

Learning about Child Support

Child support helps share the everyday costs of raising children, including food, clothing, housing, school expenses, health care and activities, when parents aren't in a relationship.

It can be paid between a parent and a non-parent carer, such as a grandparent, legal guardian or other carer.

We can help you understand child support and apply for a child support assessment. We can work out how much child support should be paid and help you choose how payments are transferred between parents or carers.

How we can help with child support

You can apply for a child support assessment and we'll work out who needs to pay child support. We'll tell both parents how much the payment will be. We work this out using information such as both parents' income, the age of the child and the care each parent provides.

Each year, we get income information from the Australian Taxation Office. This means it's important to lodge your tax return on time, or tell us your income if you don't need to lodge.

Child support collection options

There are different ways child support payments can be collected once you have a child support assessment. The right option may depend on your circumstances.

Child Support Collect

With Child Support Collect, we collect payments from the paying parent and transfer them to the person receiving child support. We only transfer payments after we get them. This is a free service.

Private Collect

With Private Collect, we work out the child support amount through an assessment. Payments are then made directly between parents or carers.

Child support agreement

You and the other parent can make a formal child support agreement outlining how the child support assessment will be covered and register this with us. An agreement can cover cash and non-cash payments such as health insurance or school fees. There are different types of agreements depending on your situation.

If you make your own arrangements

Some parents make their own arrangements without a child support assessment. If you get Family Tax Benefit Part A, this may reduce how much you can get.

Do I need to apply for child support?

Any parent caring for a child from a past relationship or eligible non-parent carer can apply for a child support assessment.

If you get Family Tax Benefit Part A and care for a child whose other parent is not your partner, you may need to take reasonable action to get child support. This is known as the maintenance action test. You can meet this test by applying for a child support assessment. The amount of child support you're assessed to receive, may reduce how much Family Tax Benefit Part A you can get.

If it's not safe or appropriate to take reasonable action to get child support, you may be able to ask for an exemption. If you don't take reasonable action or get an exemption, your Family Tax Benefit Part A may be reduced to the base rate.

If you get Family Tax Benefit Party A, you must take reasonable action to get child support within 91 days of any of the following:

- the child being born or entering your care
- you separating from the child's other parent
- your percentage of care increasing to 35% or more
- you first becoming eligible to apply for child support.

The easiest way to apply for a child support assessment is online. Go to servicessaustralia.gov.au and search

How to apply for child support.

To learn more about taking reasonable maintenance action steps for Family Tax Benefit go to servicessaustralia.gov.au/csandftba.

If you can't apply online, you can call the Child Support enquiry line on **131 272**.

If asking for child support puts your safety at risk

If you're worried that applying for or getting child support could put you or your family at risk, call our families and parents line on **136 150** and ask to speak to a social worker.

If it's not safe or appropriate to apply for child support, we can talk to you about your options, including exemptions.

Let us know if you need an interpreter, and we'll arrange one for free.

To get more support if you're experiencing family or domestic violence, you can:

- call **1800RESPECT** on **1800 737 732**.
- go to the website 1800respect.org.au and select **Help and support**.

If you or your family are in immediate danger, call **000**.

How to pay your child support

If you're paying child support, it's important to pay on time.

If we collect payments from you through Child Support Collect the easiest way to do this is to have your employer deduct child support from your pay and send it to us directly.

Other payment options include:

- direct credit
- BPAY®
- credit/debit cards using Government EasyPay
- lodgement at an Australia Post office.

If you can't pay, call the Child Support enquiry line on **131 272**.

Changes you need to tell us about

If you have a child support assessment, you need to tell us about changes that may affect your assessment, payments or how we contact you. This includes:

- personal and contact details
- the time each parent has the child/ren in their care
- income and employment details
- bank details
- if you get back together with the other parent.

You can tell us about any changes using your Child Support online account or by calling us.

For more information, go to servicessaustralia.gov.au/childsupportchanges

If your income changes

You must tell us about any income changes when they happen. This includes if you start or stop:

- employment
- getting a Centrelink income support payment.

Someone to help you with child support

You can choose a person or organisation to speak to us on your behalf. They must be 18 or older. You cannot ask a child for whom you have paid or received child support for, to act on your behalf.

They can ask us questions, give us information, access and discuss your child support information. They can't make decisions about changing your child support, or sign documents on your behalf.

To add a representative, call us on the Child Support enquiry line on **131 272**.

You can also use the *Representative Authority* form on servicessaustralia.gov.au. Fill it out and send it to us using your Child Support online account.

For more information



Go to **servicesaustralia.gov.au/childsupport** for more information about child support

Go to **servicesaustralia.gov.au/yourlanguage** where you can read, listen to or watch videos with information in your language

Services Australia's Financial Information Service (FIS) can help you understand your new financial position. FIS Officers can provide information and education on the payments and support you may be eligible for. Go to **servicesaustralia.gov.au/fis**



Call the Child Support enquiry line on **131 272** or the Centrelink families line on **136 150** to ask to speak to a social worker.

Call **131 202** to speak with us in your language about Centrelink payments and services

Let us know if you need an interpreter, and we'll arrange one for free



Visit a service centre.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is intended only as a guide to payments and services. It's your responsibility to decide if you wish to apply for a payment and to make an application with regard to your particular circumstances.

Note: calls from your home phone to '13' numbers from anywhere in Australia are charged at a fixed rate. That rate may vary from the price of a local call and may also vary between telephone service providers.

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