



2025-26 Subsidies and Financial Support Guide

For children in care supported by CYF

In this document: This guide will assist CYF staff and carers of children and young people supported by CYF to understand the available subsidies and financial support associated with the care of children.

Note: The CYF Foster and Kinship Panel Providers operate using separate but similar financial support guidelines that may differ from this CYF guide. When support transitions to a provider, that provider will work with carers to understand the ongoing support requirements of the child.

'Child' and 'children' also refers to 'young person' and 'young people'.

Financial support is available to carers to help with the costs of caring. This includes, but is not limited to, a fortnightly subsidy, medical costs, transport costs and payments relating to supports outlined in a child's Support Plan.

Where a child is supported by CYF, CYF is responsible for providing kinship carers with the payment of their subsidy and agreed costs associated with the care and support of the child in their care.

Subsidies

The following subsidies are available to carers depending on their situation.

Foster and Kinship Care Subsidy

Foster and Kinship Care Subsidy (Carer Subsidy) is applied to all **new care placements**. A new placement occurs when:

- > a child enters care
- > when a child in an existing placement moves to a new placement.

The Carer Subsidy paid to carers is based on the age of the child in their care. It is intended to contribute to the child's cost of living, regardless of the complexity of their needs. This includes things such as food, clothing, recreational activities, haircuts and pocket money.



At times, specialist assessments may identify that a child has additional needs, and this information may be used to inform decision making regarding additional financial support to address those specific needs.

Carers wanting more information about the Carer Subsidy should speak with their CYF practitioner.

Note: Since 2015 the Carer Subsidy replaced the Basic Care, Care Level 1, Care Level 2, Intensive Care and Enduring Parental Responsibility rates.

Extended continuum of care (18-21 years)

Kinship and foster carers caring for children aged between 18 and 21 years old (inclusive), may be eligible to receive the Extended Continuum of Care subsidy – this is an extension of the Carer Subsidy. To be eligible, the child's Transition Plan must state the child will be best supported by continuing to live with their carer after turning 18 years old.

This extension is determined on a case-by-case basis where it can be demonstrated the child's wellbeing would otherwise be jeopardised by the cessation of the Carer Subsidy at 18 years old. Provision of the subsidy is subject to a review process.

Children under Enduring Parental Responsibility or adoption orders, or those in residential care, are outside the scope for a continuum of care payment but may be eligible for assistance through Aftercare Support (for care leavers up to 25 years – see below).

Carers wanting more information, including eligibility details and approval process requirements, should speak with their practitioner.

Aftercare Support for care leavers to 25 years

All children who have been in care are eligible for aftercare support when they leave care.

Aftercare support is provided by **out of home care (OOHC) service providers**. Support could include assistance with:

- > guidance
- > information and advice
- > referrals to other services
- > application for passport

In some circumstances, more intensive, longer-term assistance may be needed. This support can include:

- > support work coordination
- > planning and oversight of therapeutic responses and counselling
- > support accessing, reading and processing care records
- > life story work
- > practical supports, such as assistance with housing applications, driving lessons, accessing the Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA)
- > mediation with families and/or carers
- > financial supports and funding of services for young adults (up to 21 years) with high and complex needs (dependent on assessment).

Carers and care leavers who want more information, including eligibility details and approval process requirements, should speak with their practitioner.

2025-26 subsidy rates

While the Carer Subsidy is the primary method for providing carers with financial support, other subsidies and financial supports are available to carers depending on their situation. These are outlined in the table below and the following section 'Financial Support Payments'. The CPI rate used for these payments is 2.75% (2025-26 budget)

Subsidy	Age group	Weekly rate	Who is eligible? What is the subsidy expected to cover?
Foster and Kinship Care Subsidy (Carer Subsidy) and Enduring Parental Responsibility (EPR) rate	0 – 4	\$328.56	Approved kinship and foster carers caring for a child for whom the Director-General has parental responsibility, or who are under an EPR order. This subsidy is intended to contribute towards the daily costs of caring for a child. For example: food, household provisions, household costs, clothing, footwear, school wear, education, daily travel, suitable car restraints, general medical, pharmaceuticals, general communication costs, gifts, pocket money, holidays, hobbies, activities. No further financial support payments can be claimed under an EPR.
	5 – 14	\$368.43	
	15 – 17	\$494.92	
Extended Continuum of Care	18 – 21	\$314.56	Approved kinship and foster carers caring for a child aged 18 – 21 (inclusive) whose Transition Plan states they will continue to live with their carer in order to be best supported. Subject to an application, approval and review process. This subsidy is an extension of the Carer Subsidy and intended to contribute to the living costs of a child who remains in care after turning 18 years old.
Emergency Care Subsidy	0 – 17	\$544.40	Provided to kinship and foster carers when emergency action sees a child needing to come into care with less than 24 hours' notice. This subsidy is intended to contribute to the daily costs of caring for the child and is paid for a maximum of 21 days while a longer-term arrangement is being organised.

Subsidy	Age group	Weekly rate	Who is eligible? What is the subsidy expected to cover?
Respite Care Subsidy	0 – 17	\$439.84	Approved kinship and foster carers when they provide respite for a child on an overnight basis. This subsidy is intended to cover the temporary costs of the child for a short period and is set in isolation to the needs of their usual care arrangements. The subsidy is calculated pro-rata on a daily basis.

Notes:

- > Rates current back dated to 1 July 2025.
- > Payments are made fortnightly in arrears.
- > Payments are tax free and are not means-tested.
- > Payments are not affected by other Australian Government benefits you or the child may be receiving (for example, youth allowance), with the exception of the Extended Continuum of Care subsidy.
- > Payments stop when the placement ends. Any payments made after this time will be recovered. Carers should contact their CYF practitioner immediately if they think there has been an overpayment.
- > Expenses that are covered by Payments stop when the Carer subsidy placement ends.

Government assistance

A range of financial assistance and relevant supports are available from the ACT and Australian Governments, and these options should be explored and exhausted in the first instance, prior to considering the financial support payments outlined below. For more information, see **Appendix A** at the end of this document, or visit:

- > ACT Government: <https://www.act.gov.au/community/families>
- > Australian Government: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au>

Financial Support Payments

In addition to the Carer Subsidy, carers in the ACT can also access **financial support payments**. These aim to help carers cover certain other expenses directly related to a child's care that fall outside the Carer Subsidy, including therapeutic and non-therapeutic expenses. These expenses are based on the individual circumstances of the child.

Financial support payments are managed as **reimbursements**. All **agreed** expenses are first paid for by the carer and later reimbursed once the carer has provided their practitioner with the required documentation. Approval for purchase should be sought from CYF **prior** to purchase.

Financial support payments do not apply to children under Enduring Parental Responsibility (EPR) orders. For children in residential care, other arrangements apply. Speak with your practitioner or team leader if you require information.

Important: The information below relates specifically to kinship carers caring for children supported by CYF. Staff and carers are reminded OOHHC Providers have their own financial support guidelines that may differ to this CYF guide.

Approval for financial support payment

CYF **approval is required** for all financial support payments **before** any purchases are made, as without this, reimbursement cannot be guaranteed, and carers can end up out of pocket.

Practitioners and carers are to discuss the process for applying for specific financial support payments so carers are informed about the supporting documentation that may be required for a decision regarding approval to be made, such as input to financial briefs or inclusion in the child's Support Plan.

Practitioners are **only** able to arrange payment for expenses identified in this CYF guide, the child's current Financial Support Plan or that have been **approved** by the appropriate delegate.

CYF staff should discuss concerns regarding financial decision-making with their team leader or operational manager.

CYF kinship carers should discuss concerns with their practitioner in the first instance. Carers can also contact their team leader, or the CYF Kinship Assessment and Support Team.

Expenses that WILL be paid as a financial support for expenses directly related to the child or young person in care.

Applicable to CYF kinship carers.

Expense	Reimbursement
Driving lessons and associated costs	> Up to six professional lessons per Young Person > Insurance excess coverage for first 12 months (if required on carer's car if the Young Person was responsible for the accident). Note: There are a range of free or low costs safe driver courses available, and it is expected that these options should be utilised first, before considering professional driving lessons. Some options to consider include: - Drive for life The Salvation Army Australia - Safer Drivers Course in Sydney and NSW NRMA Driver Training - Free ACT Safer Driver Course Road Ready Centre Canberra - Keys2Drive - Getting your licence - Capital Region Community Services
Medical / Dental / Optical	> Where the Medicare gap exceeds \$40 for one occasion of service, reimbursement for the gap amount will be paid. Reimbursement will only occur after the Medicare claim has been made and processed.

Expense	Reimbursement
	Note: Therapeutic and psychologist assessments, and counselling services may be paid through financial support. All referrals, payments and requests for these services are to be referred to the CYF Referrals team for consideration. Note: Public and/or cost-effective community options should be explored. Services Australia and Medicare provide a range of options to support reducing health costs. More information can be found here: https://my.gov.au/en/services/work/managing-the-cost-of-living/managing-health-care-costs/help-paying-for-health-care
Supported contact	> Costs associated with a child's attendance at approved contact with birth family or significant others. For example: travel to supported contact at a specific rate, taxi, transport by carer, food, and activities for contact. Note: Contact mileage is separate to additional mileage claims and is recorded as a to/from rate.
Excess travel	> Mileage reimbursement where a carer is required to travel in excess of 150 kilometres per week per child for the ongoing care of the child. For example: travel to school, attendance at appointments, sport/hobby activities. > Mileage reimbursement will be made at: • \$0.75 per kilometre over the 150-kilometre threshold for ACT and surrounding region • \$0.25c per kilometre will apply for interstate. Note: Carers must maintain and provide a mileage record sheet that logs the date and kilometres travelled, and purpose of the trip. Travel related to contact is covered in 'Supported contact' above.

Expenses that **MAY** be paid as a financial support directly related to the child or young person in your care.

Applicable to CYF kinship carers. Reimbursement claims require approval by a Team leader. Some decision making/approval will require consultation and or approval from another delegate due to CYF policy or practice guidelines.

Expense	Reimbursement
Childcare expenses (including before and after school care)	The Australian and ACT governments provide a range of free programs and subsidies for early childhood education which should be explored in the first instance, prior to considering financial support payments for other childcare options.

Expense	Reimbursement
	The ACT government recently introduced the Free three-year-old preschool program which provides access to up to 300 hours per year of free preschool for three-year-olds living in the ACT. More information can be found here: https://www.act.gov.au/education-and-training/early-childhood-and-preschool/free-three-year-old-preschool. The ACT government also provides up to 15 hours a week of free preschool for four-year-olds living in the ACT. More information can be found here: https://www.act.gov.au/education-and-training/early-childhood-and-preschool/4-year-old-preschool > Depending on the child’s individual circumstances, childcare may be considered an alternative option if all other government funded or subsidised programs have first been explored. However, childcare may not be appropriate for all children. Carers seeking childcare are to discuss the option with their practitioner. CYF will not reimburse for childcare expenses unless all available subsidised government options have been first been explored. > If childcare is deemed suitable, carers must register with the Australian Government’s Child Care Subsidy (CCS) to receive a reduction in the cost of childcare and receive a reimbursement from CYF. More information about the Child Care Subsidy can be found here: https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/providers/child-care-subsidy Note: All CCS eligible families can get at least 72 hours (or 3 days) of subsidised childcare per week. Families can get 100 hours of subsidised childcare each fortnight for each child if they: • care for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child • have more than 48 hours of recognised participation each fortnight • have an exemption or experience exceptional circumstances • receive Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) child wellbeing, temporary financial hardship or grandparent payments. Note: The Child Care Subsidy is paid directly to the childcare provider to reduce the fees carers have to pay. Reimbursement will only be paid for the amount difference between refunds obtained and the cost of childcare. An Additional Child Care Subsidy may also be available in certain circumstances. See ‘Childcare arrangements’ later in this guide for more information.

Expense	Reimbursement
Education and private school fees	> Costs associated with vocational programs, specific needs for a special program/purpose, obtaining employment. > University fees up to one year. > Laptops/computers dependent on individual circumstances. Note: It is expected children in care attend government schools. Only in exceptional circumstances will reimbursement for private/independent school fees be considered. These will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Executive Branch Manager approval required.
International travel	> International travel costs associate with specific purposes. For example: education, sport participation, cultural school trip. Note: Reimbursement for international travel is considered on a discretionary one-off basis. It will not be given for the purpose of family holidays. A minimum of four months' notice must be given when requesting a passport or seeking approval for a child in care to travel overseas. International travel requires approval from Executive Branch Manager/ Executive Group Manager prior to any arrangements being made or considered.
Health and safety	> Costs associated with the purchase of fire blankets, first aid certificate, fire extinguishers or other safety items where necessary.
Vacation care	> Up to \$300 per year per child where special circumstances exist. Note: Vacation care, holiday camps and holiday programs are generally covered under the Carer Subsidy. This additional payment may be agreed in advance where special circumstances exist.
Special equipment	> Costs associated with furniture or special equipment required to set up proper care for a child entering care. Note: Must be agreed in advance. Any purchase remains with child throughout their time in care. If the child is under two years old, the item should be returned to CYF to provide to other children when required.
Other one-off expenses	> Any other expenses not covered by the Carer Subsidy may be considered. Agreement in advance is needed by the appropriate delegate. > Reimbursement for damage or injury caused by a child in care in exceptional circumstances only may be considered.

Expenses that **WILL NOT** be paid as a financial support

Applicable to CYF kinship carers. **The following expenses are generally covered under the Carer Subsidy** and CYF generally will not provide additional funding for these expenses.

Expense	Details
General accommodation and food costs	CYF will not provide additional funding for: > Special dietary needs, cleaning and maintenance of home, general utilities (gas, electricity, water, phone), toys, gifts, presents.
Baby sitting and occasional care	CYF will not provide additional funding for: > Baby sitting or occasional care.
General clothing and footwear	CYF will not provide additional funding for: > School clothing and footwear. Note: Generally, CYF will not provide funding for school uniforms or clothing, however in exceptional circumstances such as emergency placements or school changes, additional funding may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
General education costs	CYF will not provide additional funding for: > ACT Government school and preschool costs, elective and subject costs, books, stationery materials and equipment, school formals, school photos, excursions, camps, tutoring. > Voluntary contributions. Note: Financial school contributions are voluntary. It is CYF policy not to pay voluntary contributions to government schools. No child will be refused benefits or services if a contribution is not made.
General practitioner / Dental / Optical / Therapy services	CYF will not provide additional funding for: > General pharmaceutical needs and out of pocket expenses before Medicare gap.
Haircuts / Tattoos / Piercings	CYF will not provide additional funding for: > Birth parents' permission must be obtained to change a child's appearance by hairstyle or invasive process when the child is on a short-term or interim Care and Protection Order (that is, the Director-General does not hold long-term parental responsibility).
Stolen goods	CYF will not provide additional funding for: > Where the goods are the child's property.
Activities / Entertainment / Holidays	CYF will not provide additional funding for: > Leisure, hobby, and non-school sporting activities, and holidays. All children in care should participate in at least one ongoing activity throughout the year.
Pet / Pet costs	CYF will not provide additional funding for:

Expense	Details
	> A child should not have sole responsibility for a pet's care.
General travel	CYF will not provide additional funding for: > Travel less than 150 kilometres per week per child related to the ongoing care of the child. For example: travel to school, attendance at appointments, sport/hobby activities.
Communication costs	CYF will not provide additional funding for: > Phone, mobile phones, phone cards and Internet costs.

Notes for all financial support payment tables:

- > Tables applicable to kinship carers caring for children supported by CYF.
- > As every child's circumstances are different, the information in this guide should not be read as a statement of entitlement.
- > Any claims seen as exceptional circumstances of the child that fall outside the coverage of the Carer Subsidy and/or are not covered by this guide, are to be referred to the child's practitioner to seek appropriate approval by a CYF Team Leader, CYF Operations Manager or CYF Senior Director.
- > Where there is an agreement to progress with a permanency assessment, requests for financial support related to that child or young person must not impede the requirement to evidence financial autonomy before the courts.

Childcare arrangements

Depending on the child's individual circumstances, childcare *may* be an option if it is in the child's best interests. In this context, childcare refers to centre-based day care, occasional care, family day care, before or after school care and vacation care.

If the child attended childcare before they came into care, it may be important for this to continue to help them maintain relationships and social networks. Childcare is not, however, appropriate for all children. Carers seeking childcare must discuss this with their practitioner.

If childcare is considered suitable, carers are required to apply to Centrelink for the **Child Care Subsidy** to receive financial assistance to help cover the childcare costs. The amount a carer receives will depend on *their* circumstances. If the carer is a grandparent of the child, they may also be eligible for Centrelink's **Additional Child Care Subsidy**. More information can be found here:

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/child-care-subsidy>.

CYF may also reimburse carers the out-of-pocket cost of childcare expenses, provided all government subsidised options for early childhood education have been explored. If reimbursements are agreed to, invoices and receipts must be made out in the carer's name.

The following briefly explains what **carers** should do to ensure they receive financial assistance if childcare is to be used for the child in their care.

- > If the child is not already enrolled, discuss childcare options with your practitioner and enrol them with an **approved** provider (not all providers fall under the Child Care Subsidy). Special

agreement from your practitioner is needed to use a provider where the Child Care Subsidy cannot be claimed.

- > **Register** with Centrelink to apply for the Child Care Subsidy. If you do not register, additional funding assistance from CYF will not be provided.
- > The Child Care Subsidy will be paid directly to your childcare provider to reduce the fees you need to pay.
- > Pay the remaining fee to your childcare provider and ensure invoices, statements and receipts are written in **your** name, not CYF.
- > Provide your childcare statement showing evidence of your payment, plus receipts, to CYF who will reimburse you the out-of-pocket cost for up to two days per week. Documentation can be emailed or posted to:
 - CYFFinance@act.gov.au
 - GPO Box 785, Canberra ACT 2601.

Carers are encouraged to contact Centrelink's non-parent carer support advisor line to understand what childcare subsidies they may be eligible for. This can be done by:

- > calling 1800 245 965

Carers can also use Centrelink's Payment and Service Finder to estimate how much they may receive from the Child Care Subsidy. Access it at:

- > https://www.centrelink.gov.au/apps/clkonline_cof/payment-service-finder/payment-service-finder-start

Supports for kinship and foster carers

Carers ACT – Kinship and Foster Carers Advocacy Service

An independent service that can:

- > Help you to communicate effectively with carer agency or CYF
- > Support you to have your voice heard and acknowledged
- > Assist you to develop your self-advocacy skills
- > Support you in writing correspondence, phone calls and attending meetings

The service can be reached by:

- > Phone 6296 9965 or 0447632067
- > Email: kinship.fostercare@carersact.org.au
- > Website: www.carersact.org.au

Centrelink's non-parent carer support service

Provides advice and support to kinship and foster carers regarding all matters concerning Australian Government payments, allowances and subsidies for carers and the children in their care. Includes a dedicated advisor line just for carers. Centrelink's online Payment and Service Finder can also provide estimates of how much a carer may receive from specific subsidies.

Centrelink's non-parent carer support advisor line helps to understand what childcare subsidies you may be eligible for. You can do this by:

- > Phone: 1800 245 965
- > Web: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/grandparent-foster-and-kinship-carer-advisers>

CYF Kinship Team

A support worker providing guidance and support to kinship carers of children on short-term or interim orders.

- > Kinship Team
- > Phone: 6207 1069
- > Email: CYFKinshipTeam@act.gov.au

Carers ACT Kinship and Foster Carers Resources Hub

A dedicated space for foster and kinship carers in the ACT which provides information, referrals and advice to carers in need of support.

- > Website: <https://knfcarers.au/>

More information

For more information, CYF staff can contact CYF Business Services, the Relationship Management Team or their Operations Manager. Carers seeking more information should speak with their CYF practitioner.

Appendix A: Other government assistance

Support type	Description
Health Care Card	All children in the care of the Director-General are eligible for a Health Care Card. It provides access to various health services including, but not limited to, bulk bill medical services, PBS medications, the Child Dental Benefits Schedule, and the Spectacle Support Scheme. More information is available at https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/health-care-card
Bus passes	All children with a Health Care Card attending an ACT Government school, are eligible for a term bus pass if they live more than: > one kilometre from their primary school, or > two kilometres from their high school, college, or CIT campus. Applications must be made before the start of the school term and are available at https://www.transport.act.gov.au/travel-options/schools/school-programs/student-transport-program
Child Care Subsidy	If childcare is deemed suitable, carers must register for the Australian Government's Child Care Subsidy. The Child Care Subsidy is paid directly to the childcare provider (for example, childcare, vacation care, before and after school care) to reduce the fees carers have to pay. More information is available at https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/child-care-subsidy or phone 13 61 50. Also see childcare information at the end of this document.
Australian Government benefits	All carers and children should apply for relevant Australian Government benefits if restoration to family is not planned for in the very near future. This can include Family Tax Benefit, Parenting Payments, Double Orphan Pension, Carer Allowance, Youth Allowance and Disability Allowance. More information is available at free call 1800 245 965 or https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/grandparent-foster-and-kinship-carer-advisers
ACT Spectacle Scheme	The ACT Spectacles Subsidy Scheme provides a subsidy of up to \$200 once every two years for optical care. For the child to be eligible, they must live in the ACT and have a Health Care Card that has been valid for at least three months. More information is available at https://www.revenue.act.gov.au/community-assistance/spectacles-subsidy-scheme
Transition to Independent Living	TILA is a non-cash payment from the Australian Government of up to \$1500 to assist eligible children aged 15 to 25 years meet some of the costs involved in moving from a care arrangement to independent living. It can provide assistance

Support type	Description
Allowance (TILA)	with, but is not limited to, housing, essential household items, life skills training, employment or education expenses, transport and counselling. More information is available at https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/benefits-payments/transition-to-independent-living-allowance-tila
Respite care	Respite care provides carers with a planned, time-limited break from the demands of caring for someone else's child. During respite, the child is cared for by another approved carer. Respite care can be regular or a one-off event. Carers seeking respite should discuss this with their practitioner.
ACT Government school fees	ACT Government schools and preschools do not charge school fees but may ask for a financial contribution. It is CYF policy not to pay voluntary contributions at government schools. No child will be refused benefits or services if a contribution is not made. If issues arise, carers should consult with their school's Director/Principal and if the issue continues contact the Education Directorate.
Public dental services	ACT Health provides dental services to all people with a Health Care Card. This includes emergency dental services. https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/concession-and-health-care-cards?context=60091 More information is available at www.canberrahealthservices.act.gov.au/services-and-clinics/dental-services
715 health check	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of all ages can have a free health check every 9 to 12 months. These also provide access to referrals for up to 10 free follow-up services. A 715 health check can be booked at any Aboriginal Medical Service or bulk-billing clinic. More information is available at https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-health/primary-care/annual-health-checks
Costs associated with schooling	The ACT Government Future of Education Equity Fund gives financial help to families who need it. It helps get the things your child needs for school and their wellbeing. For example, it can help cover costs like uniforms, excursions, sporting equipment, sporting activities and music lessons. More information is available at: https://www.act.gov.au/education-and-training/life-at-school-and-college/get-help-with-the-cost-of-schooling