

# Care allowances - factsheet for carers

Information for foster carers, kinship carers and permanent carers

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## Care allowance

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department) provides care allowances for assessed and approved foster, kinship and permanent carers. The care allowance contributes to the day-to-day costs incurred while providing care for children and young people.

### What the care allowance contributes to

The care allowance contributes to costs incurred by a carer while providing care for children and young people, including (but not limited to):

- accommodation, clothing, food, utilities, telephone and internet
- basic personal items for the child such as toiletries and toothbrush
- transport required as part of a regular routine, including to and from school, professional appointments and access where appropriate
- entertainment, social activities, hobbies and club memberships, pocket money, outings, toys, photos, gifts and treats.

### Care allowance levels

There are five care allowance levels which reflect the diverse needs of children and young people in care. Within each of these levels, allowance rates also vary based on the age of the child or young person, reflecting the different needs and costs at different ages and stages of development.

The complexity of the child's needs and ongoing specialist or support costs are considered when determining the care allowance level. While all children in care are likely to present with complex issues, the level of support required will be of a broad range.

The initial care allowance assessment is made based on the individual needs of each child at the beginning of the placement. However, as the needs of a child and the placement change over time, a review of the care allowance level may be necessary.

### Foster care

For foster carers, the care allowance level is determined and assessed by the department in consultation with the foster care agency. Discussions should be had with the agency and ideally in care team meetings about the needs of the child that would require a carer to receive a different care allowance level. As a child's needs change, a request to review a care allowance level can be facilitated by the agency at any time during an active placement.

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## Kinship Care

For kinship carers, the care allowance level is determined and assessed by the department, however all kinship carers are automatically eligible for the level one care allowance at the beginning of the placement. A higher care allowance, or care allowance level review, can be considered by the department by contacting the agency case manager or the child protection practitioner to discuss the needs of the child.

## Permanent Care

For permanent carers, a higher level care allowance can be considered prior to the finalisation of the Permanent Care Order. Discussions should be had with the child's child protection practitioner or the agency case manager to discuss the needs of the child. In exceptional circumstances, a care allowance level review can be considered by the department by contacting the permanent care team, who completed the assessment. Carers should first seek support from Permanent Care and Adoptive Families on 9020 1833 to discuss the needs of the child.

For more information visit: [Permanent Care and Adoptive Families](https://www.pcafamilies.org.au/) <https://www.pcafamilies.org.au/>.

The current Victorian care allowance rates are updated annually and available at [Department of Families, Fairness and Housing - Support for Carers](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/support-carers) <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/support-carers>.

## Additional components of the care allowance

Allowance	Purpose	Description	Can contribute to
New placement allowance	To assist in meeting the immediate or 'start-up' costs of caring for a child or young person. Subject to statutory involvement by the Victorian child protection system.	Additional amount paid to carers over the first six months of the placement where the carer is receiving the level one care allowance rate included in fortnightly care allowance.	Bedroom linen and furniture, such as a mattress and bedside table bedroom accessories, such as a clock radio and nightlight safety equipment such as baby capsules, car boosters and bike helmets.
Education and medical payment	To assist in meeting the education and health needs of children and young people in home-based care.	Included in fortnightly care allowance.	Medical prescriptions for everyday illnesses non-prescribed pharmaceuticals such as paracetamol and throat lozenges school excursions and sporting activities school stationery.
School attendance allowance	To contribute to meeting the educational costs for a child or young person. Subject to statutory involvement by the Victorian child protection system.	Two age bands for the allowance; 5–11 years and 12–18 years quarterly payment separate to the care allowance and paid to the carer's nominated bank account paid in arrears to foster and kinship carers, based on the number of days a child or young person has been in the placement.	Software books enrolment fees in extracurricular activity music or academic tuition.

## Other supports linked to the care allowance

Other Support	Purpose	Description
<b>Dual care allowance for periods of respite care</b> <b>Foster and Kinship care placements only.</b>	To support respite carers in temporary respite care within primary care arrangements. Subject to statutory involvement by the Victorian child protection system.	where a child or young person is being cared for by an assessed and approved respite carer, the respite carer will receive the same care allowance as the primary carer for an approved period (except therapeutic foster care if the respite carer has not attended therapeutic training) primary carers can receive dual care allowance payments for up-to 28 days of respite per calendar year for respite periods exceeding a total of 28 days in a calendar year, the care allowance will be provided to the respite carer only (exceptional circumstances may apply).
18 years and school attending	To provide ongoing support and placement stability to young people completing their secondary education qualification.	the care allowance may be payable in relation to young people residing in foster, kinship and permanent care placements following their 18th birthday this extension relates to young people up to the age of 21 years who are enrolled in full time or part time secondary education (including VCAL at foundation level or a Certificate 1 in Transition Education) to support their continued education.
Home Stretch	To continue kinship, foster and permanent care living arrangements for young people up to the age of 21.	Level 1 13+ care allowance may be payable in relation to eligible young people residing in foster, kinship and permanent care households following their 18th birthday and/or cessation of a statutory court order.

## Additional financial supports

### Client support funding

The Client Support Funding Framework ensures a fair and consistent approach to providing additional financial support to help foster and kinship carers to meet the needs of children and young people in their care.

Client support funding refers to additional funding that foster and kinship carers may be eligible for to help cover costs for extraordinary expenses. This includes the purchase of specific items or services that exceed the day-to-day costs of what the care allowance contributes to or where high costs place an unreasonable financial burden on the carer. For further information see the 'State-wide client support funding framework – frequently asked questions' available at [Department of Families, Fairness and Housing - Support for Carers](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/support-carers) <<https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/support-carers>>.

Queries regarding access to client support funding should be directed to the child's agency or child protection case manager.

Permanent carers may be eligible for flexible brokerage by contacting Permanent Care and Adoptive Families. For more information visit: [Permanent Care and Adoptive Families](https://www.pcafamilies.org.au/) <<https://www.pcafamilies.org.au/>>.

### Other financial support for carers

The Victorian and Commonwealth Governments provide a range of financial and other supports to assist carers in addition to the care allowance and client support funding. The department, service providers and care teams can help carers identify and access the full range of financial supports available. Further

information is available at [Department of Families, Fairness and Housing - Support for Carers](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/support-carers) <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/support-carers>.

## Further information about care allowances

For questions you may have about care allowances, contact your local Care Support Help Desk: [Department of Families, Fairness and Housing - Care Support Help Desk](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/care-support-help-desk-fact-sheet-word) <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/care-support-help-desk-fact-sheet-word>.

### North Division

Phone: 1800 319 507

[Email: North Care Support Helpdesk](mailto:NorthCareSupportHelpdesk@dffh.vic.gov.au)

<NorthCareSupportHelpdesk@dffh.vic.gov.au>

### South Division

Phone: 1800 319 503

[Email South Care Support Helpdesk](mailto:SouthCareSupportHelpdesk@dffh.vic.gov.au)

<SouthCareSupportHelpdesk@dffh.vic.gov.au>

### East Division

Phone: 1800 931 757

[Email East Care Support Helpdesk](mailto:EastCareSupportHelpdesk@dffh.vic.gov.au)

<EastCareSupportHelpdesk@dffh.vic.gov.au>

### West Division

Phone: 1800 319 510

[Email West Care Support Helpdesk](mailto:WestCareSupportHelpdesk@dffh.vic.gov.au)

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Available at [Department of Families, Fairness and Housing - Support for Carers](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/support-carers) <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/support-carers>