



Te Tira Ahu Ika A Whiro

**VETERANS'
AFFAIRS**

New Zealand

Policy

Mental Health Treatment

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Contents

Policy	3
1. Purpose.....	3
2. Legislative Reference.....	3
3. Eligibility for Mental Health Treatment.....	3
4. Applications for Mental Health Treatment	3
5. Approving Mental Health Treatment.....	3
6. Prior Approval for Mental Health Treatment	3
7. Veterans in urgent need.....	3
8. Definitions of Treatment Providers providing Mental Health Treatment	4
9. Mental Health Treatment that Veterans' Affairs will cover	5
10. Mental Health Treatment that Veterans' Affairs will not cover	5
11. Approving the Treatment Provider and Assessor	6
12. Assessment of the veteran's mental health treatment needs	6
13. Reimbursement of Mental Health Treatment costs	6
14. Reimbursement of Ancillary Costs	7
15. Reimbursement of Travel for Assessment and Treatment	7
16. Veterans Living Overseas	7
17. Veterans Travelling Overseas	7
18. Second Opinion.....	7
19. Reviews, Appeals and Complaints.....	7
20. Transitional Arrangements	7
Glossary	8

Policy

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This Policy provides guidance for administering eligibility for mental health treatment under the Veterans' Support Act 2014 (the Act). It should be read together with the separate papers on:
- *Treatment*
 - *Travel for Assessment, Treatment and Rehabilitation.*
- 1.2 **See separate paper on *Counselling for Family Members and Support Persons* for the policy on counselling for family members and other persons providing support to the veteran.**

2. Legislative Reference

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

3. Eligibility for Mental Health Treatment

- 3.1 **See section 3 of separate paper on *Treatment*.**

4. Applications for Mental Health Treatment

- 4.1 **See section 4 of separate paper on *Treatment*.**

5. Approving Mental Health Treatment

- 5.1 **See section 5 of separate paper on *Treatment*.**

6. Prior Approval for Mental Health Treatment

- 6.1 **See section 6 of separate paper on *Treatment*.**

7. Veterans in urgent need

- 7.1 **Veterans** with immediate extreme needs (e.g. the potential to harm themselves or others) should always be referred to the local DHB's appropriate Mental Health related services. Such needs may present themselves in the veteran's extreme agitation, restlessness, verbal aggression, threat of self-harm or threat of harm to others, bizarre or disorganised behaviour, confusion or inability to co-operate, and suicidal ideation. The Case Manager should contact the veteran's GP immediately and report the conversation with the veteran, so that the GP may take the appropriate action to refer the veteran to the mental health service.
- 7.2 **See paragraphs 13.2 and 13.3 regarding payment for urgent mental health treatment.**

8. Definitions of Treatment Providers providing Mental Health Treatment

8.1 For the purposes of this policy the following definitions apply to treatment providers for mental health treatment:

Counsellor

means a **treatment provider** who is:

(a) a **health practitioner** under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 and **counselling** is within his or her scope of practice under that Act; or

(b) recognised by the Accident Compensation Corporation as a **counsellor** for the purposes of the Accident Compensation Act 2001.

Regulation 7, Veterans' Support Regulations 2014

The counsellor is a full up to date member of a professional association and meets the association's current requirements for membership and is covered by the association's code of ethics, complaints procedure, disciplinary procedure, and requirements for compulsory peer supervision, continuing education, and professional development. The following are examples of professional associations:

- The Institute of Australasian Psychiatrists Incorporated
- The New Zealand Association of Child and Adolescent Psychotherapists (Incorporated)
- New Zealand Association of Counsellors Incorporated
- New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists Incorporated
- The New Zealand Association of Social Workers Incorporated
- The New Zealand College of Clinical Psychologists Incorporated
- New Zealand Psychological Society Incorporated

or the equivalent body in the veteran's country of residence.

Psychiatrist

means a **medical practitioner** whose scope of practice includes psychiatry and who holds a current practising certificate and is a member of the Royal Australia and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, the Institute of Australasian Psychiatrists Incorporated or equivalent body in the veteran's country of residence.

Psychologist

means a health practitioner who holds a current practising certificate and is registered with the Psychologists Board as a practitioner of the profession of psychology and is a full financial member of the New Zealand College of Clinical Psychologists Incorporated or the New Zealand Psychological Society Incorporated or equivalent body in the veteran's country of residence.

Psychotherapist

means a health practitioner whose scope of practise includes psychotherapy and who holds a current practising certificate and is a registered member of the Psychotherapists Board of Aotearoa NZ or the New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists or equivalent body in the veteran's country of residence.

9. Mental Health Treatment that Veterans' Affairs will cover

9.1 Veterans' Affairs may pay or contribute to the following mental health treatment and ancillary services for the veteran:

- visit to a health practitioner (as per section 8) chosen by Veterans' Affairs to determine the needs of the veteran
- a maximum of 4 sessions of counselling with a treatment provider approved by Veterans' Affairs after which the treatment provider should set out why additional sessions are required and the steps that will be taken to achieve the expected outcome. Veterans' Affairs may choose to refer the veteran to the DHB for assistance for ongoing needs
- PHARMAC listed subsidised **pharmaceuticals** prescribed by the veteran's health practitioner to treat the mental health **accepted disability**. The treatment provider who is providing the counselling should pass advice in relation to the ongoing medications that will be required to the veteran's GP. Where the veteran is required to visit their mental health practitioner less than monthly, the prescription service will be provided by the GP. **See also section 7 of the separate paper on Treatment regarding approvals of pharmaceuticals that are not listed on the PHARMAC Schedule.**

10. Mental Health Treatment that Veterans' Affairs will not cover

10.1 Veterans' Affairs will not pay or contribute to the costs of:

- treatment that is provided by a treatment provider outside the area of the veteran's main residence, except under the circumstances set out in the fourth bullet below
- treatment that is provided by a treatment provider that Veterans' Affairs has not approved prior to the treatment being obtained
- treatment that has **not** been approved under the veteran's Your Plan and that is not linked to an outcome as part of the veteran's overall treatment plan
- if the veteran decides they would prefer another provider of mental health services other than the recommended provider, Veterans' Affairs may consider paying for this service, if the achievement of

outcomes is in line with the mental health assessment and recommendations.

- 10.2 **Please refer to section 8 of the separate paper on *Treatment* regarding complementary and alternative treatments.**

11. Approving the Treatment Provider and Assessor

- 11.1 The health practitioner who assesses the veteran's needs may not be the same person as the ongoing treatment provider. The treatment provider will not be funded by Veterans' Affairs until an assessment has been completed which sets out the delivery of the number of treatment sessions required and the outcomes that will be achieved by the veteran as part of the treatment outcomes within the veteran's Your Plan.

12. Assessment of the veteran's mental health treatment needs

- 12.1 The specialist who assesses the mental health treatment needs of the veteran will provide Veterans' Affairs with a plan which sets out:
- what the veteran's lifestyle was prior to, during and following service and prior to the onset of the mental illness
 - the veteran's current lifestyle and any factors (whether service-related or not) that are impacting on the veteran's mental health
 - the treatment's expected outcomes and end-point
 - what is appropriate in terms of treatment
 - the number of counselling sessions that the veteran can be expected to require to achieve the expected outcomes.
- 12.2 The counsellor/treatment provider providing the treatment will be informed that if he/she cannot get the veteran to the point expected within the number of sessions stipulated by the assessor, Veterans' Affairs may seek an independent assessment and refer the veteran elsewhere.
- 12.3 The counsellor will provide reports to the Veterans' Affairs Rehabilitation Adviser as indicated in the veteran's Your Plan.

13. Reimbursement of Mental Health Treatment costs

- 13.1 **See section 17 of the separate paper on *Treatment*.**

Reimbursement for urgent mental injury or illness treatment

- 13.2 Veterans' Affairs may pay or contribute towards paying the cost of treatment for mental injury or illness before it has completed its consideration of the veteran's application if it is satisfied that a delay in treatment may have an adverse effect on the veteran.

- 13.3 Before deciding what treatment it will pay for or contribute towards, Veterans' Affairs must take into account the matters raised in paragraph 4.2 of the Treatment policy (section 108(3) of the Act).

Section 108(A) of the Veterans' Support Act 2014

14. Reimbursement of Ancillary Costs

- 14.1 See section 18 of the separate paper on *Treatment*.

15. Reimbursement of Travel for Assessment and Treatment

- 15.1 See separate paper on *Travel for Assessment, Treatment and Rehabilitation*.

16. Veterans Living Overseas

- 16.1 See section 20 of the separate paper on *Treatment*.

17. Veterans Travelling Overseas

- 17.1 See section 21 of the separate paper on *Treatment*.

18. Second Opinion

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

19. Reviews, Appeals and Complaints

- 19.1 If a veteran disagrees about a decision concerning eligibility for an entitlement or service see **separate policies on *Reviews and Appeals***. If a veteran is concerned about Veterans' Affairs' administration of an entitlement or service see **separate policy on *Complaints***.

20. Transitional Arrangements

- 20.1 See section 24 of the separate paper on *Treatment*.

Glossary

accepted disability [policy definition]

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

complementary and alternative medicine/treatment – definition as adopted by the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Complementary and Alternative Health: a broad domain of healing resources that encompasses all health systems, modalities, and practices, and their accompanying theories and beliefs, other than those intrinsic to the politically dominant health system of a particular society or culture in a given historical period. Complementary and alternative medicine includes such practices and ideas self-identified by the users as preventing or treating illness or promoting health and well being (O'Connor et al, 1997).

Counsellor [regulation 7]

A person who is a counsellor is a treatment provider if the person is–

- (a) a health practitioner under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 and counselling is within his or her scope of practice under that Act; or
- (b) recognised by the Accident Compensation Corporation as a counsellor for the purposes of the Accident Compensation Act 2001.

counselling [section 7]

means counselling that is provided by–

- (a) a health practitioner under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 and that is within the practitioner's scope of practice under that Act; or
- (b) a person who is recognised by the Accident Compensation Act 2001.

health practitioner [section 7]

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

impairment [section 7]

Means a loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical function or structure.

medical practitioner [section 7]

Means a health practitioner who is, or is deemed to be, registered with the Medical Council of New Zealand continued by section 114(1)(a) of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 as a practitioner of the profession of medicine.

member of the armed forces [section 7]

Means a person who is or has been a member of the New Zealand armed force raised by the Governor-General on behalf of the Sovereign,–

- (a) whether in New Zealand or elsewhere; and
- (b) whether before or after the passing of this Act.

qualifying operational service [section 8]

Means–

- (a) service in any deployment treated as a war or emergency for the purposes of the War Pensions Act 1954; or
- (b) service on any deployment declared to be operational service under section 9.

qualifying routine service [section 8]

Means service in the armed forces before 1 April 1974 that is not qualifying operational service.

pharmaceutical means a medicine, therapeutic medical device or related product or related thing listed in Sections B to I of the PHARMAC schedule.

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.

travel costs [section 42]

Means the cost of:

- (a) travel
- (b) meals and accommodation reasonably associated with the travel
- (c) actual and reasonable out-of-pocket expenses associated with the travel.

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
- (aa) a member of the armed forces who took part in qualifying routine service before 1 April 1974; 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.