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Tēnā koe Petra O'Rourke

Thank you for your email dated 28 July 2024 to the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) regarding Special Needs Grants (SNGs). I am replying on behalf of the Chief Executive.

You asked a number of questions around SNGs, which I will answer below.

1. Is a Case Manager able to decline a request if client doesn't show a full bank statement?

This depends on the situation.

To qualify for a Special Needs Grant (SNG), a client and their partner (if any) must meet the eligibility criteria, including an income and cash asset test. To determine whether a client meets the eligibility criteria for the assistance they are applying for, we may request verification if needed. Verification of income and cash assets may be requested in various forms, such as payslips and/or bank statements.

Further information about eligibility criteria for SNGs available in the following links: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/qualifications.html and www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/legislation/welfare-programmes/special-needs-grants-programme/part-2-universal-entrance-criteria.html.

Further information about verification for SNGs is available in the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/verification.html.

2. What happens if a Case Manager isn't available to assist in the event of an immediate or essential need? E.g., it is the weekend or they are unwell and not working, is there flexibility for the call centre to help?

You can call 0800 559 009, Monday-Friday, 7am to 6pm, and Saturday, 8am-1pm. Contact Centres are closed on Sunday and outside working hours.

Clients can also use MyMSD, the Ministry's online service.

3. Are SNGs granted under a particular set of rules and how are these rules applied? E.g., are all MSD staff trained to the same level so as to eliminate discrimination?

SNGs are granted under the Special Needs Grant Welfare Programme, which is treated as if it were a special assistance programme approved and established under section 101 of the Social Security Act 2018.

The Special Needs Grant Welfare Programme sits within the Ministry's Manuals and Procedures (Map). Map provides operational policy guidelines to our staff based on current legislation

All information in Map is available externally on the Ministry's website. You can find the Map link to the Special Needs Grant Welfare Programme at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/legislation/welfare-programmes/special-needs-grants-programme/index.html.

4. What is a Case Manager's responsibility to a client when providing information about SNGs?

This depends on the circumstances, however you can read about Case Managers' general responsibility to clients at the following link: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/about-msd/our-responsibilities/index.html.

5. Does a client's debt balance make it less likely for a client to receive extra help?


A client's debt balance can be one of several factors taken into consideration when making a decision regarding extra help. This is looked at on a case-by-case basis and may depend on other factors such as the reason for the hardship request, how many grants of the same kind the client has received within the last 52 weeks, or if a hardship grant would put the client into further hardship.

You may be interested to know that Ministry staff must consider existing debt if a client is applying for an Advance Payment of Benefit or Recoverable Assistance Payment.

You can read more about debt balance in relation to Advance Payments of Benefit and Recoverable Assistance Payment here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/advance-payment-of-benefit/existing-debt-level-01.html and www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/recoverable-assistance-payment/work-and-income-debt-balance-01.html.

Thank you for writing. I hope this information is of assistance.

Nāku noa, nā



p.p.
Magnus O'Neill
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