



# Foster Carers and the ACCS (child wellbeing)

## Information for foster carers on the application process for Additional Child Care Subsidy (child wellbeing).

Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS)(child wellbeing) assists children who are at risk by providing a top up payment in addition to the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) (100% of the actual fee charged (up to 120% of the hourly rate cap), up to 100 hours of assistance per fortnight).

## Important to know

- ACCS (child wellbeing) is an additional subsidy applied for by a child care provider on behalf of the individual – not the child.
- The foster carer must have lodged a claim for, and be eligible for Child Care Subsidy.
- Foster carers may be eligible for ACCS (child wellbeing) for a child placed in their care who is 'at risk'. The additional subsidy is paid directly to the child care provider on their behalf.
- Child Care Subsidy is the main payment to assist families with the cost of child care.
- To be eligible for ACCS (child wellbeing) a foster carer must apply and be eligible for the Child Care Subsidy. It is important that foster carers lodge their application for Child Care Subsidy as early as possible because under Family Assistance Law, the subsidy can only be backdated a maximum of 28 days.
- Where possible, foster carers should lodge their claim for Child Care Subsidy before enrolling their child in child care.
- Child Care Providers are able to apply for ACCS (child wellbeing) for children who meet the eligibility criteria.

## **Eligibility and application process for ACCS (child wellbeing)**

The foster carer must ensure the below steps are completed in order to be eligible for ACCS (child wellbeing).

1. The foster carer must apply for and be granted CCS eligibility (it does not matter if the entitlement is zero due to the activity test requirements because once ACCS is granted, the foster carer is exempt from this requirement).
  2. Complete a Complying Written Arrangement (CWA) enrolment with the child care centre and accept liability for the child care fees.
- The child must be 'at risk' for the purposes of ACCS (child wellbeing). Where a child is in a foster care arrangement that is recognised in a decision of a court or a tribunal under relevant state/territory law, the child will meet the requirement for a child to be 'at risk' for the purpose of ACCS (child wellbeing). However, evidence will be required to support an application. The child's case worker will be required to provide that evidence to the child care provider in writing.
  - The child care provider is able to give a certificate for up to six weeks. If the child continues to be 'at risk' for longer than six weeks, the child care provider will then make an application to the Department of Human Services for a determination for ACCS (child wellbeing) on behalf of the foster carer. Determinations can be made for up to 13 weeks at a time.

### **What does 'liability to pay for child care fees' mean?**

- The foster carer, as the adult who is legally responsible for the child's day-to-day care, welfare and development of the child, is liable for the child care fees.
- In order to receive Child Care Subsidy the foster carer must have incurred a liability, that is, a responsibility, to pay for a session of care under a CWA.
- This is a core part of eligibility for Child Care Subsidy or Additional Child Care Subsidy. It establishes the liability of the individual to pay for child care.
- The foster carer will have liability to pay for child care fees, however once ACCS (child wellbeing) has been granted for a child in their care, they will be entitled to receive a subsidy equal to the actual fee charged by the child care service, or up to 120% of the Child Care Subsidy hourly rate cap, whichever is lower. In most cases, the full cost of care will be covered.

### **What if the foster carer's income is too high or they don't meet the activity test requirements to receive Child Care Subsidy**

- If the child care provider applies for ACCS (child wellbeing) and it is approved, and the foster carer is Child Care Subsidy eligible, they will receive the ACCS (child wellbeing) of 100% of the fee charged (up to 120% of the hourly rate cap) and up to 100 hours per fortnight.

- While they may not receive any entitlement under the Child Care Subsidy, if the foster carer's income is too high they may be eligible for Child Care Subsidy, but with no entitlement.
- ACCS (child wellbeing) approval exempts the foster carer from the income and activity tests normally associated with Child Care Subsidy.

## Glossary

**Complying Written Arrangement** – an arrangement (an agreement between a child care provider and an individual to provide child care in return for fees) that includes required information.

**Eligibility** – for Child Care Subsidy to be paid to an individual they, and the child, must meet certain eligibility requirements such as:

- Age requirements –
  - children must be aged 13 years or under, and
  - Not attend high school (secondary school)
- Immunisation requirements – a child must meet the immunisation requirements
  - Immunised according to the standard vaccination schedule
  - Be on an eligible catch-up vaccination schedule, or
  - Have an approved exemption from being immunised
- Residency requirements –
  - The foster carer or their partner must be an Australian resident or be an eligible non-resident

**Entitlement** – For the purposes of Child Care Subsidy, entitlement is determined by the following:

- Family income
- Activity test results
- Type of child care service used, and whether the child attends school.

**Liability** – the individual, in this case the foster carer, who is responsible for paying the child care fees. However, once ACCS (child wellbeing) has been approved for the child, the ACCS (child wellbeing) **in most cases** will cover the costs of the child care fees.

## More information

To find out more about ACCS (child wellbeing) go to [education.gov.au/additional-child-care-subsidy](http://education.gov.au/additional-child-care-subsidy)