

Care allowances

Information for foster carers, kinship carers, permanent carers, and additional needs local adoption carers

Care allowance

The Department of Health and Human Services (the department) provides care allowances for assessed and approved foster, kinship, permanent and additional needs local adoption. The care allowance contributes to the day-to-day costs incurred while providing for children and young people placed in statutory home-based care or adopted through the Victorian additional needs local adoption program.

What the care allowance contributes to

The care allowance contributes to costs incurred by a carer in the course of providing home-based care for children, including (but not limited to):

- accommodation, clothing, food, utilities, telephone and internet
- basic personal items for the child such as toiletries and toothbrush
- transport required as part of a regular routine, including to and from school, professional appointments and access where appropriate
- entertainment, social activities and other things – pocket money, hobbies and club memberships, outings, toys, photos, gifts, treats.

Care allowance levels

There are five care allowance levels which reflect the diverse needs of children and young people in care. The complexity of the child's needs and ongoing specialist or support costs are considered when determining the care allowance level. Whilst all children in out of home care are likely to present with complex issues, the level of support required will be of a broad range.

For foster carers, the care allowance level is determined and assessed by the department, in consultation with the foster care agency.

The initial assessment is made based on the individual needs of each child at the beginning of the placement. However, needs of a child and the placement change over time, therefore foster carers and their agency worker should discuss and reassess if necessary, the care allowance levels. Discussions should be had with their agency and ideally in care team meetings about what the needs of the child are that would require a carer to receive a different care allowance level.

Kinship, permanent and additional needs adoption carers are automatically eligible for the level one care allowance at the beginning of the placement. Where the child is assessed as having higher needs, carers may be eligible for a higher care allowance level through a special negotiated adjustment. For permanent care and additional needs local adoption, a special negotiated adjustment to the care allowance can be considered prior to finalisation of the Permanent Care Order or Adoption Order. Please contact the agency from which you receive support or the child's child protection worker or agency case manager to discuss the needs of the child in your care.

The current Victorian care allowance rates are updated annually and available at [Department of Health and Human Services](http://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au) <www.dhhs.vic.gov.au>.

Additional components of the care allowance

Allowance	Purpose	Description	Can contribute to
New placement allowance	To assist in meeting the immediate or 'start-up' costs of caring for a child or young person. <i>*Subject to statutory involvement by the Victorian child protection system.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> additional amount paid to carers over the first six months of the placement where the carer is receiving the level one care allowance rate included in fortnightly care allowance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bedroom linen and furniture, such as a mattress and bedside table bedroom accessories, such as a clock radio and nightlight safety equipment such as baby capsules, car boosters and bike helmets
Education and medical payment	To assist in meeting the education and health needs of children and young people in home-based care.	Included in fortnightly care allowance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> medical prescriptions for everyday illnesses non-prescribed pharmaceuticals such as paracetamol and throat lozenges school excursions and sporting activities school stationery.
School attendance allowance	To contribute to meeting the educational costs for a child or young person. <i>*Subject to statutory involvement by the Victorian child protection system.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> two age bands for the allowance; 5–11 years and 12–18 years quarterly payment separate to the care allowance and paid to the carer's nominated bank account paid in arrears to primary or full-time foster and kinship carers, based on the number of days a child or young person has been in the placement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> software books enrolment fees in extracurricular activity music or academic tuition.

Other supports linked to the care allowance

Other support	Purpose	Description
Dual care allowance for periods of respite care <i>*Foster and kinship care placements only.</i>	To support respite carers in temporary respite care within primary care arrangements. <i>*Subject to statutory involvement by the Victorian child protection system.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> where a child or young person is being cared for by an assessed and approved respite carer, the respite carer will receive the same care allowance as the primary carer for an approved period (except therapeutic foster care if the respite carer has not attended therapeutic training) respite placements of seven consecutive days or less will automatically receive a dual care allowance respite placements of eight days or more will require specific approval for a dual care allowance for respite periods exceeding a total of 28 days in a calendar year, the care allowance will be provided to the respite carer only, unless exceptional circumstance apply.
18 years and school attending <i>*Not available for additional needs local adoption.</i>	To provide ongoing support and placement stability to young people completing their secondary education qualification.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the care allowance may be payable in relation to young people residing in foster, kinship and permanent care placements following their 18th birthday this extension relates to young people up to the age of 21 years who are enrolled in full time or part time secondary education (including VCAL at foundation level or a Certificate 1 in Transition Education) to support their continued education.

Additional financial support

Client support funding

The Client Support Funding Framework ensures a fair and consistent approach to providing additional financial support to help foster and kinship carers to meet the needs of children and young people in their care.

Client support funding refers to additional funding that foster and kinship carers may be eligible for to help cover costs for extraordinary expenses. This includes the purchase of specific items or services that exceed the day-to-day costs of what the care allowance contributes to or where high costs place an unreasonable financial burden on the carer. For further information see the Client support funding framework fact sheet.

Queries regarding access to client support funding should be directed to the child's agency or child protection case manager.

Other financial support for carers

The Victorian and Commonwealth Governments provide a range of financial and other supports to assist carers in addition to the care allowance and client support funding. The department, service providers and care teams can help carers identify and access the full range of financial supports available. Further information including a fact sheet about the Client Support Funding Framework is available at [Department of Health and Human Services](http://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/support-home-based-carers-victoria) <<http://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/support-home-based-carers-victoria>>.

Further information about care allowances

For questions you may have about care allowances, contact the Care Allowance Helpdesk:

Phone: 1300 552 319

Email: [Care Givers](mailto:caregivers.mgt@dhhs.vic.gov.au) <caregivers.mgt@dhhs.vic.gov.au>

To receive this publication in an accessible format phone 9096 7366, using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email care services @ care.services@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

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Available on the [DHHS Services website](http://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/support-home-based-carers-victoria) <<http://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/support-home-based-carers-victoria>>