

Policy and Guidelines

Expenditure on Children and Young People
in Out of Home Care

July 2011

1. Introduction

This document outlines the policy and guidelines that apply to the reimbursement to carers from 2 July 2011. The term carer refers to foster carers, formal kinship carers, family group home carers and cottage home carers. The term case manager refers to child protection workers within response and case management teams who are responsible for preparing the Case and Care Plans for children and young people in care.

2. Legislative basis

Section 69 of the *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997* empowers the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to provide for care of children under guardianship or in the custody of the Secretary.

3. Policy position

In accordance with the object of the *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997*, the Department of Health and Human Services is committed to the care and protection of children and young people in a manner that maximises their opportunity to grow up in a safe and stable environment and reach their full potential.

The Department recognises that children and young people in out of home care have specific needs. The level of abuse and neglect before entering care is likely to result in a range of behaviours, emotional needs and developmental delays. These factors together with the experiences of being in care mean that no child in care is likely to be 'easy' to care for. However, some children have significantly more complex needs than their peers.

The majority of carers receive standard board payments for children in their care. Some carers receive higher payments to cover the costs associated with meeting the intensive and complex needs of children in care.

Higher level payments must be approved by an Area Funding Panel.

4. Area Funding Panel

The Area Funding Panel consists of the Manager Child Protection Services and all Team Leaders including Team Leader, Business Operations in the Area.

Area Funding Panels must approve:

- higher level carer payments for children with intensive and complex needs
- all claims for additional reimbursement by carers.

The Manager Child Protection may approve payments for essential child related services that parents are normally responsible for, such as specialist medical services, orthodontic treatment, additional educational costs, and

counselling services. However, the Manager Child Protection may refer these funding decisions to the Area Funding Panel.

Area Funding Panels are responsible for managing the provision of child protection services within budget.

5. The standard board payments

The standard fortnightly board payments cover the day to day costs of children in care. The rate of payment varies according to the age of the child or young person as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1 Standard board payments to carers \$ per fortnight from 2 July 2011

Age	Fortnightly rates	Annual Rates
0-4 years	\$359	\$9 334
5-11 years	\$411	\$10 686
12-17 years	\$475	\$12 350

The standard board payment covers the day to day costs for children in care including:

- all clothing items including school uniform and a school bag
- all footwear including school shoes, boots, sandshoes, sandals, slippers and thongs
- sports clothing including tracksuit, sports uniforms, bathers and goggles
- accessories including hats, belts, sunglasses, personal jewellery, a watch and a wallet
- sun protection including a sunhat, sun glasses sunscreen and sun protection suit
- nappies and baby hygiene products such as wipes
- education including excursions, performances, school camps, school photos and magazines
- recreational activities including DVD hire, toys, games and cinema tickets
- recreational items such as mouth guards, safety helmets, skateboards, skipping ropes, tennis rackets and basket balls
- participation in normal recreational activities including travel to activities, entry and club fees
- pocket money
- day trips and holidays within Tasmania
- occasional child care, after school care, school holiday program and baby sitting
- travel to and from school, sporting and social activities, standard doctor and dental appointments and reasonable family access
- standard medical costs including prescriptions for medication covered by the PBS for medical conditions that are not ongoing or chronic
- dental costs including tooth brushes, tooth paste and dental floss

- household cleaning products including washing powder, disinfectants and shoe polish
- personal care items including soap, shampoo and conditioner, regular haircuts, deodorant and tampons
- doonas, blankets, bed linen and towels
- fair wear and tear of household items including a bed, desk and carpets etc
- energy costs including electricity, gas, solar heating and other heating products
- water including metered water and tank water
- phone calls including carer's calls to the case manager
- internet services
- food including eating out or take-away food, snacks, lunches from school canteen and special occasions such as Christmas and birthday parties and Easter eggs
- photographs, cards and small gifts from the child for members of the child's birth family.

The standard board payment covers the majority of day to day costs for children in care. It is intended that carers will not have to spend time seeking reimbursement for incidental costs associated with caring for a child in their care.

5.1 Pocket Money

The amount for pocket money is not specified. However, the carer must provide pocket money to the child each week. The level of pocket money will depend on the age of the child, community norms and the amount of pocket money that the carer's own children receive. It is recommended that children receive a level of pocket money that is equivalent to their age. Thus a four year old child would receive \$4 per week and a ten year old child would receive \$10 per week. Young people aged 16 and 17 years are eligible for Youth Allowance payments. Carers who are caring for young people who are receiving Youth Allowance do not need to provide pocket money and the young people are expected to cover the costs that are normally met with pocket money from their Youth Allowance payments.

5.2 Clothing

Standard board payments cover the cost of clothing for children however the amount is not specified. Carers are expected to purchase clothing that meets community norms. The preferences of children should be respected. Some children may require guidance in determining the 'trade offs' that are required if they wish to purchase an expensive item of clothing.

6 Establishment allowance

Carers receive a one-off voucher of \$70 for children and young people who are entering care for the first time. The establishment allowance covers expenditure on the personal care items and small items of clothing that are required by children or young people when they are placed in care for the first

time. It may cover items such as a toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, hairbrush, socks and underwear. It may also be used to purchase food for the child, for instance the child's preferred breakfast cereal.

Case managers will provide carers with a voucher for \$70 at the time of placement to reimburse them for establishment costs. If it is not possible for this to happen immediately it will be done as soon as possible following the placement. Alternatively, carers who do not wish to use a purchase order can submit a claim for reimbursement to a maximum of \$70. A direct deposit for the amount will then be paid into the carer's bank account.

6.1 Change in placement

The establishment allowance will not be paid when children and young people move to another placement as the items that were purchased from the establishment allowance and other Departmental payments on behalf of the child or young person will be taken with them to their new placement.

6.2 Children and young people who have been previously placed in care

Children and young people who have been previously placed in care may receive an establishment allowance of \$70 providing that they need essential items such as personal care products or additional clothing. A team leader may approve one additional establishment allowance within a twelve-month period. A Manager, Child Protection Services, may approve a third and fourth establishment allowance within a twelve-month period.

7 Additional payment for clothing and suitcase

Children and young people who have been in care between four to eight weeks and it is expected that they will remain in care may require an additional payment to ensure that the child has an adequate supply of clothing and a suitcase.

The level of payment depends on an assessment of the clothing that a child or young person has at the time of placement and the likelihood that the child or young person will remain in care. As a general rule, the decision that a child/young person is likely to remain in care occurs at the same time that there has been a decision to extend an assessment order under Section 22 (5).

Additional payment for clothing and a suitcase must be approved by the Area Funding Panel.

8 Gifts for children in care

The primary carer receives an additional payment of \$75 for a birthday gift and \$75 for a Christmas gift for each child who is in care when those events occur.

9 Brokerage funds for additional needs

Children and young people in care may have additional costs that are not covered by the standard board payments.

Examples of additional costs that can be approved include:

- specialist medical interventions
- orthodontic treatment
- private school fees
- recurrent child care fees
- child's component of private rental costs
- child selected for an interstate trip as a member of a sporting team or other organised activity such as a debating team or youth orchestra
- interstate and overseas travel
- a computer for the child
- private tutoring/teachers' aide costs
- recreational and sporting equipment and activities.

Area Offices have been allocated two pools of funds to meet additional needs. One fund covers the costs that a 'responsible parent' normally meets such as specialist medical interventions. The other fund covers the additional costs that carers incur such as additional travel, child care fees, and additional recreational activities. Additional carer reimbursement must be approved by the Area Funding Panel.

9.1 Health Care Expenses

Workers and carers will utilise public health care services and doctors who are willing to 'bulk bill' wherever possible.

Over the counter medicines such as Panadol and anti-septic creams as well as occasional prescriptions covered by the PBS scheme are covered by the standard board payments.

Private specialist services, regular medication and any ongoing medication that is not covered by the PBS scheme can be approved by the Area Funding Panel or the Manager Child Protection.

CYS does not cover the cost of private health insurance for children in care unless the child has a serious medical condition and a costs benefits analysis demonstrates that there are savings in having private health insurance.

9.2 Dental Care Expenses

Children in out of home care should utilise the Oral Health Services Tasmania.

Private dental treatment including orthodontic treatment must be approved by the Area Funding Panel or the Manager Child Protection before the treatment commences.

9.3 Optical Expenses

School aged children in out of home care should utilise the Spectacles Assistance Scheme.

9.4 Educational Expenses

The Student Assistance Scheme (STaS) covers day to day educational materials such as school books and stationery for children in care.

School uniforms and school excursions are covered by the standard board payments.

Some children in care may require additional funding towards the costs of a teacher's aide to assist the child's learning and to manage behaviours in the school setting. Both the Department of Education (DoE) and DHHS share responsibility for ensuring that students in out of home care receive the educational support they need.

The costs of tutoring, computers and private school fees must be approved by the Area Funding Panel.

9.5 Recreational Expenses

The standard board payment covers normal recreational activities. Normal recreational activities include books, toys, games, a trip to the cinema, hiring DVDs, the annual show, entry to a swimming pool, school sports and at least one specific leisure activity such as dancing or music lessons. Any costs associated with the child attending a friend's party are also covered by the standard board payment.

Additional carer payments for the care of children with intensive and complex needs may cover additional recreational costs for the children.

The cost of additional recreational and sporting activities or equipment must be approved by the Area Funding Panel.

9.6 Child Care Expenses

The standard board payment includes occasional child care costs.

Carers may be eligible for the Child Care Benefit from Centrelink to assist with the cost of child care for long day care, family day care, in-home care, occasional care, outside school hours care, vacation care and registered care. The rate of the child care benefit is affected by the adjusted taxable income but is not subject to an assets test. An application form can be obtained from any Family Assistance Office located in Centrelink Customer Service Centres and Medicare offices. Carers should also be eligible for the Child Care Rebate.

The cost to the carer for regular and ongoing child care must be approved by Area Funding Panel. If the carer is eligible for the Child Care Tax Rebate these payments should be factored into the calculation of the cost to the carer.

Child care expenses must be approved by the Area Funding Panel.

9.7 Private rental expenses

Approved carers are expected to have suitable accommodation in order to care for a child.

Reimbursement for additional housing costs may be approved when a carer who is renting privately and the placement of children has made it necessary to move to a larger house with increased rental. The percentage of the market rent is determined by calculating the percentage of the bedroom space that the child/young person occupies. For instance, if the child/young person occupies one bedroom of a three bedroom house, the departmental payment would be one third of the actual rent. If the child is sharing a bedroom with another child in a two bedroom house the payment would be one quarter of the rent.

If the carers are receiving rent assistance from Centrelink the amount of rent assistance should be deducted from the rent and then the child's component is calculated.

Private rental costs must be approved by the Area Funding Panel.

Carers who are renting public housing are not eligible for additional rental assistance from CYS.

9.8 Transport expenses

The standard board payment covers the day to day transport costs for children in care. This includes travel to and from school, travel to and from the doctor/dentist and recreational activities including day trips and holidays within Tasmania.

Where carers are required to use their private vehicle to provide additional transport, they may be reimbursed at the gazetted occasional user rate. Examples of additional transport include the carer provides transport for the child to have family access visits (the carer must be agreeable); transport to a school that is outside the local area or transport to a specialist service that is more than ten kilometres from the carer's home.

The gazetted occasional user rate is the maximum level of reimbursement. The Area Funding Panel may approve a lower rate of reimbursement in the following circumstances apply:

- intensive or complex levels of payment have been approved for the care of the child
- CYS has provided financial assistance towards the purchase of the vehicle
- CYS is covering the costs associated with leasing a vehicle for use by the carer.

9.9 Interstate and overseas travel

Costs for interstate and overseas travel must be approved by the Area Funding Panel before the travel commences.

The Manager Child Protection may approve costs associated with Interstate travel costs for medical reasons or family access. These costs can be referred to the Area Funding Panel for consideration.

10 Fortnightly payments for the care of children with intensive needs

Carers who are caring for children with intensive needs may receive higher fortnightly payments to cover the additional costs associated with the child's high needs. The higher level of payments also covers the day to day costs that are covered by standard board payments (see section 5)

Children with intensive needs include those children who have significant behavioural problems at home and at school.

The assessment of the severity of challenging behaviours is intrinsic to the care planning for the child or young person. Case managers should consider the need for higher payments to cover the additional costs in caring for children and young people with challenging behaviours or significant medical conditions or disabilities.

The Application to the area Funding Panel for additional carer payments for a child with intensive or complex needs must be completed and presented to the Funding Panel with the child's Case and Care Plan and other documentation that outlines the child's needs.

Higher payments (intensive) may be required for children and young people who:

- have experienced significant disruption in their lives or while in out of home care resulting in difficulties in forming and maintaining attachments
- have impaired social relationships with peers and others
- have been excluded from education for extended periods
- have attempted suicide or are considering attempting suicide
- display aggression towards others
- have a pattern of offending behaviour
- have significant drug and alcohol problems
- are a risk to animals
- demonstrate inappropriate sexualised behaviours
- have abnormal sleep patterns
- have a pattern of destroying property.

The behaviours should be ongoing. Children and young people in care, especially adolescents may have episodes of non-compliant behaviours and may be involved in minor offending or be suspended from school. The role of the case manager

is to determine when a combination of behaviours represents the need for additional supports to manage the behaviours and to prevent further escalation of challenging behaviours. If carer requires additional skills to manage the behaviours the case manager should explore opportunities to develop the skills and seek additional support from the out of home care team.

The case manager will present the Case and Care Plan for the child to the Area Funding Panel if the child's behaviours and needs indicate that higher payments are required.

There are two levels of intensive payments. The Area Funding Panel will determine the appropriate level. Level 2 is more appropriate for children over the age of 12 years and where the child regularly demonstrates more than three challenging behaviours.

The Area Funding Panel will determine the date that the additional payments will commence and set a date for review. For intensive payments the maximum review date is 12 months from the date that the payments commenced.

Table 2: Rates for intensive payments (includes the standard payments)

Age	Level 1		Level 2	
	Per fortnight	Per year	Per fortnight	Per year
0-4	580	15 080	875	22 750
5-11	633	16 458	928	24 128
12-17	696	18 096	992	25 792

11 Fortnightly payments for the care of children and young people with complex needs

Children with complex needs have similar behaviours as children with intensive needs however the behaviours are more extreme. The level of complexity is increased when a child has a high number of difficult to manage behaviours. Complexity is also likely to increase as the child gets older and where there is a pattern of placement breakdowns and cumulative harm,

The behaviours include:

- persistent destruction of property
- excessive use of alcohol/drugs/solvents and other mind-altering substances
- chronic school refusals or established pattern of suspension and or expulsion from school
- physical and verbal attacks on others
- sexually aggressive behaviours
- suicidal and serious self-harming behaviours

- serious risk taking behaviours including regular running away from placement and seeking out locations that are unsafe
- major mental health illness
- chronic medical condition or disability.

There are two levels of payments for complex payments. Level 2 is more appropriate for children over the age of 12 years and where the child presents with more than four categories of difficult behaviours.

Table 3: Rates for complex payments (includes the standard payments)

Age	Level 1		Level 2	
	Per fortnight	Per year	Per fortnight	Per year
0-4	1 171	30 446	1 392	36 192
5-11	1 224	31 824	1 445	37 570
12-17	1 287	33 462	1 508	39 208

The Area Funding Panel must set the commencement date and a review date. If the higher payments were approved because the child has complex challenging behaviours, the review date should be six months from date the additional payments were approved.

12 Payments for Respite Care

Carers who are providing respite care receive a flat amount per child depending on the amount of time that the child spends in the carers' home.

Table 4: Respite care payments

1 night	2 nights	3 nights	4 nights	5 nights	6 nights
\$50	\$75	\$100	\$125	\$150	\$175

Respite carers are not required to provide children with pocket money or clothing and if the child is taking regular medication, his or her primary carer must ensure that the child has sufficient medication for the respite period. Respite carers are responsible for incidental recreational costs.

The carer receives the standard board payment for any placement that exceeds six days. Thus if a child is placed for respite and the intention is that the child will return to his or her primary placement, the respite care payments may continue for a maximum of six nights. Following six nights of continuous respite, the payments to the respite carer are the same as standard board payments for the child, even though the child may be on respite.

If an intended respite placement ceases to be a respite placement because the child's primary placement has broken down during the respite period and the immediate plan is for the child to remain with the respite carer, the standard board payments commence from the date that there was a decision that the carer is the primary carer.

If the primary carer is receiving higher fortnightly payments because the child has intensive or complex needs and respite care is being arranged it may be necessary to provide additional financial support to the respite carer.

13 Child is away from a placement for a short period

The Department recognises that carers may experience continuing costs associated with the care of a child/young person who is away from a placement for short periods of time. Carers continue to receive standard payments if the plan is that the child will return to carers' home within the near future. The child may be away from the placement because the carers are having respite, the child is spending time with family members, the child is in hospital, the child is attending a camp or the child is missing. Payments continue for up to 28 days per year.

14 Child is being reunified

The child's carer should continue to receive standard board payments during the period that a child is being reunified with his or her family. The 28 day limit of payments being paid to the carer while the child is away from the placement does not apply if the child is being reunified.

15 Child is removed from the placement pending an investigation

The Area Director must approve the continuation of payments to a carer following the removal of a child pending a 'Complaints in Care' investigation.

16 Care is shared between two carers

Two carer households (that is out of home care is provided across two separate homes) may share the care of a child on an ongoing basis. This arrangement generally applies for the care of a child with high needs with the child spending an agreed period of time in one home and then moving to another home for an agreed period of time. This arrangement occurs on a regular basis and over an extended period of time. For instance the child may spend Thursday to Sunday nights in the home of the primary carer and Monday to Wednesday nights in the separate home of the additional carer.

In these rare circumstances the primary carer and the secondary carer receives the standard board payments for the actual nights of care provided. If additional payments for the care of children with intensive and complex needs have been approved the additional payments are also paid for the actual nights of care provided. The Case and Care Plan for the child must outline the arrangements for the provision of pocket money, clothing and other costs for the care of the child. The Plan must also identify which carer is listed as the primary carer. The primary carer receives the payments for Christmas and birthday gifts.

Note: Two approved carers in the same household are not two carer households.

17 Shared care with parents

The care of the child may be shared with the child's parents. Providing that this arrangement is not part of a planned reunification and if the parents provide more than 28 nights of care over the period of one year, the payments

to the carer are reduced for each additional night that the child is cared for by his or her parents.

18 Youth Allowance

Centrelink considers young people placed in out of home care to be in supported state care. As a consequence they are eligible for the Youth Allowance at the dependent rate.

The carer continues to receive the standard board payment until the young person is 18 years of age (providing that the young person is living in the carer's home).

Young people aged 16 and over are expected to contribute to their recreational and clothing costs. This includes the costs associated with attending a leavers' dinner.

18.1 Supported state care

Supported state care applies where the young person receives payments for his or her upkeep from the State. Upkeep involves payment by the Department for items of a physical, tangible nature that are necessities of life for a young person in state care. These include food, clothing shelter and utilities. The payments do not need to be adequate or ongoing and thus even small and irregular payments by the Department results in the young person being regarded by Centrelink as being in supported state care.

18.2 Supported state care

Unsupported state care applies where the Department of Health and Human Services does not provide a young person with any payments for items of a physical tangible nature that are the necessities of life such as food, clothing shelter and utilities. The payment for counselling services that aim to assist the young person's transition to independence or payments to assist the young person with the cost of family access visits are not seen as necessities of life. A young person in unsupported state care may be eligible for Youth Allowance that is equivalent to the Youth Homeless Allowance.

19 Centrelink Payments for the child

Carers may lodge an intention to claim for Centrelink benefits for a child placed in their care from the first day of placement. However, if the child is absent from the care of his or her parents for less than four weeks, the child's parents will continue to receive Centrelink benefits for the child.

The receipt of Centrelink payments for a child in care does not affect the standard reimbursement. However, there is an expectation that Centrelink payments on behalf of a child in care are directed to the care of the child. Such payments may be taken into account in planning to meet the needs of a child.

19.1 Carer allowance (Centrelink)

The carer allowance from Centrelink helps carers to care for a child/young person with a disability at home. Centrelink uses the Child Disability

Assessment Tool to assess the functional ability of a child under the age of sixteen years of age. The carer allowance is not subject to an income test or an asset test. It may be backdated up to twelve months prior to the lodgement of a claim form. Details of the carer allowance are available on the Centrelink homepage at www.centrelink.gov.au

A carer allowance from Centrelink may be taken into account during the care planning process. Although the Carer Allowance will not impact on the level of special care allowance the Department will provide, it may be considered when planning for other payments such as additional payments for leisure activities for the child.

20 Public housing

Departmental payments to carers for a child in care are not treated as household income by Housing Tasmania.

21 Australian Taxation Office

Departmental payments to carers for a child in care are not taxable income.

22 Changes in the Cost of Living

The standard board, intensive and complex payments are adjusted in July each year to reflect changes in the cost of living for the previous year.

Application to the Area Funding Panel for higher carer payments for child with intensive or complex needs

Child's name:

Date of birth/...../.....

Age [] yrs]

Current payments: Standard [] Intensive level 1 [] level 2 [] Complex level 1[] level 2 []

Physical health: No concerns [] Minor concerns [] Significant [] Life threatening []

Disability: No concerns [] Minor Concerns [] Significant [] Severe and profound []

Mental health: No concerns [] Minor concerns [] Significant [] Severe/receiving treatment []

Presenting behaviours (over previous 12 months):

School: No concerns [] School refusal [] Exclusions [] Not attending school []

Self harm: No concerns [] Minor incidents [] Regular incidents [] Excessive/persistent []

Aggression to others No concerns [] Minor incidents [] Regular incidents [] Excessive/persistent []

Sexual behaviours: No concerns [] Minor incidents [] Regular incidents [] Sexually aggressive []

Damage to property: No concerns [] Minor incidents [] Regular incidents [] Excessive/persistent []

Alcohol/drugs No concerns [] Minor incidents [] Regular incidents [] Excessive usage []

Attachments: No concerns [] Moderate issues [] Major issues [] Extreme issues []

Offending: No concerns [] Minor offending [] Regular offending [] Pattern of serious offending []

Other intensive/complex behaviours (brief outline or cross reference to case and care plan/other reports

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Case Manager

Date/...../.....