



Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Information for child care providers and services

This information sheet outlines the existing robust and responsive support mechanisms in place to assist the early childhood education and care sector when special circumstances affect its businesses. These mechanisms have been designed specifically with the needs and circumstances of the early childhood education and care sector in mind.

Assistance available for families

Access to Australian Government subsidies

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) are a family's entitlement, based on their individual circumstances, used for subsidising the cost of child care to help them undertake work-related activities. Importantly, the general application of CCS and ACCS is that it can only be paid where services are open and providing care, with the exception of public holidays or when a period of local emergency has been declared.

Additional Child Care Subsidy (temporary financial hardship)

ACCS (temporary financial hardship) is available to provide short-term support to families experiencing a significantly reduced ability to pay child care fees, such as if the parent lost income due to being unable to attend work. Eligible families will receive a subsidy equal to the actual fee charged by the child care service, up to 120 per cent of the CCS hourly rate cap. In most cases, the full cost of child care will be covered. It can be accessed for up to 13 weeks and eligible families are entitled to up to 100 hours of subsidised child care per fortnight. Families will be required to provide supporting evidence of a substantial reduction in their ability to pay child care fees, such as an email from their employer.

Absences from child care

Where services are open, reporting of absences for families whose child/ren cannot attend child care due to COVID-19 is supported by the existing arrangements as outlined below:

- Whether a child is actually ill or not, including where a child does not attend care as part of the family's own precautionary measure against potential contact with COVID-19, CCS can be paid for up to 42 absence days per child, per financial year, without the need for families to provide documentation.
- Once a child's 42 initial absences have been used, CCS can be paid for additional absences for a reason defined in the Family Assistance Law, including illness (as set out in the [Child Care Provider Handbook](#)). Evidence is required to be kept by the provider for any additional absences claimed, e.g. a doctors certificate.

- **If a child is not ill**, and does not attend care (as part of the family's own precautionary measure against potential contact with COVID-19, some medical practitioners may support families by providing a medical certificate allowing them access to additional absences, if required).
- **If a child is not ill** and does not attend care **for a longer period of time** (for example, a month or longer), the family may wish to follow the established advice around longer absences (as set out in the [Child Care Provider Handbook](#), noting that an enrolment automatically ceases when a child does not attend care for 14 weeks).

Assistance available for services

Responsibilities for providers when a service closes

Where a service closes due to COVID-19, it's important to understand what your obligations are under Family Assistance Law.

Given that services are unable to provide sessions of care in these circumstances, attendance reports cannot be submitted into the Child Care Subsidy System.

Additionally, as child care cannot be offered, families should not be charged fees. In this circumstance, please see the below information regarding Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) Special Circumstance Grant Opportunity.

Community Child Care Fund Special Circumstances Grant Opportunity

CCS and ACCS cannot be used to support business viability in times of hardship. The CCCF Special Circumstances Grant Opportunity is designed to support continuity of child care, in particular in disadvantaged or vulnerable communities, where service viability is affected by an unforeseen factor outside the control of the service, such as COVID-19.

CCCF Special Circumstances funding can help cover business costs, including wages and other costs to ensure services continue to operate even when some families have stopped using child care or cut back on hours (e.g. cancelled or changed enrolment details). Funding is available for child care providers and in the case of Family Day Care; a provider may apply for support on behalf of affected educators.

The amount of funding provided to applicants will be determined on a case-by-case basis. The Special Circumstances team will look at the individual circumstances of a service and the type of activities they need help funding when making a decision.

Applications for \$10,000 or less typically take two to three days to assess and funds flow within 24 hours of a signed agreement. The Department of Education, Skills and Employment has also implemented streamlined processes to assist those services seeking larger grants.

Further information is available on the [CCCF Special Circumstances Grant Opportunity](#) webpage, including eligibility criteria and instructions on how to apply. If you have any questions about the CCCF, please contact the CCCF Program team via CCCFSpecialCircumstances@dese.gov.au.

This information was last updated on 16 March 2020. Please regularly check dese.gov.au/news/coronavirus-covid-19 to help ensure that you are using the latest version of this information sheet.

Responsibilities as an employer

The [Fair Work Ombudsman](#) has issued advice regarding your responsibilities as an employer including workplace entitlements and obligations if your staff are affected by the outbreak of COVID-19. This includes information about different forms of leave for full and part-time employees, as well as information for casual employees.

Advice on potential service closures

The decision whether or not a service should close will be made, and advised, by state and territory governments. Usually it is from the relevant [health department](#), but it may come from the [state or territory regulatory authority](#).

If you close your service, either voluntarily, or as advised, you must notify your [state or territory regulatory authority](#) **within 24 hours**.

Further information

Please visit the [Australian Government Department of Health](#) for the latest health advice.

Please contact the 24/7 [National Coronavirus Health Information Line](#) on 1800 020 080 which provides health and situation information on the outbreak. Call 131 450 for translating or interpreting services.

Please visit your [state or territory health department](#) for the latest local updates and guidance on COVID-19.

Please visit the **Department of Education, Skills and Employment** [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information for providers and services and [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) for the latest education and training sector fact sheets.

The **CCS Helpdesk** is available to assist with information for services to help them manage the impacts on their business. Please email the CCS Helpdesk on ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au, send in your query via an [online form](#) or call 1300 667 276 between 9.00 am — 5.00 pm (AEDST), Monday to Friday.

Please make sure that if you are a child care provider or service you have [subscribed to receive communications](#) from the Department of Education, Skills and Employment.