

This brochure tells you about how you can avoid benefit fraud. It's a quick guide, so if you are unsure about anything, please call us on **0800 559 009**.

We're here to take your call from 7am to 6pm Monday to Friday and Saturday 8am to 1pm. Or you could talk with your Case Manager.

If you are deaf or find it hard to communicate by phone, you can send a message to our Deaf Link free-fax **0800 621 621**.



If you have any questions,
you can call us free on
0800 559 009

Receive your full
and correct benefit
entitlement by keeping
us up to date with your
personal situation.



MINISTRY OF
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora



Work and Income
Te Hiranga Tangata

A service of the Ministry of Social Development

ALLA0008 – APRIL 2007

How to avoid benefit fraud

Remember to tell
us about changes
before it's too late



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Most people who receive income support tell us everything about their situation so that we can determine the correct amount they are entitled to.

It is important that we are kept informed of changes that affect your entitlement. If you don't keep us informed you could find yourself in the situation of being investigated for benefit fraud.

Benefit fraud is taken very seriously and has severe penalties:

- You may have to pay a penalty on top of the debt you already owe us, or
- You could face prosecution, a fine, sentence to do community service or imprisonment – plus pay back any money you owe us.

A conviction for benefit fraud can affect your life, including:

- your job or future job prospects
- your ability to travel overseas
- how the community sees you and your family
- your ability to get a loan or credit
- your debt burden.

It's not a matter to be taken lightly.



If you believe someone is committing benefit fraud phone our Allegation Line on **0800 556 006**.

You need to tell us everything

You must be totally honest about your personal situation and tell us straight away if anything changes, for instance, if you:

- find a job or change the number of hours you work
- become self employed or start to run a business
- intend to travel overseas
- start or finish part-time or full-time study
- are imprisoned or held in custody on remand
- are admitted to or discharged from hospital
- have been granted an overseas pension
- get married or separate, start or end a civil union or de facto relationship with someone of the same or opposite sex
- have a change in the number of children living with or supported by you
- have a change in your accommodation costs
- have any other change in your personal situation.

If you don't tell us of any changes right away you may be overpaid and will be asked to pay back any overpayment. If you deliberately don't tell us or you tell us something that is not true, you are breaking the law and committing benefit fraud.

How we find benefit fraud

We find benefit fraud in lots of different ways, including through members of the public, data matching with other government agencies, our own internal investigations and regular client entitlement reviews.

If we have concerns about your entitlement to payments

We will contact you to let you know and may ask you for more information. We'll then conduct further investigations, which could include using our authority to obtain information from:

- financial institutions
- employers
- real estate agents
- government agencies.

We may also contact other organisations and talk to people in the community.

Find out more

Don't take the risk. Call us if there's anything you'd like to know more about – we are always happy to answer your questions and there is no need to identify who you are.

You can call us free on **0800 559 009** or if you are a student call **0800 889 900**.

Benefit fraud affects us all. If you suspect someone you know may be committing benefit fraud please call our Allegation Line on **0800 556 006**.