

## **Medical Transportation Supports**

### **Client Escort Requirements**

- a) In certain cases it may be necessary to cover costs for escorts to accompany clients or their children to the closest medical facility outside their local resident area.
- b) Medical escorts: When a health professional is required by the attending physician to act as a medical escort for out-patients who are eligible for Income Support, payment of transportation and other related expenses of the medical escort is the responsibility of the hospital.
- c) Non-medical escorts: Non-medical escorts may receive medical transportation benefits to cover their transportation, accommodations and meals costs when accompanying a client travelling to access medically required health services.
- d) Non-medical escorts must be preauthorized by the Medical Transportation Benefits Program by providing a medical note from the referring physician or nurse verifying with reason why an escort(s) is absolutely medically necessary. The medical note must explain the patient's need for a non-medical escort in relation to their medical condition, illness, injury or treatment. The medical note must be detailed enough for the client service officer to make an informed decision within the escort policy requirements outlined below. The obligation to obtain sufficient documentation from a physician or nurse to support an escort request rests with the client. The Medical Transportation Benefits Program does not offer funding for non-medical escort costs when the only reason is to provide the client emotional support.
- e) Coverage for a non-medical escort may be approved when there is a legal or medical requirement that results in the client being unable to travel alone, such as when the client:
  - is a minor;
  - requires alternative legal consent or immediate decision making that cannot be conducted in an efficient matter by phone;
  - requires assistance with activities of daily living, such as dressing, eating and bathing in an outpatient setting;

- is undergoing an outpatient medical procedure (such as outpatient general anesthetic) or has been diagnosed with a disability or medical condition that impairs their cognitive or physical ability and will require assistance to and from the medical appointment;
  - is to receive instruction on specific and essential home medical or nursing procedures, and it cannot be given to the client alone. In this instance, escorts can be approved when the client is ready and/or is given a time for hospital discharge (example: will be discharged on the weekend). Coverage of a non-medical escort may be approved for one day in advance of client discharge or under special circumstances to a maximum of three (3) days in advance of client discharge (with senior manager approval); or
  - is a pregnant person whose trip is for the purpose of childbirth, including being closer to care while awaiting childbirth.
- Exceptions to this policy would be where there is existing documentation in the client's file that supports the continuing need for a non-medical escort such as:
  - escort travel previously approved as part of a series of related treatments; or
  - client has been diagnosed with a permanent medical condition that impairs their cognitive or physical ability and will always require assistance while travelling.
- When coverage for an escort has been authorized, the escort must be capable and willing to provide the assistance that the client needs, for the duration it is required. Depending on the client's needs, for example, the escort must:
  - be able to sign consent forms or provide a patient history; and
  - be able to provide the required physical and other required care when the client needs it.
- An escort must not require assistance or special accommodation for their own needs during the trip. This is especially important in situations where the client may be admitted to hospital, leaving the escort on their own. The escort must:
  - be able to drive if the role includes providing ground transportation; and
  - be able to share personal space to support the client.

- Medical transportation benefits must always be provided using the most economical means possible. For example, if a client is admitted to hospital, escort assistance under the Medical Transportation Supports Program may be limited to the expenses incurred to travel to/from the client's place of residence to the treatment facility. It may be more economical for the escort to return home and come back at a later date to accompany the client, especially when the discharge date is not known. Exceptions can be considered, but require approval from management.
- Where escorts spend their own money to accompany clients, they may submit claims for reimbursement. Expenses cannot exceed the \$.30 per/km for private vehicle usage or actual bus/airline costs, hostel/hotel costs and meal costs at \$20 per day per person (where overnight stays are required). Receipts are required.
- When staying at a hotel or hostel, medical escorts and clients will normally be required to share the same room. Separate rooms in a hotel or hostel may be approved if a compelling reason can be provided, for example, the client and escort are opposite sex adults who are not within a family unit.