

Stanton Obstetrics Emergency Services: Phase 1 Service Resumption Q&A

Stanton labour and delivery has been on reduced services since November 22, 2021. A phased resumption of services is being planned to ensure safe and sustainable operations within this service.

Who is impacted?

- Any person who was set to give birth in Yellowknife and has a due date between December 10th, 2021 and February 21, 2022 can continue to expect to travel outside Yellowknife to give birth.
- For individuals who have due dates between February 22, and March 31, 2022 there will be a phased resumption of services which will include:
 - Individuals expecting their second or subsequent birth will deliver in Yellowknife.
 - Individuals who have a scheduled caesarean section will deliver in Yellowknife
 - Individuals who are having their first child will have care transferred to Edmonton
 - Individuals who are from Nunavut will have their care transferred to Edmonton.
- Inuvik birthing services are not impacted; if you are set to give birth in Inuvik you are not impacted this time.
- Fort Smith and Hay River midwifery services are not impacted; if you are set to give birth in Fort Smith or Hay River you are not impacted at this time.

How will patients be informed?

- Informing patients directly is a high priority. Everyone who is impacted is being called by a healthcare provider familiar with this issue to provide notice, further information and advice, and provide an opportunity for questions. This work started the day of the announcement and will continue until complete.
- Notifications are being prioritized based on due date, prioritizing those with the nearest due dates first.

What can impacted individuals expect?

- Impacted individuals who must travel to Edmonton can expect to leave during or before their 37th week of pregnancy.
- Duration of stay will differ depending on how pregnancy progresses, individuals can expect to be in Edmonton for 3-5 weeks, but it may be longer or shorter.
- A support person or partner ('non-medical escort') is approved for all those traveling to give birth.
- Individuals can expect direct outreach from NTHSSA staff to discuss their situation, timelines, needs, and to answer questions.
- NTHSSA has dedicated a team to work directly with impacted individuals to determine what supports may be required and to add support to reduce the burden of this change where possible.
- More information is available at www.nthssa.ca/birthing.

Where will people stay while in Alberta? Will travel and accommodation costs be covered?

- All individuals will have access to the supports of the NWT Medical Travel program.
- Some individuals may have additional supports through insurance plans or programs above and beyond the NWT Medical Travel program. Examples include employee benefit programs, specific federal programs (such as Non-Insured Health Benefits) or private insurance.
- Guidance will be provided by the Medical Travel Program for what options are available for each individual.
- More details about supports is available at www.nthssa.ca/birthing

Why is this necessary? Why can't Stanton resume full labour and delivery services?

- A phased service resumption will allow for reduced volume and complexity of birthing services during phase one, which is scheduled to be in effect from February 22, to March 31, 2022.
- Generally individuals who have already had a child require less pre-labour assessments, less coaching or direct nursing support during labour, have quicker births and have a lower probability of in-labour complications.
- A lot of work has been done to secure safe staffing for the reopening. Although we have more nurses hired, we don't have enough to re-open the unit fully for planned births, especially given that the potential impact of COVID isolation on staffing.
- With a smaller unit and team, staff absence can have a large impact on capacity and can vary unpredictably.
- We want to ensure the care we do provide is safe for everyone. First births tend to take longer in labour and be in hospital for longer, increasing the chance that we run into an issue related to staffing levels.
- Staffing could be impacted by any significant absence, which is a reality in the current COVID situation, especially with the potential for staff to need to be off for an extended period of isolation. In normal times we would be able to add/call in staff to surge if there are a high number of births or a number of more complicated deliveries on any one shift. Our ability to do is limited and by redirecting part of our service to Edmonton we can continue to offer the safest birthing experience for residents while we continue to work to stabilize staffing long term.
- Stanton will retain emergency services in labour and delivery for any unexpected or emergency situations.
- We will continue to assess the situation and if we are able to resume more services sooner than planned we will communicate this to those impacted and publically.

Can I travel somewhere other than Alberta for my delivery?

- Patients are free to organize their ongoing care in a location of their choice. NTHSSA is only able to coordinate transfer of care to Edmonton as this is our established referral pathway.

Can Edmonton handle our volume of patients?

- NTHSSA has been in touch with Alberta Health Services medical leadership and they are confident they will be able to provide the care and services needed for NWT patients during this period of time.

Can I choose where in Alberta I want to go?

- You may speak with your physician/healthcare provider but referrals will be made to the Edmonton zone.
- We cannot guarantee ability to choose an alternate location as this will be dependent on capacity and logistics within the Alberta system.

Will my family be able to come with me?

- One non-medical escort is approved for patients traveling for childbirth.
- A person wishing to bring other family members must do so at their own expense
- More details about what individuals specifically qualify for will be determined when they are connected with NTHSSA Medical Travel to determine what benefits they qualify for if they have insurances through their employer or privately.

What if I refuse to travel outside of the NWT?

- This is not recommended; this decision was made to ensure the safety of all individuals giving birth and to ensure a sustainable resumption of labour and delivery services.
- By transferring care to Edmonton we are ensuring that all care is as safe as possible during this period while creating space to ensure a successful resumption of services for patients and staff.

Can I deliver in Inuvik?

- Individuals who are scheduled to deliver in Inuvik will proceed as normal. Some Sahtu patients may have the option to deliver in Inuvik, specific details will be discussed with each impacted individual.

Who can people contact if they have questions or are concerned about their care?

- Impacted individuals will be contacted directly and provided with contact numbers/details for follow up if they have questions.
- We recognize this service reduction continues to impact individuals and families and that a change to birthing plan can be stressful.
- We encourage people to wait for their direct contact as opposed to contacting their primary care provider because the team dedicated to making the notification calls will have the latest information and be able to answer questions that your regular provider may not at this time.

What about unvaccinated patients, will they be able to travel with new travel rules in place?

- Travel for necessary medical care can be exempted under current federal travel rules.
- Pregnant individuals are encouraged to get vaccinated, please see our [notice on this matter here](#).