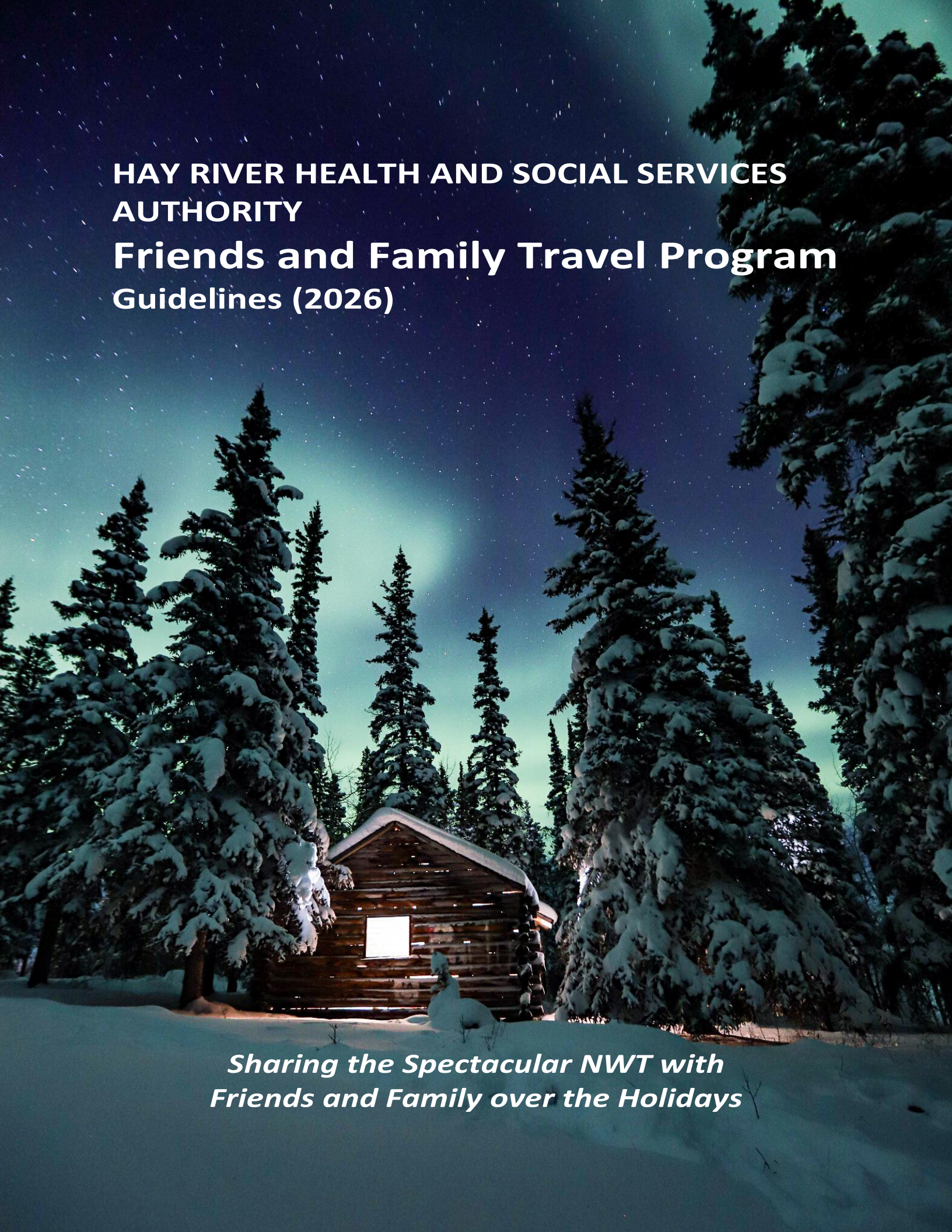


A photograph of a log cabin in a snowy forest at night. The cabin is illuminated from within, and a single window is visible. The surrounding trees are heavily covered in snow. In the background, the aurora borealis is visible in the dark sky, with stars also visible. The overall scene is serene and festive.

**HAY RIVER HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
AUTHORITY**

**Friends and Family Travel Program
Guidelines (2026)**

*Sharing the Spectacular NWT with
Friends and Family over the Holidays*

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Hay River Health and Social Services Authority

FRIENDS AND FAMILY TRAVEL PROGRAM GUIDELINES

1. Program Description

The Hay River Health & Social Services Authority (HRHSSA) Friends and Family Travel Program (FFT Program) is a taxable incentive program available to indeterminate, term, and casual front-line nurse practitioners, and registered nurses providing direct patient care who are scheduled for a minimum of five full, regular shifts between December 19, 2026, and January 03, 2027, inclusive. It is also available to permanent and locum physicians providing direct patient care who are scheduled for a minimum of five full, regular shifts (including scheduled call shifts, but excluding travel days) between December 18, 2026, and January 05, 2027, inclusive.

Eligible individuals have the opportunity for financial support to bring family members and/or friends to their community of employment. The program will cover the costs of flights and/or travel by privately owned vehicle, to a maximum of \$2,000 per employee.

Note that **funding paid through the FFT Program is subject to income tax**. Employees / locums are encouraged to consult the Canada Revenue Agency for more information or contact a tax professional for specific advice.

2. Program Objective

The objective of the FFT Program is to address staffing shortages over the holiday season by incentivizing staff with an opportunity to work, while still celebrating the holidays with family and friends. This program will:

- Help address staffing shortages in hard-to-fill positions within the HRHSSA over the holiday season.
- Help in supporting a healthy work/life balance for employees / locums working over the holiday season.
- Build and enhance employee / locum engagement, by offering employees / locums incentives to work and visit the NWT.

3. Eligibility

To be eligible for the FFT Program, any **non-physician** applicant must meet ALL of the criteria outlined below. The applicant must be:

- An indeterminate (full-time, part-time, relief), term, or casual front-line nurse practitioner or registered nurse.
- Providing direct patient care within the HRHSSA
- Scheduled to work a minimum of five full, regular shifts between December 19, 2026, and January 03, 2027, inclusive.

For **physicians**, an applicant must meet ALL of the criteria outlined below to be eligible for the program. The applicant must be:

- A permanent or locum physician.
- Providing on-site patient care within the HRHSSA.
- Scheduled to work a minimum of five full, regular shifts (including scheduled call shifts, but excluding travel days) between December 18, 2026, and January 05, 2027, inclusive. A shift is calculated as 8 or more hours of scheduled medical services.

Regular and scheduled shifts / hours exclude on-call and overtime.

4. Funding

Friends and family who are travelling through the FFT Program may travel between December 01, 2026, and January 31, 2027. Travel costs incurred beginning prior to December 01, 2026, or concluding after January 31, 2027, will not be eligible for reimbursement.

Eligible travel costs (maximum \$2,000), for up to a maximum of two people/vehicles, include the costs of flights and/or travel by privately owned vehicles. Additional costs associated with accommodations are at the expense of the employee / locum. Note that rewards tickets (i.e. booked using points) are not eligible for reimbursement, only the cash portion paid.

Travel by privately owned vehicle rates will be determined by the GNWT [Duty Travel Rates](#), and determined at the convenience rate.¹

5. Application and Reimbursement Process

Individuals interested in participating in the FFT Program should indicate their interest to their supervisor, to determine if they meet eligibility criteria, including the minimum scheduling requirements outlined in *Section 3: Eligibility*.

Supervisors and human resources staff should endeavor to promote the program to all employees / locums who may be eligible.

For indeterminate, term, and casual employees, as well as permanent and locum physicians, steps for accessing the program are as follows:

1. Employee / locum completes FFT Program Form and submits it to their supervisor.
2. Supervisor reviews form, which includes a list of all required criteria to be considered eligible for the FFT Program.
3. If the employee / locum meets all eligibility criteria, the supervisor signs the form and sends it to Chief Operating Officer (COO) / Executive Director / Area Medical Director for their approval and signature.
4. If the form is fully signed off, it is then sent back to the employee / locum.
5. If the employee / locum does not meet eligibility criteria, the supervisor should inform the employee they are not eligible for FFT Program, including rationale.
6. An employee / locum who receives the signed form should submit the application form to Abena.Nyarko@gov.nt.ca and keep a copy to be included with their Claim Form. **The deadline to submit completed applications is Thursday, December 17, 2026, at 11:59pm MST. Applications received after this time will not be considered.**

¹ Rate set at \$0.33 per kilometre, as of July 01, 2026. This rate may change periodically.

7. The employee / locum can then arrange booking flights and / or arrange travel plans by private vehicle for friends and/or family. Employees / locums or their designates are responsible for booking flights, not the NTHSSA.
8. Once eligible travel costs have been incurred, the employee / locum must submit eligible receipts and the signed form for reimbursement. For a step-by-step guide on submitting reimbursement claims through the FFT Program employees, including permanent physicians and locums, should refer to the **Claim Form Instructions** included with the Claim Form. **The deadline to submit claims is March 15, 2027, at 11:59pm MST.**

Claims will be reviewed and approved by Abena_Nyarko@gov.nt.ca for processing. If the claim is incomplete or does not meet eligibility requirements, it will be sent back to the employee with a request for clarification and/or revisions.

9. If/when the claim is approved, the eligible reimbursement amount, up to \$2,000, will be paid to the employee on a subsequent paycheque. **Note that for Locum Physicians, the claim will be paid via the regular vendor process.**

It is important to note that **funding paid through the FFT Program is subject to income tax**. Employees / locums are encouraged to consult the Canada Revenue Agency for more information or contact a tax professional for specific advice.

6. Additional Considerations

It is at the discretion of the CEO if an employee is eligible for the incentive. Employees are encouraged to contact their supervisor should they have any questions or concerns regarding the booking or payment process.

Every effort should be made to ensure that an employee / locum approved through the FFT Program does not have a schedule change that makes them ineligible.

Should an employee / locum's scheduling status change, whereby they are no longer eligible to receive FFT Program funding, Abena_Nyarko@gov.nt.ca should be notified immediately. If the change in schedule is a result of decisions made by the employee, the employee / locum will be required to pay back the monies awarded. Scheduling changes made by the HRHSSA that make an employee /locum ineligible will not require monies to be repaid.

Applicants should notify Abena_Nyarko@gov.nt.ca if they are reimbursed for travel claims that do not occur, so that arrangements for repayment can be made. Failure to do so is considered fraud.

Every effort will be made to ensure all friend and family travel reimbursements are processed in a timely fashion. There may, however, be instances in which additional review is warranted. This may delay the payment process in some instances.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

The following section highlights the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the FFT Program:

Employee / Locum

- Identify interest in FFT Program to supervisor, to determine viability.
- Complete form and submit to supervisor for sign-off.
- Make necessary travel arrangements with friends and/or family, once approved.
- Submit signed form and eligible receipts for reimbursement, following processes outlined in Appendix A and B.
- Notify Abena_Nyarko@gov.nt.ca of any changes to program eligibility.
- Complete survey on FFT Program, if requested.

Supervisor

- Promote FFT Program to eligible employees / locums.
- Confirm employee / locum meets eligibility, through FFT Program Form.
- Be mindful of implications of any scheduling changes as it relates to making employees / locums eligible / ineligible for the FFT Program.

Human Resources

- Promote the program to staff and hiring managers.
- Provide information on the program, where requested.
- Collaboration with Finance related to the administration and implementation of the FFT Program.
- Support program evaluation.

Finance Abena_Nyarko@gov.nt.ca

- Collaboration with Human Resources related to the administration and implementation of the FFT Program.
- Administer the program, including:
 - Maintaining all documentation related to the FFT Program.
 - Approving reimbursements requests or requesting additional information.
- Support program evaluation.

8. For More Information

Please contact Abena_Nyarko@gov.nt.ca with questions.