



Response to COVID-19 in Victoria

On 7 July 2020, the Minister announced fee relief for Victorian families in response to the COVID-19 lockdowns. From 13 July until 31 December 2020, services open and located in an area of Stage 3 or higher – ‘stay at home’ restrictions are permitted to waive families’ out of pocket fees where a child is not attending due to COVID-19, and an absence is recorded.

Areas subject to Stage 3 or higher – ‘stay at home’ restrictions are listed at vic.gov.au.

Child Care Subsidy returns on Monday – are you ready?

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) will resume on Monday, 13 July 2020.

The following information may help you prepare.

Submit Additional Child Care Subsidy applications now

Services Australia are continuing to process applications for ACCS (child wellbeing) during the Relief Package Period. You should ensure ACCS (child wellbeing) certificates and determinations are in place as soon as possible to reduce the risk of delays or gaps in ACCS payments once the Relief Package ends.

Families can also apply for other ACCS payments they may be eligible for now, so their entitlement can begin on 13 July. You should direct families to the [Services Australia website](http://ServicesAustralia.gov.au) for more information on eligibility and to apply for ACCS (temporary financial hardship), ACCS (transition to work) and ACCS (grandparent).

Further information is available in the ACCS - transition arrangements and the [Information for Families](#) information sheets.

Child Care Subsidy and ACCS return from 13 July 2020

From Monday 13 July 2020, the CCS and ACCS will recommence, along with a range of new measures to support the sector and its families through the transition.

Session reports

Providers will be able to resume submitting session reports on the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS) from 13 July 2020, noting that session reports cannot be submitted to the CCSS for the period 6 April 2020 to 12 July 2020.

Gap fees

In addition to the arrangements in Victoria, if a service is required to close as a result of a state public health directive at any time between 13 July 2020 to 31 December 2020, they are also able to waive families’ gap fee during the closure. Otherwise, all requirements of Family Assistance Law apply, including the requirement for providers to recover gap fees from families.

Enrolment details

Providers are encouraged to ensure all enrolments are up to date in advance of CCS resuming, to help ensure transition back to CCS is as smooth as possible. A \$0 session of care will be recorded on Sunday 12 July 2020 for every CCS enrolment current at that time (this is in addition to the \$0 session of care recorded on Monday 6 April 2020 at the commencement of the Relief Package).

Families will see the \$0 session in their [myGov](#) account, and it will show in the Provider Entry Point and third party software with the note “COVID-19 System Update”. Families do not need to do anything or contact Centrelink. This will not have any impact on a family’s entitlement. By recording this session of care, we are ensuring that enrolments remain current for any family unable to immediately return to care when CCS resumes.

It’s important to note that the 14 week rule and absences still apply. Therefore, services should determine families’ intentions relating to ongoing care as early as possible rather than continue to record absences from 13 July 2020 onwards.

Absences

In response to feedback from the child care sector, new allowable absences provisions also take effect from 13 July 2020. Families can receive CCS for absences up to seven days before a child’s first, and after a child’s last physical attendance at a service, where they have been booked in for care, for any of the following reasons:

- any of the [additional absence reasons](#)
- the child, the individual who cares for the child, the individual’s partner or another person with whom the child lives is ill (no medical certificate required if the child has not used 42 absence days)
- the service has changed ownership
- the usual service is closed and the child is attending a different service under the same provider
- a family tragedy (a major event including the death of an immediate family member) has occurred, or
- the enrolment ceased incorrectly.

For further details on absences please see the [Absences Fact sheet](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions](#) on the department’s website.

Activity test

From 13 July 2020 to 4 October 2020, individuals who can no longer engage in the same number of hours of work, training, study or other activity recognised by the CCS activity test immediately prior to the COVID-19 crisis, can advise Services Australia they meet the requirements to access 100 hours of subsidised child care, per child, per fortnight for up to 12 weeks.

This can be done through their [Centrelink online account](#) through [myGov](#) or the [Express Plus Centrelink mobile app](#). For more information, visit dese.gov.au/covid-19/childcare.

COVID-19 health and safety resources

We have developed a [COVID-19 related poster](#) which may be downloaded and displayed by early childhood education and care providers and services. The poster provides information and tips for families and staff to help minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Also a reminder that the Australian Government Department of Health has an [online](#) infection control training module that covers the fundamentals of infection prevention and control for COVID-19.

The module is easy to use, takes approximately 30 minutes to complete, and provides useful information including:

- COVID-19 – what is it?
- signs and symptoms
- keeping safe – protecting yourself and others
- myth busting

This training is not compulsory.

You can find the [COVID-19 Infection Control Training](#) on the Department of Health’s website.

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