

Our purpose

Our mission and purpose is to “...help New Zealanders to be safe, strong and independent. **Manaaki Tangata, Manaaki Whānau**”.

We help New Zealanders by undertaking a broad range of functions and responsibilities while building public trust and confidence in our ability to protect the integrity of the welfare system.

This ethics framework contributes to ensuring that our efforts to protect the integrity of the welfare system are consistent with our primary purpose and our commitment to treat clients and staff fairly and ethically.

Ethical principles underpin our codes of conduct for obtaining information and the State Services Commission “Standards of Integrity and Conduct”. We use these principles in every decision we make and action we take.

We protect the integrity of the welfare system by:

- using tools and expertise to integrate prevention strategies into new systems
- minimising errors, client debt and fraud in the welfare system
- managing the collection of overpayments, recoverable assistance loans and other balances owed by former clients.

Scope of this framework

This framework applies to all staff, contractors, and service providers who play a role in investigation activities.

Goals of the Framework

The Ministry recognises that our investigation activities often require difficult decisions and complex choices. The framework aims to ensure that those decisions are made in ways which are lawful, ethical, effective, while maintaining the public’s trust and confidence.

We aim to protect the integrity of the welfare system, to reduce the negative consequences of fraud for our clients, and to treat clients and staff fairly and with respect.



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“Help New Zealanders to be safe, strong and independent”

Three Core Outcomes

New Zealanders get the support they require.

New Zealanders are resilient and live in inclusive and supportive communities.

New Zealanders participate positively in society and reach their potential.



Benefit fraud (Client and Staff)

Fewer people commit fraud, and we operate with fairness and integrity, protecting the Ministry’s reputation.



Intelligence Unit

We use tools and intelligence analysis practice to transform information and data into knowledge and understanding that informs and influences strategic, operational and tactical decision making.

Our Ethics and Principles

The authority to carry out our functions is set out in legislation, such as the Social Security Act 2018. The authority to act comes with a responsibility to carry out those functions ethically and responsibly, including meeting our obligations to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

In all our work the following principles will guide our behaviour at MSD and how they apply to prevention, detection and response activities.



To be fair, we will:

- communicate with others in ways that promote their understanding of our needs
- ensure clients understand they can seek support from a lawyer or advocate
- listen and ask relevant questions in a professional and respectful manner
- recognise that many clients are in vulnerable states
- identify integrity issues early to prevent debt and harm to clients.



To be impartial, we will

- engage with staff and clients about our work
- deal with others without cultural or other bias and favouritism
- consider all facts and evidence on their own merit
- avoid tunnel vision when considering appropriate decisions and outcomes.



To maintain confidentiality, we will:

- treat all information with respect, and access it only in the proper course of duties
 - safeguard our files and the information collected
 - share information only as legally allowed with authorised individuals or agencies
 - manage information according to applicable laws and MSD policies.
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To be responsible, we will:

- conduct inquiries in a non-adversarial manner using the most appropriate method
- be mindful of client mental health issues that an investigation may affect
- use our powers reasonably and in accordance with the law
- only seek necessary information relevant to the inquiry.



To be trustworthy, we will:

- establish a rapport with the clients and staff we deal with
- report factually on our work, opinions, concerns and findings in an objective and timely manner
- be open and honest about our work and the potential outcomes for clients and staff.



To be accountable, we will:

- have regard for our own safety and the safety of others
 - be prepared to stand behind the decisions made and actions taken
 - demonstrate that actions have been taken with sufficient reason and in good faith
 - review our actions with peers and supervisors to improve practices.
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Ethical decision making

When faced with an ethical issue, there is rarely only one correct way to act. The guide below is designed to help you to make professional and ethically responsible decisions.

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Understand the facts

- Learn more about the situation
 - Make inquiries, find additional facts to ensure you have the best possible understanding of the situation
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Explore your options

- Identify and understand each option available to you
 - Take account of legislative requirements that affect your options
 - Consider the consequences of each option
 - Be mindful of how your own personal bias and opinion is affecting your choice of options
 - Be open to new and different alternatives
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Check your planned option is the best one

- Reflect and review the option you plan to take
 - Consider what you know for a fact compared to what you believe might be the case
 - Strive to make decisions using fact-based information
 - Ensure your proposed option aligns with our policies and core values
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Act on the chosen option

- Take practical steps to implement the chosen option
 - Act professionally and in a timely way
 - Actively consider any legal requirements that may influence your actions
 - Be aware of any personal biases or views that affect your conduct
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Continuous Reflection

- Learn from how the activity is conducted
 - During the activity reflect on each stage of the process from discussing benefit entitlements with the client, receiving an allegation of fraud, to the investigation steps and conducting a prosecution
 - Consider what you have learnt while completing your work. Discuss these openly with team members to help improve our practices in a transparent and blameless manner
 - Engage clients and staff to seek feedback about their experience
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