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| Additional Child Care Subsidy (child wellbeing) |
| Factsheet for Child Protection, CSOs and ACCOs working with children who are subject to an Interim Accommodation Order or Protection Order |

## What is the Additional Child Care Subsidy (child wellbeing)?

The Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) (child wellbeing) assists eligible parents and carers who need help with the cost of child care to support children who are considered to be at risk in line with Commonwealth Family Assistance Law. The subsidy is paid to providers and passed to families through fee reduction.

## Who is eligible?

A child is considered to be ‘at risk’ for the purpose of ACCS (child wellbeing) if they are experiencing harm, as a result of current or past circumstances or events that resulted in the child being subject to, or exposed to: serious physical, emotional or psychological abuse; sexual abuse; domestic or family violence; or neglect. It also includes circumstances where the risk of harm or neglect to a child is real and apparent.

Children who require care and protection under state child protection laws are considered to be ‘at risk’ for the purpose of ACCS (child wellbeing). Therefore any child subject to an Interim accommodation order or protection order under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* is eligible for ACCS (Child Wellbeing). This includes children who are placed in foster or kinship care. However, if a child is under the care of the State and, for example, living in residential care, then they are not eligible for any form of Commonwealth child care assistance.

## How is an application for ACCS (child wellbeing) made?

ACCS (child wellbeing) is managed by child care providers on behalf of parents or carers. If the provider considers that the parent or carer is eligible and the child is at risk, then the provider can immediately give access to the ACCS (child wellbeing) for up to six weeks. For further periods, the child care provider can apply to the Department of Human Services, for periods of 13 weeks thereafter. An eligible child may receive up to 100 hours of subsidised child care per fortnight. There is no limit on the amount of time that a child can receive ACCS (child wellbeing) so long as they continue to be eligible.

## What type of evidence is required to support an application for ACCS (child wellbeing) for children subject to court orders?

Evidence that demonstrates a child is in need of care and protection and subject to an Interim Accommodation Order or Protection Order must meet the minimum requirements as outlined in the Guide to ACCS (child wellbeing)[[1]](#footnote-1). The evidence should be a formal letter that includes:

* the name of the child
* the child’s date of birth; or residential address; or name(s) of parent(s)/carer(s) to ensure that the evidence relates to the correct child
* the name and contact details of the organisation responsible for the document
* type of order and the date the order was made
* the name of the person giving the evidence
* the person’s title and/or position in the organisation.

The Guide to ACCS (child wellbeing) does not dictate the source of the evidence, and organisations that provide contracted case management services for children subject to a protection order may attempt to provide this evidence to child care providers directly. However, it is possible the child care provider may request the evidence comes from Child Protection. In these scenarios, evidence should be sourced by the allocated contracted case manager in the relevant operational child protection division.

For children subject to Permanent Care Orders where Child Protection are no longer involved, the carer can provide a copy of the child’s Permanent Care Order to the child care provider directly as evidence. If a care agency is involved in supporting the carer manage the Permanent Care Order, the agency may also be able to assist the carer with the provision of evidence.

## How will the Additional Child Care Subsidy be paid?

ACCS (child wellbeing) is paid directly to approved child care services to reduce the cost of child care for eligible families. Eligible families will receive a subsidy equal to the actual fee charged by the child care service, or up to 120 per cent of the Child Care Subsidy hourly rate, or whichever is lower. In most cases, the full cost of care will be covered.

Where the fee charged is higher than the ACCS hourly rate, the parent or carer may be asked by the child care provider to accept liability for future gap fees. It should be noted that another third party organisation (such as the department or a voluntary support service) can pay then pay gap fee on behalf of the parent or carer. Family Assistance Law does not prescribe how these payments are made, however in most cases it can be expected that a formal agreement is negotiated between the third party organisation and the child care provider.

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1. The Guide to ACCS (child wellbeing) contains information for child care providers and services involved in the administration of ACCS (child wellbeing) and can be found at <https://docs.education.gov.au/node/50896> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)