enduring power of attorney or power of attorney for the applicant or the individual legal guardian appointed pursuant to the Incompetent Person' Act and shall not be an employee of the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness unless that employee is acting on behalf of a member of their family.
- 2.3. Ground Ambulance Service Fee Appeals Committee: the Ground Ambulance Service Fee Appeals Committee has been established to review invoices/charges associated with the use of the ground ambulance service to ensure invoices are in compliance with the Ambulance Fee Regulations.
- 2.4. Dependent: A child of the applicant or the applicant's spouse, who is:
 - 2.4.1. Financially dependent, and is under 19, or
 - 2.4.2. under 25 and enrolled full-time in an education institution, or
 - 2.4.3. over 18, disabled and listed at a dependent.
- 2.5. EHS: A branch of the Government of Nova Scotia, within the Department of Health and Wellness (DHW), charged with the administration of the Emergency Health Services Act.
- 2.6. EHS Operations Management (EHSOM): Refers to the current provider of Ground Ambulance services and EHS LifeFlight Management services.

- 2.7. EHS System: Any component of the Ground Ambulance and Air Medical systems where direct or indirect patient care is provided, including all facilities, vehicles, personnel, etc.
- 2.8. Family Unit: Applicant, applicant and spouse, or applicant, spouse and any dependents, excluding household members deceased within the tax year.
- 2.9. Financial Hardship: having the intention but not the financial capacity to make the required payments within the timeframe set out in the payment terms.
- 2.10. Assessed Income: Income from all sources (taxable and non-taxable) after all statutory and other employer deductions (CPP, EI, Income Tax, etc.) and health insurance premiums have been deducted of your family unit. Notice of Assessment line 236 less line 435.
- 2.11. Service Fee: for the purpose of this policy, is the fee levied for ground ambulance transport(s).
- 2.12. Spouse/Partner: A person who is married to the individual, or who is not married to the individual but living in a conjugal relationship for at least one year.

3. POLICY OBJECTIVES

- 3.1. To ensure a clear appeals process for Ground Ambulance Service Fees.

4. APPLICATION

- 4.1. This policy applies to all ground ambulance service fees issued under the *Health Services and Insurance Act* (HSIA) and the regulations respecting Ambulance Service Fees, known as *Ambulance Fee Regulations* on behalf of EHS by EHSOM.
- 4.2. This policy does not apply to air medical services fees issued on behalf of EHS by EHSOM.

5. POLICY DIRECTIVES

- 5.1. Following the *Ambulance Fee Regulations* and this policy, EHSOM on behalf of EHS, invoices individuals for ground ambulance transports.
- 5.2. Ground Ambulance Service Fee Appeals may be made to EHSOM if the applicant believes that the service fee charged was not in compliance with the *Ambulance Fee Regulation* or on the basis of financial hardship.
- 5.3. If, after appealing to EHSOM, there is no resolution of the amount of fees billed, an applicant may appeal, in writing, to the Ground Ambulance Service Fee Appeals Committee.
- 5.4. EHS will establish a Ground Ambulance Service Fee Appeals Committee to review invoices associated with the use of the ground ambulance service which have been appealed within 30 days of invoice, the Appeals Committee will use the *Ambulance*

Fee Regulations to determine whether a specific invoice has been issued in compliance with the regulations.

- 5.4.1. Ground Ambulance Service Fee Appeals Committee will be comprised of representatives from EHS, EHSOM, and the public.
- 5.4.2. The Appeals Committee will make recommendations to the Deputy Minister and/or Minister in accordance with the *Ambulance Fee Regulations*; the decisions of the Minister are final.
- 5.5. If an applicant indicates that payment of the total amount of the invoice will create a financial hardship EHSOM will offer an interest free repayment schedule.
- 5.6. If the applicant indicates an inability to pay based on income levels they may apply for to have the invoice waived or reduced under the Ambulance Fee Assistance Program (AFAP). To do so they must submit an AFAP Application Form (Appendix C), within 90 days of the day the bill was issued.
 - 5.6.1. On receipt of an AFAP appeal, EHSOM may waive or reduce the invoiced fee in accordance with this policy.
 - 5.6.2. If, after appealing through the AFAP to EHSOM, there is no resolution of the amount of the invoice, an applicant may appeal, in writing, to the Ground Ambulance Service Fee Appeals Committee by submitting a Service Fee Appeals Form (Appendix B), detailing their case.
 - 5.6.3. AFAP does not apply to service fees associated with Motor Vehicle Accident transports, Private Call transports and transports between Long Term Care facilities.

6. POLICY GUIDELINES

- 6.1. Every effort should be made by EHSOM and applicants to resolve complaints or issues related to service fees prior to submitting the case to the Ground Ambulance Service Fee Appeals Committee. In instances where an applicant has an issue with a specific invoice for ground ambulance services, they must first contact the EHSOM Billing Office, at the telephone number or address found on the invoice.
- 6.2. In circumstances where an applicant has a specific issue related to an invoice for a service fee, and that issue cannot be resolved by EHSOM and the applicant, the issue will be forwarded to the Ground Ambulance Service Fee Appeals Committee by way of the Service Fee Appeals Form (Appendix B) for review in order to ensure a fair and uniform process is adhered to for resolving the matter.
- 6.3. Ambulance Fee Assistance Program (AFAP)
 - 6.3.1. Applicant must meet the following eligibility requirements in order to be eligible for AFAP:

- 6.3.1.1. The applicant must be a resident of Canada.
- 6.3.1.2. The application must not be on behalf of an estate, or a patient who is deceased.
- 6.3.1.3. The applicant must not be a recipient of Employment Support & Income Assistance through the Nova Scotia Department of Community Service.
- 6.3.1.4. The applicant must not be eligible for other Federal/Provincial government programs that cover the cost of ground ambulance transportation.
- 6.3.1.5. The applicant must not have been required to have for third party insurance.
- 6.3.1.6. The applicant must have filed taxes within the previous two tax years.
- 6.3.2. The applicant or authorized representative must accurately complete and submit the Ambulance Fee Assistance Program form (Appendix C).
- 6.3.3. Invoices for applicants under the age of 19 who resided with their parent(s)/guardian(s) at the time of the invoice must be appealed by the parent(s)/guardian(s).
- 6.3.4. The applicant or authorized representative must submit their "Notice of Assessments" for the family unit from the Canadian Revenue Agency for the most recent tax year. If the "Notice of Assessments" is not available, the applicant or authorized representative may complete and sign the "Consent to Release Taxpayer Information" form.
- 6.3.5. The applicant's family unit's net income, less any paid or unpaid ambulance invoices within that tax year, and family unit size will be examined by EHSOM. This information will be applied to a statistical measure of low income produced by Statistics Canada in order to determine eligibility for the financial hardship category.
- 6.3.6. Only eligible and medically necessary ground ambulance services fee invoices will be reviewed, backdated to the most recent September 1st, and waived going forward to the next tax filing deadline (April 30th). An applicant must reapply to AFAP for any service fees incurred in future tax years.

7. ACCOUNTABILITY

- 7.1. The Deputy Minister has accountability for the administration of this policy.
- 7.2. The Executive Director of EHS has responsibility for on-going monitoring and enforcement of this policy.

8. MONITORING / OUTCOME MEASUREMENT

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- 8.1. The Executive Director of EHS will monitor the implementation, performance and effectiveness of this policy.
- 8.2. The Executive Director of EHS is responsible for ensuring that the Ground Ambulance Service Fee Appeals policy and processes are adhered to.

9. REPORTS

- 9.1. Monthly Service Fee Reconciliation

10. REFERENCES

- 10.1. *Health Services and Insurance Act*
- 10.2. *Emergency Health Services Act*
- 10.3. 2100 Ground Ambulance Service Fees
- 10.4. *Regulations Respecting Ambulance User Fees*

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1. Appendix A: *Ambulance Fee Regulations*
- 11.2. Appendix B: Service Fee Appeals Application Form
- 11.3. Appendix C: Ambulance Fee Assistance Fund Applications Form
- 11.4. Appendix D: Canada Revenue Agency - Consent to Release Taxpayer Information
- 11.5. Appendix E: Statistics Canada After-tax Low Income Measure (LIM)

12. INQUIRIES

- 12.1. EHS Service Fees
Emergency Health Services
Nova Scotia Department of Health & Wellness
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