

Fact Sheet: Youth Allowance Eligibility for Children in Care

What is Youth Allowance?

Youth Allowance is a Centrelink income support payment for young Australians aged 16 to 24 who are studying full time, undertaking an apprenticeship, or (if aged 16-21) looking for full-time work. The allowance is paid to the young person, not the carer.

Eligibility Criteria

All young people in care are eligible for Youth Allowance once they turn 16 and meet activity requirements because they are subject to a child protection statutory order and consequently assessed as *independent* for Youth Allowance purposes. This is the case even when they are living at home with a carer.

Timeframes for Claiming

- Claims can be lodged up to 13 weeks before turning 16.
- Payments generally start from the date the claim is lodged.

Late Applications May Not Be Backdated

Youth Allowance eligibility generally begins at age 16. However, payments are not automatically backdated to a young person's 16th birthday (or any other eligibility date) if the claim is lodged late.

In most cases, if a claim is submitted after a young person's 16th birthday, the payment will only start from the date the claim is lodged, not from the date eligibility began. This means:

- carers and young people should apply as early as possible - ideally within the 13-week early-claim window before the 16th birthday;
- delaying the application can mean permanently losing entitlement for the period between the eligibility date and the date the claim is submitted.

Child Dental Benefits Schedule (CDBS) - Medicare Dental

Children who qualify for Youth Allowance are also generally eligible for the Child Dental Benefits Schedule (CDBS) - a Medicare-administered benefit for basic dental care.

Eligibility for CDBS requires that in a given calendar year the child:

- is eligible for Medicare on the day of the dental service;
- is aged 0–17 for at least one day of that calendar year; and
- the young person receives an eligible Australian Government payment such as Youth Allowance at least once in that calendar year.

No separate application is needed. If a young person is eligible, Medicare will automatically send a notification to them by mail or to their myGov account.

Current CDBS Funding (2026)

The benefit cap is currently up to \$1,158 per eligible person, available over two consecutive calendar years. Regardless of the application date, eligibility will always commence from 1 January of the calendar year in which the application is made.

For example, if Youth Allowance is applied for in March 2026, the two calendar year eligibility for the CDBS will commence on 1 January 2026 and end on 31 December 2027.

The full amount can be used in the first year, or the balance spread across both years — but any amount left at the end of the second year cannot be carried forward.

Once the two-year period ends, a new cycle can begin if the person still meets all eligibility criteria.

Covered services include check-ups, X-rays, cleaning, fissure sealing, fillings, root canal treatment and extractions; it does not cover orthodontic treatment, cosmetic dental work, or services delivered in hospital.

Balances can be checked via myGov or by calling Medicare.

Getting Help with Applications

Foster carers who need assistance with Youth Allowance or CDBS applications — including help booking appointments with Centrelink — can contact:

- **Grandparent, Foster and Kinship Carer Line (Services Australia) 1800 245 965** between 8:30 am – 4:30 pm Monday to Friday

Specialist advisers can:

- provide tailored information about payments and support services;
- arrange appointments with Centrelink staff, including social workers;
- arrange referrals to other federal, state and community service providers;
- assist with related Medicare or Centrelink enquiries.

For general Centrelink payments and services, carers can also call **13 61 50**.