



Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package



Dear early childhood education and care providers and services

The availability of early childhood education and care (ECEC) services is vital to ensuring that during this COVID-19 event workers can work, and children, including vulnerable children, can continue to receive high quality education and care.

The legislative amendments to the Family Assistance Law that passed last week provide some continuity of fee relief to help manage the impact of COVID-19, but more support is needed to support the provision of ECEC. The Government has listened to your concerns about ongoing business viability due to low attendance or declining enrolments, as families lose work, and seek to keep their children at home, based on advice from state health authorities.

Today, the Government announced the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package to further support the provision of essential ECEC services.

Payments

To ensure ongoing availability of ECEC for Australian families, from 6 April until the end of the 2019-20 financial year, services that remain open and have children enrolled will receive a weekly payment to ensure they can continue to deliver ECEC to families who need it. These payments will be made instead of the usual Child Care Subsidy and Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) payments, which will cease from 6 April 2020. Importantly these payments will complement the Government's recently announced [JobKeeper Payment](#).

Providers will not be able to upload session reports to the Child Care Subsidy System during this period, but must continue to keep attendance records while the payments remain active. Providers should ensure they have uploaded current session reports by 11:59 pm (AEST) Sunday 5 April 2020.

Payments will be approximately 50 per cent of fees, based on a reference fortnight, up to a maximum of the hourly rate cap.

In return for receiving a payment, services are required to:

- stay open unless closed on public health advice or for other health and safety reasons
- ensure families are not charged a fee, including an out of pocket fee
- prioritise access to care to essential workers, vulnerable and disadvantaged children and previously enrolled children
- continue to record attendance of children
- comply with all other provider obligations including National Quality Framework and other relevant conditions of approval under Family Assistance Law.

Where children who otherwise would be considered 'at risk' for the purposes of ACCS (child wellbeing) enrol at a service, services are required to make a referral to an appropriate support agency as per the existing ACCS (child wellbeing) referral requirements.

No out of pocket fee

Up to and including 5 April 2020, services will now be able to waive out of pocket fees for families whose children are not attending where a service remains open. This change retrospectively takes effect from 23 March 2020 and extends the rule which allows services to waive out of pocket fees where a service is directed to close on public health advice.

From 6 April onwards, no fees can be charged to families for the period the Government is providing payments.

While we encourage services to take advantage of this provision to help families, it is ultimately a service's choice to not recover out of pocket fees.

Further information

Two new information sheets have been [published](#). I encourage you to regularly check the department's [website](#) to ensure you are using the latest versions. More information, including frequently asked questions, will continue to be published over the coming days.

As you are well aware, the situation is changing very rapidly and we will continue to monitor the viability of ECEC services and take further steps as required to support services and families, and as we plan for recovery once the crisis is over.

I will continue to update you on important changes as we continue work with Government to support you during these unprecedented times.

Thank you again for the critical work you are doing.

Regards

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