

Medical Travel Support Fund Program Guidelines

Purpose

People living with spina bifida often require specialized medical treatment. Such treatment is often available only in certain locations, resulting in families incurring significant travel costs associated with obtaining this medical treatment. This Fund will help to offset travel costs for those who must travel away from home.

Eligibility Criteria

- Applicants must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident with spina bifida travelling for medical treatment and one support person OR a person pregnant with a baby with spina bifida and one support person for appointments related to the baby's spina bifida.
- Treatment is related to spina bifida.
 - Current members of the Spina Bifida Families of Canada (SBCAN) Board of Directors and their families will be ineligible for the Fund.
 - An individual/family may apply more than once per year; however, priority will be given to first-time applicants.
 - Further/revised eligibility criteria and selection process may be determined in the future. SBCAN reserves the right to revise the criteria and structure of the Fund at any time.
 - Travel must occur between January 1, 2024 and December 31, 2024. Receipts/proof of travel must be received no later than January 31, 2025.

Program A: Medical Travel Expenses Program

This Program provides funding for trips for appointments, tests, and day visit procedures.

Additional Eligibility Criteria

- Must be travelling at least 150km from home to a treatment centre in Canada.

Program B: ***NEW*** Extended Stay Support Program

Applicants of Program A may also apply for the Extended Stay Support Program for longer duration stays away from home for medical appointments, tests and treatment.

Additional Eligibility Criteria

- Treatment duration must be for a period of 8 or more nights.
- Where an applicant is also eligible for Program A, additional expenses related to the same trip may be reimbursed under Program B provided all other eligibility criteria are met.
- Applicants must provide proof of extended stay for medical purposes.

Eligible Expenses

- Air, train or bus tickets
- Gas/Electric charging for vehicle
 - Approved applicants will receive 68¢ per kilometre for a round trip from home to the treatment centre.
- Car rental
- Taxi, ride sharing or public transit expenses (including accessible transit)
- Parking
- Overnight accommodations

Other Sources of Support

Applicants are encouraged to reach out to these organizations for support with expenses in advance of booking travel and/or making an application to this Fund.

- **Hope Air** is a national charity that provides flights, accommodations, meal vouchers, and ground transportation at no cost to patients and caregivers. For more information on their eligibility criteria and how to apply, visit <https://hopeair.ca/>.
- **Staywell** is a national charity that provides access to accommodations for all patients, their caregivers and their families required to relocate for medical treatment at a reduced cost. Their aim is to lower financial barriers to receiving life-saving care. To learn more and find out how Staywell can help, please visit <https://staywell.ca/>.

Funding Level

A maximum of \$500 per application, per Program, for 2024. If there are remaining funds in the Travel Fund budget at the end of the 2024 calendar year, the SBCAN Board of Directors may approve additional funding, above the \$500 limit, to approved applicants in exceptional circumstances.

Application Process

Email completed Medical Travel Expenses Application and Medical Travel Support Fund Confirmation of Appointment forms to hello@sbc.ca.

Applicants may apply for conditional approval of funding for travel that has not happened but will occur in 2024. Reimbursement will only occur when receipts and proof of travel have been provided. If travel plans are changed or cancelled, applicants are asked to inform SBCAN as soon as possible.

If travel expenses have already been incurred, applicants are encouraged to provide receipts and proof of travel at the time of applying in order to expedite the evaluation process.

Information collected as part of the application process includes:

- A declaration of the impact of the treatment on the individual - how it will support development, quality of life, or overall well-being.
- A completed Confirmation of Appointment form, signed by a medical professional, indicating the nature and date of treatment.
- Breakdown of travel costs (actual or estimated).
 - For fuel/EV expenses, applicants must submit a screenshot of Google maps that displays the distance in kilometres from home to the treatment centre.
- A declaration of other financial assistance sought and/or received for these expenses.

Evaluation

- The review committee will be made up of at least one SBCAN Board member and one SBCAN volunteer. Where a committee member has a close personal relationship with an applicant, they will recuse themselves from the evaluation of that individual/family's application and another Board member will evaluate the application.
- If reviewers cannot come to a consensus regarding the decision of an application, the application will be brought to the full Board for a final decision.
- Applications will be reviewed on a first come, first served basis. Once the pool of funds for the year has been allocated, applications for the year will be closed.
- A service standard to review and respond to the applicant will be set at two to four weeks, with two weeks as the best practice. SBCAN will aim to review emergency applications in a timely manner.