

Dental Treatment

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Policy

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to provide policy on administering funding for dental treatment under the Veterans' Support Act 2014 (the Act).
- 1.2 The general policy on *Treatment*, and policies on reimbursement of *Travel for Treatment and Rehabilitation*, on *Temporary Increase in Disablement Pension* (for when treatment requires absence from home or work), and on *Treatment for Veterans Living Overseas* are covered in separate papers.

2. Legislative Reference

- 2.1 The relevant legislation is the Act, sections 51, 107 to 111, and the Veterans' Support Regulations 2014, regulations 64 to 70.

3. Eligibility for Dental Treatment

- 3.1 **Go to section 3 of separate paper on Treatment.**

4. Applications for Dental Treatment

- 4.1 **Go to section 4 of separate paper on Treatment.**

5. Approving Dental Treatment

- 5.1 **Go to section 5 of separate paper on Treatment**

6. Prior Approval for Dental Treatment

- 6.1 **Go to section 6 of separate paper on Treatment.**
- 6.2 If necessary Veterans' Affairs will seek an independent assessment or reassessment of the veteran's dental fitness before approving treatment (**Go to section 7**).

7. Dental treatment that Veterans' Affairs will cover

- 7.1 Veterans who were receiving dental treatment under the War Pensions Act 1954 may continue to be reimbursed for that dental treatment, including replacement of dentures and implants that Veterans' Affairs has previously funded and follow-up treatment for teeth extraction that Veterans' Affairs has funded for another accepted condition.
- 7.2 For other veterans, where a veteran has an accepted dental condition, Veterans' Affairs aims to work with that veteran to achieve dental fitness and will invest in a treatment programme for that condition.

- 7.3 Veterans' Affairs may pay or contribute up to a maximum of NZ\$3,000 per annum towards dental treatment and associated ancillary services for a **veteran's accepted disabilities** where the treatment is:
- the standard treatment in New Zealand for that condition; and
 - is undertaken within five years of acceptance of a **service-related** condition to achieve dental health.
- 7.4 Veterans' Affairs may have an independent assessment carried out of the veteran's current dental health to determine what treatment is required to bring the veteran back to dental fitness.
- 7.5 Standard treatment and ancillary services in this respect means:
- Dental x-rays when assessing whether Veterans' Affairs will fund the treatment
 - amalgam and white fillings
 - Required extractions
 - Root canal treatment
 - Crowns and bridges
 - Dentures in the case of loss of teeth
 - the fitting of a mouth guard in the case of teeth grinding
 - Periodontal treatments for gingivitis, periodontal abscesses where related to an accepted disability
 - Dental implants.
- 7.6 Where a veteran uses his/her Community Services Card for emergency dental care by the public hospital or ACC for pain relief or extractions or other outpatient treatment, Veterans' Affairs may consider paying the part-charges not covered by the public health system or ACC, if the treatment is related to an accepted disability.
- 7.7 If within five years of acceptance of the service-related condition the treatment does not get the veteran to dental fitness, Veterans' Affairs will work with the veteran to consider what other treatment may be appropriate for their accepted condition.

8. Removal of teeth as part of another treatment

- 8.1 Veterans' Affairs may fund the extraction of a veteran's teeth as a part of treatment for a service-related accepted disability condition such as cancer under the general treatment policy (**see separate paper on Treatment**), if the removal of the teeth is not covered by the public health system. Veterans' Affairs will not fund tooth or teeth replacements (dentures, bridges, implants

etc) for these extracted teeth as this will generally be covered by the public health system.

9. Dental treatment that Veterans' Affairs will not cover

9.1 Veterans' Affairs will not pay for:

- Ongoing maintenance such as the veteran's expected regular check-ups and X-rays unless related to an accepted chronic disability and given prior approval by Veterans' Affairs
- Regular hygiene as advised by the dental treatment provider
- Oral hygiene products including floss, toothpaste, brushes, mouthwash
- Treatment for any damage to wisdom teeth (except for extraction after a filling has failed) unless the damage is an accepted disability
- Cosmetic dentistry including whitening, veneers, dental jewellery, dental grills and/or other cosmetic surgery
- Ozone treatment
- Orthodontics – fixed and removable
- Repair and maintenance of implants or reconstructive plates after five years following the acceptance of a service-related condition
- Reconstructive dental treatment relating to a general health condition, such as cancer, where this affects teeth and is covered by the public health system
- Any other dental treatment that the veteran may receive or be eligible to receive from the public health system or equivalent overseas public health system
- Dental treatments for an injury or accident which is covered by ACC or equivalent overseas agency/insurer
- Dental treatment when the veteran has not attended effective and ongoing dental treatment relating to the accepted disability and for which Veterans' Affairs continues to fund as part of a treatment plan.

9.2 Veterans who are declared by independent dental assessment as having reached the stage of "dental fitness" in terms of treatment for their service-related condition will not have further dental treatment covered by Veterans' Affairs.

9.3 When a veteran's dental health has been achieved by a dental treatment provider and the veteran then goes to another dental treatment provider without prior approval, Veterans' Affairs will not fund the dental treatment.

10. Veterans who travel overseas for dental treatment

- 10.1 Veterans' Affairs will not contribute or pay for dental treatment for which a veteran has opted to travel overseas.

11. Veterans Living Overseas

- 11.1 **Go to section 20 of the separate paper on Treatment.**

12. Second Opinion

- 12.1 Veterans' Affairs may reserve the right to seek a second opinion.
- 12.2 If a veteran seeks an independent second opinion he/she does so at his/her own cost and Veterans' Affairs may take that opinion into consideration.

13. Reimbursement of Dental Treatment Costs

- 13.1 **Go to section 17 of separate paper on Treatment for general principles on Reimbursement of Treatment Costs and section 18 on Reimbursement of Ancillary Costs.**
- 13.2 Reimbursement of dental treatment will not be made unless prior approval for the treatment has been sought.
- 13.3 The maximum payment per veteran that Veterans' Affairs will make for dental treatment to achieve dental fitness is up to NZ\$3,000 per annum, unless dental assessment indicates that the specific accepted dental condition requires further treatment.

14. Reviews, Appeals and Complaints

- 14.1 If you disagree about a decision concerning eligibility for an entitlement or service **go to separate policies on Reviews and Appeals**. If you are concerned about Veterans' Affairs' administration of an entitlement or service **go to separate policy on Complaints**.

Glossary

accepted disability [policy definition]

Means an injury, illness or condition that Veterans' Affairs accepts as being service-related.

dentist means a health practitioner who holds a current practising certificate and is, or is deemed to be, registered with the Dental Council as a practitioner of the profession of dentistry

health practitioner [section 7]

Has the same meaning as in section 5(1) of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003.

service-related [section 7]

In relation to an injury, an illness, a condition, or a whole-person impairment, means an injury, an illness, or a whole-person impairment caused by, contributed to by, or aggravated by qualifying service.

treatment provider [section 7]

- (a) means a chiropractor, dentist, medical laboratory technologist, nurse, nurse practitioner, occupational therapist, optometrist, osteopath, physiotherapist, podiatrist, or medical practitioner; and
- (b) includes a member of any occupational group as added for the purposes of this definition by regulations made under section 265 and subject to any criteria specified in those regulations, including (but not limited to) whether and, if so, the extent to which members of an occupational group are recognised by the Accident Compensation Corporation as treatment providers for the purposes of the Accident Compensation Act 2001.

veteran [section 7]

Means:

- (a) a member of the armed forces who took part in qualifying operational service at the direction of the New Zealand Government; or
- (b) a person:
 - (i) who has been:
 - (A) appointed as an employee of the Defence Force under section 61A of the Defence Act 1990; or
 - (B) seconded to the Defence Force with the permission of the Chief of Defence Force; and
 - (ii) who took part in qualifying operational service at the direction of the New Zealand Government; or
- (c) a person who, immediately before the commencement of Part 3 of this Act, is eligible for a pension under the following provisions of the War Pensions Act 1954:
 - (i) section 19 (but only if the person was a member of the forces):
 - (ii) section 55 or 56:
 - (iii) Parts 4 and 5