



## Special Child Care Benefit for hardship – fact sheet for approved child care services

### What is Special Child Care Benefit (SCCB)

Special Child Care Benefit (SCCB) is a component of the Child Care Benefit (CCB) and can be used to subsidise or cover the costs of approved child care for eligible children.

There are two types of SCCB:

- SCCB rate for families experiencing hardship
- [SCCB rate and additional hours for children at risk of serious abuse or neglect](#)

**This fact sheet is about SCCB for families experiencing hardship.**

### When can SCCB be approved to support a family experiencing hardship?

SCCB rate can be used to help a family maintain access to child care when they are **experiencing hardship** that substantially reduces their ability to pay child care fees.

Families may be eligible to receive SCCB rate for hardship due, but not limited, to the following kinds of events:

- loss of employment or the failure of a business
- a natural disaster such as fire or flood
- a period of declared local emergency
- destruction or severe damage to the family's home, necessitating relocation of the family and/or the need to place a child in care, or
- significant additional expenses or reduction in income arising, for example, from a death or serious illness in the family.

Using SCCB for a family experiencing hardship may help prevent their situation from deteriorating further, as can occur when the effects of a financial crisis become compounded. SCCB is intended to help the family adapt to their changed circumstances.

### Can a child care service provider approve SCCB rate for a family experiencing hardship?

An approved child care service provider can approve up to 13 weeks of SCCB rate in each financial year for an individual conditionally eligible for CCB in respect of a child. This is a combined total (**not** 13 weeks of SCCB for at risk *and* 13 weeks for hardship). The SCCB rate can be up to the full amount of the usual fee charged by your service.

## Can a child care service provider approve additional hours of care for a family experiencing hardship?

Sometimes an event that causes financial hardship also results in the need for additional hours of child care. An example of this may be due to the death or serious illness of the child's parent or caregiver. In such cases, the family's weekly limit of CCB hours may be increased due to exceptional circumstances. SCCB rate for hardship may also be used to cover the additional hours of child care.

Only the Family Assistance Office (FAO) can approve an application for an increase in the family's weekly limit of CCB hours due to exceptional circumstances.

## What evidence and documentation do I need to approve the initial period of SCCB for a family experiencing hardship?

To certify approval of SCCB for a family experiencing hardship you need to complete the *SCCB Claim for Special Child Care Benefit and/or increased weekly limit of hours* (FA023.1003) form. The form must be signed by both the director or operator of your service **and** the claimant (individual who is conditionally eligible for CCB).

You **do** 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.

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

## Can I send applications for approval for the initial period of SCCB to the FAO?

No - only the child care service provider can approve the first 13 weeks of SCCB in a financial year.

The only exceptions are when a service has reached its 18 per cent approval limit and does not have approval for a higher limit, or if a service has had its power to approve SCCB for hardship suspended. In these cases, initial approvals can be sent to the FAO, along with requests for further periods of SCCB. For further information see ['Are there limits to the overall amount of SCCB a service provider can approve'?](#)

## What if the child needs more than 13 weeks of SCCB for hardship in a financial year?

More than 13 weeks of SCCB rate or increased weekly limit of CCB hours due to exceptional circumstances can be provided to a family experiencing hardship. All applications for further periods of SCCB must be sent to the FAO.

You need to re-apply to the FAO for each further period required. You should only request approval of SCCB for the number of weeks required according to the circumstances of the

family. The FAO is able to approve further periods which are generally for up to an additional 13 weeks per application.

There is a maximum limit of 52 weeks of SCCB payable for a family in relation to a single hardship event. SCCB for hardship is intended to be a short-term payment designed to support families while they adjust to their new financial circumstances. It is not intended to support families with ongoing financial difficulties or low income.

Applications are assessed by the FAO on a case by case basis.

### What evidence and documentation will the FAO need to assess and approve further periods of SCCB?

You need to apply to the FAO using the SCCB *Claim for Special Child Care Benefit and/or increased weekly limit of hours (FA023.1003)* form. The form needs to be signed by both the director or operator of your service **and** the claimant.

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.

### If I approve the initial 13 weeks, how do I know that the FAO will approve any further periods of SCCB?

The FAO considers applications for further periods of SCCB on a case by case basis. While there is no guarantee that an application will be approved, it will help to provide as much information about the family's circumstances as possible. You can contact the FAO Special Child Care Assessment team to discuss your application form and obtain further guidance on how to apply. [Contact details](#) are provided at the end of this fact sheet.

### Are there limits to the overall amount of SCCB a service provider can approve?

The total amount of SCCB a child care service provider 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 you reach the 18 per cent limit and need to approve an initial 13 week SCCB period, you should apply to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for a higher limit. If a higher limit is approved, your service can then continue to approve initial 13 week periods in the quarter, up to the higher limit.

If a higher limit is not approved, you can instead send these applications directly to FAO for the remainder of the quarter.

(Note: a quarter refers to the three month periods Jan – March, April – June, July – September and October-December)

## Where can I go for further information?

Detailed information can be found in the *Child Care Service Handbook* available online at [Child Care Service Handbook](#).

You should also be aware of your obligations under the *Privacy Act 1988* in handling personal information. Please refer to Chapter 4 of the handbook for details of the National Privacy Principles.

For questions about applying for further periods of SCCB, please contact:

FAO Special Childcare Assessment Team

Fax: 1800 700 533

Phone: 1800 050 021

For questions about applying for a higher approval limit if you will exceed the 18 percent limit please contact:

The Child Care Management System Helpdesk

Phone: 1300 667 276.

## Forms

To approve or apply for Special Child Care Benefit and/or increased weekly limit of CCB hours you can access the *Claim for Special Child Care Benefit and/or increased weekly limit of hours* (FAO23.1003) form at [centrelink.gov.au](http://centrelink.gov.au).

To apply for a service approval limit higher than 18 per cent you can access the *Approving Special Child Care Benefit – Application for a higher approval limit where 18 per cent has been reached* form (DEEWR 08-310) at [Child Care Service Handbook](#).

To help monitor the value of SCCB approvals made by your service in a quarter to see if you need to apply to DEEWR for a higher limit, you can access the *Approving the Special Child Care Benefit – Will my service exceed the 18 per cent limit* form (DEEWR08-309) at [Child Care Service Handbook](#).