



5 January 2026

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 4 December 2025, requesting information about the Disability Allowance and counselling.

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Please find my decision on each part of your request set out separately below.

- *Please provide full intranet information for staff procedures under the title "Disability Allowance and Counselling" [\[no link find out why\]](#)*

Please see the attached **appendix**, which provides the full intranet information for "Disability Allowance and Counselling".

- *Furthermore, please provide the following information: **More than 30 sessions**: Please define the time period for which a 30 session limit applies. (For example, a year? a lifetime?) Please define what information is sufficient for WINZ when describing 'exceptional circumstances'. I am looking for a balance that provides necessary information to WINZ while respecting the confidentiality of my client when dealing with WINZ staff.*

A client can access up to 30 counselling sessions in total, within a lifetime period, if they have met the eligibility criteria, which includes utilising all funded options available before requesting support.

For a client to qualify for Disability Allowance for more than 30 counselling sessions they must have exceptional circumstances. The decision to approve more than 30 sessions is usually made with support from the Ministry's Regional Health Advisors and Regional Disability Advisors and/or the Ministry's Principal Health and Disability Advisors where needed.

Exceptional circumstances could include, but are not limited to, the following situations:

- a client with a particular diagnosis that may require additional, but not ongoing number of sessions to treat it (e.g. Obsessive Compulsive Disorder or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder);

- a client with a mental health condition that is complicated by co-morbidities which may require a longer period to benefit from therapy i.e. someone with significant depression and autism
- a client who is being supported using a longer-term, therapeutic approach such as EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing) or DBT (Dialectical Behavioural Therapy) and requires a slightly longer period of counselling.

This is not an exhaustive list, and each situation is considered on its own merits. We encourage clients to submit an application to test their eligibility.

On occasion, where there is a clear need for longer term support based on the above outlined situations along with additional needs, the client may have psychotherapy included as an ongoing cost under Disability Allowance. This decision is made by the Principal Health and Disability Advisors. In these cases, the cost is ongoing but subject to an annual review or at the period set by the Advisors (i.e. 6 months).

- **Commencement date:** *What is the accepted start date for counselling? If a client begins counselling and the counsellor completes, dates and signs the Disability Certificate Counselling form, but a delay is encountered while trying to enrol in a GP practice - hence a delay in submitting the fully completed form to WINZ, does WINZ pay from the start date of counselling?*

Where a client has not been able to enrol themselves in a GP practice to approve counselling costs, causing their application to be delayed and go on past the dates they had initially booked for counselling, the Ministry would not backdate this payment.

If the client has provided the appropriate application forms prior to counselling but the delay is caused by the Ministry not meeting the expected processing timeframe, the Ministry would backdate this payment to the date that the DA form is completed by the General Practitioner.

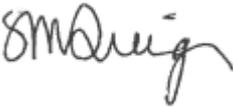
Please note, the expected timeframe for processing a completed application is five working days.

I will be publishing this decision letter, with your personal details deleted, on the Ministry's website in due course.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with my decision on your request, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui

pp. 

Anna Graham
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services

Disability Allowance and Counselling

These pages provide you information about including Counselling as a cost in Disability Allowance.

On this Page:

Introduction

Disability Allowance can help pay for the costs of counselling fees, and the transport costs required to attend counselling, up to the maximum amount of Disability Allowance payable per week.

Qualifications

To have counselling costs included as part of Disability Allowance, the client must:

- meet the qualifications for Disability Allowance
- need counselling because of the disability
- not be able to get counselling for free
- receive the counselling from a bona fide counsellor

Initially, counselling costs can be included in Disability Allowance for up to 10 sessions.

[Disability Allowance - Qualifications \[http://doogole/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/qualifications.html#P29_706\]](http://doogole/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/qualifications.html#P29_706)

[Disability Allowance - Counselling \[http://doogole/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/counselling-01.html\]](http://doogole/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/counselling-01.html)

Number of sessions

Generally:

assistance is limited to a maximum of 10 sessions on first application
and up to 20 additional sessions can be considered on the recommendation of the client's medical practitioner or specialist
assistance for more than 30 sessions can be considered if the client has exceptional circumstances.

Additional counselling sessions after the client has reached the limit of 30 sessions should only be considered in exceptional circumstances, and when the client has provided receipts as verification of attendance and a new Disability Certificate – Counselling form has been provided.

The client will also need to provide supporting evidence from their doctor or specialist that the counselling is directly related to their disability and is still necessary and beneficial to them in addressing their disability.

Contact your Regional Health Advisor or Regional Disability Advisor for advice before approving assistance for further counselling sessions after the client has reached the limit of 30 sessions.

Application process

When a client tells us they wish to apply for assistance with the ongoing cost of counselling, they will need:

- to complete a Disability Certificate – Counselling
- to complete an application for Disability Allowance if the client is not currently receiving Disability Allowance
- a 'Disability Allowance – Record of Counselling Card'
- a copy of the 'Disability Allowance and Counselling Factsheet'.

At the interview you need to let the client know:

- how much we are able to contribute towards the cost of the counselling sessions
- when we will review the inclusion of this cost
- that they must tell us if they stop attending.

The client also needs to consider:

- what they hope to get from the counselling

how many sessions they may need

how they are going to pay.

Note the 'Disability Allowance - Record of Counselling Card' can be ordered through KEA.

Payment process

When a client meets the criteria to have Disability Allowance paid for the on-going cost of counselling, the cost can only be included for the period that they are attending the counselling sessions.

SWIFTT requires an expiry date for counselling costs to be entered in the client's record. SWIFTT will automatically exclude the cost and reassess Disability Allowance once the counselling costs have expired.

Note to ensure the client receives their full entitlement the start date must be the beginning of the pay period when the first visit is due and the expiry date must be the beginning of the next pay period following the last counselling session.

Disability Allowance can also be paid for the cost of transport to counselling.

[Disability Allowance - Calculating rate and expiry date-counselling \[http://doogie/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/calculating-rate-and-expiry-date-counselling.html\]](http://doogie/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/calculating-rate-and-expiry-date-counselling.html)

[Disability Allowance - Transport-counselling \[http://doogie/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/transport-counselling-01.html\]](http://doogie/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/transport-counselling-01.html)

The agreement for counselling is between the client and the counsellor and the responsibility to make the payment is with the client.

The client may wish to consider:

setting up an automatic payment from their bank account

arranging the counselling session on the same day they receive their benefit payment.

Redirection of Payment

If a client advises you that they are having difficulty managing the payments you may consider as a last resort redirecting part of their benefit to the counsellor when there is good cause to do so.

You need to discuss with the client the following if you are considering redirecting part of the client's benefit:

If they meet the 'good cause' criteria.

All other options have been considered (for example the client setting up an automatic payment through their bank account).

That they can cancel the direct payment to the counsellor at any time (they need to allow two to three days to do this).

Payments to the counsellor are made weekly.

We can only make the payment to the counsellor when their benefit is current and there is enough money available to cover the cost.

If they don't go to the counselling session, but we have paid part of their benefit to the counsellor, they will have to talk to the counsellor about getting that money back.

They must let us know if they stop going to counselling as soon as possible, so we can stop making the payments to the counsellor.

[Redirection of Benefit - Good Cause \[http://doogie/map/income-support/core-policy/redirection-of-benefit-payment/good-cause-01.html\]](http://doogie/map/income-support/core-policy/redirection-of-benefit-payment/good-cause-01.html)

[Redirection of Benefit - Processing Standards \[http://doogie/resources/helping-clients/processing-standards/redirection-of-benefit-payment-01.html\]](http://doogie/resources/helping-clients/processing-standards/redirection-of-benefit-payment-01.html)

[Factsheet – Disability Allowance and Counselling \(PDF 162.04KB\) \[http://doogie/documents/resources/helping-clients/forms-templates/work-and-income/factsheets/factsheet-da-counselling.pdf\]](http://doogie/documents/resources/helping-clients/forms-templates/work-and-income/factsheets/factsheet-da-counselling.pdf)