



Keeping your child in care during COVID-19

Benefits of keeping your child enrolled

Participation in a quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) program provides positive developmental opportunities for children and helps prepare them for formal schooling. While your child is in ECEC they continue to benefit from play-based learning and develop language, communication and social skills through interacting with their peers.

By keeping your child in care, you are free to continue participating in work, study and other activities, including looking for work. If you decide to keep your child at home during this time or are subject to restrictions that prevent your child's attendance, maintaining your child's enrolment at their service means you won't have to find an available place again once the COVID-19 pandemic is resolved. It can be difficult settling children into a new service and places may be hard to find in some areas after COVID-19, depending on the demand for child care.

Can I keep my child enrolled while they are at home?

Yes. Under the Child Care Subsidy (CCS), families are allowed 42 absence days per child, per financial year. These can be taken for any reason, including public holidays and when children are sick, without the need for families to provide documentation.

Examples:

For a child who usually attends 5 days per week, this is more than 8 weeks of absences before additional absences are needed.

For a child who usually attends 3 days per week, this is 14 weeks of absences before additional absences are needed.

Are additional absences available?

Where a child has used all of their 42 absence days, and they cannot attend because of COVID-19 related reasons, additional absence days can be used without the requirement to provide medical evidence. This applies from 24 March 2020 to 31 December 2020.

More information on absences is available on the [Services Australia](#) website.

What if my service is closed?

In cases where a service has closed temporarily due to COVID-19, it is a business decision for each child care provider whether they choose to charge families a fee for days where a session of care would have usually been provided. If a family is charged a fee for days while the service is closed due to COVID-19, CCS can be paid as an absence day.

Do I have to pay the gap fee or can it be waived?

Under Family Assistance Law, providers are obliged to recover a gap fees from families. The gap fee is the difference between the amount covered by CCS, and the full fee charged.

However, until 31 December 2020, while a service is closed as a result of a public health directive, the service may record an absence and waive families' out-of-pocket fees.

Additional support for families in Victoria

An additional 30 allowable absence days are being provided to families in Victoria. This is equal to 6 weeks of full time care, or 72 days in total. This ensures that CCS can still be paid to services during the restriction period, and families can maintain their enrolments without using up their allowable absences.

From 13 July until 31 December 2020, services open and located in an area of Stage 3 or higher restrictions are able to waive families' out-of-pocket fees where a child is not attending due to COVID-19, and an absence is recorded. Areas subject to Stage 3 or higher restrictions are listed at vic.gov.au.

In Home Care

The Australian Government is able to support families within existing In Home Care (IHC) settings, subject to eligible families being matched with educators that can meet their needs.

Families wishing to access IHC should contact the relevant IHC Support Agency for their state or territory, who will assess their eligibility and refer them to a service that can meet their needs.

More information on IHC and Support Agency contact details is available on our [website](#).

What happens to my CCS if I cancel my enrolment?

Families can receive CCS for absences up to seven days before a child's first, and after a child's last physical attendance at a service, where they have been booked in for care, in certain circumstances. This includes where the child is ill, the service is closed as a direct result of COVID-19 or the child cannot attend because of a local emergency (for example, because they are subject to stay at home restrictions).

CCS will not be paid for any absences outside of the seven days once an enrolment ends. This means that families need to be aware of a service's terms and conditions in relation to cessation of enrolments. For example, if a service requires a family to give two weeks' notice to end an enrolment and a child has not attended for a couple of days or weeks beforehand, then families may be required to pay full fees for a period of time to fulfil this obligation. Services in these situations can also choose to discount fees.

Enrolments automatically end when a child has not attended a service for a continuous period of 14 weeks.

For more information on CCS and COVID-19, visit [Services Australia](#).