



BRIEFING NOTE

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ISSUE/SUBJECT

The Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) Housing has identified the need to implement a pandemic protocol of a single learner per housing unit to allocations within our housing to accommodate for learner safety and address the safety restrictions and self-isolation measures imposed by our communities as the pandemic continues.

Context & Background:

In order to enhance the safety of our learners through the winter and spring months of the pandemic, NOSM is introducing changes to its current housing practices to account for COVID-19 concerns. NOSM housing has been identified as an important area to increase the ability for learners to be assigned as one learner per unit, if appropriate and necessary. As most of the Programs (now including UME, PGME, Physician Assistant Program, Health Sciences Program, Northern Ontario Dietetic Internship Program, Visiting Residents, and Agreements) have re-entered into clinical placements, it means that there is cohabitation occurring within NOSM Housing. Understandably, this can be a cause for concern as the pandemic numbers increase not only in northern Ontario but also in all of Ontario.

With the COVID numbers rising and restriction measures from our communities continuing to be implemented, there is no way to properly or efficiently implement the self-isolation measures in NOSM Housing while maintaining the ability for learners to complete placements outside of their homebase. There is simply not enough physical space. The largest concern is if a new learner is coming in and needs to self-isolate for 7-14 days but is placed in a unit that already has a learner working within the community. We would need single learner allocations or everyone arriving at the same time within a unit to be properly self-isolating (if appropriate given the travel and community affected).

Recommendation/Next Steps:

In order to help alleviate the amount of learners within NOSM Housing and make it safer for all learners completing placements in our NOSM communities, NOSM will provide a reimbursement of a maximum of \$3,000, per four week block, directly to learners who are required to find self-arranged housing.

Although, every effort is made to make NOSM Housing move toward single occupancy during a pandemic, there is no guarantee that this can be done within all of NOSM Housing. Single occupancy can be facilitated more effectively in our large urban centers, where more accommodation choices are available. However, at times, NOSM Housing and Hospital

Housing is the only available accommodations in many of our smaller rural communities and NOSM Housing may need to be shared.

At any point during the stay in NOSM Housing, if a learner does not feel comfortable sharing NOSM Housing, they are eligible to use and implement this COVID Housing Reimbursement protocol and find suitable self-arranged accommodation.

Duration:

Affecting any NOSM Housing from January 11, 2021 (start of Block 8) to June 30, 2021 (end of Block 13).

This process will be implemented in three steps.

Step 1:

All housing that is currently allocated will stay as is (based on currently confirmed placement).

- Re-allocation will occur if self-isolation measures are needed on a case by case basis.
- At this point, learners do not need to do anything for upcoming scheduled placements unless advised or reach out to exercise the self-arranged option.

Step 2:

Effective immediately, any new housing allocations moving forward (based on newly confirmed placements) will be scheduled as follows:

- Will be scheduled in a single learner per unit basis from the January 11, 2021 (start of Block 8) to June 30, 2021 (end of Block 13).
- NOSM Housing will be prioritized as such:
 - If NOSM Housing is not-occupied NOSM Housing will be first come first serve for single learner allocations.
 - Once NOSM Housing is occupied, any other learners will be eligible for a maximum reimbursement of \$3,000 to book their own accommodations (via AirBnB, community contacts, local hotels, etc.) within the community of their confirmed placement.
 - General Rule: Any learner (internal or external) that would be provided housing by NOSM will be eligible for the housing reimbursement (i.e., PGME, UME, HS, PA, Agreements, NODIP)

Procedure: Email will be sent by NOSM Housing to affected learners as their confirmed placements are entered into PaNDa, which will indicate the reimbursement option to find self-arranged housing.

Step 3:

Any learners that currently have a confirmed placement and is funded for housing will be eligible to take \$3,000 maximum reimbursement to arrange for their own housing accommodations within the respective community of their confirmed placement [email to come from respective Programs].

- For NOSM residents: The reimbursement will be available for each clinical placement that is outside of their homebase if considered core, elective, and core external and/or 4 weeks or higher in duration.
- For NOSM residents already using Housing Option 2: They will be eligible to receive a reimbursement of up to \$3,000 during this effective time period. Do not submit through the 'Housing Option 2', all claims must be submitted using the COVID Housing Reimbursement procedure that is detailed below. Residents are to submit under their respective 'Program and then Travel" options.
- For NOSM students: The reimbursement will be available for each clinical placement that is outside of their homebase if considered CBM ICE 110 or electives of 4 weeks or higher in duration at the time of allocation.
- For Health Sciences or Physician Assistant Programs: The reimbursement will be available for any housing that is funded by NOSM.
- For Visiting Electives and Agreements: The reimbursement will be available for any housing that is funded by NOSM.

Procedure for NOSM: Email will be transmitted to learners by respective Programs to indicate the reimbursement option to find self-arranged housing.

Procedure for Learners: Email NOSM Housing to indicate the selection of the reimbursement option for self-arranged housing.

Reimbursement Processes:

All learners are required to pay for the accommodation and submit the following for reimbursement by NOSM after the end of each placement:

Eligible Expenses:

*any expense that is directly attributed to the cost of housing up to a maximum of \$3,000 total

*all expenses must follow the guidelines and principles of the NOSM Travel Management and General Expenses Policy (TMGE), including claim submission deadline of 90 days.

- Rent
- Parking
- Internet and Utilities (if not included in the rent)
- Meal Allotment: only allowed if renting a hotel room with no kitchenette (receipt are mandatory & following the TMGE rules)
- Accommodations with Family and Friends: \$30/day can be claimed

For LEARNERS:

1. Visit www.NOSM.ca
2. Click on *MyNOSM* and choose the option *Expense Reimbursement* under the Learners tab.

3. Download a new version of the *Travel Expense Summary Form* and fill out the form to the best of your ability. The Travel Expense Summary Form is a SMART form and if information is missing there will be a red marker highlighting the missing information.
4. When completing the Travel Expense Summary Form please add the following in the comments section: 'COVID Housing'.
5. When completing the Expense Reimbursement page, select the correct *Payee Type*, *Program Name* (select your respective program), and *Reimbursement Type* (i.e. Travel). The *Funding Type* must be "Program", not "Housing" or "Option 2".
6. To submit the claim, upload the completed Travel Expense Summary Form and **all** receipts (these must to include proof of payment, notification of payment, and may be supported with a credit card receipt..
7. Attach all required documents and submit.

For PROGRAMS:

1. When reviewing these claims, please ensure that the learners have included the two Travel Expense Summary and all relevant receipts.
2. Add the COVID-19 budget code: **11-200019-63602-00**
3. In comments section of the claim, please indicate 'COVID HOUSING'
4. Route forward

Reference: Appendices:

- i. Frequently Asked Questions - COVID-NOSM Housing Reimbursement