

Foster Care Association of Victoria Position:

The Foster Care Association of Victoria believes respite care can add strength and relief to any home based care placement. It is very important that carers, their Community Service Organisation and DHHS establish the potential need for respite early in the child's care planning; and monitor this during the placement through regular Care Team Meetings and carer supervision.

It is important to note that a decision to place a child or young person in respite care on a regular basis is one that requires case planning endorsement by DHHS.

WHAT IS RESPITE?

Respite is the time-limited placement of a child away from their primary carer or current living circumstance.

WHAT RESPITE IS FUNDED BY DHHS THROUGH CARE ALLOWANCES?

- Respite for a child, subject to child protection involvement and being cared for by registered foster carers within a funded home based care placement.
- Respite for a child in kinship care as part of an endorsed case plan, where child protection has assessed the respite carer as suitable to provide for the care of a child, including the undertaking of mandatory screening processes.
- Respite for a child not subject to child protection involvement (voluntary) being cared for by registered foster carers within a funded home based care placement.

WHAT ARE THE BUSINESS RULES THAT APPLY TO RESPITE AND CARE ALLOWANCES?

Where a child is subject to child protection involvement and is being cared for by a registered foster carer within a funded home based care placement or by a department assessed and approved kinship carer; the respite carer will receive the same reimbursement rate as the primary carer.

Carer reimbursements provide a financial contribution towards the day-to-day costs of caring for a child. Therefore, all carers are reimbursed on a per day basis, not overnight.

IN WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES CAN PRIMARY AND RESPITE CARERS RECEIVE DUAL CARE ALLOWANCE?

The dual payment of carer reimbursements apply to:

- Registered foster carers of children subject to child protection involvement being cared for within funded home based care placements
- Assessed and approved kinship carers where respite is part of an endorsed case plan.

Where a Community Service Organisation intends to seek dual reimbursements for registered foster carers caring for a child with child protection involvement, this provision must first be negotiated with the relevant Placement Coordination Unit (for any respite placement greater than 7 days) before the relevant forms are submitted to the department's Care Allowance Helpdesk for processing.

For assessed and approved kinship respite carers, dual reimbursements must be approved by a Team Manager.

WHAT ARE THE DUAL PAYMENT PROVISIONS?

- **Respite up to 7 days** – an automatic payment will be made to both the respite and primary carer.
- **Respite between 8 and 28 days** - on negotiation with and approval from Placement Coordination for foster carers and on negotiation with and approval from a Team Manager for kinship carers.
- **Respite over 28 days** - no dual payments occur unless exceptional circumstances exist.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Discussions regarding the provision of dual reimbursement should be first discussed with your Community Service Organisation (for foster carers) or Child Protection Manager (for kinship carers).

Financial queries regarding care allowances should be directed to the Department of Human Services Care Allowance Helpdesk on **1300-552-319**.

Specific rates information is available at

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/kinship-foster-and-other-care/support-for-carers-in-victoria>