



What do the latest COVID restrictions mean for you and your service?

We continue to monitor restrictions imposed by state and territory authorities and what this means for services, families and educators.

We strongly encourage you to stay up to date in your area through official websites.

COVID restrictions, including the ability to travel across borders, and to and from designated hot spots, may affect who can attend your service.

Health requirements may also mean educators, staff and children have to be tested for COVID-19 and to quarantine, and/or follow other rules. In some cases, people have had to quarantine even if they have been cleared of the virus.

Services will need to give careful consideration to all this, and contingencies, as educators return to work and as services progressively become busier with the approaching new school year.

Keep informed: online resources

It is incumbent on child care services to stay up to date on how the constantly changing circumstances may affect your area and operations, and to plan in case of a local emergency even if one does not seem imminent.

Here are some useful webpages given current circumstances:

- [Restrictions for Northern Beaches](#), NSW Government website
- [Restrictions for Greater Sydney, Central Coast and Wollongong](#), NSW Government website.
- [COVID-19 restriction checker](#), a handy national tool
- Our [Help in an emergency webpage](#), which outlines what constitutes a local emergency and what support is given by the Australian Government.

Absences and gap fees

All families are permitted 42 absences for each child per financial year.

Services can waive gap fees until 31 January 2021 if they are forced to close on public health advice.

Family Day Care and In Home Care providers must apply to waive gap fees.

COVID-19 additional absences

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) can be paid for additional absences for COVID-19 related reasons without the need for medical evidence for the period 24 March 2020 to 31 December 2020.

If a child did not attend due to COVID-19, before 31 December 2020, you should submit any absences from 43 days and above as additional absences.

Select the reason as 'illness' and tick the evidence provided box. This will allow CCS to be paid for these absences.

If you have submitted absences above the allowable 42 that were due to COVID-19 but you didn't mark them as additional absences, you can amend these as outlined above.

Support for Northern Sydney

On 21 December 2020, we made a Local Area Emergency Declaration for child care services in the Northern Beaches Local Government Area of Sydney.

This allows families who have already used 42 absence days access to unlimited additional absence days if they cannot attend their child care service due to COVID restrictions. This declaration is in force until 11:59pm on Sunday (10 January).

Support for Victoria

All children attending a Victorian child care service will have an additional 45 days of extra absences in 2020-21.

These are in addition to the existing 42 days for the 2020-21 financial year, making a total of 87 absence days that can be taken for any reason without the requirement for evidence.

Families can use their allowable absence days where children are not permitted to attend or where families prefer to keep them at home for any reason.

Please stay up to date with our [COVID webpage](#) as support changes depending on hotspots.

Special Circumstances applications

The Community Child Care Fund Special Circumstances grant opportunity may provide financial help to eligible Child Care Subsidy approved services at risk of closure due to COVID-19.

Applications close 31 January 2021.

[More information about eligibility and how to apply is on our website.](#)

How can we improve approvals?

We want your input as we streamline the child care service approval process.

Nationally, we have two systems, each with their own user interface, which creates a duplication in paperwork and the processing of approvals.

We've released a [Consultation Regulation Impact Statement](#) that explores and discusses improvements. We are interested in what you think and your suggestions.

To have your say, email CCSA-ChildCareServiceApprovals@dese.gov.au

The deadline for feedback is this Friday.

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