



9 APR 2015

Mr Chris Glen
fyi-request-2566-6a737129@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Mr Glen,

On 10 March 2015 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *Please can you provide a copy of any documents by MSD Fraud Investigation Unit investigators during interviews with Beneficiaries that are being investigated to determine their relationship status that provide guidance to the interviewer as to what questions to ask of the interviewee & how to structure the interview.*
- *Additionally, please provide any training material given to MSD Fraud Investigation Unit investigators that advise them on how to conduct interviews with Beneficiaries under investigation.*

The Ministry of Social Development takes its responsibilities in administering \$17 billion worth of income assistance to over one million New Zealanders each year very seriously. The Ministry works hard to protect the integrity of the system to ensure it remains fair for all New Zealanders.

It is vital that the public has trust and confidence in the Ministry to ensure people receive their correct entitlement and do not take advantage of the welfare system. The Ministry does not tolerate benefit fraud. The Ministry actively looks to prevent, detect and reduce incidences of benefit fraud and its systems are constantly improving to enable this to happen.

The Ministry has a dedicated team of around 100 specialist fraud investigators located throughout the country, and an Intelligence Unit that identifies emerging fraud risks and trends and works with other government agencies and Intel Units to identify and reduce fraud.

The Ministry's Fraud Investigation Unit investigators are subject to a five week intensive training course and induction, which covers legislation, investigation procedures, collection of evidence and court processes. Investigators also receive practical interview training which consists of theory and scenario based assessments. Subsequent to their training, investigators enter a buddy system where they are paired with a senior investigator for at least the first three months of their employment. This is to provide on-going guidance and support to investigators as they familiarise themselves with the role and investigatory processes.

Enclosed are four documents which advise investigators on how to conduct interviews, take verbal and written statements and determine the relationship status of beneficiaries under investigation.

- Investigation Unit Training Package - Legislation & Case Law Module - Unit L7: Conjugal Status.

- Investigation Unit Training Package – Interviews and Statements Module – Unit S1: Interviews.
- Investigation Unit Training Package – Interviews and Statements Module – Unit S2: Recorded Statements.
- Investigation Unit Training Package – Interviews and Statements Module – Unit S3: Written Statements.

A small amount of information has been withheld, from Unit S1: Interviews, under section 6(c) of the Official Information Act where making that information available would be likely to prejudice the maintenance of the law, including the prevention, investigation and detection of offences.

The following documents, which all staff can access, appear on the Ministry's intranet and provide guidance for client interviews, specifically around determining a beneficiary's relationship status, are also enclosed:

- PEACE Guidance for Client Interviews.
- Determining a client's relationship status.

The following documents, which are also available internally to all staff on the Ministry's intranet, provide guidance in determining a beneficiary's relationship status and verifying the relationship status of a beneficiary for the purpose of qualifying for Sole Parent Support. This information is publicly available on Work and Income's website at <http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/manuals-and-procedures.html>.

- Relationship status for benefit – Introduction.
- Relationship status for benefit - Clients living apart.
- Relationship status for benefit - Clients who are married or in a civil union.
- Relationship status for benefit - Definition of de facto relationship.
- Relationship status for benefit - Domestic violence.
- Relationship status for benefit - Emotional commitment.
- Relationship status for benefit - Financial interdependence.
- Relationship status for benefit - Partners under 18 years.
- Verification of relationship status
- Relationship Status Verification form may be required
- Relationship Status Verification form contents
- Relationship Status Verification form received
- Relationship status verification form
- Relationship status interview questions
- Client to provide details of a nominated person
- Not reasonable for a client to provide details of a nominated person

A high proportion of benefit fraud is the result of beneficiaries not declaring a relationship whilst receiving a benefit. It is critical the beneficiaries discharge their obligations for receiving a benefit and advise Work and Income immediately of a change of circumstances including their relationship status.

A presentation was also identified as being in scope of your request, however this is withheld under section 6(c) of the Official Information Act as the release of this presentation would prejudice the prevention and detection of benefit fraud.

I hope you find this information helpful. You have the right to seek an investigation and review of my response by the Ombudsman, whose address for contact purposes is:

The Ombudsman
Office of the Ombudsman
PO Box 10-152
WELLINGTON 6143

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carl Crafar', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Carl Crafar
Associate Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery