

Education – What Are You Entitled To In 2017?

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, DHHS 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.

Victorian Government Assistance

What's Available	Eligibility	How to Access
<p>Early Start Kindergarten</p>	<p>Early Start Kindergarten provides free or low cost kindergarten to eligible three year old children where programs are offered by a qualified teacher.</p> <p>Children are eligible for Early Start Kindergarten if they are aged three years old by 30th April in the year they will be attending a kindergarten program, and:</p> <p>the child is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander; or has had contact with Child Protection (or been referred by them to Child FIRST).</p>	<p>For further information contact your local council or kindergarten or visit</p> <p>http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/kindergarten/Pages/earlystart.aspx</p> <p>Note: Applications for Early Start Kindergarten funding are made by the service on your behalf and the grant is paid directly to the service.</p>

<p>Student Scholarships</p>	<p>The Department of Education and Training administers more than 25 different student scholarships which equates to approximately 250 scholarship awards (as some scholarships have more than the one award).</p> <p>The scholarships are offered to primary, secondary and tertiary students and range in value from \$300 to \$2580. They are generally awarded to students who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate academic achievement • demonstrate participation in their school and local community • are in financial need (determined by the parents/guardians being in receipt of a Health Care Card, a Low Income Health Care Card or a Pensioner Concession Card (Centrelink reference number required) or the students themselves receiving the Youth Allowance). 	<p>Further information about the allowance and the relevant applications forms are available from</p> <p>https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/scholarships/</p>
<p>Conveyance Allowance</p>	<p>The conveyance allowance is a form of financial assistance to help families in rural and regional Victoria with the cost of transporting their children to their nearest appropriate school/campus. The conveyance allowance is available to eligible students travelling by public transport, private car and private bus. The conveyance allowance is also available to eligible students whose nearest school is not serviced by a free school bus.</p> <p>Note: Specialist schools and special settings located within metropolitan Melbourne are not subject to the conveyance allowance boundary and students may apply for a conveyance allowance.</p> <p>Details of eligibility criteria are available at</p> <p>http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/management/finance/Pages/conveyance.aspx</p>	<p>Further information about the allowance and the relevant applications forms are available from your school or at</p> <p>http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/management/finance/Pages/conveyance.aspx</p> <p>Enquiries in relation to eligibility for a conveyance allowance should be addressed by the school in the first instance. If enquiries cannot be resolved at school level, please contact the Family Payments Unit (FPU) at:</p> <p>conveyance@edumail.vic.gov.au</p>

<p>Victorian Public Transport Student Concession Card</p>	<p>Primary and secondary students must be studying full time and attend a school listed in the approved list of schools. Full time VCE and VCAL students studying at TAFE can apply.</p> <p>A school identification card does not entitle students aged 17 years and over to buy concession fares.</p>	<p>See Public Transport Victoria's <i>Travelling with Student Concessions</i> web page for details and to download an application form:</p> <p>http://ptv.vic.gov.au/tickets/concessions/students/#p5</p> <p>Applications can be lodged at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PTV Hub at 750 Collins Street - Premium Stations - Staffed V/Line stations and V/Line ticket agents. <p>Call 1800 800 007 for locations and operating hours.</p>
<p>Victorian Student Pass</p>	<p>The Victorian Student Pass provides unlimited travel on metropolitan trains, trams and buses, on all regional town bus services and all V/Line train and coach services operating wholly within Victoria.</p> <p>To travel on this pass, students must also have a VPT Student Concession Card with a pass number endorsed on their concession card. The pass and concession card must be carried at all times when travelling.</p>	
<p>School Bus Program</p>	<p>The School Bus Program is an extensive school bus network that provides travel at no cost to eligible students attending government and non-government schools and living in rural and regional Victoria.</p> <p>Students deemed ineligible to travel at no cost may access a school bus service upon payment of a fare.</p>	<p>Contact your school to see if a free school bus operates within your area.</p>

<p>Students with Disabilities Transport Program</p>	<p>Students attending a specialist school may be eligible for travel assistance through the provision of buses, taxis, conveyance allowances and other transport solutions.</p> <p>To be eligible for transport assistance under the SDTP a student must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be eligible for the Program for Students with a Disability (PSD). • Reside in the Designated Transport Area (DTA) of the specialist school attended. • Be enrolled at the school for three or more days per week. • Be of school-age and reside in Victoria. 	<p>Your child's school will be able to provide you with further details.</p> <p>Contact your school to see if you are eligible for travel assistance.</p> <p>Further information is available at http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/studentmanagement/Pages/sdtransport.aspx</p>
<p>State Schools' Relief Committee</p>	<p>The State Schools' Relief Committee Incorporated is an autonomous body that assists needy students attending government schools in Victoria with school clothing and footwear.</p> <p>Note: Most schools will offer a second hand uniform shop which provides parents/guardian with a cheaper uniform option for their child.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Further information is available at https://ssr.net.au/</p>

Commonwealth Government Assistance

What's Available	Eligibility	How to Access
<p>Youth Allowance</p> <p>Independence for Youth Allowance</p>	<p>Young people may be eligible for Youth Allowance if they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 to 21 years of age and looking for full time work or undertaking approved activities; • 18 to 24 years of age and studying full time; • 16 or 17 years of age and have completed year 12 or equivalent, or undertaking full time secondary study and need to live away from home in order to study, or are considered independent for Youth Allowance, or • 16 to 24 years of age and undertaking a full time Australian Apprenticeship <p>Young people aged 22 years or over are automatically considered independent.</p> <p>Young people aged less than 22 years may be considered independent if they meet any of a range of criteria.</p> <p>A higher rate of Youth Allowance may be payable if a young person is considered to be independent.</p>	<p>For further information visit your local Centrelink office or call Centrelink on 13 61 50.</p> <p>http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/youth-allowance</p> <p>Carers can contact the Centrelink Grandparent Advisor on 1800 245 965</p>
<p>ABSTUDY (The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Study Assistance Scheme.)</p>	<p>To be eligible for ABSTUDY you must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australian • able to meet residence requirements • enrolled in an approved course or an Australian Apprentice, and • not receiving any other government assistance to study or complete your apprenticeship 	<p>For further information visit your local Centrelink office or call Centrelink on 13 61 50.</p> <p>http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/abstudy</p> <p>Carers can contact the Centrelink Grandparent Advisor on 1800 245 965</p>

<p>Assistance for Isolated Children</p>	<p>Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme payments are not taxed and, except for Additional Boarding Allowance, are free of income and assets tests.</p> <p>This assistance may be available for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school age students who live in an isolated area, or • school age children with a disability or special health need that cannot be met at a local state school <p>The student must normally be enrolled in approved full-time primary or secondary study. A school aged student who does not have access to a state secondary school can be enrolled in approved full-time tertiary vocational education and training, for example a TAFE course, instead.</p>	<p>For further information visit your local Centrelink office or call Centrelink on 13 61 50.</p> <p>http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/assistance-for-isolated-children</p> <p>Carers can contact the Centrelink Grandparent Advisor on 1800 245 965</p>
<p>Schoolkids Bonus</p>	<p>The Schoolkids Bonus has been phased out. The final instalments of Schoolkids Bonus were paid in January and July 2016.</p>	

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:

1. Essential education items for which the parent/guardian must pay to provide, or for which the parent/guardian must pay the school to provide
(e.g. text books, stationary, school uniforms where required)
2. 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 extracurricular activities)
3. 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 go to <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/financial/pages/parentpayments.aspx>

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 to access information around the school's specific policies relating to the services outlined in this supplement. If you encounter difficulties when trying to access any of these services, please contact FCAV and we will do what we can to liaise and facilitate this process.

If you are having difficulty in meeting the financial obligations of schooling a child in your care, please ask for help. Refer to your DHHS case worker, agency worker, support group or the Foster Care Association of Victoria if your need help or advice beyond what has been provided here.