



3 April 2023

A KS

fyi-request-21945-1773d0e8@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: DOIA 2223-1919

Tēnā koe A KS,

Thank you for your email of 28 February 2023 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- 1. Please provide a copy of the User Guide or operational guide and any other relevant guides, SOPs, emails, or documents in any form PPT PDF DOC that the INZ Health Assessment process refers to while checking and deciding the next course of action when the visa applicant provides medical test results. Please provide information for health assessment process and guidelines for the SMC and parent residency category.*
- 2. Please provide the copy of the operational document and any other relevant guides, SOPs, emails, or documents in any form that INZ health team checks before referring the case to the medical assessor for SMC and parent residency categories....*
- 3. Please provide the copy of the User Guide and any other relevant guides, SOPs, emails, or documents in any form that is checked by the medical assessors to provide an opinion if an applicant is ASH or ASH with conditions. ... The INZ operational manual mentions some conditions but my request is for operational documents used by assessors that may have a detailed info for their decision making for acute and chronic medical conditions for SMC and parent residency categories.*

On 8 March 2023, the Ministry contacted you to clarify the request. On the same date, you confirmed the following:

- 1. To reduce the amount of information requested please restrict my request to the parent residency...*
- 2. I confirm that I am requesting the most recent, current and up to date Health Assessments SOPs and guides for all health assessment processes that are used by the visa officers and medical assessors for the operations for parent residency visa, determining ASH/ no ASH as mentioned in all of my questions in the original OIA.*
- 3. I can understand that email data may be huge so please restrict the emails to the last 12 months from 01-03-2022 till 28-02-2023 and only that are relevant to parent residency*

Our response

As there are no particular guidelines for health assessment decision-making designed specifically for the Parent Category, the information presented below is relevant to all resident class visa applicants.

The first point of reference for Medical Assessors (MAs) and Health Assessment Team Immigration Officers (HAT IOs) are the relevant immigration instructions at A4 of the Immigration New Zealand (INZ)

Operational Manual which outline health requirements, including the requirements for residence class visa applicants:

<https://www.immigration.govt.nz/opsmanual/#46506.htm>

Applicants are required to provide medical examination results to confirm their health status. All medical examinations are undertaken by doctors on behalf of INZ, known as Panel Physicians. In the vast majority of cases the information is submitted online via the eMedical platform. The data from eMedical is then transferred to INZ's Immigration Health System (IHS) which is used by HAT IOs and MAs to review medical information and record medical opinions and health outcomes.

In addition to the immigration instructions referred to above, INZ staff refer to relevant Visa Paks which contain advice on interpreting and applying immigration instructions fairly and consistently. The Visa Paks relevant to your request can be found on INZ's website at the following links:

1. Visa Pak 491 – 3 December 2021
<https://www.immigration.govt.nz/documents/visa-paks/3-december-2021-removal-of-hiv-infection-from-the-list-of-high-cost-medical-conditions.pdf>
2. Visa Pak 522 – 9 September 2022
<https://www.immigration.govt.nz/documents/visa-paks/visa-pak-522.pdf>

Immigration medical examinations submitted by eMedical are run through business rules in IHS to determine whether the requirements for auto-clearance are met. If an immigration medical examination has not auto-cleared, the HAT IOs undertake an initial assessment of the information provided. The HAT IOs are guided by the information provided in parts **A, B, C** and **D** of the attached **Appendix**. Where a HAT IO is unable to determine whether an applicant has an acceptable standard of health, they may request further information or refer the case to an MA for review. When an MA has provided an opinion, the opinion will be taken into account by the IO when making an assessment as to whether an applicant has an acceptable standard of health.

INZ MAs are practising general practitioners. When assessing the health of a visa applicant, they rely heavily on their own clinical expertise. They may also access a range of reference material from external sources such as medical journals, websites catering to medical professionals and available data on pharmaceutical costs. INZ guidelines for MAs dated 14 October 2022 are bookmarked as **E** of the **Appendix**. Links to some of the reference material used by MAs can also be found in this document.

You will notice that the document refers to supplementary guidelines. INZ's Immigration Health Team is currently consolidating information to inform these guidelines which will support medical assessors when undertaking health assessments.

The 'IHS and Health' Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) can be found in part **F** of the **Appendix**. The SOPs outline the process and responsibilities of INZ staff within IHS.

Please note that some information contained in the **Appendix** has been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act to protect the privacy of natural persons. In accordance with section 9 (1) of the Act, I have considered whether there are any factors that make it desirable, in the public interest, to release information to which section 9 of the OIA applied. I do not consider that any public interest considerations outweigh the need to withhold this information.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of the Ministry's response to your request, in accordance with section 28(3) of the Act. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request or this response, please contact inzoias@mbie.govt.nz.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Owen', with a large loop at the end.

Richard Owen

Acting General Manager, Border and Visa Operations
Immigration New Zealand