

Benefits and Entitlements



This Information Sheet is about Work and Income benefits you may be able to receive if you or your family/whānau or caregivers are affected by cancer.

Special circumstances may entitle you to further payments. Ask the hospital social workers or staff at the local office of Work and Income or phone the **Work and Income Contact Centre on 0800 559 009**, or see the Useful Contacts section at the end of this Information Sheet.

Who can get income support?

If your illness is temporary and you can't work or seek work you may be able to get the Sickness Benefit. To receive this:

- you must be over 18 years of age, or
- 16-17 and living with a partner and are supporting 1 or more children.

If your illness is long-term and you are permanently and severely disabled or ill and can't work regularly for 15 hours or more a week you may be able to get an Invalids Benefit. The Invalids Benefit is paid at a higher rate than the Sickness Benefit.

It is advisable to apply for a Sickness Benefit which can be granted quickly and then be transferred to the Invalids Benefit if eligible.

If you are a sole parent, or a woman of 50 years of age or older who is living alone, or if you care for someone sick or infirm (other than your partner), you may be able to get the Domestic Purposes Benefit (DPB-Sole Parent, the DPB-Woman Alone or the DPB-Care of Sick or Infirm).

To qualify for any of these types of income support:

- you must be a legal resident of New Zealand when you apply. This means you normally live here and have been living here continuously for two years or more at any one time since becoming a New Zealand citizen.
- depends on your income. Income means any money you or your partner get from work, investments, your own business, rent or boarders, or Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) payments.

And for the DPB-Care of Sick or Infirm:

- a medical certificate for the patient is required as proof of their sickness or disability. The application form also requires verification that without your ongoing support hospitalisation would be necessary.

If you don't meet the criteria you may still qualify for an Emergency Benefit on the grounds of hardship. (If you are not a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident you may still qualify for an Emergency Benefit.)

Extra help

If you are on a low income, or already get one of the main types of income support, you may be able to get extra help. Most types of extra help depend on your income and the costs involved.

Accommodation Supplement

The Accommodation Supplement helps towards rent, board, or the cost of owning a home. You only qualify if your costs are over a certain amount and your income and assets under certain limits.

Supplementary assistance is not paid if you live in a Housing New Zealand home.

Disability Allowance

The Disability Allowance helps towards the extra ongoing costs you or your family/whānau have because of illness.

It can help with costs like regular visits to the doctor or hospital, medicines, counselling, extra clothes, travel, personal alarms, lawn mowing and gardening. You need to prove you have lived in New Zealand permanently and show medical proof that you have a disability.

Community Services Card

The Community Services Card gives you and your children cost reductions on doctors' fees and prescriptions. Most people who are on a benefit automatically get one of these cards. If you are on a low income you can also apply for one.

Applications can be made at your local Work and Income office or by calling the Community Services Card National Centre on 0800 999 999.

Family Support

Family Support is cash help for families on a low income. It is usually paid by Work and Income if your main income is a benefit, but Inland Revenue pays it if your total income is more than \$20,000 a year before tax.

The amount you get depends on how many children you have and their ages.

Special Disability Allowance

This can be paid to a partner not in hospital or residential care to help with the extra costs of their partner's hospitalisation.

This can be paid to a client when they are receiving NZ Superannuation, Veteran's Pension, Invalids Benefit, Unemployment Benefit, Sickness Benefit or a related Emergency Benefit, and their partner is a patient in a hospital or residential care, and is receiving a reduced rate of benefit.

Temporary Additional Support

This is a non-taxable supplementary payment that can be paid for a maximum of 13 weeks. It is paid as a last resort to help a person with their regular essential living costs.

Advances

In order to receive an Advance Payment of Benefit an applicant must meet an income and asset test, and have an immediate and essential need.

Childcare Subsidy/OSCAR

This is available to assist seriously disabled or ill caregivers.

Funeral Grant

This is a non-taxable lump sum payment that provides assistance towards a person's funeral expenses. It is designed to cover actual and reasonable funeral costs only and is income and asset tested.

Widow's Benefit

This provides income support for a woman whose partner has died and who meets the criteria. Phone 0800 559 009 for more information.

Appointment of an Agent

For someone undergoing cancer treatment or who is unwell, it can be helpful to appoint an agent to act on their behalf and communicate with Work and Income when required. This involves completing a form obtainable from your oncology social worker or from Work and Income. Phone 0800 559 009.

Entitlements other than Work and Income

High User Card – GP

If you have 12 or more visits to your General Practitioner in a 12-month period for the same illness, you can get a High User Card through your GP. This gives you cheaper visits for subsequent treatment for the illness. The High User card is not income tested.

Prescription Card – Chemist

You can get a Prescription Card also known as the Pharmaceutical Subsidy Card through your local pharmacies.

This allows for families/whānau receiving more than 20 prescription items per year to get further prescriptions free (for holders of a Community Services Card) and for \$2.00 (for people without a Community Services Card).

The exception is a part charge on non-subsidised drugs. The Prescription Card is not income tested.

Travel Reimbursement – Hospital

You may be entitled to a reimbursement of your travel costs. This is dependent on distance and number of trips and, in some circumstances, a Community Services Card is required. To apply you can call the Ministry of Health Travel Assistance on 0800 281222 (press 2), or talk to your hospital social worker.

Care Plus

Care Plus is a new service being introduced through Public Health Organisations (PHOs). It is aimed at people who are enrolled in a PHO medical practice, who need to visit their family GP or nurse often because of significant chronic illnesses such as diabetes or heart disease, have acute medical or mental health needs, or a terminal illness.

People who use Care Plus will get an initial comprehensive assessment, and an individual care plan will be developed with services being provided at low or reduced cost. Your family doctor or nurse will give you more information and assess you to see if you are eligible for Care Plus.

Working for Families Tax Credits (Inland Revenue – IRD)

This is part of the Working for Families programme whereby Inland Revenue pays family assistance to working families/whānau with dependent children aged 18 and under, and who meet the criteria. Ask your social worker for more information or see the contact details at the end of this Information Sheet

Queries about benefits and entitlements

Hospital social workers, oncology social workers at treatment centres, or your local office of Work and Income can help you with any queries.

For in-patients, the hospital social workers can arrange a visit from Work and Income Liaison. Work and Income also provide a Home Visit Service to people who are sick.

Useful contacts

Community Services Card National Centre
Phone 0800 999 999

Work and Income Contact Centre
Phone 0800 559 009

Work and Income website:
www.workandincome.govt.nz

Working for Families programme information
www.ird.govt.nz/familyassistance/
or phone 0800 257 777

HealthPac Contact Centre
Phone 0800 458 448

Ministry of Health National
Travel Assistance Information
Phone 0800 281222 (press 2)