

Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package - Frequently Asked Questions

What is the new child care payment under the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package?

The new payment under the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package is a payment to support Child Care Services to remain open. Due to the impact of COVID-19, the sector has reported significant decreases in attendance and enrolments. These payments will ensure services can remain open, and families who need it can access care.

Weekly payments will be approximately 50 per cent of a service's fee revenue up to a maximum of the hourly rate cap for sessions of care in the fortnight preceding 2 March 2020 (i.e. Monday 17 February 2020 through to 28 February 2020).

The payments for services providing vacation care only will be calculated on the equivalent of the average weekly amount for the vacation period between term 3 and term 4 in 2019 (September-October School Holidays).

The payments are made in lieu of any Child Care Subsidy and Additional Child Care Subsidy. Receiving these payments does not preclude your service from accessing other Government initiatives to support businesses.

What do I have to do to receive the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package payment?

In order to receive the payment you must:

- stay open, with at least one active enrolment, unless closed on public health advice or for other health and safety reasons
- ensure families are not charged a fee, including an out of pocket or gap fee
- continue and prioritise care to essential workers, vulnerable and disadvantaged children and previously enrolled children
- continue to record attendance of children
- comply with all other provider obligations including National Quality Framework and other relevant conditions of approval under Family Assistance Law.

You do not need to apply. Payments will be made automatically on a weekly basis.

When will I start receiving the payment and for how long?

From the week beginning 6 April 2020 until the week ending 28 June 2020.

How will I receive the payment?

The payment will be paid into your child care service bank account. This is the same bank account that Child Care Subsidy is currently paid into.

What does this payment mean for my third party software?

The department has spoken to all third party software vendors to accommodate these payments. Your third party software often offers additional functionality to assist you with the day-to-day operations of your child care service. If you have specific questions about this functionality, or the general usability of your software, the Department recommends that you contact your third party software provider directly.

Am I still expected to record/store the attendance information of children at my service (for example 'in and out times')?

Yes, you must still record the attendance information, such as in and out times, for children that attend your service. This can either be stored electronically, or by other means. You must also give families statements of sessions of care provided.

Will I still receive payments if my service is directed to close by health authorities due to COVID-19?

Yes, you are still eligible to receive this payment if your service is directed to close on public health advice or other valid health and safety reasons.

Is there additional assistance available for my service?

The department will consider payments at a higher rate on a case by case basis. You must first take into consideration other government measures to assist you. Your service would then need to demonstrate it requires a higher percentage to stay open, for example, if greater funding is required due to an increase in enrolments to address the needs of essential workers or vulnerable children.

More information on how to apply for a higher percentage will be made available shortly.

What is the out-of-pocket fee waiver?

Ordinarily, providers are required to recover the out-of-pocket fees from families, even if the child was absent from care. Due to the impact of COVID-19, the sector has reported significant decreases in attendance and enrolments. To support families and the sector, you will now be able to waive out of pocket fees for families where a service remains open, but children are not attending for COVID-19 reasons. This change is in effect from 23 March 2020 to 5 April 2020.

This will allow you the discretion to waive out-of-pocket fees, encouraging families to stay enrolled in child care.

I have already charged families the gap fee for care provided on or after 23 March 2020. Can I give them a refund?

It is a business decision for each child care service whether or not they choose to charge families a gap fee, or in this case refund the gap fee. From 23 March 2020 there is no legal obligation for services to charge gap fees for the remainder of the 2019-20 financial year.

Where can I find resources to support children in my care?

To help children in your care who are feeling the impact of the significant social disruption and health concerns associated with COVID-19, a number of resources are available specifically designed to support them.

Emerging Minds has published a new resource on [supporting children during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#), which includes a video, fact sheets and tips about what you can expect and how you can help children cope.

The Raising Children Network has published an article on [Coronavirus and children in Australia](#), which includes health information and guidance on talking to children about COVID-19.