



Position Statement

Treatment of family, whānau and those close to you

This position statement outlines our position on treatment provided to family, whānau and those close to you, by our treatment providers.

Treating family can blur professional boundaries, result in poor clinical decision making and encourage excessive or unnecessary treatment. We consider “family” to encompass whānau, family members, and those close to you.

While we recognise exceptional circumstances where treatment of family may be unavoidable, we consider it generally inappropriate and unethical for treatment providers to claim payment for treating family.

This position statement aligns with those of regulatory authorities, such as the Nursing Council, Medical Council of New Zealand, and the Physiotherapy Board of New Zealand.

Exceptional circumstances

Exceptional circumstances include:

- Acute treatment provided in an emergency where, in your reasonable judgement, the need for treatment is urgent given the likely clinical effect on the person of any delay in treatment
- Situations in rural areas where there is no other appropriately qualified treatment provider available to provide the required treatment

If you believe these circumstances apply and you choose to treat a family member, you should document your consideration of any impact on good clinical reasoning, conflict of interest or power imbalance concerns.

It is your responsibility as a treatment provider to make sure the care you provide meets the clinical, professional and ethical standards of your profession.

ACC doesn't fund treatment provided in a non-emergency and/or treatment that would normally be provided by a family member.

Whānau/family member

An individual with whom you have both a familial connection and a personal or close relationship such that the relationship could be reasonably considered to affect your professional and objective judgement. A family member includes, but is not limited to your spouse or partner, parent, child, sibling, members of your whānau or extended family, your spouse or partners extended family.

Those close to you

Any individuals who have or could be perceived to have a personal or close relationship with you, whether familial or not, where the nature of the relationship could reasonably be expected to affect your professional and objective judgement. This includes where there is potential for a power imbalance or a perceived financial incentive between you and the person being treated. Examples include a close friend, work colleague, family members of the practice owner or those with a financial interest in the practice.

Considerations

Schedule 1, clause 1 of the Accident Compensation Act 2001 states that ACC is liable to pay or contribute to the cost of the client's treatment for a personal injury for which they have cover. The Act also states ACC is liable to pay such costs when the treatment is:

- necessary and appropriate
- performed only on the number of occasions necessary
- given at a time or place appropriate for that purpose

Where we identify that you have invoiced us for treatment of a family member and exceptional circumstances criteria are not met, or there is insufficient clinical rationale documented for the treatment provided, we may seek reimbursement of the costs.

We will also notify the relevant Regulatory Authority if we consider there is a potential risk of harm under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003.

If you are uncertain about these criteria or think you need another opinion, you should contact your professional association or our [provider relationship team](#).