

# IOM Travel Health Assistance: Information for MHD Focal points



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## Continuity of Care

To provide the best health care possible to migrants, IOM endeavours to provide a continuity of care where migrants continue to receive health support upon arrive at their destination. To achieve this, the following factors are considered.

IOM health staff take note of people travelling with known chronic but stable health conditions requiring lasting medical care, (e.g. diabetes, cardiovascular disease, mental health issues etc.) and communicable conditions with long treatments (e.g. tuberculosis, AIDS etc).

Mechanisms are then identified to ensure these patients can continue their treatment. This will differ depending on the situation and final destination. For example IOM may provide a TB patient with the full course of treatment, and a referral to a health facility for further treatment support, where as a diabetes patient may receive the name and location of specialist health care providers for their condition at their final destination.

The establishment of referrals and guaranteed continuity of care may result in a delay in departure.

## Capacity Building

Where possible and appropriate, IOM builds the capacity of the local health staff and system to be able to carry on health activities once IOM's support is over. IOM always works within the existing framework of the local health system and does not create new or parallel health services.

Trainings and awareness raising programs are conducted where appropriate to build the capacity of the local population. The topics of these programs will be based on local needs, e.g. social distancing education or established WASH procedures.

## Data Collection, Reporting and Coordination

All IOM Health Units maintain up-to-date statistics on the beneficiaries of IOMs Travel Health Assistance. Reports are sent to headquarters on a daily and weekly basis, and donor reports published regularly. IOM medical units also relay necessary medical information to the operations unit who provide transport based on travellers needs.

## Introduction

Assisting the movement of migrants is one of IOM's most important humanitarian services during emergencies and post-emergencies.

While providing transport assistance, IOM ensures that the people travel in a safe and dignified manner, are fit to travel, receive appropriate assistance when necessary and do not pose as a health hazard to other travellers, personnel or receiving communities.

IOM developed the following set of guidelines to help field staff and partners work together effectively and achieve high levels of safety in all their travel activities.

## Aim of Travel Health Assistance

The aim of IOM's travel health assistance programmes is to:

- Reduce mortality, morbidity and disability among the IOM beneficiaries during and immediately after assisted movement.
- Guarantee continuity of care throughout the phases of migration.
- Ensure that movement operations comply with International Health Regulations (IHR) and contribute towards global public health goals.
- Ensure that movement-related health initiatives are coordinated with and inclusive of other health partners on the ground, and at the same time, ensure that they reinforce globally-accepted standards of primary and public health.
- Promote community health, as well as health system recovery and strengthening in areas of return.

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IOM International Organization for Migration  
OIM Organisation internationale pour les migrations  
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

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International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
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## General Safe Transportation

The following activities are conducted by IOM when providing travel assistance to ensure the safe transport of people in need:

- Mapping of transport facilities and evaluation of distances and durations of journeys.
- Monitoring and constant updating information on road and runway conditions.
- Assessing and updating information concerning the existence of potential security threats e.g. bridges, possible presence of mines, bandits, weather conditions etc.
- Identifying and mapping health facilities that exist within the itineraries (and their capacity in case of emergency) thus establishing a referral system in case of need.
- Assessing the adequacy (technical and legal) of the transportation (trucks, buses, aircraft, boats, trains etc) for the task they are requested to perform.
- Setting up adequate procedures to verify vehicle maintenance status and equipment and preparedness.
- Providing instructions, guidelines and training to drivers to enhance their capacity and obtain their support for operation procedures (e.g. respect for speed limit, instructions concerning night time driving, prohibition of alcohol etc).
- Ensuring the availability of manifests and list of passengers travelling.
- Preparing regular travel reports, include health-related events that may occur during transportation, to allow for appropriate corrective action.
- Assessing procedures, guidelines and instructions on a regular basis to ensure they remain relevant and appropriate.

## Public Health Safety

The health and safety of migrants and receiving communities, also includes protection from preventable and transportable diseases. The following guidelines are used by all IOM Health Units:

- Pre-departure assessments checks scan travellers for individual 'Fit-To-Travel' health as well as for communicable, transportable and exportable illnesses.
- Measures to prevent outbreaks within camps are taken such as: Promotion of social distancing practices, health education, positive behaviour change programmes, awareness raising programmes, WASH programmes. Which measures are used will depend on local circumstances and health risks.
- Depending on the local situation, pre-departure treatment is given to the travelling population. E.g. Anti-malaria, de-worming, immunizations and health counselling/education. (e.g. for STDs and HIV/AIDS etc.).
- Any travellers with communicable, transportable or exportable diseases in the acute, contagious phase is referred to the appropriate local health facility and their travel delayed until the disease is no longer a health risk to others.

## Individual Travel Safety

IOM endeavours to ensure that each individual is healthy to travel and that any conditions are not aggravated by the movement process. The following guidance helps IOM Health Units to do this.

Every individual travelling must have a travel health assessment to ensure they are fit-to-travel.

Triage is conducted by trained staff who look at migrants for signs of illness or frailty. Each migrant is then placed in one of four triage risk categories:

- ◆ **Travel Risk Category ONE: Those in good health conditions prior to departure.** No additional measures need to be taken for the protection of these travellers.
- ◆ **Travel Risk Category TWO: Those expected to be vulnerable while travelling.** Protection of these travellers is assured by travelling with special conditions of care (e.g. wheel chair or crutches) and the consideration of alternative means of transport (e.g. air lifts Vs road transport).
- ◆ **Travel Risk Category THREE: Those needing constant surveillance/help during Travel.** The protection of these travellers is assured by providing an individual/customized medical escort.
- ◆ **Travel Risk Category FOUR: Those affected by diseases (or a temporary 'high risk health condition' in an acute or active phase)** Travel for these individuals will be delayed until their condition is stabilized.

When triage occurs immediately before travel, persons who fall under the 1st category are directed to the waiting transport vehicle. Persons who have been placed in categories 2,3 or 4 usually require a more detailed examination, treatment or referral to a health facility where appropriate.

Family members of individuals in categories 2-4 are not separated from their relatives.

## Medical Escorts

On occasions where someone has been deemed Not Fit To Travel, but travel can not be delayed, a medical escort will be allocated, using the following guidelines.

- A medical escort (either a physician or a nurse) is allocated to situations where an individual or group of travellers need or may need medical and/or logistical assistance.
- The medical escort must be specifically trained and is selected by the most senior member of IOM medical services at the post where the escort is engaged. This is usually the Chief Medical Officer.
- The medical escort will provide as much medical support to the migrant as possible.
- The medical escort will accompany the patient until the agreed-upon point of separation, and when the patient can be handed over to a responsible entity, either a family member or a health service provider.
- Escorts ensure that any onward travel connections are understood by accompanying family members.

