

## EDUCATION – WHAT ARE YOU ENTITLED TO?

The cost of education is high no matter what form of education you are hoping to offer a child in your care. For many carers, DHS or your community services agency may well be able to assist with covering the costs associated with putting children through school. For other carers, particularly those in non-statutory kinship arrangements, this assistance is not always forthcoming. The following subsidies and fee assistance packages are available to all statutory and non-statutory carers:

What's available?	Eligibility	Relevant Dates	How to access	Contact details
<b>Student Travel Expenses</b>				
<b>Conveyance Allowance</b>  <small>Source: DEECD Website</small>	If you live more than 4.8km from the nearest school you may be eligible for a conveyance allowance.	Any time	Further information about the allowance and the relevant applications forms are available from your school.	Contact your school for further details
<b>Victorian Public Transport Student Concession Card</b>  <small>Source: DEECD Website</small>	Primary and Secondary school children. Child concession age has increased to 17 years old (and hold a Health Care Card)	Any time Note: Yearly and half-yearly Metro Student Passes & Regional Student Transit passes are available.	Speak to you school for full information on options available to that particular school.	See Metlink's Travelling with Student Concessions web page: <a href="http://www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au/fares_tickets/concessions/students">www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au/fares_tickets/concessions/students</a>
<b>State-wide Victorian Student Pass</b>  <small>Source: DEECD Website</small>	Primary and Secondary school children NB: As the Victorian Student Pass allows access to public transport services outside normal travel to and from school (school holidays, weekends and public holidays), it cannot be used to claim the Department of Education conveyance allowance.	Any time	Speak to you school for full information on options available to that particular school or visit Metlink.	See Metlink's Travelling with Student Concessions web page: <a href="http://www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au/fares_tickets/concessions/students">www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au/fares_tickets/concessions/students</a>

What's available?	Eligibility	Relevant Dates	How to access	Contact details
<b>Student Travel Expenses (cont'd)</b>				
<b>Free school bus network</b>  Source: DEECD Website	Primary and Secondary school students	Any time	An extensive school bus network exists, generally in regional areas, but also in the outer metropolitan Melbourne suburbs.	Contact your school to see if a free school bus operates within your area or alternatively refer to the Department of Transport's School Buses website: <a href="http://www.transport.vic.gov.au/pt/public-transport-projects-and-improvements/regional-public-transport/school-buses-in-country-victoria">http://www.transport.vic.gov.au/pt/public-transport-projects-and-improvements/regional-public-transport/school-buses-in-country-victoria</a>
<b>Walking or Cycling to school</b>  Source: DEECD Website	Primary and Secondary school students	Any time	Many schools offer walking or cycling groups to increase safety for children walking or cycling to school.	Talk to your school about any initiative they might offer those students who wish to walk or cycle to school.
<b>Further Assistance</b>  Source: DEECD Website	For some students who travel to school by private car, ferry or motor bike a range of allowance based on the distance travelled may be available.	Any time	Your child's school will be able to provide further details of any travel allowances available to you.	Contact your school to see if you are eligible.
	Students attending a specialist school may be eligible for travel assistance.	Any time	Your child's school will be able to provide you with further details.	Contact your school to see if you are eligible for travel assistance.
To find contact details for your child's school go to the 'Schools Online' website: <a href="http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/schoolsonline/">http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/schoolsonline/</a>  For further assistance or advice please email the Dept of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) Financial Services Division – 'Student Transport Unit' at: <a href="mailto:student.transport@edumail.vic.gov.au">student.transport@edumail.vic.gov.au</a>				

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<b>Financial Assistance</b>				
<p>Education Maintenance Allowance</p> <p>\$235 pa for primary school students</p> <p>\$470 pa for secondary school students (paid on a pro rata basis the year a child turns 16 at which time payment ceases)</p> <p>Source: DEECD Website</p>	<p>The applicant must – on the first day of Term 1 for the first instalment, and on the first day of Term 3 for the second instalment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) be an eligible recipient of a Centrelink pension, allowance or benefit and be a holder of either a Health Care Card or a Pensioner Concession Card</li> <li>b) Or be a Veterans Affairs (TPI) pensioner</li> <li>c) Or be a foster parent and</li> <li>d) Submit the application to the school by the submission dates</li> </ul>	<p>Payments are received in 2 instalments per year. Once in March and again in August</p>	<p>EMA is divided equally between the school and the parent/guardian.</p> <p>Parents/guardians apply for the EMA at their schools by completing an application form.</p>	<p>The Bursar at your child's school will be able to provide you with the relevant application forms, and also will be able to answer any questions you may have.</p> <p>Cut off dates for the return of application forms are the 29<sup>th</sup> of February 2012 and the 3<sup>th</sup> August 2012.</p> <p>Note: Foster parents can only apply for the EMA for foster children only.</p> <p>For more information on the EMA go to: <a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/aboutschool/lifeatschool/ema/payment.htm">http://www.education.vic.gov.au/aboutschool/lifeatschool/ema/payment.htm</a></p>
<p><b>School Start Bonus</b></p> <p>The School Start Bonus is provided by the Victorian Government to assist low-income families with the costs associated with their child</p>	<p>If you hold a valid Health Care Card, Pension Card, or are a foster parent, and you have a child starting Prep or Year 7, you may be eligible to receive this one- off \$300 payment. This bonus is separate, and additional to the Education Maintenance Allowance.</p>	<p>Lodge your application by 15<sup>th</sup> December 2011. The School Start Bonus will be paid by Electronic Funds Transfer [EFT] into your nominated account in late January 2012.</p>	<p>Contact your school for an application form</p>	<p>For more information call the DEECD on 1800 809 834 / Option 6 or go to: <a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/aboutschool/lifeatschool/schoolstartfaq.htm#H3N1009E">http://www.education.vic.gov.au/aboutschool/lifeatschool/schoolstartfaq.htm#H3N1009E</a></p>

<p>starting Prep or Year 7 at a government or non-government school. If you hold a valid Health Care Card, Pension Card, or are a foster parent, and you have a child starting Prep or Year 7, you may be eligible to receive this one- off \$300 payment. This bonus is separate, and additional to the Education Maintenance Allowance.</p> <p><u>Amount:</u> \$300 per eligible child</p> <p>Source: DEECD Website</p>				
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What's available?	Eligibility	Relevant Dates	How to access	Contact details
<b>Financial Assistance (cont'd)</b>				
<p><b>Youth Allowance</b> Provided by the Federal Govt through Centrelink.</p> <p>Source: Centrelink Website</p>	<p>Youth Allowance is an income support payment for young people generally aged between 16 and 24 years of age in the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ people under 25 yrs who are studying full-time in an approved course at an approved institution, or are temporarily unable to study due to illness;</li> <li>➤ people under 21 yrs who are looking for work, combining part-time study with looking for work or undertaking other approved activities;</li> <li>➤ people under 21yrs who are temporarily unable to work due to illness;</li> </ul>	<p>Any time</p>	<p>The amount of Youth Allowance a young person can get depends on whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ the young person's income and assets (or their parent's income and assets) are over a certain amount;</li> <li>➤ the young person is independent (refer the Independence Youth Allowance);</li> <li>➤ the young person is single or has a partner;</li> <li>➤ the young person has children;</li> </ul>	<p>For further information call Centrelink on 13 61 50, go to <a href="http://www.centrelink.gov.au">www.centrelink.gov.au</a> or visit any Centrelink or Family Assistance Office.</p>

What's available?	Eligibility	Relevant Dates	How to access	Contact details
<b>Financial Assistance (cont'd)</b>				
<p><b>Independence (Youth Allowance)</b></p> <p>A higher rate of Youth Allowance may be payable if the young person is considered to be independent.</p> <p>Source: Centrelink Website</p>	<p>Young people may be considered independent if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ they are over 23 and a full time student of Australian Apprentice</li> <li>➤ they meet the criteria for having supported themselves in paid employment;</li> <li>➤ they have been married or have been living in a marriage-like relationship for 12 months or more, or</li> <li>➤ they have or have had a dependent child, or</li> <li>➤ it is unreasonable for them to live at home – for example due to an extreme family breakdown;</li> <li>➤ they are a refugee, an orphan or are (or have been) in State care.</li> </ul>	Any time		<p>For further information call Centrelink on 13 61 50, go to <a href="http://www.centrelink.gov.au">www.centrelink.gov.au</a> or visit any Centrelink or Family Assistance Office.</p>
<p><b>Assistance for Isolated Children</b></p> <p>Source: DEECD Website</p>	<p>This scheme provides financial assistance to parents/guardians of children who, because of geographic isolation or disability, must live away from home to attend school, study by correspondence or live at a second family home that provides daily access to schooling.</p>	Any time		<p>For further information call Centrelink on 13 61 50, go to <a href="http://www.centrelink.gov.au">www.centrelink.gov.au</a> or visit any Centrelink or Family Assistance Office.</p>

What's available?	Eligibility	Relevant Dates	How to access	Contact details
<b>Financial Assistance (cont'd)</b>				
<p><b>ABSTUDY</b></p> <p>The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Study Assistance Scheme.</p> <p>Source: DEECD Website</p>	<p>ABSTUDY helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who want to stay in school or go on to do more study.</p>	<p>Payments are received fortnightly</p>	<p>ABSTUDY may be able to help with money for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ living expenses;</li> <li>➤ accommodation expenses (rent, boarding fees, residential costs)</li> <li>➤ education expenses (school fees, books, and equipment, incidentals, thesis costs);</li> <li>➤ fares (to travel to study each term/semester if a person needs to study away from home);</li> <li>➤ prescription medications;</li> </ul>	<p>For further information call Centrelink on 13 61 50, go to <a href="http://www.centrelink.gov.au">www.centrelink.gov.au</a> or visit any Centrelink or Family Assistance Office.</p>
<p><b>Student Scholarships</b></p> <p>Source: DEECD Website</p>	<p>Student scholarships are generally awarded on the basis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ excellent academic achievement</li> <li>➤ outstanding participation in the school and local community</li> <li>➤ financial needs (determined by the parents eligibility to receive the Education Maintenance Allowance)</li> </ul>	<p>Applications for the DEECD Student Scholarships close Monday the 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2012.</p>	<p>The DEECD administers 30 student scholarships.</p> <p>In addition, some schools will offer their own 'in house' scholarships, and the details and application requirements of these scholarships can be provided by the individual school.</p>	<p>For further information on DEECD administered student scholarships, go to: <a href="https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/scholarships/default.aspx">https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/scholarships/default.aspx</a></p> <p>To check if your child's school offers scholarship opportunities, contact your school directly.</p>

What's available?	Eligibility	Relevant Dates	How to access	Contact details
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**Financial Assistance (cont'd)**

**Parent Payments in Victorian Government Schools**

There are three categories of education items or services for which schools can request payment from parents or guardians:

- essential education items for which the parent/guardian must pay to provide, or for which the parent/guardian must pay the school to provide (eg: text books, stationary, school uniforms where required)
- optional educational items which are offered on a user-pays basis allowing the parent /guardian to choose whether their child has access to such items; (eg: school magazines or extra curricular activities)
- voluntary financial contributions which parents and guardians may be invited to donate to the school;

School Councils are required to develop their own policy around these payments, with the stipulation being that the developed policy be in line with the Department's policy, and it be made available to all parents and guardian upon request.

For further information to go <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/schooloperations/schoolcharges.htm> or <http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/schacc/parentpayments-pol-oct2007.pdf>

Source: DEECD Website

**State Schools' Relief Committee**

The State Schools' Relief Committee Incorporated is an autonomous body that assists needy students attending government schools in Victoria with school clothing and footwear.

All requests for assistance must be lodged with the School Principal, and the Principal must then lodge an application for assistance on behalf of the parent or guardian with the State Schools' Relief Committee.

**Note:** Most schools will offer a second hand uniform shop which provides parents/guardian with a cheaper uniform option for their child.

Source: DEECD Website

<p><b>Kindergarten / Pre-School</b></p>	<p>For children with a Health Care Card, the fees for children to attend Kindergarten are minimal to non-existent. In many cases, the initial deposit paid when registering your child for kindergarten will cover the fees for the year as the kindergarten can claim the costs back against the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.</p>	<p>Your kindergarten or local council will be able to provide you with the dates relevant to your chosen kindergarten.</p>	<p>Generally children attend Kindergarten or Pre-School in the year preceding the year they start Primary School.</p> <p>This will vary from child to child, as will the requirement or benefit of a child attending a second year of kindergarten or pre-school prior to commencing Primary School.</p>	<p>For further information contact your local council or kindergarten.</p> <p>Many areas now have a centralised enrolment process for children entering kindergarten.</p>
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What's available?	Eligibility	Relevant Dates	How to access	Contact details
<b>Financial Assistance (cont'd)</b>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You can ONLY access free kindergarten or kindergarten at minimal costs if you have a Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veteran's Affairs Gold Card, Asylum Seeker Bridging Visa A-F or Temporary Protection Visa (447, 451, 785 and 786)</li> </ul> <p>A child is only legible for this repayment if they are 4 years of age before the 30<sup>th</sup> of April of that year.</p> <p>This service is not available for 3 year old kindergarten as it is only provided to those who are entering primary school the following year.</p>		<p>The Victoria Government funds approx. 10 hours of kindergarten fee subsidy to provide for 10 hours of a kindergarten program per week for free (or up to the value of \$205 per week.) This payment goes directly to the kindergarten program.</p> <p>This is only valid for government funded kindergartens with qualified early childhood teachers. To check if your kindergarten program is legible go to <a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/financialkindergarten">www.education.vic.gov.au/financialkindergarten</a> or check to see if they have a Kindergarten Certificate issued by the government.</p>	<p>For more information go to: <a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/ecprofessionals/kindergarten/default.htm">http://www.education.vic.gov.au/ecprofessionals/kindergarten/default.htm</a></p>

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**Financial Assistance (cont'd)**

<p><b>Education Tax Refund</b></p> <p>The refund will be provided at the following levels:</p> <p>A maximum refund of \$397 per primary school child;</p> <p>A maximum refund of \$794 per secondary school child;</p> <p>Source: Jenny Macklin MP Website</p>	<p>The rebate will be available to all parents that are related to Family Tax Benefit Part A, or whose school children receive Youth Allowance or a similar payment.</p>	<p>The tax refund will be payable at the end of the 2011/2012 financial year.</p>	<p>Parents/guardians need to collect the receipts for items they purchase as part of their child's education such as, laptops, computers text books and stationary. Families will then be able to claim a 50% refund to help meet these costs.</p>	<p>For further information go to:</p> <p><a href="http://www.educationtaxrefund.gov.au/">http://www.educationtaxrefund.gov.au/</a></p>
<p><b>Education Expense Payment</b></p> <p>Payments will be \$300 for a full year for children at primary school</p> <p>\$450 for a full year for children at secondary school.</p>	<p>To be eligible for the 2012 school year, educational assistance will be linked to case planning for children in Victorian foster and kinship care placements and where there is active child protection involvement. For kinship carers without current active child protection involvement and where there is no permanent care order in place, administration of this assistance will be linked to the carer reimbursement process.</p>	<p>Payments made as a lump sum directly into your bank account</p>	<p>Parents/guardians need to contact case planner and make sure this payment is included in the child's case planning</p>	<p>For queries about the payments, call the caregiver help desk on 1300 552 319 or refer to your caseworker.</p>

What's available?	Eligibility	Relevant Dates	How to access	Contact details
<b>Other services available</b>				
Open Family Australia  'Back to School' Program  <small>Source: Open Family Australia Website</small>	As their resources are very limited, Open Family's primary focus is on assisting those young people who are living away from home, young people of bridging visa E as well as indigenous young people.	Any time		For further information go to:  <a href="http://www.openfamily.com.au/">http://www.openfamily.com.au/</a>
DHS & Agency Support	Limited assistance may be available through your community services agency or DHS on a case by case basis.	Any time		Refer to your case worker or agency worker for further information.
<p>Most schools employ the services of a Welfare Officer and/or a School Chaplain. These staff members will be more than happy to assist you in accessing information around the school's specific policies relating to the services outlined in this supplement. If you encounter any resistance from the school when trying to access any of these services, please contact the FCAV and we will do what we can to liaise and facilitate this process.</p> <p>If you are having difficulty in meeting the financial obligations of schooling a child in your care, please ask for help. Refer to your case worker, agency worker, support group or the Foster Care Association of Victoria if you need help or advice beyond what has been provided here.</p>				