



31 JUL 2020

Dear

On 3 July 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- 1. The number of beneficiaries referred to drug testable positions in the year to June 30, 2020.*
- 2. The number who failed.*
- 3. The number of sanctions applied.*
- 4. The number of drug sanctions applied to beneficiaries with children.*
- 5. The number of children affected.*

The Ministry works closely with people receiving a benefit to support them into employment. If someone is not able to obtain work as a result of failing a drug test, the Ministry encourages them and offers them support to enable them to address their drug use and get into a position where they are able to access employment opportunities.

Sanctions are a last resort. Stopping or reducing someone's benefit for failing a drug test is a serious step and one the Ministry would only take after exhausting other options. As you may be aware, sanctions are a legal obligation and any changes to any sanctions would require changes to the Social Security Act.

People with children have 50% protection to ensure that children are not negatively impacted by the use of the sanction. Further information about what happens when a client fails or does not take a pre-employment drug test is available on the Work and Income website at: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/on-a-benefit/not-meeting-your-obligations.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/on-a-benefit/not-meeting-your-obligations.html).

Further information about the obligations clients are required to meet is available on the Work and Income website at: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/on-a-benefit/obligations/index.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/on-a-benefit/obligations/index.html).

I can advise that during the 2019/2020 financial year, 37,066 clients were referred to drug testable positions by Work and Income. Of those, 73 resulted in a drug test obligation failure. The total number of drug test obligation failures that resulted in a sanction is 44 with 9 of those being for clients with children. There were 11 children affected by the sanctions.

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter and any attached documents available to the wider public. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development's website. Your personal details will be deleted, and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact [OIA\\_Requests@msd.govt.nz](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding drug testable job referrals by Work and Income, 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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



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**Manager, Issue Resolution  
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