



21 JAN 2020

Kaye Serrah  
[fyi-request-11699-38ac8e94@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-11699-38ac8e94@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Tēnā koe Ms Serrah

Thank you for your email of 21 November 2019 requesting information about staff training in the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) during the period 1990-2010. I apologise for the delay in this response.

I will respond to each of your questions in turn.

- 1. Did front line staff / managers have specific training in the provisions held in other Acts as they pertained to a DSW applicant, at the time of application? E.g, An office worker applies for assistance to DSW because they broke a leg in a cycling accident. Their employer had terminated their employment on the Friday immediately prior to the accident & the employee is considering disputing the decision. The applicant could have cover from ACC but hasn't applied yet & doesn't know to do so.*

All Service Delivery staff and managers are provided with the skills, knowledge and tools, and support to make the right decisions when determining eligibility to welfare assistance set out in the Social Security Act 2018 and administered by the Ministry. This includes staff across channels such as Contact Centres, Service Centres and Online Services.

Training broadly includes:

- determining eligibility for benefit assistance based on the applicant's reasons for applying and their circumstances at the time of application (such as not being able to work due to an accident-related injury)
  - asking questions to better understand an applicant's reason for applying and current circumstances to determine their full and correct entitlement
  - assessing what supporting information is needed to verify the information provided by the applicant (such as a medical certificate from the applicant's doctor confirming an accident-related injury)
  - knowledge of other forms of financial assistance available from the Ministry (such as Accommodation Supplement and Disability Allowance)
  - awareness of assistance available from other agencies (such as ACC, Inland Revenue, or Housing) that is relevant to their individual circumstances and providing advice on where to get information about applying
  - knowing types of income that can affect the benefit rate (including payments from ACC).
- 2. Would the client officer be expected to recognize through training, that ACC may or may not be available to the applicant?*

Case Managers would recognise from their training to encourage an individual to lodge an application with ACC, if the reason for them applying along with the information disclosed to the Ministry as part of their application indicated they may be eligible to payments from ACC, but hadn't already applied. It is important to note that the decision in respect of eligibility for assistance from ACC is determined by that agency.

3. *Would the client officer have had further assistance, ie. a flow chart, reference manual etc to guide them?*

Case Managers have access to a range of information sources, including:

- Manual and Procedures (Map) - The purpose of Map is to provide clear, concise and up to date operational policy guidelines and information to staff based on the current policy and supporting legislation administered by the Ministry. This enables staff to make consistent, accurate and sound decisions, ensuring clients receive their full and correct entitlement. Map is publicly available on the Work and Income website here: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/index.htm](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/index.htm)
- Helpline – a centralised team who are available by phone or email to all staff who need assistance and advice on benefit policy, entitlement and processes
- local trainers and managers for advice.

4. *Would the situation under normal procedure, have been brought to the attention of a supervisor?*

Cases like these would be referred to the supervisor for advice and further direction where the staff member is unsure on the grounds of eligibility.

5. *How would the client officer have been expected to process the application, i.e to either accept, accept with provision, or deny?*

The Ministry has a duty to investigate and decide all applications where it has the relevant information to do so. More information about this is available here: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/core-policy/requests-for-financial-assistance/application-for-benefit/guidelines-application-for-benefit.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/core-policy/requests-for-financial-assistance/application-for-benefit/guidelines-application-for-benefit.html).

Where the Case Manager has confirmed eligibility for a benefit, this would generally be processed with a future expiry date and the applicant informed that they need to provide confirmation from ACC that an application has been lodged and to also let ACC know that they are receiving a benefit. Once a benefit application has been processed, a formal notification letter is sent advising the outcome. Where the decision is to grant a benefit, the letter outlines what date the benefit is granted from and the payment amount. Where the decision is to decline the application due to the applicant not being eligible, the letter provides the reason why they are not eligible and that they have the right to request a review of the decision.

6. *Was the staff training, availability of advice, process standardization & staff performance monitoring, equivalent, in particular regard to derivative Acts, or referenced in subordinate acts, to that which is available today?*

All the training given is based on what is contained in Map and relates to the Accident Compensation Scheme when it came into operation on 1 April 1974, and the following changes:

- up until 1 July 1999, the treatment of weekly compensation depended on the reason the client was receiving a benefit
- from 1 July 1999, weekly compensation became a direct deduction from income tested benefits. However, weekly compensation is still charged as income for some clients whose payment of weekly compensation started before 1 July 1999
- from 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000, when private insurers were able to provide work-related accident insurance cover
- from 1 July 2000, when ACC became the sole provider of accident insurance for all work and non-work injuries and has taken over all clients from the private providers.

There were changes to the Accident Compensation Scheme from 1 April 2002 which included:

- lump sum payments for impairment were reintroduced. These were previously removed in 1992
- recipients of Independence Allowance are able to convert their entitlement to a lump sum payment
- the lump sum payments for impairment and Independence Allowance are exempt from the asset test for Accommodation Supplement and Residential Care Subsidy for a period of 12 months from the date of receipt
- surviving spouses are able to convert their entitlement to weekly earnings related compensation to a lump sum payment.

If you are requesting information in relation to a specific case and would like further information, I would encourage you to contact Work and Income by freephone on 0800 559 009 to discuss your concerns. Alternatively, you can email [Info@MSD.govt.nz](mailto:Info@MSD.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response you have the right to ask for a review by the Office of the Ombudsman. Information on how to make a complaint is available at the following link: [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or by telephone on 0800 802 602.

Thank you again for writing. I hope this information is of help.

Nāku iti noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'K. Satterthwaite', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Kate Satterthwaite  
General Manager  
Ministerial and Executive Services