

LEGCO PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES

Subcommittee on Review of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme

Provision of special grant to cover costs of dental treatment under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme

PURPOSE

This paper provides information on the provision of special grant to cover costs of dental treatment under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme.

BACKGROUND

2. The CSSA Scheme provides a safety net of last resort to meet the basic needs of those who cannot support themselves financially. It is non-contributory but means-tested. The CSSA Scheme provides different standard rates to meet the basic needs of different categories of recipients. In addition, CSSA recipients who are old, disabled or medically certified to be in ill health are given special grants, including a special grant for dental treatment (dental grant), to meet their specific needs. Furthermore, free emergency dental services are provided by the Department of Health (DH) to the public, including CSSA recipients.

SPECIAL GRANT TO COVER COSTS OF DENTAL TREATMENT

3. Under the CSSA Scheme, the dental grant for the old, disabled or ill health aims to cover the actual expenses or the ceiling amount of the treatment item (dentures, crowns, bridges, scaling, fillings and root canal treatment) set by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) in consultation with DH. In 2005-06, there were 3,720 CSSA recipients approved with a dental grant which involved a total expenditure of about \$15 million.

4. For able-bodied CSSA recipients aged below 60 who are in genuine financial hardship and unable to afford the dental expenses, the Director of Social Welfare may consider, on an exceptional basis depending on the merits of individual cases, a discretionary payment of special grant to cover the expenses.

Application procedures

5. Under the existing arrangements, CSSA recipients may seek dental services from one of the dental clinics designated by SWD to meet their needs. After approaching the designated clinic for an estimate of cost, the CSSA recipient may apply for special grant from SWD to cover the cost of dental treatment.

6. Upon receiving approval of the special grant, the CSSA recipient is free to turn to a registered dentist of a non-designated clinic for the same service. The amount of the dental grant payable would be equal to the cost charged by the designated clinic/non-designated clinic or the ceiling amount, whichever is the less.

PROVISION OF DENTAL SERVICES BY DH

Free emergency dental services

7. DH provides the public, including CSSA recipients, with free emergency dental services covering pain relief and extraction of teeth. There are 11 government dental clinics providing emergency dental services.

Specialist dental services

8. DH also provides specialist and emergency dental services to hospital in-patients and referred patients, including patients with special oral health care needs, e.g. those who are medically compromised, those with severe dento-facial deformities or oral cancer and those who are physically or mentally incapacitated requiring hospital facilities for dental treatment. CSSA recipients are entitled to free specialist dental services at public hospitals or dental clinics.

School Dental Care Service

9. All Primary 1 to Primary 6 school children, including those under the CSSA Scheme, can join the School Dental Care Service provided by the DH

through their schools. The service aims at promoting oral hygiene and providing basic and preventive dental care to primary school children through eight school dental clinics. Participation is voluntary and participants have to pay an annual enrolment fee (HK\$20 for the current school year 2006-07). Enrolled school children are arranged for dental visit at a school dental clinic for annual dental check-up and necessary dental treatment.

10. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

**Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
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