

Tips for Health Providers

How to make sure your patients get all the support they're entitled to.

For more tips, check out the new Work and Income Health Pathway.

It's live now on your community health pathways – search Work and Income.

Employment

For the majority of people, work has a positive impact on their health and wellbeing. As well as important financial benefits, being engaged in mahi also:

- reduces the likelihood of developing anxiety, depression or suicide
- encourages social connectedness and a sense of purpose
- increases mobility and physical fitness
- provides role-modelling for others in the household and community
- contributes to a longer healthy life expectancy.

You play an important role in framing work as a positive health intervention. As at October 2024, 12% of working age adults were reliant on a benefit as their main income, and nearly half of those were on benefit because of a health condition or disability.

The longer people stay on a health or disability-related benefit, the less likely they are to return to paid work.

When you're completing a Work Capacity Medical Certificate, consider talking to your patient about:

- how work might positively affect their health condition and have other positive effects for their whānau
- ways Work and Income can support them into work. Our role is to support and upskill people, think about new roles or sectors they'd like to work in and connect them with suitable employers. We can also provide 'work readiness basics like CV writing support, interviewing skills and driver licensing
- part-time work alongside the benefit. People can earn up to \$160 per week from paid work before their benefit is affected – even a small number of hours can make a significant difference to their weekly income.

Community Services Cards

A Community Services Card (CSC) can reduce the cost of a range of things, including visits to primary care and after-hours services, public transport and basic prescription fees.

Making sure all your eligible patients have a valid CSC is a useful exercise – perhaps you have a HIP, Health Coach or other team member who could take this on?

Information about eligibility, income thresholds and how to apply can be found at workandincome.govt.nz/csc

Disability Allowance

This income-tested assistance provides up to \$80.35 a week (as at 1 April 2025) for people who have ongoing costs associated with a chronic health condition or disability. This includes children and people aged over 65. People don't have to be on another benefit to qualify.

We require a Disability Certificate to be completed and signed by a registered medical or nurse practitioner, outlining the costs you consider to be **essential, directly related to the disability and of therapeutic value to the patient, and aren't covered by another agency.**

The range of costs we can help with is extensive, common costs include:

- primary care appointment fees
- travel costs to health appointments
- alternative treatments (such as physiotherapy, acupuncture, Rongoa, mirimiri, ADHD coaching)
- non-subsidised medications (for which we require an additional letter confirming the patient has tried all suitable subsidised alternatives for their condition)
- essential vitamins, minerals and supplements
- additional costs of special foods for conditions such as Coeliac disease
- counselling
- medical alarms.

You don't need to provide the costs of these items – the person does – this can be either a receipt, an invoice, or a quote if they haven't yet purchased the items.

The more information you can provide about why you consider these items to be essential, the easier it is for us to determine whether they meet our criteria.

For a full list of costs we can help with and how to apply, go to:

workandincome.govt.nz/dacosts

Child Disability Allowance

There are likely children in your practice who qualify for this but are missing out.

Child Disability Allowance (CDA) is **not** income or asset tested. It provides an extra \$60.55 a week (as at 1 April 2025) to recognise the extra care and attention that a child with a serious health condition or disability requires.

Common conditions that might qualify for this support include:

- severe or newly diagnosed epilepsy or diabetes
- coeliac disease in a young child who can't manage their diet themselves
- significant physical or intellectual disability
- moderate or severe neurodiversity including ADHD and ASD
- eating disorders, cancers and immunological conditions.

We require a medical certificate to be completed and signed by a registered medical or nurse practitioner. It needs to state the child requires substantially more care and attention than another child would, because of the stated health condition or disability.

Occasionally, other supporting documents may be required to help us assess eligibility.

Supported Living Payment for Carers

This benefit provides assistance to a person if they're caring for someone who needs hospital, rest home or residential care. The person providing the care can be a friend, neighbour or relative, but can't be their partner. The carer needs to be **available for 24** hour care and attention, which doesn't mean they need to provide care around the clock, but they need to be close enough by to do this if and when it's needed.

Examples of the sort of care that might be provided include:

- meal preparation
- helping with medications
- bathroom assistance and supporting mobility to avoid falls
- providing company.

You need to complete and sign a supporting medical certificate as the medical or nurse practitioner of the person being cared for (not the carer).

This type of care sits well alongside a formal 'package of care' that eligible people might get after a health needs assessment. The people who receive this benefit can work (it's an income-tested benefit) or study part time, and don't need to be trained.

To recognise the important mahi people do, we encourage carers to enrol in free training to get qualifications to recognise their work.

For more information go to myskill.co.nz

Health Pathways

We've supported the development of a fantastic Work and Income Health Pathway. This is live on your community health pathways now, and can be found by typing *Work and Income* into the search bar.

Practitioner information

For a one-stop-shop for all practitioner information on our website, go to workandincome.govt.nz/practitionerinfo

You don't determine eligibility, we do!

This is often not well understood, but medical and nurse practitioners don't decide what benefit or financial support someone is going to get from us. You're simply providing us with the information we require about their health condition so we can determine what they may be eligible for.

Second opinions

Work and Income has a second opinion process. Designated Health Practitioners give us another opinion on a person's work capacity or other medical matters relating to benefit entitlement. Work and Income arranges and pays for a longer appointment (typically an hour) with a Designated Health Practitioner, and receives a report at the end of the process. You can request a Designated Health Practitioner report by contacting us or ticking the box on the Work Capacity Medical Certificate. Patients can also request this. Sometimes they help if you and your patient don't agree over their work capacity.

For more information go to:

workandincome.govt.nz/secondopinions

Use *your* team

We know how busy primary care is, so please utilise all your team, and other supports that your PHO can provide. HIPs, health coaches, counsellors, social workers and others can be invaluable in making sure your patients are getting the right supports from Work and Income, as well as having those motivational conversations about working. We're more than happy to provide training for any of your team, so you're all aware of what we offer.

Use *our* team

Each of our regions has a Work and Income Regional Health and Disability Team made up of:

- Regional Health Advisors (who usually have clinical backgrounds)
- Regional Disability Advisors (who have usually had experience working in the disability or health sector)
- Health and Disability Co-ordinators.

They're there to support you, as well as Work and Income's frontline staff. If you have any questions about our services or supports in general, or how we can help a specific client with a health condition or disability, please reach out to them. Their contacts can be found on Health Pathways, but please **don't** share them with your patient!

Principal Health Advisor

Dr Cathy Stephenson is the Ministry of Social Development's Principal Health Advisor. If you have any questions or would like more information, contact

Cathy.Stephenson006@msd.govt.nz