



Closure of child care services in the event of a local emergency

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It is the responsibility of the operator and the management and operational personnel of a child care service to understand their obligations regarding the payment of Child Care Benefit (CCB) where a child care service is closed because of a local emergency.

Information about the payment of CCB in the event of a local emergency can be found in the *Child Care Service Handbook*. You can also contact your local state or territory Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) office on 1300 363 079. Please identify the state or territory you are from to ensure you speak to a DEEWR staff member in your region.

Declaration of a period of local emergency

Where a local emergency is declared, it is possible that your service will need to close. A period of local emergency is normally determined by state and territory authorities such as state or local government agencies, emergency services or fire authorities.

CCB is payable for fees charged when a child does not attend a child care service, or a service is closed, because of a local emergency.

Local emergencies

A local emergency is an event that:

- affects a widespread area and has a severe impact on the lives of a significant number of residents (for example, major damage to homes and businesses, or personal injury 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 an outbreak of disease, declaration of a catastrophic (code red) fire danger rating).

Closure of a child care service in the event of a local emergency

State and territory governments have different rules about the closure of child care services in the event of a local emergency. In some states and territories a local emergency does not mean automatic closure.

If you are unsure about your local emergency provisions, you should call your state or territory licensing department for advice.

Informing DEEWR of the temporary closure of your service

In the event a service is temporarily closed due to a local emergency, the service must notify DEEWR. Details can be submitted by calling the DEEWR switchboard on 1300 363 079. When calling DEEWR, please identify the state or territory you are from to ensure you speak to a DEEWR staff member in your region. Child care services should ensure DEEWR holds the service's current email address and contact details.

Absence provisions and service closures due to a local emergency

There are different rules around absences in the event of a local emergency. Any absences related to a local emergency will be considered an 'Additional Absence' according to the Family Assistance Law. Child care services simply need to indicate an absence for the day/s the service was closed when submitting attendance reports.

It does not matter if all 42 initial absences have been used by a family.

Affect on CCB

CCB is payable for child care fees paid when a child does not attend a child care service, or if a service is closed, because of a local emergency.

There is no limit on the number of additional absence days for which CCB is paid under local emergency conditions.

Submitting attendance reports

Attendance reports should be submitted within **14 days** of the end of the week in which the emergency occurred. If the event exceeds this period, reports need to be submitted when the service resumes operating.

If you do not have access to a computer or the internet during the local emergency, you can wait until the emergency is over to report your attendances.

Where services do not submit attendance reports within the two week period following the local emergency, absences will be deducted from the families' absence entitlement. You should call the CCMS Helpdesk on 1300 667 276 to inform them of the delay in submitting attendance reports.

Local emergency and Special Child Care Benefit – hardship provisions

Approved child care services caring for children whose families have been affected by a declared local emergency may consider Special Child Care Benefit (SCCB) for hardship for some families.

SCCB can be provided to assist families whose capacity to pay child care fees is reduced due to hardship associated with a period of local emergency. The child care service operator must be satisfied that the usual eligibility criteria for hardship have been met.

A child care service operator can approve up to **13 weeks** of SCCB for a family experiencing hardship. Any extension beyond the initial 13 weeks must be approved by the Family Assistance Office.

More information on SCCB can be found in the *Child Care Service Handbook*, Instruction sheet 8 or in the Special Child Care Benefit (for hardship) fact sheet located on the DEEWR website at www.deewr.gov.au/earlychildhood/resources.