

## **Guidelines for private healthcare providers assisting asylum seekers without access to Medicare.**

### **Background regarding asylum seekers and access to Medicare**

It is anticipated that new commonwealth government policies may limit asylum seeker access to services including Medicare. As a result of this, humanitarian and settlement services are providing some asylum seekers with 'Letters of Supply' to bridge the financial gap in accessing health services.

### **What are Letters of Supply?**

Letters of Supply may be provided to those with no access to Medicare. This includes asylum seekers with temporary protection visas or those with no visa. The letter can be provided by settlement and humanitarian services to ensure that the cost of health needs for these groups are covered. The letter states what medical services will and will not be covered by the services.

### **Letters of Supply service providers**

Services in south eastern Melbourne providing clients with Letters of Supply are:

- Red Cross - 8327 7370
- AMES Settlement – 8791 2451
- New Hope Foundation – 9530 4986
- Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau (SCAAB) – 9546 5255

**NB:** Clients need to be given the letter of supply by their case managers from one of the above service providers.

### **Setting up payments to GPs - Letter of supply**

In order for the costs of health related services to be covered, clients need to present to their GP appointments with their letter of supply. If they do not have a Letter of Supply providers can ask services if the client is eligible for a letter of supply. Upon completion of treatment, GPs are to invoice the appropriate service for payment.

### **Access to public healthcare services**

All asylum seekers who can provide documentary evidence of their asylum seeker status have access to the Victorian public healthcare system, generally at no cost. This includes emergency, in-patient and out-patient services.

## **Community health services**

Asylum seekers can also be referred to various community health services in this region. Asylum Seekers are prioritised in the Monash Health community health services with the next available appointments. It is advised that the service is contacted prior to referring the client. The services which clients can be referred in this region include:

- Cardinia Casey Community Health Services, Doveton - 9212 5711
- Asylum Seeker and Refugee Health Clinic, Doveton - 9212 5700
- Greater Dandenong Community Health Services, Springvale - 8558 9000
- Cranbourne Integrated Care Service, Cranbourne - 5990 6789

## **Referrals for tests**

Letters of Supply for particular individuals may cover the costs of pathology tests and diagnostic imaging. If the individual is not covered, it is advised that where possible Monash Health is utilised for any referrals for tests. This is to minimise the cost to the clients. Please note that all clients requiring TB tests should be referred to the Refugee Health Clinic at Dandenong Hospital.

## **Referrals to specialists**

Letters of Supply for particular individuals may cover the costs of specialist medical services. In the event that a referral to a private specialist is warranted, GPs need to provide a support letter justifying the reason for private specialist, eg. Urgency, and provide to the settlement or humanitarian service for pre-approval. Otherwise it is advised that public specialist services are utilised.

## **Medications**

Letters of supply cover the cost of PBS medications only. In the event that non PBS medication and/or over the counter medication is prescribed, this will be at the cost of the client.

## **Requests for documentation of health needs**

At times case workers may request copies of documents or support letters from GPs. This could be for various reasons but generally to advocate on behalf of their clients. Failure to obtain these documents or letters may result in either a delay in or failure to meet client needs. In an attempt to speed up the process, it is advised that case managers provide a letter stating what documents are required and give a copy of this letter to their client to give to their GP at their appointment. It is recommended that GPs respond promptly to these requests.

**Further information: Contact SEMML Refugee Health Program 8792 1911**