Child Care Information for Families

Tips for getting your child care payments right

Parent Responsibilities



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CRN = Customer Reference Number (issued by the DHS)
CCB = Child Care Benefit
GCCB = Grandparent CCB
SCCB = Special Child Care Benefit
CCR = Child Care Rebate
CCMS = Child Care Management System
JET = Jobs, Education & Training Child Care Fee Assistance
DHS = Department of Human Services (Centrelink)

Tips for getting your child care payments right
Parent Responsibilities

1. Am I eligible for child care fee assistance payments?

The Australian Government provides child care fee assistance to families through the Child Care Benefit (CCB) and the Child Care Rebate (CCR). CCB is a means tested payment (your family income determines how much CCB you can receive). CCR is not a means tested payment (your family income is not considered for you to receive CCR).

To be eligible for CCB the requirements are:

- The child must attend CCB approved child care and
- The child must meet the immunisation requirements or have an approved exemption and
- The parent/s are liable for payment of the child care fees and
- One parent must meet the Australian residency requirements.

If you meet the requirements above, you are eligible for CCB and CCR. CCR provides working families up to 50 per cent of the out-of-pocket child care costs (ie after any CCB is applied), up to the annual cap of $7,500 per child per year.

There is no separate claim or eligibility test for CCR. The rebate is paid to you automatically if you are eligible for CCB for approved child care (even at zero rate), regardless of your family income.

2. Get the right family assistance

Make sure you have been assessed for CCB by the Department of Human Services (DHS). The amount of CCB you receive depends on your family income, the number of children you have who are attending approved care and the type of approved care you use. Just because you have a Customer Reference Number (CRN) issued by DHS for another payment like Parenting Payment or Family Tax Benefit doesn't automatically mean you can receive CCB and CCR. Remember that CCR is a different type of payment to CCB and your family income is not considered. You need to ask DHS to be assessed for CCB so that you can receive both payments, or just CCR. The DHS will provide you with a letter that contains a CRN for you and your child or children and confirms that you are eligible for CCB and/or CCR.

- It is your responsibility as a parent/guardian to provide timely and correct information to your child care service.
- Always put your advice to the service in writing.
- The DHS can give you access to an online service where you can track the submission of child care attendance details and payments made to your service on your behalf under your CRN.

3. Get the best payment methods for your family

You can choose from a range of payment options for CCB and CCR, to suit your family's financial situation. The best and most common payment method for CCB is fee reduction payments made to your approved service on your behalf. To receive CCR you must first be assessed for CCB by the DHS. Where a family's income is too high for them to receive any CCB, they are assessed at zero rate. Remember, you may be eligible for CCR payments even if your income is too high to receive any CCB payments.

Once you are eligible for CCB (even at a *zero rate),* your CCR can be paid automatically and you can choose how often and how you are paid.
Visit the DHS website at www.humanservices.gov.au or call the DHS on 136150 for more information about your payment options.



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If you want your **CCB** entitlement to be paid to your approved child care service, so that you can pay a lower fee each week, choose the ***"reduced fees"*** option.

If you want your **CCR** entitlement to be paid to your approved child care service so that you can pay a lower fee each week, choose the ***"reduced fees"*** option.

You can apply online, or obtain and complete the DHS form: *Claim for Approved Child Care Payments* (form number FA002). **This is the quickest and easiest claim option.**



4. Get your Rebate sooner

If you have elected to receive CCB paid as fee reduction payments made to your approved service, (or you are assessed at zero rate), you can choose from three payment options for CCR:

- You can have CCR **paid to your service as a fee reduction.** This will further reduce the gap fee amount you have to pay each week. If you choose this method, CCR will be paid to the service each week or fortnight, after they submit attendance records for your children.
- You can have CCR paid **to your family bank account** after your service submits attendance records each week or fortnight.
- If you choose quarterly CCR payments, they are usually paid about 5 weeks after the end of each quarter ending September, December and March. June quarters are paid after you lodge tax returns and have your CCB and CCR entitlement reconciled by the DHS.

Note: When you choose a payment option, this option will be used for the entire financial year, unless exceptional circumstances apply.

5. Get all your details right

When you enrol your child at a new service, you need to provide four unique pieces of information to identify your family. This allows the service to create a formal enrolment in the Child Care Management System and receive fee reduction payments on your behalf so they can reduce your weekly child care fees. The details you need to give are:

- Child's date of birth
- Child's CRN
- Parent's* date of birth
- Parent's* CRN

*** Make sure you give the date of birth and CRN details for the parent who is eligible for claiming CCB.**

The dates of birth and CRNs you give the service must be identical to the numbers on your DHS child care record. The CCMS uses numbers to match against the DHS record because this is more reliable than using names and addresses.



6. Get the bill in the right name

If one parent has been assessed for CCB, but the other parent enrols the child at the child care centre and provides their details to the service, then you may not receive fee assistance payments as expected. You need to make sure that you provide your child care service with the correct details for the parent who is assessed for CCB. **A service is under no obligation to backdate a change in CRN to allow a different parent or guardian to be paid retrospectively. It is your responsibility to provide timely and correct information to your child care service.**

If you decide to change the account from one parent's name to the other, first make sure the "new" parent has been assessed for CCB and has their own CRN. Organise that with the DHS first and then give the details to your service so they can change your child's CCMS enrolment. *See Tip #5.*

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Separated Parents

Make sure that all of the sessions or days of care that you are liable to pay for are booked with your service in your name and your child is enrolled with the service on those days linked to your own CRN. Otherwise, you will not receive CCB or CCR for care that you are paying for.

The service is under no obligation to change and backdate this information or mediate parental custody issues. It is important that each parent takes responsibility for this. Give your service written confirmation of your liability to pay child care fees and keep the proof that you do pay those fees. This will help if there is a dispute later.

7. Get your gap fee right after the end of financial year

The service may have to change your records after the end of the financial year, when your CCB entitlement has already been reconciled by the DHS. When this happens, any change to your CCB entitlement is managed between you and DHS.

If the new CCB calculation is less than before, your gap fee will be higher. It is your responsibility to pay any outstanding fees to your service.

To query any payment details, speak to your service first for details. If you disagree with any CCB or CCR information, contact DHS on 136150. You will need to provide the payment statements issued by your service so they can analyse your problem.

8. Get all the family details right

Your CCB can be affected if you have other children in care or if one child attends more than one service. It's important to tell the service about your child's attendance at other child care services during the same period, so they can put the right details into the system.

Why is this important?

- If you advise the service when you have more than one child in care, the service can report the correct number of children that are in care and you will receive the ***multiple child rate*** of CCB for your family each week. There is no obligation on the service to backdate this information, so keep them informed of all changes. Otherwise, you may need to wait until the end of financial year for an adjustment.
- Make sure all attendance for the same period is placed on the ***same parental CRN***. Otherwise, DHS will treat the children linked to different parental CRNs as separate families. When your payments are reconciled at the end of the financial year the multiple child CCB percentage may not be applied.
- Make sure you tell the DHS ***when your child starts school*** because CCB is then paid at a lower rate. If you don't inform the DHS, you may receive too much CCB and be asked to pay it back.
- If you exceed your ***42 day absence limit*** any further absences must be for approved reasons (e.g. ill with a medical certificate) or CCB and CCR will not be paid for those absence days *(see Tip # 12 for more about absences).*

9. Get your child immunised or get an exemption

To get CCB and CCR for children under seven, you must comply with the following immunisation requirements:

- be fully immunised or up-to-date according to the Australian Standard Vaccination Schedule, or
- on a catch up vaccination schedule, or
- have an approved exemption.

The DHS will send letters to you, giving plenty of notice so that you can comply with the immunisation schedule or apply for an exemption before your eligibility for CCB is suspended or cancelled. If your eligibility for CCB is suspended or cancelled, your service will stop getting fee reduction payments on your behalf and you will have to pay the full fees for your child care. Even when you know your child's immunisation is up to date, if you get a letter from the DHS about it, you must contact them to make sure your record is correct. **You will not get any CCR for the period when not eligible for CCB.**



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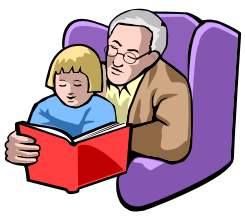


10. Get the right JET payments

- The DHS has to approve JET before the service can reduce your child care fees. The sooner you complete all JET plan and reporting requirements, the sooner you can start receiving the JET subsidy.
- Always provide your JET letters to the service as soon as you get them. This is equally important for initial approval and reassessments. **The service is under no obligation to reduce your fees before you provide them with a DHS letter confirming that you are eligible for JET.**
- You may lose eligibility for JET because your income support payments change, by not fulfilling your reporting requirements or if your CCB rate changes.
- To keep your JET, you must be receiving a CCB rate of 100%. **Do not** have continuous adjustment of the CCB percentage.
- JET is approved for a maximum of 12 hours for each day. Divide the hours shown on the DHS letter by 12 to confirm how many days JET is approved for.
- You can only have JET coverage for the hours of care you use, up to a daily total of 12 hours. You cannot use any 'leftover' hours on another day (if JET is approved for 36 hours, this is 3 days).

11. Get GCCB if you're a Grandparent

If you have taken over the care of a grandchild, you are not *automatically* eligible for **Grandparent CCB**. If you think you may qualify for GCCB, contact the DHS for more information.



12. Get to know the absence rules

Government assistance is intended to help with the cost of child care. In certain circumstances, it can also be paid for the times your child is absent from a booked session of care and you are charged for it. There are some complex rules about absences, but the most important points to know are:

- Each child can use up to ***42 absence days*** in a financial year for any reason, without giving the service any supporting evidence.
- After the initial 42 absence days have been used, CCB and CCR can only be paid for ***additional absences*** in specified circumstances and supporting evidence is usually required (e.g. a medical certificate if you or your child is ill).
- CCB and CCR are not paid for absences before the first day of care or after the last day of actual attendance at the service. You may be charged fees if you don't give your service a certain amount of notice, but these fees do not attract CCB or CCR, unless the next dot-point applies.
- If your child has already used the initial 42 absence days, CCB and CCR may be paid for ***additional absences*** that occur after the last day of care. *NB: if the child is absent for an additional absence reason (such as illness) but has not already used all 42 initial absences, then the absence is still considered to be an initial absence and CCB/CCR is not paid.*
- Your service may charge for public holidays that fall on a day you usually send your child to care. If so, you can use an initial absence to have CCB and CCR paid for that day. A public holiday is **not** an additional absence reason. You cannot use additional absences for a public holiday unless the initial absences have all been used and your child satisfies one of the additional absence reasons.
- Be clear about telling the service when you take your child out of care. If they don't know you have left, they may report absences for several weeks and receive CCB for you incorrectly. This will have to be repaid and the service will have to bill you for the full fees that you owe them.

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