



# Policy & Guidelines

## Expenditure on Children and Young People In Out of Home Care

September 2017

# Document History

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Minor updates

01/09/2020 – Figures updated to 2020/21

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18/09/2019 – Transport Expenses section revised to clarify reimbursement rate.

# 1. Introduction

This document outlines the policy and guidelines that apply to the reimbursement to carers from 30 June 2012. The term carer refers to foster carers, formal kinship carers, family group home carers and cottage home carers. The term case manager refers to Child Safety Officers (CSOs) within response and case management teams who are responsible for preparing the Case and Care Plans for children and young people in care.

## 2. Legislative basis

Section 69 of the *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997* establishes both the powers and the duties of the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services in relation to the care of children under guardianship or in the custody of the Secretary.

## 3. Policy position

In accordance with the object of the *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997*, the Department of Health and Human Services is committed to the care and protection of children and young people in a manner that maximises their opportunity to grow up in a safe and stable environment and reach their full potential.

Children and Youth Services (CYS) recognise that children and young people in out of home care have specific needs. The level of abuse and neglect before entering care is likely to result in a range of behaviours, emotional needs and developmental delays. These factors together with the experiences of being in care mean that no child in care is likely to be 'easy' to care for. However, some children have significantly more complex needs than their peers.

The majority of carers receive standard board payments for children in their care. Some carers receive higher payments to cover the costs associated with meeting the intensive and complex needs of children in care.

Higher level payments must be approved by the relevant Child Safety Manager.

## 4. The standard board payments

The standard fortnightly board payments cover the day to day costs of children in care. The rate of payment varies according to the age of the child or young person as outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1. Standard Board Payment to Carers, \$ per fortnight, 2019/20**

Age	Fortnightly Rates	Annual Rates*
0-4 years	\$428.00	\$11,128.00
5-11 years	\$490.00	\$12,740.00
12-17 years	\$566.00	\$14,716.00

The standard board payment covers the day to day costs for children in care including:

- all clothing items including school uniform and a school bag
- all footwear including school shoes, boots, sandshoes, sandals, slippers and thongs
- sports clothing including tracksuit, sports uniforms, bathers and goggles
- accessories including hats, belts, sunglasses, personal jewellery, a watch and a wallet
- sun protection including a sunhat, sun glasses sunscreen and sun protection suit
- nappies and baby hygiene products such as wipes
- education including excursions, performances, school camps, school photos and magazines
- recreational activities including DVD hire, toys, games and cinema tickets
- recreational items such as mouth guards, safety helmets, skateboards, skipping ropes, tennis rackets and basket balls
- participation in normal recreational activities including travel to activities, entry and club fees
- pocket money
- day trips and holidays within Tasmania
- childcare, after school care, school holiday program and baby sitting
- travel to and from school, sporting and social activities, standard doctor and dental appointments and reasonable family access in line with the child's care plan.
- standard medical costs including prescriptions for medication covered by the PBS for medical conditions that are not ongoing or chronic
- dental costs including toothbrushes, tooth paste and dental floss
- household cleaning products including washing powder, disinfectants and shoe polish
- personal care items including soap, shampoo and conditioner, regular haircuts, deodorant and tampons
- doonas, blankets, bed linen and towels
- fair wear and tear of household items including a bed, desk and carpets etc
- energy costs including electricity, gas, solar heating and other heating products
- water including metered water and tank water
- phone calls
- internet services
- food including eating out or take-away food, snacks, lunches from school canteen and special occasions such as Christmas and birthday parties and Easter eggs
- photographs, cards and small gifts from the child for members of the child's birth family.

The standard board payment covers the majority of day to day costs for children in care. It is intended that carers will not have to spend time seeking reimbursement for incidental costs associated with caring for a child in their care.

#### **4.1. Pocket Money**

The amount for pocket money is not specified. However, the carer must provide pocket money to the child each week. The level of pocket money will depend on the age of the child, community norms and the amount of pocket money that the carer's own children receive. It is recommended that children receive a level of pocket money that is equivalent to their age. Thus, a four-year-old child would receive \$4 per week and a ten-year-old child would receive \$10 per week. Young people aged 16 and 17 years are eligible for Youth Allowance payments. Carers who are caring for young people who are receiving Youth Allowance do not need to provide pocket money and the young people are expected to cover the costs that are normally met with pocket money from their Youth Allowance payments (this will change in Jan in line with new Centrelink payment processes).

#### **4.2. Clothing**

Standard board payments cover the cost of clothing for children however the amount is not specified. Carers are expected to purchase clothing that meets community norms. The preferences of children should be respected. Some children may require guidance in determining the 'trade offs' that are required if they wish to purchase an expensive item of clothing. In exceptional circumstances additional clothing expenditure may be approved by the panel.

### **5. Establishment allowance**

Carers receive a one-off voucher of \$70 for children and young people who are entering care for the first time. The establishment allowance covers expenditure on the personal care items and small items of clothing that are required by children or young people when they are placed in care for the first time. It may cover items such as a toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, hairbrush, socks and underwear. It may also be used to purchase food for the child, for instance the child's preferred breakfast cereal.

Case managers will provide carers with a voucher for \$70 at the time of placement to reimburse them for establishment costs. If it is not possible for this to happen immediately it will be done as soon as possible following the placement. Alternatively, carers who do not wish to use a purchase order can submit a claim for reimbursement to a maximum of \$70. A direct deposit for the amount will then be paid into the carer's bank account.

## 5.1. Change in placement

The establishment allowance will not be paid when children and young people move to another placement as the items that were purchased from the establishment allowance and other Departmental payments on behalf of the child or young person will be taken with them to their new placement.

## 5.2. Children and young people who have been previously placed in care

Children and young people who have been previously placed in care may receive an establishment allowance of \$70 providing that they need essential items such as personal care products or additional clothing. The relevant Child Safety may approve any additional establishment allowances within a twelve-month period.

# 6. Additional payment for clothing and suitcase

Children and young people who have been in care between four to eight weeks and it is expected that they will remain in care may require an additional payment to ensure that the child has an adequate supply of clothing and a suitcase.

The level of payment depends on an assessment of the clothing that a child or young person has at the time of placement and the likelihood that the child or young person will remain in care. As a general rule, the decision that a child/young person is likely to remain in care occurs at the same time that there has been a decision to extend an assessment order under Section 22 (5).

Additional payment for clothing and a suitcase must be approved by the relevant Child Safety Manager.

# 7. Gifts for children in care

The primary carer receives an additional payment for a birthday gift and a Christmas gift for each child who is in care when those events occur.

### Bonus Payment Rates, 2019/20

Christmas Gift	\$86.00
Birthday Gift	\$86.00

## 8. Brokerage funds for additional needs

Children and young people in care may have additional costs that are not covered by the standard board payments.

Additional carer reimbursement must be approved by the relevant Child Safety Manager and this will not be approved retrospectively.

### 8.1. Health care expenses

CYS and carers will utilise public health care services and doctors who are willing to 'bulk bill' wherever possible.

Over the counter medicines such as Panadol and anti-septic creams as well as occasional prescriptions covered by the PBS scheme are covered by the standard board payments.

Private specialist services, regular medication and any ongoing medication that is not covered by the PBS scheme can be approved by the relevant Child Safety Manager.

CYS does not cover the cost of private health insurance for children in care unless the child has a serious medical condition and a costs benefits analysis demonstrates that there are savings in having private health insurance.

### 8.2. Dental care expenses

Children in out of home care should utilise the Oral Health Services Tasmania. Private dental treatment including orthodontic treatment must be approved by the relevant Child Safety Manager before the treatment commences.

### 8.3. Optical expenses

School aged children in out of home care should utilise the Spectacles Assistance Scheme.

### 8.4. Educational expenses

The Student Assistance Scheme (STaS) covers day to day educational materials such as schoolbooks and stationery for children in care.

School uniforms and school excursions are covered by the standard board payments.

## **8.5. Recreational expenses**

The standard board payment covers normal recreational activities. Normal recreational activities include books, toys, games, a trip to the cinema, hiring DVDs, the annual show, entry to a swimming pool, school sports and at least one specific leisure activity such as dancing or music lessons. Any costs associated with the child attending a friend's party are also covered by the standard board payment.

Additional carer payments for the care of children with intensive and complex needs may cover additional recreational costs for the children.

The cost of additional recreational and sporting activities or equipment must be approved by the relevant Child Safety Manager.

## **8.6. Childcare expenses**

The standard board payment includes occasional childcare costs.

Carers may be eligible for the Child Care Benefit from Centrelink to assist with the cost of childcare for long day care, family day care, in-home care, occasional care, outside school hours care, vacation care and registered care. The rate of the childcare benefit is affected by the adjusted taxable income but is not subject to an assets test. An application form can be obtained from any Family Assistance Office located in Centrelink Customer Service Centres and Medicare offices. Carers should also be eligible for the Child Care Rebate.

The cost to the carer for regular and ongoing childcare must be pre-approved by the relevant Child Safety Manager as indicated in the Case and Care Plan. If the carer is eligible for the Child Care Tax Rebate these payments should be factored into the calculation of the cost to the carer.

Regular and ongoing childcare expenses must be contained in the Case and Care Plan and be approved by the relevant Child Safety Manager.

## **8.7. Private rental expenses**

Approved carers are expected to have suitable accommodation in order to care for a child.

## **8.8. Transport expenses**

The standard board payment covers the day to day transport costs for children in care. This includes travel to and from school, travel to and from the doctor/dentist and recreational activities including day trips and holidays within Tasmania.



Where carers are required to use their private vehicle to provide additional transport, they will be reimbursed at the rate of \$0.21 per kilometre<sup>1</sup> travelled in excess of ten kilometres from the carer's home, unless agreed otherwise by the Child Safety Manager who may approve a different rate of reimbursement in certain circumstances. Examples of additional transport include transport to a school outside the local area or to a specialist service.

## 8.9. Interstate and overseas travel

Costs for interstate and overseas travel must be pre-approved by the relevant Child Safety Manager before the travel commences.

The relevant Child Safety Manager may approve costs associated with Interstate travel for the child's family access.

## 9. Fortnightly payments for the care of children with intensive needs

Carers who are caring for children with intensive needs may receive higher fortnightly payments to cover the additional costs associated with the child's high needs. The higher level of payments also covers the day to day costs that are covered by standard board payments (see section 5)

The assessment of the severity of challenging behaviours is intrinsic to the care planning for the child or young person. Case managers should consider the need for higher payments to cover the additional costs in caring for children and young people with challenging behaviours or significant medical conditions or disabilities.

An application for additional carer payments for a child with intensive or complex needs must be completed and presented to the relevant Child Safety Manager with the child's Case and Care Plan and other documentation that outlines the child's needs.

Higher payments (intensive) may be required for children and young people who:

- have experienced significant disruption in their lives or while in out of home care resulting in difficulties in forming and maintaining attachments
- have impaired social relationships with peers and others
- have attempted suicide or are considering attempting suicide
- display aggression towards others
- have a pattern of offending behaviour
- have significant drug and alcohol problems
- are a risk to animals
- demonstrate inappropriate sexualised behaviours

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<sup>1</sup> Rate based on DHHS PTAS:

[https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/hospital/ptas/publications\\_ptas/information\\_for\\_medical\\_practitioners\\_frequently\\_asked\\_questions](https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/hospital/ptas/publications_ptas/information_for_medical_practitioners_frequently_asked_questions)

- have abnormal sleep patterns
- have a pattern of destroying property.

The behaviours should be ongoing. Children and young people in care, especially adolescents may have episodes of non-compliant behaviours and may be involved in minor offending or be suspended from school. The role of the case manager is to determine when a combination of behaviours represents the need for additional supports to manage the behaviours and to prevent further escalation of challenging behaviours. If carer requires additional skills to manage the behaviours the case manager should explore opportunities to develop the skills and seek additional support from the out of home care team.

The case manager will present the Case and Care Plan for the child to the relevant Child Safety Manager if the child's behaviours and needs indicate that higher payments are required.

There are two levels of intensive payments. The relevant Child Safety Manager will determine the appropriate level based on the evidence contained in the Case and Care Plan. Level 2 is more appropriate for children over the age of 12 years and where the child regularly demonstrates more than three challenging behaviours.

The relevant Child Safety Manager will determine the date that the additional payments will commence and set a date for review. For intensive payments the maximum review date is 6 months from the date that the payments commenced.

**Table 2. Rates for Intensive Payments (includes the Standard Board Payment), 2019/20**

Age	Level 1		Level 2	
	Fortnightly Rates	Annual Rates*	Fortnightly Rates	Annual Rates*
0-4 years	\$692.00	\$17,992.00	\$1,047.00	\$27,222.00
5-11 years	\$757.00	\$19,628.00	\$1,108.00	\$28,808.00
12-17 years	\$832.00	\$21,632.00	\$1,184.00	\$30,784.00

## 10. Fortnightly payments for the care of children and young people with complex needs

Children with complex needs have similar behaviours as children with intensive needs however the behaviours are more extreme. The level of complexity is increased when a child has a high number of difficult to manage behaviours. Complexity is also likely to increase as the child gets older and where there is a pattern of placement breakdowns and cumulative arm, The behaviours include:

- persistent destruction of property

- excessive use of alcohol/drugs/solvents and other mind-altering substances
- physical and verbal attacks on others
- sexually aggressive behaviours
- suicidal and serious self-harming behaviours
- serious risk-taking behaviours including regular running away from placement and seeking out locations that are unsafe
- major mental health illness
- chronic medical condition or disability.

There are two levels of payments for complex payments. Level 2 is more appropriate for children over the age of 12 years and where the child presents with more than four categories of difficult behaviours.

**Table 3. Rates for Complex Payments (includes the Standard Board Payment), 2019/20**

Age	Level 1		Level 2	
	Fortnightly Rates	Annual Rates*	Fortnightly Rates	Annual Rates*
0-4 years	\$1,399.00	\$36,374.00	\$1,664.00	\$43,264.00
5-11 years	\$1,462.00	\$38,012.00	\$1,726.00	\$44,876.00
12-17 years	\$1,538.00	\$39,988.00	\$1,802.00	\$46,852.00

The relevant Child Safety Manager must set the commencement date and a review date. If the higher payments were approved because the child has complex challenging behaviours, the review date should be six months from date the additional payments were approved.

## 11. Payments for respite care

It is acknowledged that respite aids in the provision of a supportive placement but should not be viewed as an entitlement. Respite was introduced to ensure carers continued to receive their full entitlement for approved respite periods. Generally, respite periods will be 1 to 2 days but can be longer by agreement for situations such as family emergencies, illness etc. A carer going on holiday is not considered to be respite. Should a child be placed with a different carer for a holiday period then this is viewed as 'shared care' or 'carer to carer care' and standard payment is transferred. Respite and away from carer situations allow for carers to be paid up to 28 days per financial year and should be considered in conjunction with point 13 below.

Respite plans must be discussed, approved and recorded in to the clients' Case and Care Plan.

Carers who are providing respite care receive a flat amount per child depending on the amount of time that the child spends in the carers' home.

### Respite Rates, 2019/20

Day 1	\$60.00
Day 2-6	\$33.00

Respite carers are not required to provide children with pocket money or clothing and if the child is taking regular medication, his or her primary carer must ensure that the child has sufficient medication for the respite period. Respite carers are responsible for incidental recreational costs.

The carer receives the standard board payment for any placement that exceeds six days. Thus if a child is placed for respite and the intention is that the child will return to his or her primary placement, the respite care payments may continue for a maximum of six nights. Following six nights of continuous respite, the payments to the respite carer are the same as standard board payments for the child, even though the child may be on respite.

If an intended respite placement ceases to be a respite placement because the child's primary placement has broken down during the respite period and the immediate plan is for the child to remain with the respite carer, the standard board payments commence from the date that there was a decision that the carer is the primary carer.

If the primary carer is receiving higher fortnightly payments because the child has intensive or complex needs and respite care is being arranged, it may be necessary to provide additional financial support to the respite carer.

## **12. Child is away from a placement for a short period**

The CYs recognise that carers may experience continuing costs associated with the care of a child/young person who is away from a placement for short periods of time. Carers continue to receive standard payments if the plan is that the child will return to carers' home within the near future. The child may be away from the placement because the carers are having respite, the child is spending time with family members, the child is in hospital, the child is attending a camp or the child is missing. Payments may continue to carers in exceptional circumstances if approved by the relevant Child Safety Manager.

## **13. Child is being reunified**

The child's carer should continue to receive standard board payments during the period that a child is being reunified with his or her family. Board payments cease to carers when the child returns to the full-time care of parents.

## **14. Child is removed from the placement pending an investigation**

The Director must approve the continuation of payments to a carer following the removal of a child pending a 'Complaints in Care' investigation.

## 15. Care is shared between two carers

Two carer households (that is out of home care is provided across two separate homes) may share the care of a child on an ongoing basis. This arrangement generally applies for the care of a child with high needs with the child spending an agreed period of time in one home and then moving to another home for an agreed period of time. This arrangement occurs on a regular basis and over an extended period of time. For instance, the child may spend Thursday to Sunday nights in the home of the primary carer and Monday to Wednesday nights in the separate home of the additional carer.

In these rare circumstances the primary carer and the secondary carer receives the standard board payments for the actual nights of care provided. If additional payments for the care of children with intensive and complex needs have been approved the additional payments are also paid for the actual nights of care provided. The Case and Care Plan for the child must outline the arrangements for the provision of pocket money, clothing and other costs for the care of the child. The Plan must also identify which carer is listed as the primary carer. The primary carer receives the payments for Christmas and birthday gifts.

Note: Two approved carers in the same household are not two carer households.

## 16. Shared care with parents

The care of the child may be shared with the child's parents. Providing that this arrangement is not part of a planned reunification and if the parents provide more than 28 nights of care over the period of one year, the payments to the carer are reduced for each additional night that the child is cared for by his or her parents.

## 17. Youth Allowance

Centrelink considers young people placed in out of home care to be in supported state care. As a consequence, they are eligible for the Youth Allowance at the dependent rate.

The carer continues to receive the standard board payment until the young person is 18 years of age (providing that the young person is living in the carer's home).

Young people aged 16 and over are expected to contribute to their recreational and clothing costs. This includes the costs associated with attending a leavers' dinner.

## **17.1. Supported state care**

Supported state care applies where the young person receives payments for his or her upkeep from the State. Upkeep involves payment by the Department for items of a physical, tangible nature that are necessities of life for a young person in state care. These include food, clothing shelter and utilities. The payments do not need to be adequate or ongoing and thus even small and irregular payments by the Department results in the young person being regarded by Centrelink as being in supported state care.

## **17.2. Unsupported state care**

Unsupported state care applies where the Department of Health and Human Services does not provide a young person with any payments for items of a physical tangible nature that are the necessities of life such as food, clothing shelter and utilities. The payment for counselling services that aim to assist the young person's transition to independence or payments to assist the young person with the cost of family access visits are not seen as necessities of life. A young person in unsupported state care may be eligible for Youth Allowance that is equivalent to the Youth Homeless Allowance.

# **18. Centrelink payments for the child**

Carers may lodge an intention to claim for Centrelink benefits for a child placed in their care from the first day of placement. However, if the child is absent from the care of his or her parents for less than four weeks, the child's parents will continue to receive Centrelink benefits for the child.

The receipt of Centrelink payments for a child in care does not affect the standard reimbursement. However, there is an expectation that Centrelink payments on behalf of a child in care are directed to the care of the child. Such payments may be taken into account in planning to meet the needs of a child.

## **18.1. Carer allowance (Centrelink)**

The carer allowance from Centrelink helps carers to care for a child/young person with a disability at home. Centrelink uses the Child Disability Assessment Tool to assess the functional ability of a child under the age of sixteen years of age. The carer allowance is not subject to an income test or an asset test. It may be backdated up to twelve months prior to the lodgement of a claim form. Details of the carer allowance are available on the Centrelink homepage at [www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au)

A carer allowance from Centrelink may be taken into account during the care planning process. Although the Carer Allowance will not impact on the level of special care allowance CYs will provide, it may be considered when planning for other payments such as additional payments for leisure activities for the child.

## **19. Public housing**

CYS payments to carers for a child in care are not treated as household income by Housing Tasmania.

## **20. Australian Taxation Office**

CYS payments to carers for a child in care are not taxable income.

## **21. Changes in the cost of living**

The standard board, intensive and complex payments are adjusted in July each year to reflect changes in the cost of living for the previous year.