

Sickness Benefit

Changes at Work and Income

Changing the way we deliver services to clients

- Many Sickness and Invalid's Benefit clients have told us they want to work and want our help to get work
- We are working actively to help them plan for and move into work if they are ready

A New Service for Sickness and Invalid's Benefit recipients

- We have focused on providing ways to help clients exit benefit, by helping them access healthcare, supported employment, training and rehabilitation, etc
- We also need to be sure we have a robust process by which people come on to these benefits, and that this process works for you as well

We rely on you for some information:

Section 54B of the Social Security Act 1964 requires a person applying for a Sickness Benefit to include a certificate from a medical practitioner, registered dentist or registered midwife

The certificate must ... :

- certify that the person's capacity for work is affected by sickness, injury or disability, and
- indicate the nature of the sickness, injury or disability, the extent to which the person's capacity for work is affected, and the length of time this is likely to last.

WE RELY ON YOU TO TELL US ABOUT THIS

SB eligibility—the process

1. Client receiving SB gets sent computer generated SB Review form
2. Client sees doctor for an assessment of medical eligibility
3. If medically eligible, doctor ticks and signs certificate
4. Client continues to receive Sickness Benefit for up to 13 more weeks (*if other criteria met eg. income, residency*)
5. If you say the client is NOT medically eligible for SB, we'll look at other benefit options

IB eligibility – a reminder

1. Medical eligibility for INVALID'S benefit is determined by a Work and Income Designated Doctor
2. Eligibility requires the medical condition to be both permanent (expected to last 2 years of more) AND severe (client cannot work 15 hours a week or more)
3. The Designated Doctor will request a Host Doctor report from the clients usual GP. It is important you tell the Designated Doctor all issues relevant to the person's medical condition that might affect benefit entitlement

Sickness Benefit forms easier to fill in – from August 2005

- In consultation with Doctors, we've made some improvements to the Sickness Benefit medical certificate
- For example, we don't ask you to 'rank severity' of the incapacity codes any more – tell us the one that mainly stops the client working
- We've asked for more rehab information if you know it
- New forms from August 15 2005

The extra rehabilitation information:

The new 'Towards Employment' section of the form asks:

- whether the client is well enough to be contacted by us to plan for the future
- whether the client is capable of part time work or training
- whether there are rehabilitation activities (medical and non-medical) that will help the client move into work

Getting a 'second opinion'

- You may have heard through the media that we are introducing a provision to allow GPs to request that another doctor make the assessment of a client's medical eligibility for the Sickness Benefit
- In Wellington, Doctors and Work and Income are currently exploring ways to make this work
- If a GP indicates they want another doctor to make this assessment, the client is referred by us to a Work and Income Designated Doctor
- We will be introducing this nationwide, with refinements, in the middle of the year (with the new SB med cert forms)

What happens if the client doesn't meet medical eligibility for SB?

If you tell us that a client doesn't meet the medical eligibility for the Sickness Benefit, we will look at their eligibility for:

- The Unemployment Benefit (paid at the same rate), where we will work to help them into sustainable employment
- The Invalid's Benefit (paid at a higher rate), for clients who are permanently (2+ years) and severely (can't regularly work 15 or more hours a week) incapacitated

What's next?

There are other improvements we're looking at as well:

1. Sickness Benefit forms available electronically (the possibility of capacity for electronic return of forms is also being investigated)
2. Ability to indicate the need for a specialist opinion, where you think appropriate, to determine Sickness Benefit eligibility
3. Similar improvements to the forms and processes around the Invalid's Benefit
4. Benefit reform and a 'single benefit'

Single Core Benefit and New Service Model

Government has recently announced changes to the way we deliver services to people on working age benefits

The single core benefit will have two streams:

- rapid return to full-time work, or
- work development and preparation (as individual circumstances allow).

We will continue to work with doctors during the development

Feedback? sue.bidrose001@msd.govt.nz

Are you interested in being more involved?

We need more doctors for two things:

- to be designated doctors
- to be willing to sit on medical appeals boards from time to time

Are you interested? Tell me, and we'll send you information

Feedback? sue.bidrose001@msd.govt.nz