

Orphan's and Unsupported Child's Benefits

A guide for caregivers
who are raising someone
else's child



Work and Income
Te Hirainga Tangata

A service of the Ministry of Social Development

If you are raising someone else's child, we may be able to help in a small way by meeting some of the costs involved in their upbringing.

The **Orphan's Benefit** can help support the child when their parents have died or can't be found, or when they can't look after their child because they have a long-term illness or incapacity.

The **Unsupported Child's Benefit** can help support the child when their parents can't support them because of a family breakdown.

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.

The child you are looking after must be:

- aged under 18 years *and*
- single *and*
- financially dependent on you.

You must:

- be aged 18 years or older, and the main caregiver of the child *and*
- expect to care for the child for 12 months or more *and*
- not be the child's natural or adoptive parent or the step-parent if you are applying for the Unsupported Child's Benefit.

Both you and the child must also normally live in New Zealand.

You may be eligible for **in-work tax credit**, which can be paid for children for whom you receive the Unsupported Child's Benefit or the Orphan's Benefit, provided you work the required hours. Call Inland Revenue free on **0800 227 773** to see if you are eligible, or visit **www.ird.govt.nz**

If you apply for the **Unsupported Child's Benefit** you will also need to:

- apply for child support from Inland Revenue and identify the child's parents so the child's parents help pay for their child's care. This money goes to the Government to help cover what we pay you *and*
- attend a Family Meeting with the child's parents and extended family if possible.

The Family Meeting is to confirm that there has been a family breakdown and that you will be the child's main caregiver for the next 12 months or more. If a Family Group Conference has already been held, you won't have to attend a Family Meeting.

Sorry, but we can't help if:

- you are a professional caregiver or childcare organisation *or*
- the child doesn't depend on you financially *or*
- the child works full-time, gets a Student Allowance, or other income support *or*
- the child is in the care of an iwi, cultural social service, or Child, Youth and Family.

Payments

How much you can get depends on how old the child is and any income they may get from their parents' estate, a family trust, investments, or regular insurance payments. The maximum weekly payment you can get for each child is shown in the chart below.

Orphan's or Unsupported Child's Benefit Weekly Payments after tax

Child under 5	5-9 years	10-13 years	14 or over
\$139.97	\$162.43	\$179.25	\$195.96

Rates as at 1 April 2011

The money is paid straight into your bank account every week. It is not counted as income, so it is not taxed and won't affect any other income support or Working for Families Tax Credits you may get. Payments usually start 2-4 weeks after you qualify (this is the date you apply or start looking after the child, whichever is later). **Please note that we can't backdate payments** so you need to apply as soon as you become the child's main caregiver.

If the child has an income over a certain amount, their benefit is reduced. The income limit is between \$3,159.00 and \$4,105.92 a year before tax (based on the child's age). The benefit is reduced by \$1 for each dollar over this limit. Any money the child earns working after school or in the holidays isn't counted as income but could affect any in-work tax credit you get.

Other assistance

Accident insurance

If the child's parents died in an accident, the child may be able to get accident insurance payments from ACC. Talk to ACC about this.

In-work tax credit

In-work tax credit is paid by Inland Revenue. It pays up to \$60 a week per family with 3 children, and up to an extra \$15 a week for each other child.

To get in-work tax credit couples must normally work 30 hours a week between them, and sole parents must normally work 20 hours a week.

When you are granted the Orphan's or Unsupported Child's Benefit, we'll tell Inland Revenue and they'll be in touch.

Tell us about changes

You need to tell us any time your circumstances change as it may affect your payments. For instance, you must tell us if the child:

- leaves your care
- goes back to live with their parents
- leaves school or starts work (full or part-time)
- gets other income support, the Student Allowance or insurance
- is adopted by you
- goes overseas or into hospital.

Important

Make sure you bring everything you need to your meeting. There is a list of all the basic things you need to bring in our *How can we help you?* brochure.

You also need to bring:

- a full birth certificate for the child (please call if you don't have this)
- a copy of the custody or guardianship agreement (if possible)
- details of any income the child gets including benefit payments from overseas, items such as payslips, bank statements, or a letter from an accident insurer.

For the Unsupported Child's Benefit, you also need to bring (if you have them):

- Family Group Conference Outcomes, Court Orders or Court Approved Plans
- names, addresses, phone numbers of the child's parents
- names, addresses and phone numbers of the places where the child's parents' work.

For the Orphan's Benefit you need to bring copies of the parents' death certificates (if this applies). If you don't have them, please call us as we may be able to obtain verification.

Remember, if you don't think you qualify for these allowances, there may be some other way we can help, so please ask us.



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