

Policy: Financial Support for Children and Families

Policy Purpose

To explain the kinds of financial support that can be provided for the care of children, the decision-making process and requirement for case planning.

Policy Statement

Territory Families provides:

- Child maintenance payments for children in the care of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who are unable to live with their parents; and
- Preventative family care payments are also provided to reduce the risk of harm to a child and the likelihood of a child coming into the care of the CEO in the first place.

While allowance and subsidy payments will not cover all the expenses of raising a child, they provide recognition of the costs of caring for children to ensure authorised carers are not unduly financially burdened and that children and young people in out of home care are not disadvantaged. Carers have the right to support that will contribute towards providing a safe and caring environment in which the needs of children and young people will be met. The child or young person has a right to be placed in a care environment that best meets their needs.

Child Maintenance Payments

Child Maintenance Payments are made to support the placements and provision of other services to children in care.

The payment rates used in the Northern Territory are based on the *Foster Care Estimates*, Australia's foremost evidence based assessment of the real costs of foster care. These rates vary depending upon the age of the child and are reviewed and indexed annually, in line with the Consumer Price Index. The fortnightly payment is made directly to the Carer via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) to their nominated bank account.

The payment model includes the following elements:

- A one-off Establishment Payment to assist with placement start-up costs;
- Standard age-related Carer payment;
- Additional 'Special Needs Loading' if the child is assessed as having high and complex needs as indicated by the administration of a Complexity Tool;
- Remote Area Loading for areas outside of the outer Darwin region.

The payment rate is reviewed annually as part of the case review process, or whenever there is a significant change in the child's circumstances. The agreed payment rate is documented in the Carer's Placement Agreement and the child's care plan.

Preventative Family Care Payments

The aim of Preventive Family Care (PFC) payments is to reduce the risk of harm to a child and the subsequent likelihood of a child coming into the care of the Chief Executive Officer.

This may be through the provision of financial payments to parents or other adults caring for the child or, on rare occasions, directly to a young person who is living independently.

In all cases, PFC payments may only be made after the development of an approved care plan which clearly identifies the purpose, duration and expected outcomes of the proposed payment/s. Payments may be made on a one-off basis, or as a continuing but time-limited payment, defined by the care plan. A PFC payment can only be made for a child who has an open Child Protection, Family Support or Protective Assessment case.

PFC is a casework tool. It is not a form of income support or emergency financial assistance. The use of PFC generally requires a relationship of some duration between the client and Territory Families.

The onus lies with the Manager to ensure that any recommendation for the use of PFC payments complies with the spirit of the policy and procedures.

Legislative Basis

[Care and Protection of Children Act 2007](#) s82

[Financial Management Act](#)

Practice Standards

[Standards of Professional Practice](#) 1, 2, 5.

Authorised by:

Executive Director, Service Development and Policy on:	16/03/2015	Active from:	16/03/2015
Version 1.0	Provide a list of Financial Supports available to children in care, decision making processes and case planning requirements.		
Review due:	March 17	Maintenance:	Policy tf.policy@nt.gov.au

Current Version V 1.01

Active from:	6/02/2017	Authorised by:	Director, Policy
Update:	Rebranded, changed Caseworker to Case Manager and minor edits for clarity.		