

Child Care Services in Australia



Frequently Asked Questions

Here are some common questions we receive from refugees and migrants with children who want to work and better understand how the childcare system works. This information aims to provide a starting point on understanding the basics, benefits and where to go for more information.



This is a general guide, and a list of useful links and expert organisations to seek further help is provided at the end. We always recommend you also speak to your case worker to help get the right information for your personal circumstances.

What is Child Care?

Child Care refers to the care and supervision of children, provided by professional providers, while their parents are doing other activities like working or studying. It is also known as “early childhood education and care” and it’s mainly designed for children aged up to 5 years, but it also includes care for primary school-age children outside school hours.¹



What other ways can we use to refer to the Child Care services?

Other ways to refer to Child Care service can be:²

- Long day care
- Family day care
- Preschool/kindergarten
- Occasional care
- Outside school hours care

Who can use Child Care services in Australia?

Every family with children under 13 years old can use the Child Care services. But not all families will get subsidies for Child Care. This will depend on family income.

How much does the Child Care cost?

On national average, costs are around \$13.05 per hour.³

Child Care fees depend on different factors like the type of care, the child’s age, and the hours of care needed.

You should review the fees for each provider. A good tool to use is www.startingblocks.gov.au

This is Australia’s free government website for families and communities to find and compare services by quality ratings, fees, vacancies and inclusions.

Who pays for Child Care services?

If you are eligible for a Child Care Subsidy, you can share Child Care payments with the Australian government.

This means the government may cover part of the cost, and your family will only pay the remaining gap.

What is a Child Care Subsidy?

The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is money from the Australian government that goes straight to your Child Care provider to help you reduce the cost that you need to pay.⁴ This means that the government will cover a number of hours that your children spend in the childcare, and you will only need to pay the difference.

Is everyone able to get a Child Care subsidy?

No, you need to check if you are eligible and apply for this benefit. You can review the eligibility criteria here: [Child Care Subsidy - Services Australia](https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/find-child-care).

Can I use the Child Care Subsidy with any Child Care provider?

No, the childcare provider must be approved by the Department of Education, and Services Australia to receive the subsidy.⁵

You can review the list of approved providers here: <https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/find-child-care>

What type of services receive Child Care Subsidy?⁶

There are different types of services that can receive a Child Care Subsidy as explained in the table below. Find more information of each type of service here: <https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/about/service-types>



What?	Description	Who?	When?
Centre Based Day Care (long day care or occasional care)	This is one of the most common types of Child Care. It is sometimes called 'long day care' and it is provided by trained educators in a specific location.	Children from birth to school age, usually 5 years old. Children are usually grouped with others of a similar age.	It is typically open Monday to Friday from 7am to 6pm.
Family Day Care	This is a type of service usually provided in the home of an educator or an agreed location. It may be smaller group of children.	Children from birth to school age, usually 5 years old. Some Family Day Care may also care for school-aged children.	Flexible with the times but usually from Monday to Friday from 7am to 6pm.
Outside School Hours Care	This type of service cares for school or preschool children before or after regular school hours. They also care for children during school holidays.	School-aged children (5-12 years old)	Typically working hours: Before school (from 6am to 9am) After school (from 3pm to 6pm) School holidays (from 7am to 6pm)
In Home Care	This is a flexible option where an educator will go to your house to care for your child.	You need to be assessed by In Home Care Support Agencies to determine if your family is eligible for this type of service. It is only an option for families without access to other types of childcare or with complex and challenges needs. ⁷	Flexible, depending on the family's needs.

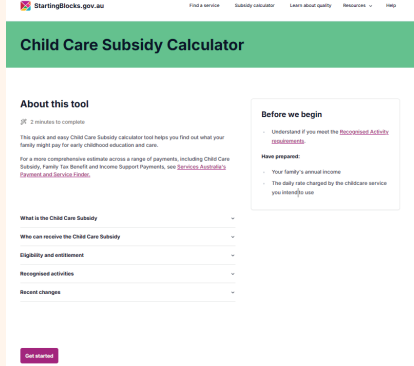
How much can I receive from the Child Care Subsidy?⁸

The amount of Child Care Subsidy you can get depends on your personal situation. The government will look at different factors like your family income, how many children you have, the hours that you and/or your partner work or study, your children's ages, and other details. You can review and estimate your Child Care Subsidy using the Starting Blocks calculator here: <https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/child-care-subsidy-calculator>

This is an example of how to calculate the Child Care Subsidy that your family can receive:

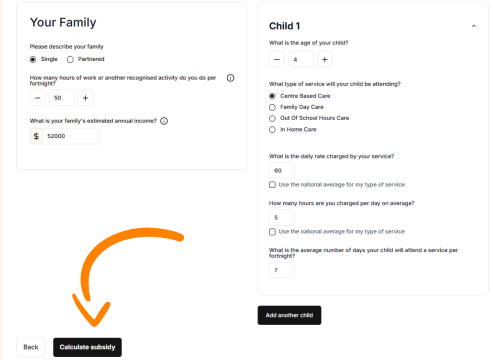
1

Go to <https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/child-care-subsidy-calculator> and click on **"get started"** to start the calculation.



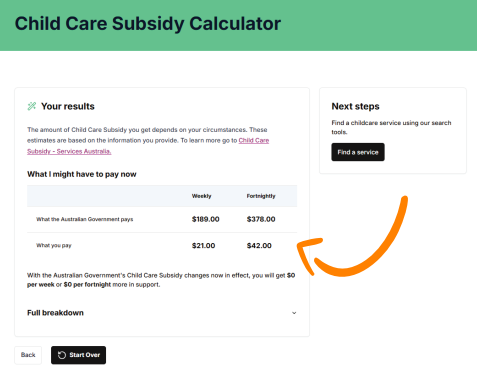
2

Complete the required information and click on **"calculate subsidy"**.



3

You will see the result and the estimated amount that you will receive as a Child Care Subsidy and the amount of money that you will need to pay.



What is the eligibility to apply for a Child Care Subsidy?⁹

To get Child Care Subsidy (CCS) you must:

- Have a child 13 years old or younger who is not going to secondary school, unless an exemption applies.
- Use an approved childcare service (find a childcare here: <https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/find-child-care>)
- Take responsibility for paying the childcare fees that apply to your family.
- You must be an Australian citizen or resident (or hold a specific visa type that includes temporary protection type visas, partner provisional visa and Special Category visa).
- Meet the immunisation requirements (see more information below or in this link: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/what-are-immunisation-requirements?context=41186>)
- Do a recognised activity, such as:
 - paid work including being self employed
 - unpaid work experience or internships (or work in a family business)
 - doing an approved course of education or study
 - doing training to improve work skills or employment prospects
 - actively looking for work or volunteering
 - other activities on a case-by-case basis.

For more information about eligibility criteria, you can visit: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/child-care-subsidy>



How can I calculate the Childcare Subsidy for my children?

StartingBlocks.gov.au have a quick and easy Child Care Subsidy calculator tool to help you find out how much you might pay for early childhood education and care in this link: <https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/child-care-subsidy-calculator>

For up to date information on subsidies available, visit this link:

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/activity-level-and-subsidised-hours-for-child-care-subsidy?context=41186>



I don't know any Child Care providers; how can I search for one?

StartingBlocks.gov.au offers the "Find Child Care Tool" in this link: <https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/find-child-care> where you can find a Child Care Provider in different suburbs according to your needs. You can compare their services and fees and get access to service phone numbers and email addresses, so you can call or email them to book a visit or request more information.

If I have casual or irregular hours of work, can I still apply for the Child Care Subsidy?¹¹

Yes, you can apply for the subsidy even if you work irregular hours. You will need to estimate your working hours. Think about the most hours you plan to work in a two-week period over the next three months. For example, Suzie is a single parent working at a supermarket. She usually works around 15 to 45 hours per fortnight. Suzie needs to declare that the most hours she plans to work in two weeks over three months is 45 hours per fortnight.

How can I apply for the Child Care Subsidy?¹²

You can apply online through your MyGov account:

1. Sign in to MyGov (you need to link your MyGov account to Centrelink before making your claim)
2. Select **Make a claim or view claim status**, then **Make a claim**.
3. Under **Families** select **Get started**.
4. Select **Apply for Family Assistance Payments (including Paid Parental Leave)** then follow the prompts to complete your claim.

You will find a detailed step-by-step guide for this application here:

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/centrelink-online-account-help-claim-child-care-subsidy>

Do Child Care services offer halal food options?¹³

All the Child Care services will work with the families to make sure they meet their food requirements. Some Child Care services may have halal options, but if not, they might allow you to provide halal food for your children.

Are all providers required to meet the National Quality Framework?

Yes, all providers no matter if public or private, must comply with the Australian government regulations under the National Quality Framework (NQF). Public Child Care usually has a lower cost than private options because they receive government funding. Private Child Care usually has more availability, but the cost is normally higher.

Will I lose Child Care subsidies if I work too many hours?

No, you won't lose the Child Care subsidy. Remember that there is a maximum of 100 hours of subsidy that the government will cover for your children if you or your partner are working 48 hours or more per fortnight.

Do I have to get my child immunised with up-to-date vaccinations to use Child Care services? Why?¹⁴

Yes, this is a mandatory requirement to keep the benefit of the Child Care Subsidy. If the vaccinations are not updated, the government might stop the subsidy, and you will need to apply again once you have updated your child's immunisation requirements.



I have contacted Child Care services, and they say they are full and I'm on a waiting list. What does this mean?

This means that there are no spots available for your child at the moment, but they will contact you when a spot becomes available. It is recommended that you look for another option in your area while you are on the waiting list.

I've heard others tell me some providers do not accept children who do not speak English, is this right?

Child Care centres are required to be inclusive and welcome children from all backgrounds, including those who speak other languages. If you're worried about language barriers, you can ask the provider if they have language support programs or if they can help your child feel more comfortable.¹⁵

What are my responsibilities with Child Care services?

- Pay any fees you are responsible for on time if you are receiving the Child Care Subsidy.
- Follow the rules and respect the times that your provider has established.
- Use an approved childcare service (find a childcare here: <https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/find-child-care>)
- Make sure that you are doing a recognised activity if you are receiving Child Care Subsidy:
 - paid work including being self employed
 - unpaid work (can be in a family business or unpaid internships)
 - doing an approved course of education or study
 - actively looking for work or volunteering
 - other activities on a case-by-case basis.

I find Child Care services in Australia very confusing, where can I get help?

Find useful links to organisations that provide information about childcare services below.
You can visit their websites or contact them for more details.



Organisation	What they offer	Contact information	Link
Starting Blocks	Australia's free government website to help families to find and compare Child Care services. They offer tools to calculate your subsidy, find a Child Care provider, among others.	Email: enquiries@startingblocks.gov.au	Home Early Childhood Education & Care StartingBlocks.gov.au
	Find a Child Care provider	Email: enquiries@startingblocks.gov.au	Find children's education and care StartingBlocks.gov.au
	Calculate your Child Care subsidy	Email: enquiries@startingblocks.gov.au	Child Care Subsidy Calculator StartingBlocks.gov.au
	Information to help you find the best option for your family's needs and what to expect when your children enroll.	Email: enquiries@startingblocks.gov.au	StartingBlocks.gov.au
Services Australia	Australian Government website with all the information about early childhood education and Child Care options.	Only for Child Care Subsidy queries: 136 150 (Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm)	Early education - Growing up - Services Australia

If you still have questions, please contact Community Corporate's social support team via Email: sso@communitycorporate.com.au Phone: 1300 855 892

This resource has been developed as part of Community Corporate's Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) Program with funding contribution from the Department of Home Affairs. The content of this resource was reviewed by the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority and is accurate at time of production June 2025.

¹ <https://raisingchildren.net.au/grown-ups/work-child-care/organising-child-care/child-care-types> verbatim

² <https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/about> verbatim

³ <https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/about/data-and-reports/quarterly-reports/september-quarter-2024>. Average hourly fee based on Child Care Subsidy data report – September quarter 2024

⁴ <https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/child-care-subsidy-calculator>

⁵ <https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/about>

⁶ <https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/about/service-types> paraphrased from here.

⁷ In Home Care Support Agency |

⁸ <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/how-much-child-care-subsidy-you-can-get?context=41186>

⁹ Child Care Subsidy Calculator | StartingBlocks.gov.au

¹⁰ <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/activity-level-and-subsidised-care-for-child-care-subsidy?context=41186>

¹¹ <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/casual-or-irregular-hours-work-for-child-care-subsidy?context=41186> Paraphrased but the example is the same.

¹² <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/how-to-claim-child-care-subsidy?context=41186#dc-53804-s-209030-209032>

¹³ Nutrition in early childhood education and care | StartingBlocks.gov.au

¹⁴ <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/what-are-immunisation-requirements?context=41186>

¹⁵ <https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/about/national-quality-framework/inclusion>