



State Comptroller and Ombudsman
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National Insurance Institute

Service of the Medical Committees at the National Insurance Institute

Abstract

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Background

Israel grants people with disability various rights that are contingent on a medical evaluation by a medical committee. The National Insurance Institute is responsible for medical evaluation through the medical committees that it operates. The main committees are “general disability” committees for a person with disabilities whose earning ability has been impaired, “work disability” committees for persons suffering from disability due to workplace injuries, “disabled child” committees for children and teenagers with disabilities, special services committees for assessing and evaluating the extent to which claimants are dependent on others, and income tax exemption committees for persons asking to be exempt from tax payments.

Key figures

NIS 20.9 billion

Payments for general disability (approximately 15.6 billion) and for work disability (approximately 5.3 billion), out of a total of NIS 76.3 billion in benefit payments in 2018

293,000 claims

were submitted to the National Insurance Institute in 2018

NIS 147 million

The operating budget of the National Insurance Institute's medical committees in 2018. The committees operate at 23 branches of the National Insurance Institute nationwide

113

The average number of days it takes for work disability committees to process claims. There are significant differences in processing time between branches, of up to 90 days

33

The average number of days it takes for general disability committees to process claims

93%

The proportion of elderly persons dependent on care from others who are not entitled to a nursing allowance and who employ a foreign worker and have not fully exercised their right to apply to an income tax exemption committee in 2018






Audit Actions



In February-August 2019, the State Comptroller's Office reviewed the management and functioning of the National Insurance Institute's medical committees, with emphasis on changes to the organization of the committees, an issue that had already arisen in the 2010 State Comptroller's report ¹. The examination was conducted at the National Insurance Institute, the Population and Immigration Authority and the Israel Tax Authority.

The Situation Reflected in the Audit Findings



-  The quality of the service at medical committees is unsatisfactory. This is reflected in the long waiting time for the committee to reach a decision (113 days on average for a work disability committee), variance in waiting times at different branches, a high rate of stopping of discussions (up to 32%), availability of the service at the committees and more. One of the key reasons for this situation is a shortage of physicians.
-  The organizational structure of the committee apparatus, which involves a large number of managers, is inefficient. About a decade after the publication of the previous State Comptroller report and after recommendations for change from various committees, the jointly declared goal of improving the medical committees' organizational and operating structure has not yet been achieved.
-  Over the years, attempts have been made to regulate the work processes of the medical committees and clearly define the party responsible for managing them and his powers, but these attempts have been unsuccessful. This regulatory hiatus prevents improvement in the quality of service provided by the committees.
-  There is concern that elderly persons dependent on care from others are not aware of their eligibility for evaluation by an income tax exemption committee and have therefore not exercised this right (about 93% of elderly persons dependent on care from others who are not entitled to a nursing allowance and who employ a foreign worker did not fully exercise their right to apply to an income tax exemption committee in 2018). The National Insurance Institute, the Israel Tax Authority and the Immigration Authority are not taking adequate steps to provide them this information.
-  The processes of requesting an income tax exemption and summons to medical committees are not accessible online.


¹ The State Comptroller, Annual Report 60B (2010), "aspects in the work of medical committees to determine disabled rights", pp. 1115-1157.





The National Insurance Institute has taken various actions over the years aimed at increasing public satisfaction, including through advancing an initiative to provide consultation and guidance services for medical committees at no cost within its Helping Hand centers.


The National Insurance Institute makes rights accessible to the public primarily through its website, and publishes a large amount of information on the procedures involving medical committees on its website.


Main Audit Recommendations

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Given the key barriers to improved quality of service that have not yet been addressed, which include an inefficient organizational structure and decentralized committee apparatus, the National Insurance Institute must consider appointing a single responsible person who will answer directly to the Director General to coordinate and manage the medical committees apparatus.
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It is recommended to examine the establishment of regional centers for medical committees, which will be subordinated to the appointed coordinating party. Accordingly, the National Insurance Institute should make a concentrated effort in this field to complete the formation of the reform and set schedules and objectives for doing so.
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The National Insurance Institute and the Israel Tax Authority must examine, each within its own field of responsibility, how it is possible to improve the accessibility of online service and information to the citizen within claim processes, including online transfer of payment vouchers and completion of applications.
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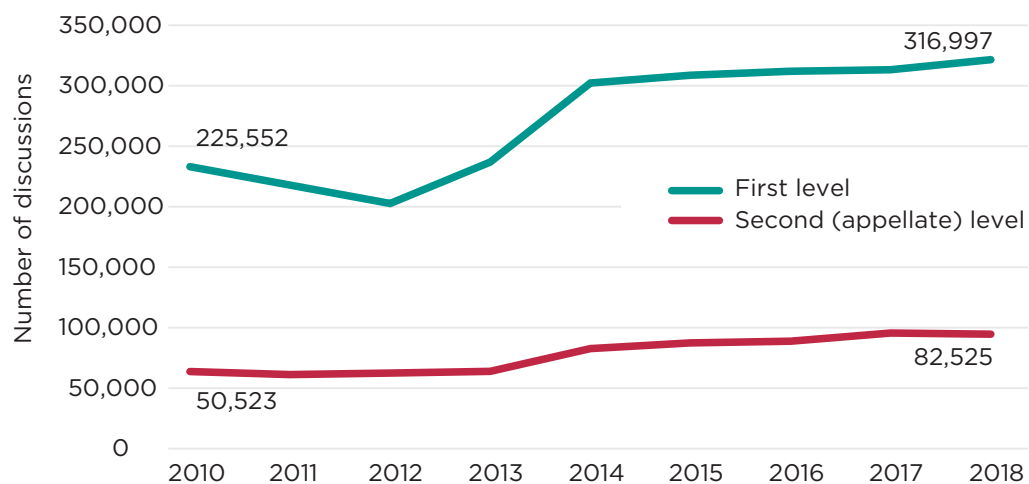
It is recommended that the Israel Tax Authority act to transfer information to the relevant entities for allowing taxpayers to exercise their full rights, such as discounted municipal tax bills, subject to the consent of each taxpayer to so transfer information related to them.
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The National Insurance Institute, the Immigration Authority and the Israel Tax Authority must examine the degree to which elderly individuals who are dependent on help from others, exercise their the right to exemption from income tax and establish ways of making information on this right accessible.

Summary

The National Insurance Institute has acted over the years to improve the quality of service in medical committees, but there are still key barriers that have not been attended to, the main ones being examination of the organizational structure of the medical committees' apparatus and possible changes to it to improve and streamline the management of the committees. The National Insurance Institute should make a concentrated effort in this field to complete a reform that will address the key barriers, including setting of schedules and objectives.

The increase in the number of discussions by medical committees, 2010-2018



According to National Insurance Institute data, adapted by the State Comptroller's Office.