



28 MAY 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

On 16 April 2018, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information regarding Regional Health Advisors and Hardship Payments.

Further to the Ministry's letter to you on 22 March 2018, your questions are responded to as follows;

Regional Health and Regional Disability Advisors (RHA/RDA)

RHAs and RDAs are health practitioners, often former nurses. It is this knowledge and experience that is drawn on in these roles. The Ministry does not require RHAs and RDAs to maintain an Annual Practising Certificate as they are not "practising" in their profession, in this role.

The Ministry depends on assessments from doctors, nurse practitioners, midwives and dentists to help determine whether people are eligible for health related financial assistance. A qualified medical practitioner provides information in the form of a medical certificate which allows Work and Income to determine whether the conditions are met for health and disability related benefits. Any statement a doctor certifies must be honest and made in good faith. Medical practitioners are required to be qualified within their field of practice, and registered with the Medical Council of New Zealand or an equivalent body.

RHA/RDAs do not make decisions regarding a client's entitlement. They provide guidance to help Case Managers understand the health related information provided so they can determine a person's work obligations in respect to their benefit entitlement.

RHA/RDAs receive the same training provided to Case Managers. A part of staff induction is training in the use of Work and Income's Manuals and Procedures (MAP) which provides guidelines for many key decisions, such as how the legislation supports their decision-making processes. As the RHA/RDA does not make the decisions regarding a client's entitlement there is no specific training provided for this.

It is sometimes necessary for the RHA/RDA to clarify information provided by a person's medical practitioner. There is no set template or questions to ask the medical practitioner as it depends on each individual case, for example, if the information on the medical certificate is unclear or incomplete. If further information is required to determine a person's ability to work a separate consent form is required. As such, your request for a template that RHA/RDA use when contacting a

medical practitioner to clarify information is refused under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act as this information does not exist.

Hardship Payment Count

Only certain types of hardship payments are included in the Hardship Payment count. Please find enclosed '*Hardship Payment Categories – Included and Excluded*' that outlines what categories of hardship payments are included in the Hardship Payment count. If one or more applicable payments are made to the applicant on the same day, those payments are counted as one applicable payment.

Legislation requires the Ministry to record the Hardship Payment count under the Welfare Programme.

However, the Ministry also uses this information when considering a client's needs. This is outlined in Clause 9, sections 9.12 to 9.18 of the Special Needs Grant programme and is available on the Work and Income website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/legislation/welfare-programmes/special-needs-grants-programme/clause-9-restriction-on-payments.html

When a client applies for a sixth hardship grant, they are required to participate in an interview. This is an opportunity to review and discuss with the client what reasonable steps and budgeting activities they have undertaken so far, to identify any on-going difficulties they are facing, and to discuss the types of support that may address these difficulties.

Legislation requires the Ministry to record a client's food balance in order to record the amounts in any 26 week period that are approved in relation to the thresholds in the Welfare Programme. When a Special Needs Grant (SNG) for food is granted, the amount spent is deducted from their food balance, which can result in a negative balance. 26 weeks after the SNG grant date, the amount spent is added back to their food balance. A person can be granted multiple SNGs for food over a 26 week period and the current food balance is reflected by the total amount spent from those grants over the previous 26 weeks.

When determining the amount granted for a SNG for food, the following factors are taken into consideration:

- is it reasonable and fair?
- is the decision justified and lawful?
- when is their next benefit payment?
- what is the usual amount spent on food?
- is the food amount reasonable based on their family size?

The Food Costs Survey provides the Ministry with useful information about the weekly food costs of households and provides guidance to make informed decisions.

Information in the Food Costs Survey has previously been used to inform policy changes which provide additional financial assistance to low-to-middle income households, such as the 2016 Child Material Hardship package.

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter available to the wider public shortly. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development's website. Your personal details will be deleted and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response concerning RHA/RDA and SNGs, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Kay Read
Group General Manager Client Service Delivery

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Hardship Payment Categories - Included and Excluded

The table on this page provides the categories that are included and excluded in Hardship Payments count.

Categories included and excluded

Included	Excluded
<p>Special Needs Grants Programme</p> <p>Medical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACC Travel • Health Travel • Vasectomies and Terminations (including travel) • Laser therapy for removal of birth marks • Wigs and hairpieces <p>Emergency Medical treatment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctors fees • Prescription costs • Accompanying medical treatment overseas <p>Emergency Medical equipment</p> <p>Food</p> <p>Bedding</p> <p>Ambulance fees</p> <p>Effluent treatment system maintenance and repair</p>	<p>Special Needs Grants Programme</p> <p>Re-establishment Grants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees • Sole Parents • Released prisoners - Steps to freedom • Long term patients • Transition from Care to Independence <p>Medical</p> <p>LARC (Long acting reversible contraception)</p> <p>Medical related</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport costs • Prescription related <p>Domestic Violence Programme (15B) Applicants applying for a residence permit in who have lost the financial support of their sponsors</p> <p>Clients transferring from a main benefit to New Zealand Superannuation</p> <p>Assistance during an initial stand down and/or benefit application process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disqualified spouse • Sole parent • Serious hardship <p>Assistance during a non-entitlement period</p> <p>Assistance when a client is on strike</p> <p>Civil Defence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payments • Re-establishment • Relocation

Emergency Dental Treatment

Other Emergency grants

Rural Assistance Payments

Special assistance to affected residents of Waihi

Driver Licences

- New
- Renewal

Designated Doctor travel costs

International Custody Dispute Payments

Advance Payments of Benefits

Ambulance Subscription fees

Appliances and Furniture

(Fridge/freezers and washing machines [http://doogle/resources/helping-clients/procedures-manuals/work-and-income/extra-help/hardship-assistance/preferred-supplier/preferred-supplier-arrangement-for-fridges-fridge-freezers-freezers-and-washing-machines.html])

Attendance at funerals and tangihana

Bedding

Beds, chairs and tables

Bonds and Rent

Car repairs

Car seats and safety helmets

Clothing

Dental treatment

Dentures, glasses or contact lenses and hearing aids

Electricity, gas and water

Essential home repairs

Fire loss or Burglary

Fridges/freezers and washing machines [http://doogle/resources/helping-clients/procedures-manuals/work-and-income/extra-help/hardship-assistance/preferred-supplier/preferred-supplier-arrangement-for-fridges-fridge-freezers-freezers-and-washing-machines.html]

Laser therapy for removal of birthmarks

Other essential grants

Advance Payments of Benefits



Rent arrears

Safety footwear

School costs

School stationery

School uniforms

Telephone installation

Tenancy tribunal fees

Travel for stranded clients

Recoverable Assistance Payments

Ambulance Subscription fees

Attendance at funerals and tangihana

Beds, chairs and tables

Bonds and Rent

Car repairs

Car seats and safety helmets

Clothing

Dentures, glasses or contact lenses and hearing aids

Electricity, gas and water

Fire loss or Burglary

Fridges/freezers and washing machines [http://doogle/resources/helping-clients/procedures-manuals/work-and-income/extra-help/hardship-assistance/preferred-supplier/preferred-supplier-arrangement-for-fridges-fridge-freezers-freezers-and-washing-machines.html]

Other emergency grants

Rent arrears (from 270910)

School costs

School stationery

School uniforms

Telephone installation

Recoverable Assistance Payments

Drivers Licences

- Renewals of existing driver licences
- New driver licences



Tenancy tribunal fees

Travel for stranded clients

Other forms of assistance

Assistance to Live Organ Donors Programme

Course Participation Assistance

Community Services Card Reimbursement

Employment Transition Assistance

Civilian Amputee Assistance

Funeral Grants

Home Help Programme

New Employment Transition Grant

Sole Parent Study Assistance Programme

Seasonal Work Assistance Programme

Student Allowance Transfer Grant

Training Incentive Allowance

Transition to Work

Work Bonus

Content owner: Work and Income Operational Support Last updated: 11 July 2017

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