



17 February 2025

Tēnā koe

### **Official Information Act Request**

Thank you for your email of 28 January 2025, requesting information about counselling services for claimants, including guidance, and what organisations the Ministry refers claimants to.

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.

- a) Disclosure of the guidance policy document that sets out the eligibility of claimants of abuse for counselling funded by MSD;*

There is no specific document that relates to the eligibility of claimants of abuse for counselling funded by Historic Claims. If a claimant is eligible to register a Historic Claim, they are eligible for six counselling sessions funded while their claims are being processed. Funding for additional sessions is at the discretion of the General Manager of Historic Claims.

- b) At what point in the claims process may a claimant request counselling support from MSD Historic Claims, and at what point can they no longer do so?*

Counselling support can be requested once a claimant is confirmed as eligible to register a claim, until the claims process has been completed.

- c) Confirmation as to whether all incarcerated claimants are ineligible to access any counselling support through MSD*

Prisons have different rules and criteria around allowing access to counsellors who are not contracted service providers with the Department of Corrections (Corrections). Other counsellors may also not be comfortable entering prisons to meet with claimants.

Historic Claims staff will work with and guide claimants in how to access Corrections mental health support via custodial staff, prison nursing staff, or prison case managers who can then refer claimants onto support services within that specific prison.

Corrections has also advised the Ministry that they do not have a generic, standardised process of accessing counselling, and in these cases Historic Claims' staff may contact the prison where the claimant is housed directly (with prior consent from the claimant) to enquire what the processes for a referral are within that particular site.

Once a claimant is released from prison and if their claim is still being processed, they can contact Historic Claims if they still require counselling support in a community setting.

*d) An explanation of what "help[ing] claimants to access counselling support or other services" involves*

The following process would take place if a claimant is represented by a lawyer:

- The lawyer may contact Historic Claims on behalf of their client to ask for counselling support to be arranged for them.
- The lawyer would need to provide Historic Claims with the claimants contact details, alongside a consent form signed by the claimant which would allow Historic Claims to contact the claimant directly to discuss their needs and the next steps.

When discussing counselling support with a claimant directly during the registration or processing of their claim:

- The claimant would be asked whether they have previously or are currently utilising counselling support.
- The claimant would be advised that they are entitled to six counselling sessions to be funded by the Ministry while their claim is processed.
- The claimant would be asked if they would like Historic Claims to review counselling availability in their area.
- If the claimant would like to proceed with counselling support, any specific details such as location, preference of male or female counsellors and preference for cultural types of supports are also noted.

If a potential counsellor is identified by Historic Claims, they are contacted directly to determine their availability, to pass on the details of the claimant so they may schedule appointments with them directly, and also to request information from the counsellor which is utilised in processing invoices related to the counselling services (counsellors' invoice Historic Claims directly).

If a counsellor is unable to be sourced, or a claimant has support needs other than just counselling, Historic Claims can contact a wraparound service contracted by the Ministry to refer a claimant to. This can include counselling support as well as assistance with other needs a claimant may have. Alternatively, claimants registered with a General Practitioner (GP) are also able to get a referral to a community mental health service through their GP.

*e) What organisations and/or charities MSD refers claimants to for the purposes of counselling and support services.*

Historic Claims may identify potential counsellors through the following resources below:

- [www.puawaitanga.nz](http://www.puawaitanga.nz)

- [www.pegasus.health.nz/services-for-patients/here-toitu](http://www.pegasus.health.nz/services-for-patients/here-toitu)
- [www.familyservices.govt.nz/directory/searchresultspublic.htm?searchTerms=SHSS&cat1=966&searchRegion=-1&search=Search](http://www.familyservices.govt.nz/directory/searchresultspublic.htm?searchTerms=SHSS&cat1=966&searchRegion=-1&search=Search)
- [www.findsupport.co.nz](http://www.findsupport.co.nz)

The two contracted wraparound support programmes mentioned above are provided by Emerge Aotearoa (Wellington region and the lower North Island up until Palmerston North) and Vision West Community Trust (Auckland region – does not include Northland or Waikato).

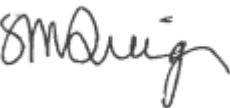
However, I would like to outline that Historic Claims can provide funding support for a claimant to any registered counsellor according to claimant preference and counsellor availability.

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](mailto: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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui

pp. 

Anna Graham  
**General Manager**  
**Ministerial and Executive Services**