



Policy: Out of Province Travel and Accommodation Cost Assistance

Originating Branch: Benefit Eligibility Division, Program Benefits and Eligibility

Original Approval Date: February 2010 **Effective Date:** April 1, 2025

Approved By:

Deputy Minister Health and Wellness

Version: April 1, 2025, replaces all previous policy directives for Out of Province Travel and Accommodation cost assistance.

1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1. The Nova Scotia (NS) Health Insurance Program (Program) provides coverage of insured health services to Residents approved for referral to receive medically necessary services outside NS.
- 1.2. The NS Department of Health and Wellness (Department) may provide cost assistance for travel and accommodation costs to Residents who must travel or temporarily relocate outside NS to receive medically necessary insured health services that are pre-approved by the Medical Consultant of the Program. Cost assistance that is provided, shall be provided in a manner consistent with this policy.
- 1.3. This policy is developed and maintained by the Department in accordance with the duties and powers of the Minister to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate standards and services, as legislated under the authority of, but not limited to, the *Health Services and Insurance Act* (HSIA), *Hospital Insurance Regulations*, *Medical Services Insurance (MSI) Regulations*, *Health Services for Foreign Workers, International Students and Armed Forces Families Regulations*, *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIPOP), *Personal Health Information Act* (PHIA), *Personal Information International Disclosure Protection Act* (PIIDPA), and the *Quality-improvement Information Protection Act* (QIIPA).

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. **Administrator:** the third-party vendor contracted by the Department for administration of the Program.
- 2.2. **CAD:** currency in Canadian dollars (\$).
- 2.3. **Civic address:** place of residence in NS.
- 2.4. **Department:** Benefit Eligibility, Department of Health and Wellness.
- 2.5. **Escort:** a person who is 16 years of age or older and pre-approved by the Medical Consultant to accompany a Resident outside NS for the purpose of providing medically

necessary support to the Resident. Residents less than 19 years of age are approved for one Escort.

- 2.6. **FOIPOP:** *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.*
- 2.7. **HSIA:** *Health Services and Insurance Act.*
- 2.8. **Kilometrage rate:** the NS government kilometrage reimbursement regular rates approved for employees of government and public sector bodies and others travelling on government business in their own vehicle.
- 2.9. **Medical Consultant:** the physician employed by the Program Administrator for the Program.
- 2.10. **MSI:** Medical Services Insurance.
- 2.11. **OPTA CA:** out of province travel and accommodation cost assistance.
- 2.12. **PIIDPA:** *Personal Information International Disclosure Protection Act.*
- 2.13. **Pre-approval of referral:** the written approval of the Medical Consultant, for medically necessary inpatient, outpatient, or professional services. The pre-approval must be provided before the Resident departs NS, and before the Resident receives, or arranges to receive services outside NS. The request for pre-approval of the Medical Consultant must be made by an appropriate health care provider on behalf of the Resident.
- 2.14. **Program:** the NS Health Insurance Program.
- 2.15. **QulIPA:** *Quality-improvement Information Protection Act.*
- 2.16. **Resident:** means a resident as defined in the *Health Services and Insurance Act*, who holds a valid NS health card.
- 2.17. **Urgent services:** insured medical services required unexpectedly and/or on an emergency basis, as a result of an accident or sudden illness.

3. POLICY OBJECTIVES

- 3.1. This policy will accomplish the following objectives:
 - 3.1.1. describe the eligibility criteria for cost assistance,
 - 3.1.2. identify the criteria for benefits and eligible costs that may be claimed for reimbursement by Residents,
 - 3.1.3. describe the role of the Medical Consultant to provide notice of pre-approval or denial of approval for referral and coverage of medically necessary insured services outside NS,
 - 3.1.4. describe the role of the Department to administer claims for cost assistance.

4. APPLICATION

- 4.1. This policy applies to the:
 - 4.1.1. Administrator and Medical Consultant,
 - 4.1.2. Residents, pre-approved Escorts, and
 - 4.1.3. the Department.
- 4.2. This policy does not apply to:
 - 4.2.1. persons who are not Residents,
 - 4.2.2. Residents who are not approved for referral outside of NS by the Medical Consultant,
 - 4.2.3. travel to facilities located within NS, and travel distance of less than 500 kilometres one-way outside NS from Civic address to the approved facility,
 - 4.2.4. non-registered accommodations or registered accommodations within NS,
 - 4.2.5. Residents and Escorts eligible for cost assistance from another provincial or federal publicly funded program that meets or exceeds the benefits of this policy. Examples include, but are not limited to, Nova Scotia Health Living

Organ Donor Expense Reimbursement, or the NS Department of Opportunities and Social Development Employment Support and Income Assistance program.

- 4.2.6. Residents and Escorts with private insurance benefits that meet or exceed the maximum allowable cost assistance for travel and accommodations provided by this policy.

5. POLICY DIRECTIVES

5.1. Eligibility

- 5.1.1. To be eligible for cost assistance an individual must:
 - 5.1.1.1. be a Resident of NS,
 - 5.1.1.2. have written pre-approval of the Medical Consultant prior to departure or making medical or financial arrangements to receive the services outside NS,
 - 5.1.1.3. have written approval of the Medical Consultant for an Escort, and/or temporary relocation outside NS if required,
 - 5.1.1.4. be required to travel more than 500 kilometres one-way outside NS to the pre-approved medical facility.
- 5.1.2. The Medical Consultant shall provide written notice of approval or denial of referral, time period of approval, and assessment of medical eligibility for OPTA CA to the appropriate health care provider, the Resident, and the Department.
- 5.1.3. The Department shall review pre-approvals and Civic address provided by the Medical Consultant and provide written confirmation of eligibility for cost assistance to Residents who meet the requirements of this policy.
- 5.1.4. Residents who make appointments or financial arrangements to receive treatment before receiving confirmation of pre-approval are not eligible for OPTA CA.

5.2. Cost Assistance

- 5.2.1. Travel fare
 - 5.2.1.1. The actual cost of travel using public transportation by plane, train, or bus, up to the maximum amount provided in Appendix 1.
- 5.2.2. Kilometrage
 - 5.2.2.1. Transportation using a personal vehicle at the Kilometrage rate in effect on the date of departure from NS for the total distance between the Resident's Civic address and the approved medical facility, using the most direct route by map. See Appendix 1.
- 5.2.3. Accommodation
 - 5.2.3.1. The actual cost of accommodation up to the maximum rate per night, and up to the maximum total amount per round trip (see Appendix 1), or
 - 5.2.3.2. the actual cost of accommodation up to the maximum amount per month during the time pre-approved for temporary relocation outside NS. See Appendix 1.

5.3. Resident Cost Sharing

- 5.3.1. The Department shall be payor of last resort. Residents must declare to the Department if they, or their Escort, are eligible to receive cost assistance from another provincial or federal program, or private insurance.
- 5.3.2. Residents are responsible to manage the coordination of benefits with their insurance providers.

5.3.3. Residents entitled to payment or reimbursement up to or exceeding the amounts allowed under this policy, by any other contract of insurance or benefit plan, are not eligible for OPTA CA.

5.3.4. Residents may request the Department review and approve the balance of unpaid eligible claims up to the maximum amounts in Appendix 1.

5.4. Claims Submission

5.4.1. Claims must be submitted directly to the Department. See Appendix 2.

5.4.2. Residents may request payment by direct deposit when they are approved for temporary relocation outside NS.

5.5. Claims Processing

5.5.1. The Department is responsible for:

5.5.1.1. verification of pre-approval for each Resident and Escort,

5.5.1.2. maintaining procedures for communications, claims, payments, audits, and

5.5.1.3. responding to inquiries about this policy.

5.6. Privacy and Confidentiality

5.6.1. The Department and Administrator shall use and disclose the personal health information and financial information collected for the administration of the Health Insurance Program according to *Personal Health Information Act*, *Quality-improvement Information Protection Act*, *Fair Drug Pricing Act*, and all relevant federal and provincial legislation related to privacy and confidentiality.

5.6.2. Government of NS Privacy and Information Security policies and Department's Privacy Policy applies to the personal information, and personal health information, collected by the Department and the Administrator.

5.6.3. The Department and Administrator shall immediately report an actual or suspected breach to the Department as per established procedures and processes.

5.6.4. Residents may request their personal information, and personal health information, by making a Request for Release of Information Authorization request to the Program, or a Personal Health Information request to the Department.

6. URGENT SERVICES

6.1. The cost of Urgent services for health care received outside Canada is not fully covered by the Program. Purchase of private health and travel insurance that includes coverage for cancellation and travel interruptions is strongly recommended when travelling outside NS and Canada.

7. ACCOUNTABILITY

7.1. For the purpose of the administration of this policy, accountability is delegated to the Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness.

7.2. The Director of Benefit Eligibility has responsibility for on-going monitoring and enforcement of this policy.

8. MONITORING / OUTCOME MEASUREMENT

8.1. The Director of Benefit Eligibility will monitor the implementation, performance and effectiveness of this policy.

9. REPORTS

9.1. Benefit Eligibility maintains a record of Residents pre-approved for referral outside NS by the Administrator, claims and reimbursements.

- 9.2. Monthly, annual, and ad hoc reporting on referrals outside NS will be provided by the Administrator, or DHW, as required for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation of this policy.

10. REFERENCES

- 10.1. Eligibility for Nova Scotia Health Insurance Program policy, DHW
- 10.2. *Fair Drug Pricing Act*
- 10.3. *Health Services and Insurance Act*
- 10.4. Health Services for Foreign Workers, International Students and Armed Forces Families regulations
- 10.5. Hospital Insurance regulations
- 10.6. *Personal Health Information Act*
- 10.7. *Personal Information International Disclosure Protection Act*
- 10.8. Privacy policy, DHW
- 10.9. *Quality-improvement Information Protection Act*

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1. Appendix 1: Transportation and accommodation cost assistance rates
- 11.2. Appendix 2: OPTA CA claims
 - 11.2.1. OPTA CA claims instructions
 - 11.2.2. OPTA CA claim form

12. VERSION CONTROL

Version	Summary of Amendments
August 1, 2024	Replaces all previous directives or guidelines for reimbursement and cost assistance, including sections 5.2 to 5.5, 6.2 and 6.3 of the DHW Out of Province Travel and Accommodation policy, April 2019. Changes include increased maximum allowable costs for travel and accommodation, kilometrage replaces reimbursement by fuel receipts, removal of limits on number of trips per year, and minimum age for pre-approved escorts.

13. INQUIRIES

Benefit Eligibility
Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness
Tel: (902) 424-7538; 1-877-449-5476 toll-free in Canada
Fax: (902) 902-424-2981
Email: Benefit.Eligibility@novascotia.ca

Appendix 1: Transportation and accommodation cost assistance rates

Transportation fare	Residents may claim up to \$600.00 CAD one-way, or \$1,200 CAD per round trip , toward transportation by bus, plane, or train for each pre-approved trip. Residents may claim up to the same amount for one pre-approved Escort. Proof of purchase and official documents (i.e., boarding passes) are required.
Kilometrage rate for travel using a personal vehicle	Residents may claim the government regular Kilometrage rate in effect on the date of departure from Nova Scotia for each pre-approved trip. Escorts cannot claim Kilometrage for travel. Kilometrage is based on the most direct route of travel between the Resident's Nova Scotia Civic address and the approved medical facility. Government Kilometrage rate: https://beta.novascotia.ca/documents/reimbursement-rates-and-transportation-allowances-employees-government-and-public-sector-bodies
Accommodation	Up to \$230.00 CAD per night with a maximum of \$2,760.00 CAD , for accommodations with a registered provider, for each pre-approved trip. Up to \$3,000.00 CAD per month , for accommodation with a registered provider, for each month the Resident is pre-approved to relocate outside Nova Scotia. Excludes claims for non-registered accommodations (e.g., private residences, stays with family, friends) and accommodations located within Nova Scotia. Escorts are expected to share the same accommodations as Residents, and this cost may be claimed when Residents are admitted to hospital as in-patients.
Declaration of other sources of cost assistance	Residents must declare any cost assistance they are eligible to receive for medical travel and/or accommodations from a federal or provincial government department or agency, Nova Scotia Health or the IWK Health Centre. The Department of Health and Wellness may provide cost assistance when the amounts received by Residents, and Escorts if applicable, do not exceed the Out of Province Travel and Accommodation Cost Assistance policy.

Note: Departure and arrival dates for travel must align with the date(s) and schedules for approved medical services.

The following costs are not eligible for reimbursement:

- Airline fees, including but not limited to, seat selection, changing/cancelling flights, baggage, and booking fees.
- Other transportation fees, including but not limited to taxi, car rental, subway fare, highway and bridge tolls, and parking.
- Accommodations in Nova Scotia and other accommodation fees, including but not limited to damage deposits, key deposits, cleaning fees, charges for extra guests, room service/meals, and booking fees.
- Accommodations using non-commercial, private or non-registered rental property. Cost of electricity, heat, phone and other utilities.
- Travel or private health insurance.
- Food, meals and any other incidental living costs.

Appendix 2:
Out of Province Travel and Accommodation Cost Assistance (OPTA CA) Claims
Department of Health and Wellness
Travel and Accommodation Cost Assistance

INSTRUCTIONS

PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY

To further protect your privacy and personal health information, do not include copies of your DHW or MSI referral or approval letters with your claim.

Claims for bus, plane, or train fares must include:

- dates travelled and/or dates for accommodation
- name of Resident
- total amount paid for the Resident, and Escort (if applicable), including HST/GST/PST
- all official travel receipts, boarding passes for both departures
- all official boarding passes (including printed electronic boarding passes)
- official itemized invoice from the transportation provider that clearly outlines each fee

Claims for the Kilometrage Rate must include:

- departure dates to and from the pre-approved destination

Claims for accommodations costs must include:

- dates of accommodations for the purpose of receiving pre-approved medical services outside Nova Scotia,
- official itemized invoice and statement of each charge made by the registered accommodation provider,
- temporary address for Residents approved to relocate outside of Nova Scotia to receive their approved medical services.

OPTA-CA CLAIMS FORM

The Department of Health and Wellness, Benefit Eligibility division, provides claim forms to Residents. Additional forms are available here: <https://novascotia.ca/dhw/Travel-and-Accommodation-Assistance/>.

The following information will be provided to the Department of Health and Wellness by the MSI Medical Consultant on your behalf:

- *record of your approval for referral outside Nova Scotia, approved medical facility, and time period to receive the approved medical services*
- *record of approval for an Escort*
- *record of approval for relocation outside Nova Scotia.*
- *eligibility for DHW travel and accommodation cost assistance*
- *your Civic address*