

More healthcare workers eligible for full Covid-19 allowance

Malaysiakini

24 April 2020

CORONAVIRUS | More healthcare workers involved in tackling the Covid-19 pandemic would be eligible to the full RM600 special allowance previously announced by Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin.

This is according to a circular dated April 21 that was issued by Health Ministry secretary-general Dr Chen Chaw Min.

In the circular, Chen said the decision is based on feedback the ministry had received regarding eligibility for the allowance and the claims process.

It stipulates that some healthcare workers who are previously not entitled to an allowance would now be eligible.

These are healthcare workers who are involved in admitting and treating suspected Covid-19 patients at respiratory infection wards, those working at emergency and trauma departments and those who handle the remains of

suspected or confirmed Covid-19 patients who have died.

They are only required to work according to their schedule to be entitled to the full allowance, regardless of the number of days they spend working with Covid-19 patients.

In addition, three other categories of healthcare workers would also be entitled to the full allowance regardless of the number of days they were assigned to Covid-19-related tasks.

These are healthcare workers who conduct Covid-19 screening at screening centres, but now the circular explicitly specifies that those involved in disease surveillance for influenza-like illnesses are eligible too.

Healthcare workers collecting and transporting samples to laboratories, and those handling the admission and treatment of confirmed Covid-19 patients at isolation wards are also eligible to the full allowance regardless of the number of days they have worked on Covid-19-related tasks.

Under previous guidelines issued on March 16, these workers would only be eligible for the full allowance if they have been assigned to it for more than 15 days in a calendar month.

Otherwise, they would only be given half the allowance.

Other healthcare workers tackling the Covid-19 pandemic such as those conducting health screenings at border checkpoints and those tracing close contacts of confirmed Covid-19 patients, would still be paid the allowance according to the number of days they were assigned to the task.

Nevertheless, the circular states that department heads (such as hospital directors and district health officers) are now given the discretion to decide who else might be eligible for the allowance even if they are not listed in the ministry's circulars regarding the allowance.

The allowance was first announced by then Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad and was originally set at RM400. His successor Muhyiddin subsequently raised it to RM600 effective April 1.

However, some medical staff had previously told Malaysiakini that not all of them were eligible for the allowance despite being working at the frontlines.

“We are the first to face the risk of being infected but we are not entitled to it (the allowance).

“It is regrettable that we cannot get the allowance because we are seen as operating from the tents. Only those who treat infected patients get the allowance,” said one healthcare worker who was assigned to a Covid-19 screening tent.

Healthcare workers have also complained that the process for filing claims for the allowance was tedious. In particular, former deputy health minister Dr Lee Boon Chye said applicants had to fill five to six pages of forms.

For the record, an earlier circular issued on March 16 only provided a one-page form for healthcare workers to file claims for the special allowance but is silent on whether supporting documents are required.

With the newly-issued circular, healthcare workers are now required to fill a two-page form but it now explicitly states that only the form is required to process the claims.

“Heads of department have to ensure supervisors do not ask for additional documents apart from the claim form,” the circular reads.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd

Source: <https://www.malysiakini.com/news/522420>