

Frequently Asked Questions

Answering your questions about working as a Nurse in a First Nation community in Ontario during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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What is the nature of the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) practice environment?

Community health nurses, with assistance from support personnel, provide primary health care including disease prevention and health promotion activities. Nurses carry out assessment and management services for health problems through treatment and some emergency services.

What will my role involve?

Your assignment will involve work in health promotion, health protection, disease prevention and education, communicating with those in self-isolation and conducting contact tracing. The role will be carried out in a primary health care environment in a remote and isolated First Nation community where there is a nursing station.



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Where will I be going?

You will be assigned to one of 21 First Nation/Indigenous communities with a nursing station in Northern Ontario. The assignments will be determined based on the needs of each community. Depending on the nature of COVID-19, you may be asked to relocate to other communities based on operational needs.

How long is my assignment?

Assignments will last for a minimum of 6 weeks. You will be required to self-isolate for 14 days prior to travelling to your community where you will live for the next 4 weeks. You are being hired on as a casual position with the opportunity to extend the term of your assignment, including the potential for permanent employment.

What should I do for self-isolation before going to the community?

Effective immediately and until further notice, FNIHB is requiring part-time, agency and casual nurses traveling to northern communities to self-isolate in their home for 14 days prior to their departure date. It is ISC's intention that nurses who are self-isolating will be compensated at their regular rate of salary for the entire 14 day self-isolation period. In addition, the self-screening directives will continue to apply with screening before departure and while in community.

While self-isolating, nurses will be asked to apply public health measures when engaging with other members of their household. This includes, where applicable, requesting other members of the home, who may work outside of the home in an essential service, to abide by strict public health measures including physical distancing and diligent hand washing.

Will I be working alone?

No. You will be working as part of a primary health care team. Mentorship and practice support will be available from a preceptor, Nurse-In-Charge, Nurse Manager, Practice Consultant, Community Health Nurse, Nurse Practitioner (either locally or at a distance), and/or a Physician.

Where will I stay?

You will be provided with a private bedroom in a shared accommodation attached or close to your assigned nursing station, at no cost to you. You will have your own bedroom but will most likely share a kitchen, bathroom, living room and laundry facility.

What should I bring with me?

You will need to bring your own clothing, food and personal toiletries. You will be provided with basic bedding, towels, kitchen utensils and dishes but you may opt to bring some of your own items. Dish and laundry soap are provided but may not be your preferred brand so bring what you need. Other suggestions for items to bring include mosquito/blackfly repellent, sunscreen, rubber boots, wind breaker, reusable water bottle and a flashlight. Just remember that you will be carrying your bags through airports and to the nursing stations.

What will I eat?

You will have access to a Northern Store or a Community Cooperative store but items can be expensive and the selection is limited. They usually carry groceries, toiletries and other sundries. Fresh fruits and vegetables are often available in limited supply and at a premium cost. You are encouraged to bring much of your own food with you such as frozen meats and fish, frozen vegetables, pre-made frozen meals from home, as well as other non-perishable items. Remember that you will have access to a kitchen in your residence with dishes as well as pots, pans and cooking utensils.

Will I have internet access?

You will have access to wi-fi internet at your worksite and in your residence. However, keep in mind that there may be occasions when the internet access is unreliable and unavailable.

Can I bring alcohol with me to the community?

Some communities are “dry reserves” while others may permit alcohol. It is best to check with the Nurse-In-Charge of the community where you will be working before deciding on bringing any alcohol into a community.

Is there a bank in the community?

There are no physical banks in the communities, however, most of the Northern Stores have a bank machine for cash withdrawal.

How do I get information about my pay and benefits?

You can access Phoenix through the Compensation Web Application (CWA) web page – pay, pension and health care benefit information. You will need myKey to access this site.

<http://gcintranet.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/gc/rem/awr-cwa-eng.html>

How will I be paid?

All employees are paid 2 weeks in arrears. The first cheque, covering entitlements for the first pay period, should be available within 20 business days of receipt of all documents. You will be paid bi-weekly (every other Wednesday). You will be required to enter your hours into a time-keeping system. Administrative support will help you with time-keeping and your nurse manager will approve and sign your time-sheets.

What are the regular working hours?

Your regular hours of work will be 7.5 hours per day, Monday to Friday, between the hours of 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., as assigned by the Nurse-in-Charge. This can vary due to operational requirements.

Will I be eligible to receive overtime pay?

Yes. You will be eligible to receive overtime pay according to the hours you have worked and to address COVID-19 issues.

How will I get to my assigned community?

ISC will be using a charter flight system that will be travelling across the country and picking up nurses at designated sites and designated times, avoiding busy terminals and public staging areas whenever possible. These charters will fly into designated provincial hubs, where they will be met by regional charters to transport staff into communities. Each of these forms of transportation will provide for physical distancing and other standardized health and safety measures. On longer flights, boxed meals will be provided. Flight patterns will be set for each rotation based on the passenger manifest and may vary from rotation to rotation. Please note that as per Transport Canada directives, all travellers boarding any flights within Canada must wear a mask (or some kind of covering) while enroute and in flight.

How will the restrictions between provincial borders impact my travel to the community?

We are regularly monitoring the situation of provincial borders being restricted. We have taken steps to facilitate the travel of nurses by writing a Department letter that identifies nurses as essential healthcare professionals who may have to cross provincial borders in order to access their assignments in First Nations communities. In addition, the alternative charter transportation will also facilitate the safety and ease of nursing travel across the country.

What will I wear to work?

If you do not have any scrubs, ISC will provide reimbursement for up to 6 sets of scrubs. No clothing allowance will be given as the time of year limits the use of this benefit. There will also be some additional sets of scrubs available at each nursing station.

Do I need special training?

ISC will provide all employees with an online orientation. Nurse Practitioners will require hospital privileges which will be arranged with partners, Meno Ya Win and Weenabayko Health Authority (WAHA), who deliver health services in Northern Ontario.

What about point-of-care testing?

ISC believes that point of care testing will be very valuable for First Nations communities. If it is available for nurses to access prior to travelling into communities, it may help allay some communities' fears that nurses who have COVID-19 may be travelling into the community without showing symptoms. The department is working on accessing this technology for First Nations and Inuit communities once it is more broadly available.