

Help with childcare costs

a guide for parents
and caregivers



Work and Income
Te Hiranga Tangata

A service of the Ministry of Social Development

At Work and Income, we make quality childcare more affordable for families – especially if you need a bit of extra help so that you can work or prepare for a working future.

We can grant you financial assistance from the date you first contact us, if you complete your application within 20 working days of that date.

Childcare Subsidy

The Childcare Subsidy is for pre-school children aged under 5 years and attending an early childhood programme for 3 or more hours a week, (or under 6 years if you get the **Child Disability Allowance** for them).

You could get help with up to 9 hours of childcare a week and in some cases you could get up to 50 hours a week if you are:

- working, studying or on an approved training course *or*
- involved in an activity that we have asked you to do *or*
- a shift worker who works nights *or*
- seriously ill or disabled *or*
- caring for a child in hospital or a child you get the Child Disability Allowance for.

The early childhood programme must be licensed and/or chartered – this includes home-based care schemes, chartered under the *Education Act 1989* and Te Kohanga Reo.

You can't get the Childcare Subsidy for more than 9 hours a week if the child's other caregiver can care for them (unless you get the Child Disability Allowance for that child). If you are ill or disabled because of an accident, you need to talk with ACC first.

OSCAR Subsidy

The OSCAR Subsidy (Out of School Care and Recreation Subsidy) is for children aged 5-13 years (or up to 18 years if they receive the Child Disability Allowance). It helps towards the costs of before and after school care of up to 20 hours a week, and school holiday programmes of up to 50 hours a week.

You could get this subsidy if you are:

- working, doing a work related activity or studying *or*
- seriously ill or disabled *or*
- paid the Child Disability Allowance for any of your children *or*
- caring for a child that is in hospital.

The service that provides the care must be approved by Child, Youth and Family.

You can't get the OSCAR Subsidy if the child's other caregiver can take care of the child unless you get the Child Disability Allowance for that child.

To qualify for either subsidy you must also meet these conditions:

- you must be the main caregiver of the child *and*
- your family must be on a low or middle income (this could be income support) *and*
- you must be a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident *and*
- your child must have at least 3 hours of care a week.

If you don't know how many hours of care you'll need each week (because you are a casual or on-call worker for instance), we'll talk with you about your options when you apply for a subsidy.

Early Childhood Education (20 Hours ECE)

Government funds up to 20 hours a week of ECE for children aged 3-4 years attending an Early Childhood Education service.

You can choose between receiving *20 Hours ECE*, the Childcare Subsidy or a combination of both payments. Families cannot receive *20 Hours ECE* and the Childcare Subsidy for the same hours.

You should tell us straight away if your child is receiving *20 Hours ECE* as we may need to adjust your Childcare Subsidy. This is so we can make sure you are getting the right amount of the Childcare Subsidy and ensure you don't miss out on any payments or end up getting too much and have a debt to pay back.

If you would like more information about how *20 Hours ECE* and the Childcare Subsidy work together, call us on **0800 559 009**. If you have specific questions about *20 Hours ECE*, talk to your service or go to **www.teamup.co.nz**

Before calling us you will need to know:

- if your service is offering *20 Hours ECE*
- the number of *20 Hours ECE* your child is receiving
- the fee that will be charged for the remaining hours not covered by *20 Hours ECE* *and*
- if you are willing to pay the optional charge and the amount your service provider will be asking for.

If you have any questions,
you can call us free on
0800 559 009.

Payments

How much you can get depends on the size of your family, your income, and how many hours a week your child goes to the service provider. The subsidies are paid directly to the service provider.

You can calculate an estimate of the amount of Childcare Assistance or Accommodation Supplement you could get by using our online calculator. This calculator is for working families not currently receiving a main benefit or New Zealand Superannuation from Work and Income. The calculator is available on the Working for Families website www.workingforfamilies.govt.nz

This chart shows the amount you could get for each child per hour.

| Number of children | Gross weekly income | Childcare Subsidy (per hour, per child) |
|--------------------|--------------------------|---|
| 1 | Less than \$1,274.00 | \$3.63 |
| | \$1,274.00 to \$1,379.99 | \$2.52 |
| | \$1,380.00 to \$1,485.99 | \$1.40 |
| | \$1,486.00 or more | nil |
| 2 | Less than \$1,465.00 | \$3.63 |
| | \$1,465.00 to \$1,580.99 | \$2.52 |
| | \$1,581.00 to \$1,697.99 | \$1.40 |
| | \$1,698.00 or more | nil |
| 3 or more | Less than \$1,634.00 | \$3.63 |
| | \$1,634.00 to \$1,771.99 | \$2.52 |
| | \$1,772.00 to \$1,909.99 | \$1.40 |
| | \$1,910.00 or more | nil |

Rates at 1 April 2009

Your subsidy starts from the date the care starts (or from the date you apply if you apply after it starts). It usually stops or is reviewed:

- the day after your job or course ends
- after 12 weeks if you stop work because you are ill or injured
- when your child reaches the age limit for the subsidy
- when your child leaves the pre-school facility or OSCAR programme *or*
- the child leaves your care.

If you are deaf or find it hard to communicate by phone, you can send a message to our Deaf Link free-fax on **0800 621 621.**

We may be able to pay your subsidy for longer if your job ends and you are starting another one within 10 days.

If you're getting the **Childcare Subsidy** and your child turns 5 years but doesn't start school straight away, we may be able to pay the subsidy for up to 28 days after their 5th birthday. If your child also gets the **Child Disability Allowance** and goes to the service provider for 3 hours or more a week, we may be able to pay the Childcare Subsidy until they turn 6 years.

If your child is absent from the programme and your service provider charges a fee for the absence, your subsidy won't usually stop, but there are limits to how long your child can be absent and still have the subsidy paid. Your child can be absent for up to 3 consecutive weeks at any time. Your child can also be absent for up to 6 consecutive weeks at any time if the child is absent due to their medical condition. For example the child:

- is receiving the Child Disability Allowance *or*
- is receiving the Group Special Education funding *or*
- has had the medical condition certified by a doctor.

It is important to tell us when your child is going to be absent for 3 or more consecutive weeks.

How to apply for a subsidy

You can apply for your Accommodation Supplement and/or Childcare Assistance by using our online application form. This is available on the Working for Families website www.workingforfamilies.govt.nz or you can call us on **0800 559 009** and we'll send you a form to fill in.

You'll need to get part of the form filled in by your service provider. If you have any questions please call us.

Reviews

We'll review your subsidy every year and send you a special form to fill in. Your early childhood programme or OSCAR programme has to fill in part of it to confirm your child's attendance.

The Childcare Subsidy and holidays

We will automatically stop all subsidies when the programme you use closes for holidays and restart them when the centre reopens.

The OSCAR Subsidy and school holidays

If you get the OSCAR Subsidy during the year, we'll send you a form 28 days before the end of each school term to ask about your care needs for the school holidays and the next term. We can pay for more hours of care during the holidays.

If you need the OSCAR Subsidy just for the school holidays, you must fill in an application form before each holiday. The form must also be filled in by the people who care for your child before and after school and during the school holidays. To get this form call us free on **0800 559 009**. You'll need to send it back to us quickly or you may not get paid on time.

For holiday care we need to know:

- when the programme starts and ends *and*
- the number of hours your child will attend *and*
- what the fees are *and*
- if the fees need to be paid in advance – we can pay a lump sum up to 28 days before the programme starts.

For the next school term you need to tell us:

- when the care starts and ends *and*
- how many hours your child will attend *and*
- how much it costs.

Tell us about changes

You must tell us straight away about any changes in your life that could affect your payments. Please call **0800 559 009** to tell us about any change in circumstance.

For instance:

- if your or your partner's income changes
- if your child stops going or moves to another early childhood programme or OSCAR programme

- if there is a change in your child's attendance
- if the number of hours you (or your partner) work or study each week changes
- if the circumstance you get a subsidy for changes – for instance your health improves or your child leaves hospital
- your child starts or stops receiving *20 Hours ECE*.

We may check information you give us with employers, banks and schools. We may compare records with other government agencies.

Important

To start your application process please ring us.

There is a list of all the basic things you need to include with your application in our *How can we help you?* brochure.

You'll need to get part of the form filled in by your service provider. It is a good idea to apply 3-4 weeks before you need your subsidy to start.

If you have any questions,
call us on **0800 559 009** from
7am to 6pm Monday to Friday
and Saturday 8am to 1pm or
contact your Case Manager at
your nearest Service Centre.

**If you are deaf or find it hard to
communicate by phone,** you can
send a message to our Deaf Link
free-fax on **0800 621 621** or email
MSD_Deaf_Services@msd.govt.nz

For more information visit:

Work and Income website
www.workandincome.govt.nz

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