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**PURPOSE**

Northern Health Travel Grants are funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC). The grants help pay some of the transportation costs for northern Ontario residents who must travel at least 100km for medical specialist or hospital care that is not locally available.

Patients qualify for travel grant assistance if they live in northern Ontario and if they are referred by a northern doctor, dentist, optometrist, midwife, nurse practitioner or chiropractor to a specialist certified by The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC) and if that specialist is at least 100 km from their area of residence.

Many Ontarians now have an option to attend specialist consultations via telemedicine instead of the traditional face-to-face method. When a telemedicine consultation occurs, clinical care is considered to be provided at the site where the patient is – in essence, the specialist is 'virtually transported' through the telecommunications medium to where the patient is located. Therefore, if a patient travels greater than 100 km from their home to attend a telemedicine enabled organization for a consultation with a 'virtual specialist', they are eligible for a Northern Travel Grant.

Due to the increasing number of Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN) Members throughout Ontario, it is unlikely that patients will need to travel greater than 100 km from their area of residence to reach a telemedicine enabled site – however this guideline has been developed to manage any exceptional cases.

This guideline has been approved by the MOHLTC Northern Health Travel Grants program.

**GUIDELINE**

Patients who qualify for Northern Health Travel Grant assistance will follow the traditional steps for grant application and bring the grant with them to the telemedicine consultation. The grant should have sections number 1, 2 & 3 completed by the referring northern doctor, dentist, optometrist, midwife, nurse practitioner or chiropractor before they arrive for their telemedicine consultation.

Due to the nature of telemedicine, the specialist is not physically located in the same location as the patient and cannot therefore personally sign the Travel Grant as per usual practice. Therefore the MOHLTC recommends and accepts the following options:

1. The Travel Grant can be mailed to the specialist after the telemedicine consultation. The specialist completes section 4 on the Grant and either mails it directly to MOHLTC on behalf of the patient, or mails it back to the patient who is responsible to forward to the MOHLTC for reimbursement.

2. A registered nurse at the patient telemedicine site can complete all information in section number 4 and sign the Grant on behalf of the specialist.
  - The "Specialist's Provider number" must be recorded
  - The word "Telemedicine" and the hospital where the specialist works must be recorded in the field labeled "Specific service provided"
  - The registered nurse signs in the field labeled "Specialist's signature"
  - The designation 'RN' must follow the nurse's signature.

If the patient arrives with a blank Travel Grant, it is acceptable for the registered nurse to complete section number 4 and return the Grant to the patient. The patient can then take the Grant back to their referring practitioner to complete section numbers 1, 2 &3.

**NOTE:** The MOHLTC only accepts original documents. Faxed copies of Northern Health Travel Grants are not acceptable and will not be processed.

## REFERENCES

MOHLTC Northern Travel Grant:

<http://health.gov.on.ca/en/public/publications/ohip/northern.aspx>

[http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/publications/ohip/docs/brochure\\_northern\\_en.pdf](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/publications/ohip/docs/brochure_northern_en.pdf)

MOHLTC Northern Travel Grant Application: Can be obtained from referring providers, local OHIP offices, or at the following URL: <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/pub/ohip/northern.html>