

LWB/W 18/36 (04)

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10 September 2007

Subcommittee on Review of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme

(Attn : Miss Betty Ma)

Legislative Council Building

8 Jackson Road

Central

Hong Kong

Dear Miss Ma,

Written Response to the meeting on 2 April 2007

I refer to the minutes of the meeting of the LegCo Subcommittee on Review of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme on 2 April 2007, wherein the Administration was requested to consider members' suggestion in paragraph 4(c) of the minutes and provide relevant information with regard to paragraph 10 of the minutes. Our replies are as follows:

- 4(c) Instead of requiring the CSSA recipients to submit supporting documents in person in respect of their applications for dental grant, the Administration should arrange for the designated dental clinics to inform Social Welfare Department (SWD) direct the estimate of cost for dental treatment, and for SWD to inform the designated dental clinics direct whether the applications were approved*

Under the CSSA Scheme, recipients are free to choose any designated dental clinics for a quotation of dental grant. They may choose either to return the estimate of cost for dental treatment to the social security field units (SSFUs) by themselves or request the designated dental clinic to send it back direct to SSFUs. After a CSSA recipient has approached the designated clinic for an estimate of cost, he/she is also free to choose any registered dentist of a non-designated clinic for service. It is hence not appropriate for SWD to inform the designated dental clinics direct whether the applications are approved.

SWD will keep in view areas of further improvement to streamline the referral arrangement between SSFUs and the designated dental clinics in respect of handling applications for dental grant for CSSA recipients.

10(a) the average utilisation rate of each of the 11 government dental clinics providing emergency dental services to the public in the past three years

Details of the utilization rate are set out in Annex I.

10(b) the average waiting time for "referred patients", mentioned in paragraph 8 above, to receive specialist and emergency dental services

Details of the average waiting time for consultation Appointments in Oral Maxillofacial Surgery and Dental Units of the Department of Health are set out in Annex II.

10(c) the respective average and longest time taken for the eligible CSSA recipients to get an estimate of cost and receive dental treatment from the designated dental clinics

SWD has made enquiries with the 36 designated dental clinics to collect information about the lead time required for the eligible CSSA recipients to get an estimate of cost and receive dental services from these clinics during the past 6 months up to May 2007.

According to the feedback of these designated dental clinics, we note that:

- (i) 13 designated dental clinics do not require CSSA recipients to make a prior appointment for obtaining an estimate of cost; and one designated dental clinic do not require CSSA recipients to make a prior appointment for receiving dental treatment after obtaining the estimate of cost. In other words, they are provided with services (including getting an estimate of cost or receiving dental treatment) on the same working day when they walk-in the clinics.
- (ii) 23 designated dental clinics require CSSA recipients to make a prior appointment for obtaining an estimate of cost. The average waiting time during the past 6 months up to May 2007 is shown in the table below:

Average Time Taken (in working days)	Number of designated dental clinics
1-7	18
8-14	3
>14	2

- (iii) 35 designated dental clinics require CSSA recipients to make a prior appointment for receiving dental treatment after obtaining an estimate of cost. The average waiting time during the past 6 months up to May 2007 is shown in the table below:

Average Time Taken (in working days)	Number of Designated Dental Clinics
1-7	23
8-14	6
>14	6

10(d) The processing time taken by SSFU to approve applications for the dental grant

SWD has not maintained statistics on the processing time taken by SSFU specifically to approve applications for the dental grant.

As a standard practice, application for advance payment of special grants under the CSSA Scheme, including dental grant, can be made upon production of supporting documents, such as the estimate of cost. SWD will normally issue payment to successful

applications within 7 working days after completion of investigation.

10(e) The number of cases where discretionary payment of dental grant was given to able-bodied CSSA recipients aged below 60 in the past 5 years, and the criteria for granting such exceptional approval by DSWOs

The number of cases where discretionary payment of dental grant was given to able-bodied CSSA recipients aged below 60 in the past 5 years is shown in the table below:

Financial year	Number of cases
2002/2003	20
2003/2004	12
2004/2005	13
2005/2006	11
2006/2007	10

Under the existing arrangement, the discretionary power has been delegated to the District Social Welfare Officers to ensure that there are good reasons for exceptional approval. Each case has to be separately considered and it is not practical to set out the general rules for exercising discretion.

Please let me know if you need any further information.

Yours sincerely,

(D.C. Cheung)
for Secretary for Labour and Welfare

c.c. Secretary for Health and Food (Attn: Miss Alice Yeung)
Director of Social Welfare (Attn: Mr K.S. Wu)
Department of Health (Attn: Dr Kitty Hse)

Average Utilization Rate of Dental Clinics with General Public Sessions in 2004

District	Dental Clinics with General Public Sessions	Average Utilization Rate (%)
Hong Kong	Western Dental Clinic	58.5
Kowloon	Lee Kee Government Dental Clinic	97.2
	Kwun Tong Jockey Club Dental Clinic	97.6
New Territories	Tsuen Wan Dental Clinic	96.3
	Yuen Long Jockey Club Dental Clinic	94.5
	Tuen Mun Yan Oi Dental Clinic	96.9
	Tai Po Wong Siu Ching Dental Clinic	97.8
	Fanling Health Centre Dental Clinic	93.1
	Sai Kung Mona Fong Dental Clinic	84.2
	Tai O Dental Clinic	35.2
Islands	Cheung Chau Dental Clinic	65.4
Overall Average Utilization Rate		87.1

Average Utilization Rate of Dental Clinics with General Public Sessions in 2005

District	Dental Clinics with General Public Sessions	Average Utilization Rate (%)
Hong Kong	Western Dental Clinic	56.4
Kowloon	Lee Kee Government Dental Clinic	96.9
	Kwun Tong Jockey Club Dental Clinic	97.9
New Territories	Tsuen Wan Dental Clinic	92.6
	Yuen Long Jockey Club Dental Clinic	95.3
	Tuen Mun Yan Oi Dental Clinic	97.6
	Tai Po Wong Siu Ching Dental Clinic	96.9
	Fanling Health Centre Dental Clinic	91.3
	Sai Kung Mona Fong Dental Clinic	80.6
	Tai O Dental Clinic	38.3
Islands	Cheung Chau Dental Clinic	76.3
Overall Average Utilization Rate		85.9

Average Utilization Rate of Dental Clinics with General Public Sessions in 2006

District	Dental Clinics with General Public Sessions	Average Utilization Rate (%)
Hong Kong	Western Dental Clinic	55.7
Kowloon	Lee Kee Government Dental Clinic	97.7
	Kwun Tong Jockey Club Dental Clinic	97.0
New Territories	Tsuen Wan Dental Clinic	96.5
	Yuen Long Jockey Club Dental Clinic	97.2
	Tuen Mun Yan Oi Dental Clinic	97.5
	Tai Po Wong Siu Ching Dental Clinic	97.1
	Fanling Health Centre Dental Clinic	97.7
	Sai Kung Mona Fong Dental Clinic	87.2
	Tai O Dental Clinic	41.4
Islands	Cheung Chau Dental Clinic	61.2
Overall Average Utilization Rate		87.6

Annex II

**Average Waiting Time for Consultation Appointments in
Oral Maxillofacial Surgery and Dental Units
of the Department of Health
(Position as at 1 April 2007)**

District	Oral Maxillofacial Surgery & Dental Unit	Average Waiting Time (weeks)
Hong Kong	Queen Mary Hospital	27
	Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital	36
Kowloon	Queen Elizabeth Hospital	26
New Territories	North District Hospital	27
	Princess Margaret Hospital	32
	Prince of Wales Hospital	26
	Tuen Mun Hospital	36

Note:

All referral cases are first screened by Unit Head, and consultation appointment is triaged according to severity of the condition. Same day appointments will be offered for those cases warrant immediate attention. Other cases will be given consultation appointments according to their severity and nature and the waiting time ranges from one week to nine months.