



Absences from child care due to a local emergency—Child Care Benefit (CCB) and Child Care Rebate (CCR)

There are times when you will be charged for care even though your child was absent from care.

If the absences are your initial 42 absence days, additional absence days or approved under the exceptional circumstances provision, the Australian Government will still pay you CCB, CCR and if applicable Jobs, Education and Training Child Care Fee assistance. This is for approved child care, including Family Day Care, In Home Care, Outside School Hours Care and Long Day Care.

(Absences are treated differently for Occasional Care. See below: Can I get absences for Occasional Care?)

Absences due to a local emergency are treated as additional absences.

What is a local emergency?

A local emergency is an event that:

- Affects a widespread area and has a severe impact on the lives of a significant number of inhabitants (for example, major damage to homes and businesses, or personal injury to local inhabitants due to an event such as a bushfire or flood); or
- Disrupts the normal operation of a substantial number of child care services in the area (for example, closure by health authorities due to a disease outbreak).

What happens if a local emergency is declared?

Where a local emergency is declared it is possible that your child care service provider will need to close. For example this may happen under the new catastrophic (code red) fire danger ratings system. If your child would normally have attended care on that day your service may still charge you fees even though the service is closed because of a local emergency. These are treated as additional absence days.

Do I still receive CCB and CCR for absences due to a local emergency?

You can get CCB and CCR for additional absence days if you are charged child care fees on days your child would normally attend child care and your service is closed because of a local emergency.

If your CCB entitlement is zero due to your income, you may still be eligible for the CCR. If you meet the eligibility criteria for CCR you can get 50 per cent of your out-of-pocket child care expenses for approved care up to the annual cap of \$7,500 per child per year, subject to the passage of legislation.

From July 2011 you have the option to receive your CCR paid fortnightly, either directly to your bank account, or through your child care service provider as a fee reduction. This means you can access your CCR payment at the time you incur your child care costs during a local emergency or for other absence days. You can still have the option to receive your CCR quarterly or annually as a lump sum directly to your bank account.

If you receive CCB for additional absences during a local emergency they will not be added to your child's absence count. There is no limit on the number of absence days for which you get CCB and CCR during the local emergency.

Correct as at 010711



Why do I pay for child care when my child care service is closed?

Charging practices are commercial decisions made independently by individual child care service providers and are not a matter regulated by family assistance law.

Is assistance available if I can't pay my child care fees?

If you are facing financial hardship as a result of the local emergency and you are unable to pay your child care fees you can discuss the option of applying for Special Child Care Benefit (SCCB) with your child care service provider. Supporting documentation will need to be supplied when you seek assistance.

SCCB can pay up to the full cost of child care fees to give your family time to recover from or adjust to circumstances following a hardship event. It can be paid for up to 52 weeks. An initial period of up to 13 weeks is able to be approved by your child care service provider. Additional periods can be approved by the Family Assistance Office.

Can I receive CCB and CCR for absences from Occasional Care?

You will receive CCB and CCR for an absence if you have booked and paid for the child care your child was absent from at your Occasional Care service. There is no limit on the number of absences.

What is my child care service responsible for?

Your child care service must keep a record of each absence for your child. Your service must let you know regularly how many absences have been used. Services are required to provide families with statements at least every 3 months.

You can also access your child's absence record on your online statement available on the Family Assistance Office website under Online Services/Child Care/View child care details and payments at www.familyassist.gov.au.



How can I get more information?

For more information on your eligibility for CCB and CCR please contact the Family Assistance Office



access online services at www.familyassist.gov.au



call 13 61 50 between 8am and 8pm (local time) Monday to Friday



email through www.familyassist.gov.au



visit a Family Assistance Office (located in Medicare Offices and Centrelink Customer Service Centres).

Useful resources

For news and information on child care visit the mychild website available at www.mychild.gov.au
Centrelink/Family Assistance/Child Support/Child Care Estimator at www.familyassist.gov.au
Family Assistance, The What, Why and How booklet, available at www.familyassist.gov.au
Family Assistance Office Guide to Payments fact sheet, available at www.familyassist.gov.au

If you need to, you can also call:



Teletypewriter (TTY) 1800 810 586 (if you are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment).

You need a TTY phone to use this service.

13 12 02 if you need information in a language other than English.

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