

# Care allowances and other financial support for carers

Information for foster carers, kinship carers, permanent carers, and special 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 special 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 special 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.

For foster carers, the care allowance level is determined and assessed by the department, in consultation with the foster care agency. The assessment is made based on the individual needs of each child at the beginning of the placement and is regularly reviewed.

Kinship, permanent and local special 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. Please contact your child protection worker or agency case manager to discuss the needs of the child in your care.

The current Victorian care allowance rates are 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
<b>New placement allowance</b>	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</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• additional amount paid to carers over the first six months of the placement where the carer is receiving the level one care allowance rate</li><li>• included in fortnightly care allowance.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• bedroom linen and furniture, such as a mattress and bedside table</li><li>• bedroom accessories, such as a clock radio and nightlight</li><li>• safety equipment such as baby capsules, car boosters and bike helmets</li></ul>

Allowance	Purpose	Description	Can contribute to
	<i>protection system.</i>		
<b>Education and medical payment</b>	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"> <li>• medical prescriptions for everyday illnesses</li> <li>• non-prescribed pharmaceuticals such as paracetamol and throat lozenges</li> <li>• school excursions and sporting activities</li> <li>• school stationery.</li> </ul>
<b>School attendance allowance</b>	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"> <li>• two age bands for the allowance; 5–11 years and 12–18 years</li> <li>• quarterly payment separate to the care allowance and paid to the carer's nominated bank account</li> <li>• paid in arrears to primary or full-time carers, based on the number of days a child or young person has been in the placement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• software</li> <li>• books</li> <li>• enrolment fees in extracurricular activity</li> <li>• music or academic tuition.</li> </ul>

## Other supports linked to the care allowance

Other support	Purpose	Description
<b>Dual care allowance for periods of respite care</b>	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"> <li>• where a child or young person is being cared for by a registered respite carer, the respite carer will receive the same care allowance as the primary carer for an approved period</li> <li>• respite placements of seven consecutive days or less will automatically receive a dual care allowance</li> <li>• respite placements of eight days or more will require specific approval for a dual care allowance</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
<b>18 years and school attending</b> <i>*Not available for local special needs adoption.</i>	To provide ongoing support and placement stability to young people completing their secondary education qualification.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the care allowance may be payable in relation to young people residing in foster, kinship and permanent care placements following their 18th birthday</li> <li>• this extension relates to young people up to the <b>age of 21 years</b> 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.</li> </ul>

## Additional financial support

### Client support funding

A new Client Support Funding Framework was introduced in July 2016. The 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.

## Examples of financial support carers can access in line with the framework

Expense	Description
<b>Childcare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Out-of-pocket child care expenses for approved child care, after the Commonwealth Government Child Care Rebate has been applied.</li> </ul>
<b>Medical</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All children and young people up to 18 years of age, who are in a placement are a priority and are eligible to access general dental, denture or specialist dental care through the public dental system.</li> <li>Carers and relatives may be eligible for a Health Care Card for a child in their care. The card is issued in the name of the child and only covers the child.</li> </ul>
<b>School</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF) covers the costs of school trips, camps and sporting activities for children and young people in care.</li> <li>State Schools' Relief can provide practical assistance directly to the child through school clothing, generic uniforms and footwear free of charge or by authorisation to purchase from the school shop or supplier on a co-payment basis.</li> <li>School contributions are not covered by Client Support Funding as they are voluntary. Instruction in the standard curriculum program must be provided free to all students in Victorian Government schools. Free instruction includes learning and teaching, instructional supports, materials and resources, administration and facilities required to provide the standard curriculum program.</li> </ul>
<b>Placement support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extra beds or furniture where the new placement allowance within the level one care allowance is insufficient, or where the carer is placing an additional child.</li> <li>Extra beds or furniture or baby goods to assist with immediate placement start-up needs in exceptional circumstances for carers receiving level 2–5 care allowance.</li> </ul>

Queries regarding access to client support funding should be directed to the agency from whom you receive support, or the 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 new Client Support Funding Framework is available at [Department of Health and Human Services](http://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au) [www.dhhs.vic.gov.au]

## Further information about care allowances

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

**Phone:** 1300 552 319      **Email:** [caregivers.mgt@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto: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 [Robyn Gumley](mailto:robyn.gumley@dhhs.vic.gov.au) – [robyn.gumley@dhhs.vic.gov.au]

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