



Special Child Care Benefit

It is a condition of approval and continued approval for Child Care Benefit (CCB) purposes that services must comply with Family Assistance Law.

The rules for Special Child Care Benefit (SCCB) are governed by:

- *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999*
- *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999*
- Child Care Benefit (Rates and Hardship) Determination 2000. The determination specifies kinds of hardship, limits on making a hardship determination and specifies further rules relating to giving certificates for hardship.

A service that does not comply with this legislation may be sanctioned.

Note: This instruction sheet provides summary information for services. All services should refer to the Child Care Service Handbook for detailed advice on determining eligibility for SCCB and the approval processes and requirements. Detailed SCCB fact sheets for services can also be found at www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Resources/Pages/home.aspx.

What is SCCB?

SCCB is a component of CCB and can be used to subsidise or cover the costs of approved child care for eligible children where families are conditionally eligible for CCB by fee reduction.

There are two types of SCCB:

- SCCB rate and/or additional hours for children at risk of serious abuse or neglect
- SCCB rate for families experiencing hardship that substantially reduces their capacity to pay their usual child care fees. For families experiencing hardship the SCCB rate is designed to assist the family while they adapt to their changed circumstances, it is not intended to support families who have ongoing low incomes or issues relating to financial over commitment.

In cases where a child is at risk of serious abuse or neglect but no one is conditionally eligible for CCB for that child, the approved child care service may make itself eligible to receive SCCB.

In cases where an event that causes financial hardship also results in the need for additional hours of child care, the provision for increased weekly limit of CCB hours for exceptional circumstances may be used to allow the family increased hours of care. All applications for an increase in a family's weekly limit of CCB hours due to exceptional circumstances must be approved by the Family Assistance Office. If an increase in a family's weekly limit of hours is approved SCCB rate for hardship may then be used to cover the additional hours of child care.

Approvals information

Services can approve up to 13 weeks of SCCB rate in each financial year for an individual who is conditionally eligible for CCB in respect of a child. This is a combined total and does not allow 13 weeks of SCCB for at risk and 13 weeks for financial hardship.

Services can also approve an increase in the weekly limit of CCB hours for a child at risk of serious abuse or neglect, for up to 13 weeks in each financial year, if this would be of benefit. These hours can also be covered by the SCCB rate.

Services should be satisfied that approvals for SCCB meet the eligibility criteria for a child at risk or a family experiencing a hardship event. The Child Care Service Handbook provides more detailed guidance on this. The Child Care Service Handbook can be found at www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Resources/Pages/home.aspx. The SCCB rate can be paid up to the full amount of the usual fee charged by your service.

The Family Assistance Office (FAO) can approve further periods of SCCB beyond the initial 13 weeks. There is no limit on the total number of weeks of SCCB that can be provided where a child remains at risk of serious abuse or neglect. There is a 52 week limit on SCCB that is provided to assist a family in relation to a single hardship event.

The FAO can also approve an increase in weekly limit of CCB hours where 'exceptional circumstances' exist. Exceptional circumstances are as defined in family assistance law and can be found in the Child Care Service Handbook. This provision may be used on its own or with SCCB rate for hardship.

Where no one is conditionally eligible for CCB for a child and that child is at risk of serious abuse or neglect, an approved child care service may apply to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) to make itself eligible to receive SCCB for that child. The service may then approve up to 13 weeks of SCCB for that child in a financial year. Further periods of SCCB beyond the initial 13 weeks can be approved on application to DEEWR.

The total amount of SCCB a service can approve in one quarter is limited to 18 per cent of the CCB paid to the service in the quarter before last. However if your service reaches this limit SCCB can still be granted by your service if you apply successfully to DEEWR for a higher approval limit. The form to apply for a higher limit than 18 per cent can be found at www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Programs/ChildCareforServices/Operation/Pages/ccservicehandbook.aspx.

Where a service has only recently commenced operating, and does not have a quarter before last to calculate against, the service does not need to apply for a higher limit until they are in their third quarter of operation and have a quarter before last to consider. In their third quarter, the service should monitor their SCCB approvals as a percentage of the CCB paid to the service in their first quarter (quarter before last). Approval for a higher limit should then be sought if required.

Documentation required for SCCB approvals

To certify approval of SCCB for up to the first 13 weeks of a financial year you need to complete the SCCB [Claim for Special Child Care Benefit and/or increased weekly limit of hours](#) (FA023.1003) form.

- For SCCB rate for a **child at risk** or increased weekly limit of CCB hours for a child at risk the form needs to be signed by the director or operator of your service. You do not need independent supporting documentation, however it should be obtained where possible. Supporting documentation could include letters of referral from other agencies where appropriate. The family is **not** required to supply any documentation.

- When providing SCCB rate for **hardship** the form must be signed by the service provider and the claimant (individual who is conditionally eligible for CCB). You need independent supporting documentation from the family to approve SCCB for a family experiencing hardship for the initial 13 week period. Examples of this may include a letter from an employer (for loss of job or reduction in income), or an independent professional such as a medical practitioner, social worker, accountant or a minister of religion. Contact details for the person providing the supporting evidence should also be included. If this is not available a statutory declaration from the claimant outlining the nature of the crisis is required.

Supporting documentation helps demonstrate reasonable grounds for approval and/or assists you in your approval decision. It may also be useful if you apply to the FAO for further periods of SCCB.

To apply to the FAO for further periods of SCCB or for increased weekly limit of CCB hours for exceptional circumstances use the same form. The statement of reasons should contain all relevant details to assist the FAO in making an informed assessment. Independent evidence in support of the application must also be provided. This will assist the FAO to make their assessment of the application. Applications are assessed by the FAO on a case by case basis.

To make your service eligible for SCCB for a child at risk where no one is conditionally eligible for CCB for that child, you will need to make a claim to DEEWR to make your service eligible. To approve or apply to DEEWR for further periods you need to complete the [Special Child Care Benefit for a child at risk when no one is receiving Child Care Benefit](#) (DEEWR 08 311) form.

Services must keep all documents relating to SCCB approvals for a child at risk or for a family in hardship. The SCCB approval forms and any documentation supporting the decision to approve SCCB must be retained and stored securely for 36 months from the end of the calendar year in which care was provided.

Careful consideration should be given to the appropriateness of backdating any SCCB approvals. Detailed reasons for backdating should be clearly outlined in the approvals documentation.

If a service shows a pattern of decisions to approve SCCB for hardship reasons that do not meet the criteria, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations has the power to remove that service's ability to approve SCCB for hardship reasons.