



Absences from child care due to a local emergency – Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate

What happens to my Child Care Benefit if I'm affected by a local emergency?

If the absences are your initial 42 absence days, additional absence days or approved under the exceptional circumstances provision, the Australian Government will still pay you Child Care Benefit (CCB), Child Care Rebate (CCR) and if applicable Jobs, Education and Training Child Care Fee Assistance. This is for CCB approved child care, including Family Day Care, In Home Care, Outside School Hours Care and Long Day Care.

Absences are treated differently for Occasional Care. See below: *Can I receive CCB and CCR for absences from Occasional Care?*

Absences due to a local emergency are treated as additional absences.

What is a local emergency?

A local emergency is an event that:

- Affects a widespread area and has a severe impact on the lives of a significant number of inhabitants (for example, major damage to homes and businesses, or personal injury to local inhabitants due to an event such as a bushfire or flood); or
- Disrupts the normal operation of a substantial number of child care services in the area (for example, closure by health authorities due to a disease outbreak).

What happens if a local emergency is declared?

Where a local emergency is declared it is possible that your child care service provider will need to close. For example this may happen under the new catastrophic (code red) fire danger ratings

system. If your child would normally have attended care on that day your service may still charge you fees even though the service is closed because of a local emergency. These are treated as additional absence days.

Do I still receive CCB and CCR for absences due to a local emergency?

You can get CCB and CCR for additional absence days if you are charged child care fees on days your child would normally attend child care and your service is closed because of a local emergency.

If your CCB entitlement is zero due to your income, you may still be eligible for the CCR. If you meet the eligibility criteria for CCR you can get 50 per cent of your out-of-pocket child care expenses for CCB approved care up to the annual limit of \$7500 per child per year.

You have the option to receive your CCR paid fortnightly, either directly to your bank account, or through your child care service provider as a fee reduction. This means you can access your CCR payment at the time you incur your child care costs during a local emergency or for other absence days. You can still have the option to receive your CCR quarterly or annually as a lump sum directly to your bank account.

If you receive CCB for additional absences during a local emergency they will not be added to your child's absence count. There is no limit on the number of absence days for which you get CCB and CCR during the local emergency.

Why can there be instances when I pay for child care when my child care service is closed?

Fee charging practices are commercial decisions made by child care service providers.

The Government's primary role in child care is to assist families with the cost through CCB and CCR and is unable to intervene in fee charging decisions.

Is assistance available if I can't pay my child care fees?

If you are facing financial hardship as a result of the local emergency and you are unable to pay your child care fees you can discuss the option of applying for Special Child Care Benefit (SCCB) with your child care service provider. Supporting documentation will need to be supplied when you seek assistance.

SCCB can pay up to the full cost of child care fees to give your family time to recover from or adjust to circumstances following a hardship event. It can be paid for up to 52 weeks. An initial period of up to 13 weeks is able to be approved by your child care service provider. Additional periods can be approved by the Department of Human Services.

Can I receive CCB and CCR for absences from Occasional Care?

You will receive CCB and CCR for an absence if you have booked and paid for the child care your child was absent from at your Occasional Care service. There is no limit on the number of absences.

What is my child care service responsible for?

Your child care service must keep a record of each absence for your child. Your service must let you know regularly how many absences have been used. Services are required to provide families with statements at least every three months.

You can also access your child's absence record by:

- using the **Express Plus Families app** and selecting 'Child Care'. If you do not have an app, you can download one to your smart device from the App Store or Google Play™. App Store is a service mark of Apple Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. Google Play is a trademark of Google Inc.
- going to your myGov account and selecting 'Child Care' and then 'View Child Care Details and Payments'. If you do not have a myGov account, you will need to create one first by going to **my.gov.au** and then linking it to Centrelink.
- going to **humanservices.gov.au/online** and logging on to Centrelink services online.

How can I get more information?

For further information on your eligibility for CCB and CCR please contact the Department of Human Services by:

- going to **humanservices.gov.au/online** and logging on to Centrelink services online.
- visiting a Service Centre (located in Medicare Offices and Centrelink Service Centres)

Useful resources

- for news and information on child care visit the [MyChild website](#)
- to estimate and compare payments access the [Child Care Estimator](#)
- [A Guide to Australian Government payments](#)

If you need to, you can also call:

- 13 6150 between 8 am and 8 pm (local time) Monday to Friday
- Teletypewriter (TTY) 1800 810 586 (if you are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment). You need a TTY phone to use this service.
- 13 12 02 if you need information in a language other than English.