



19 June 2023

Tēnā koe

On 19 May 2023, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *Please provide the number of Special Needs Grant requests for prescription medication expenses that were declined in each of the calendar years 2018 to 2022.*

The Ministry has interpreted your request to mean 'declined applications'. Please contact the Ministry if this was not the intention of your request for information.

The Ministry, through Work and Income, provides non-recoverable financial assistance to help people meet an immediate and essential need, such as emergency medical treatment.

If the client meets all qualifications, they may be able to receive a Special Needs Grant (SNG) towards the cost of emergency medical treatment including doctor's fees, prescription charges or hospital care.

Information regarding how to qualify for a SNG can be found on the Work and Income website at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/qualifications.html.

Further information on emergency medical treatment can be found on the Work and Income website, here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/emergency-medical-treatment-01.html.

Please note, a SNG for emergency medical treatment may be made only when an emergency situation exists, which has given rise to an immediate need. In determining whether an emergency situation exists, the Ministry considers the following:

- whether the situation was unforeseen
- if the situation could have been foreseen or predicted, whether the client could reasonably have expected to make provision in advance in order to meet the need
- the extent to which not making a grant would:
 - worsen the client's position
 - increase or create any risk to the life or welfare of the client or the client's partner or dependent children **or**
 - cause serious hardship to the client, or the client's partner or dependent children

Further information on Emergency Special Needs Grants can be found on the Ministry's Work and Income website at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/emergency-needs-01.html.

Please refer to **Table One** in the attached **Appendix**, which provides the information you have requested.

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 and any attached documents available to the wider public. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter and attachments on the Ministry'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 regarding Special Needs Grant requests for prescription medication expenses, 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.

Ngā mihi nui

Bridget Saunders

Bridget Saunders
**Manager Issues Resolution
Service Delivery**

APPENDIX

Table One: Number of Special Need Grants (SNG) approved and number of declines for Emergency Medical Treatment -Prescription charges in the period 01 January 2018 to 31 December 2022 by year.

In the calendar year	Number of grants	Number of declines
2018	2,517	27
2019	3,087	30
2020	2,136	57
2021	1,575	39
2022	1,158	30

Notes:

- The table is number of grants and number of declines and not number of clients.
- A client may have multiple grants and declines during the reported period.
- To protect confidentiality the Ministry of Social Development uses processes to make it difficult to identify an individual person or entity from published data.
- These data tables have had random rounding to base three applied to all cell counts in the table.
- Random rounding does not round down to zero, a value of one or two will be rounded to three.
- The impact of applying random rounding is that columns and rows may not add exactly to the given column or row totals.
- The published counts will never differ by more than two counts.