

Mid/Far North Office

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For regular updates please go to our website "NEWS" page - www.homesupport.co.nz/page/news.html

COVID-19 – Alert Level 3 update @ Friday 8th May 2020

Safety reminder

ask at the door before entering – is the Client well?

If not, please phone the office for further instructions.

This update is just for Support Workers – changes in green 😊

1. "Covid-19 Wage Subsidy Claim Form"

(latest version says 'Updated 29/04/20' at the foot of the page)

Claiming unworked Covid-19-related hours on the "COVID-19 WAGE SUBSIDY CLAIM FORM"

- Please don't claim for exited Clients.
- Please don't claim if you have been given replacement or relief work.
- Please only put UNWORKED hours on your claim form. **You only need to do this if your hours worked, replacement or relief hours come to a total less than your normal hours**
- Don't put SNC on your claim form – notify the Co-ordinator Support and note on your timesheet.
- **YOU ABSOLUTELY MUST** put all info including Client ID & hours & reason on the claim form, or else we might not be able to pay you. We are trying to process a considerably more complex pay with fewer staff, so things are pretty frantic in the payroll office and if you haven't completed the form properly we might not get the chance to contact you to fix it before the pay needs to be processed.
- **If you are unsure what to write on your Covid Claim form then please ask before submitting.**
- And finally, please write clearly.

Check the 'Types of Leave Q&A' for information on what you can and cannot claim for. You need to be using the sheet that says "updated 24/04/20" at the top, to correctly complete your "Covid-19 Wage Subsidy Claim Form".

We are looking at what your normal fortnight would look like, and will try to make sure you get at least this much pay (excluding ACC and private hours). Don't forget, if the hours you have actually worked are more than what you usually would do, you don't need to fill in the Covid-19 Wage Subsidy Claim Form because there will be no top-up for you. **The 'Covid-19 Wage Subsidy Claim Form' is to top-up your pay to your normal hours if you have worked less than usual.**

Special request from Payroll staff

Please can you complete your "Covid-19 Wage Subsidy Claim Forms" as soon as you can (for each week), for hours not being worked, and send them in to the office straight away (early). That helps streamline the job of processing the pay and trying to get everything right for you. A big thank you from the payroll staff to those of you who send in your forms early. Keep them coming in. 😊

2. Last pay (fortnight ended 03/05/20 – paid Thursday 7th May)

Again – a very difficult pay to process, including a Public Holiday and lots of Covid-19 claims. And again, sorry to those of you whose pay is incorrect – hopefully we can fix it up asap. Call us if there is anything we can clarify or fix for you.

Some of you will have had an adjustment made to your pay for overclaimed 'Covid-19 Wage Subsidy' claimed hours from the pay ended 19/04/20. This has been complicated to calculate – all you should be claiming for is the difference between what you would have worked if not for Covid-19 (excluding hours funded by ACC, Acute Home Based Support Services and Private) and what you actually did work – including additional hours. We calculated your 'normal' fortnight based on what your hours looked like in the eight weeks up to 22nd March. We've also limited claims for this fortnight to your 'normal' hours. I know it is a really complicated situation we are all in and we are having to try and work out processes as we go – good work everyone who has managed to continue working under these difficult circumstances AND battle with the tricky new paperwork. There may also be a few more overclaims from the fortnight ended 19/04/20 that we haven't managed to work through yet but those adjustments will be made next pay (fortnight ended 17th May) after we have checked and discussed with you. If we get the time we will be looking back at the fortnight ended 5th April to make sure everything was claimed correctly – we'll contact you if we have any queries.

3. Essential Worker Leave payment

On 9th April 2020 we applied for the "Essential Worker Leave payment" (four weeks) for approximately 50 staff. We applied under the following criteria:

- a. Support Workers that were at higher risk of severe illness if they get COVID-19, and Ministry of Health guidelines recommend they stay at home while we're in lockdown (and potentially longer).
- b. Support Worker lives with household members who are at higher risk of severe illness if they get COVID-19 and Ministry of Health recommend the worker also remains at home to reduce the risk to them.

Our Support Workers who are self-isolating under criteria a. have been asked to use their sick leave to cover the period of their absence. We have reassured them that once we receive the Essential Worker Leave payment we will reinstate their leave.

Great news - we received the four weeks of 'Essential Worker leave payment' for 56 Support Workers on the 28th of April, so we have been able to re-instate leave used fortnight ending 19/04/20 for Support Workers who used their leave to cover 'a.'. We have subsequently claimed for another two Support Workers for the fortnight ended 03/05/20, both received. So everyone who has had to be off for the above two reasons - a. and b. – you should have been paid your normal hours for the fortnight just gone. 😊

For the current fortnight (ending 17th May – to be paid 21st May) we have received the 'Essential Worker leave payment' for 48 Support Workers, and have applied on behalf of another four.

We will continue to apply for this payment as needed, while it is available.

We are expecting to receive instruction from the Ministry of Health about the process for health compromised and over 70's coming back to work – there may be some requirement for review prior to return. Will keep you informed.

Once everything is back to normal and we do not need to pay anyone under these two criteria (your self or a household member at higher risk of severe illness if contracting Covid-19) we will do a wash-up of the amounts paid out versus the amounts received, and if there is any leave payment left over we will look back to the fortnight ended 05th April to re-instate the leave for any Support Workers who had not worked because of the higher risk of severe illness, but needed to use their leave.

4. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (and forms/timesheets etc)

See separate form with the PPE and forms pickup details. No change from last update. If it changes we will attach an updated form to the email.

Remember to follow the PPE guidelines for wearing when with a Client. Handwashing is still the best thing to maintain frequently before and after all tasks or contact with anything or anyone.

5. ACC hours not worked

As we have been saying in previous updates, ACC will only pay for hours worked so we are unable to pay you 'Special Leave' for any unworked hours. Contact Robert or the Employee Support Team (Liz, Leonie and Lee) if you want to discuss your situation. You may have other leave (Annual Leave, Sick Leave or Alt Days) that you can claim. Our national association is still in negotiation with ACC to fund un-worked hours (if the Client has self-isolated or has had their non-essential hours stopped) so we are ever hopeful. If it turns out that way, and ACC retrospectively funds un-worked hours, then we can change the category of payment to 'Special Leave' and re-instate your leave entitlement.

There has been some media pressure from Unions and Providers about "ACC risking thousands of essential care and support worker jobs" in the last couple of days. Hopefully that will influence ACC and we will get a favourable outcome. Will keep you posted – here's hoping.

This is the same situation for Acute Home Based Support Services (we used to call it Hospital Short Term) – for when the NDHB puts in some temporary help for people who have had a hospitalisation. If you have lost hours under this contract please talk to Robert. He will make sure we are doing all we can to minimise the effect this may have on your expected wages, but we may not be able to continue to pay you for lost hours under this contract as the funders are not paying us for hours not worked.

6. Phoning the office

If you call us on our 0800 numbers, and the call might be a bit complicated and take some time, can you please let us know when you call. It may be best if we call you back. Calls that are made from the offices are free, whereas we pay for every 0800 call received. That is normally approx. \$700 each month, but as you can imagine there has been a massive increase over the last month (more than 60%). Anything that we can do to reduce this cost will be useful to the Service's ongoing sustainability.

7. Alert Level 3

- a) Non-essential supports for Clients (with a few exceptions) won't be re-instated until Alert Level 2. We'll contact the Client then you if we are going to re-start anyone's support.
- b) People at higher risk of severe illness from Covid-19 (older people and those with existing medical conditions) will be contacted by EST and advised whether it is appropriate to return to work – most likely not until Alert Level 2.
- c) What can we do for Support Workers with no childcare? Please contact us if this is you – decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis. Official advice is that you need to access home-based child care via the Ministry of Education scheme. See the info on our website.

- Support Workers who live with health-compromised people and still want to self-isolate thru Alert Level 3 will need to phone Robert, Liz, Leonie or Lee.

The change from Alert Level 4 to Alert Level 3 has not changed the service we are delivering.

And remember that under Alert Level 2 (whenever that occurs) you may not have the same Clients to return to. Please check with the office before contacting any Clients to avoid creating any confusion or anxiety.

Alert Level 2

We are planning to contact all Support Workers who are off, most likely next week, to see how they are placed for returning to work under Alert Level 2.

We will also contact the Clients who have had their non-essential services put on hold – maybe re-instate their support in stages, and see if the Clients who didn't want care over the last couple of months would like their service re-started. This won't all happen at once though. The Ministry of Health are calling it 'a progressive reintroduction'. This means that our 114 Support Workers who are not currently working will return to work at different times. We will contact Support Workers and agree on a return to work start date.

8. We have really appreciated how everyone has worked together over this challenging period so far. Everyone has been patient and understanding, and have done a great job under difficult circumstances. The work that Support Workers do is now being appreciated more than ever. It looks like we are over the worst of Covid 19 but we need to be vigilant, and all going well we will return to a "new normal" in time.

We also have a webinar from the Disability sector available that may interest you or someone else you know on "Self care for Families". You will need to register via this link – enjoy 😊

[Self care for families](#)

Also checkout the following links for regular updates:

[MOH COVID-19 Info - \(www.health.govt.nz\)](http://www.health.govt.nz)

[Government Website - All info related to COVID-19 – \(www.covid19.govt.nz\)](http://www.covid19.govt.nz)

[Home Support North Website COVID-19 Page \(www.homesupport.co.nz/page/covid-19\)](http://www.homesupport.co.nz/page/covid-19)

Stay safe and keep in touch.

The Management Team

Home Support North Charitable Trust