

INTERIM GUIDELINE: Medical Air Travel during declared pandemics

PURPOSE

To clarify additional precautionary measures to be taken regarding air travel during pandemics.

APPLICATION

In addition to the standard air travel industry practices that airline carriers already have in place for regular cleaning and sanitation, additional measures may need to be taken during pandemic or epidemic outbreaks.

In order to ensure that providers of air travel services (for NIHB-eligible trips) are aware of infection control measures and pandemic guidance from public health officials, regional officials will:

- share the attached guidance from the Public Health Agency of Canada (see Annex A)
- advise air carriers and air travel providers typically used by FNIHB that, in addition to local public health authorities, should they have any questions about the recommendations for disinfection and sanitation practices, they can contact the Public Health Agency of Canada at phac.obth-aspc.bssvf@canada.ca
- share public health guidance and information resources such as special cleaning and sanitization measures noted at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/public-health-measures-mitigate-covid-19.html>
- confirm whether the air carrier management have implemented any additional cleaning measures to minimize the risk of infection during a pandemic; as well as any measures that have been put in place to limit access to scheduled or commercial flights for those who may be suffering from symptoms of illness.
- identify a FNIHB point of contact in the region, and request that the management of frequently used air carriers contact FNIHB to advise of any anticipated reduction in service due to impacts of the pandemic on airline personnel.

NIHB Regional Offices should also contact local air charter companies that have been utilized in the past to confirm, should the need arise, whether charter air travel providers would be available to provide services to communities (in the event that the availability of scheduled flights is diminished).

- Such an arrangement would only be for clients who do NOT have a contagious illness that would require quarantine, but rather for those who may still require medically necessary, but not emergency travel;
- Emergency travel, or travel for COVID-19 patients, would continue to require specialized ambulance or medevac transportation, to maintain the isolation of the patient. Such cases would be identified by the local primary care professional or nurse in charge in the community setting.