

Child Safety

PROCEDURE

Title: Complex Support Needs Allowance

Procedure No.: 612-5

Purpose

These procedures guide decision-making regarding payment of the Complex Support Needs Allowance (CSNA) based on the child's individual needs to eligible carers, and the actions required for the commencement, continuation and discontinuation of payment to eligible carers.

This procedure gives effect to Complex Support Needs Allowance policy (612).

Assessment Process

The CSNA may be provided to eligible carers as outlined in Complex Support Needs Allowance policy (612).

The CSNA may be provided when a child or young person has been assessed as having at least one of the identified needs highlighted in the table below that contribute to direct and indirect costs of caring for that child or young person that is in excess of the fortnightly caring allowance and high support needs allowance.

Domains	A	B	C	D
1. <i>Behaviour</i>	High level of functioning	Occasional age-appropriate problems	Significant and/or frequent problems	Major problems severely impact functioning
2. <i>Emotional Stability</i>	Demonstrates coping skills or high resilience	Generally stable, occasional issues	Significant instability	Extreme emotional responses which limit functioning
3. <i>Alcohol and Drug Use</i>	Conscious decision to avoid use	No use, or minor experimentation with no significant impact	Substance use with some impact	Substance use with serious dysfunction
4. <i>Family of Origins Relationships</i>	Nurturing relationships with some or all family members	Adequate relationships with some or all family members	Limited relationships with most family members	Significant problems/conflict
5. <i>Social Relationships (non-family)</i>	Well-developed social skills	Expected level of social skills	Poor social skills	Disconnected
6. <i>Cultural History</i>	Identity is a source of strength	Some identity	Conflicted	Disconnected



Domains	A	B	C	D
7. <i>Physical Health</i>	Healthy	No health issues	Some health issues impact functioning	Major health issues severely impact functioning
8. <i>Child Development and Intellectual Ability</i>	Above average intelligence/development	Age-appropriate intellectual functioning/development	Limited intellectual functioning/developmental delay	Severely limited intellectual functioning/development
9. <i>Education/Vocation/ Employment</i>	Exceptional performance	Satisfactory performance	Some school/vocation/employment problems	Severe school/vocation/employment problems
10. <i>Additional Identified Child Strength/Need</i>	Exceptional strength	Good/adequate functioning	Some need	Significant need
11. <i>Life Skills (for YP15+)</i>	Advanced life skills	Age-appropriate life skills	Lacks some age-appropriate life skills	Significantly limited life skills
12. <i>Relationship with Carer Family</i>	Nurturing relationships with some or all carer family members	Adequate relationships with some or all carer family members	Limited relationships with most carer family members	Significant problems/conflict

In circumstances where a SDM: strengths and needs assessment cannot be completed, the Practice Resource: Support levels and behaviour characteristics can be used to determine a child's strength and needs based on the information available. This applies to children and young people subject to a long-term guardianship order to a suitable person or subject to a permanent care order.

CSNA may also be considered for a child or young person if there are regular and ongoing child related costs associated with meeting the child's needs, which may total the amount received through the CSNA. For example, where a carer is regularly submitting reimbursements for regular appointments, transport or lessons etc. consider meeting the costs through CSNA rather than CRC reimbursements.

Levels of CSNA

There are three levels of CSNA. Children who meet the eligibility criteria for the CSNA may be eligible for the CSNA, level 1. The decision regarding whether a greater level of CSNA is provided is based on an assessment of the financial impact of the child's needs.

Scope of allowance

Disability supports under the National Disability Insurance Scheme

CSNA cannot be provided to meet costs that are being met by the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The NDIS funds the reasonable and necessary disability support needs of eligible children with disability. [The Applied Principles and Tables of Support](#) outlines the principles to determine the responsibilities of the NDIS and other service systems outlines the disability supports the NDIS should be expected to pay for eligible children in care.

What the CSNA is to cover when applied

The CSNA will be paid in addition to the fortnightly caring allowance and high support needs allowance at one of three levels.

It is expected that the CSNA will cover the full range of ongoing costs covered by the high support needs allowance, however it is paid for children whose complex or extreme needs result in greater direct and additional indirect care costs to the carer, due to more costly expenses, a wider range of expenses, and/or a greater frequency of expenses.

The CSNA is also expected to cover ongoing costs associated with the child's medical needs, transport, recreation and leisure, skills development and family contact where these costs are not met through alternate funding streams (e.g. Medicare, National Disability Insurance Scheme). Examples of such costs are:

Medical/disability

- regular consultation with and treatment by general practitioners
- pharmaceuticals prescribed by a medical practitioner
- non-prescribed treatments for an ongoing medical condition or disability that are recommended by a medical practitioner
- allied health treatment, such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy, as recommended by a health professional
- treatment for a disability or mental health condition, as recommended by a health professional
- vaccinations and immunisation
- mobility aids or specialised medical equipment recommended by a general practitioner, specialist or other qualified professional (not covered by the National Disability Insurance Scheme)
- specialised meal supplements for a stabilised or permanent functional disability
- other health products such as head lice and scabies treatment.

Transport

- all public transport costs
- additional mileage (in excess of the 250km covered by the fortnightly caring allowance), to a reasonable amount depending on the rate of CSNA paid and the extent of other costs being met by the allowance.

Recreation and leisure

- ongoing expenses associated with a child's recreational activities and/or hobbies
- ongoing costs of equipment and fees associated with participating in sport and leisure activities
- ongoing costs associated with an identified strength or other area of excellence, including sports activities.

Skill development

- activities identified as part of an approved case plan with a focus on skill development.

Family contact

- costs associated with family contact visits (for example, any meals that may be required for the child or young person during the contact, or specific outing costs), life history activities and gifts from the child or young person to significant persons for specific occasions.

Additional indirect costs

- household maintenance (e.g. cleaning and gardening services)
- laundry and bedding costs
- assistance with meal preparation.

Apply for the CSNA

Application for a children in care

When a child safety officer has undertaken an assessment of the child's strengths and needs and has identified that the child meets the criteria for CSNA the child safety officer can apply for the CSNA by completing the [Complex Support Needs Allowance \(CSNA\) Application Form](#).

In addition, the carer can also request the CSNA by asking the child safety officer verbally or via email.

If a carer requests the CSNA the child safety officer will arrange a placement meeting to discuss the request and make an assessment of the child's current support needs and the support options available for the child. The assessment includes a review of the child's strength and needs using the *SDM: child's strengths and needs assessment* in ICMS, if required. The assessment will be informed by advice provided by the carer and supporting evidence including specialist disability assessment report, medical reports and/or other professional reports, if available.

Following the meeting the child safety officer will submit the application for CSNA form for approval by the child safety service centre manager.

Application for children subject to a long-term guardianship order to a suitable person

Long-term guardians can request provision of the CSNA verbally or via email.

If a long-term guardian requests the CSNA, the child safety officer, senior team leader or senior practitioner will arrange a meeting to discuss the guardian's request and to make an assessment of the child's current support needs and the support options available for the child. The outcomes of discussions with the long-term guardian will be recorded as a case note in the child's file.

Long-term guardians may provide evidence such as a specialist disability assessment report, school reports or assessments, medical reports and/or other professionals reports to support the application for high support needs allowance.

The child safety officer will complete the application for Complex Support Needs Allowance and submit for approval by the child safety service centre manager.

Application for children subject to a permanent care order

Permanent guardians can request the CSNA by contacting a child safety officer, senior team leader or senior practitioner. The child safety officer, senior team leader or senior practitioner will arrange a meeting to discuss the guardian's request and to make an assessment of the child's current support needs.

The permanent guardian may provide evidence such as a specialist disability assessment report, school reports or assessments, medical reports and/or other professionals reports to support the application for high support needs allowance.

The child safety officer will submit the application for CSNA for approval by the child safety service centre manager.

Assessment

The assessment for the CSNA will be informed by the SDM strength and needs assessment and any other assessment undertaken by the care service or other professionals.

For cases where an SDM strength and needs assessment cannot be completed, the *Practice Resource: Support Levels and Behaviour Characteristics* can be used to determine a child's strength and needs based on the information available.

Where supporting evidence has been provided such as specialist disability assessment report, school reports or assessments, medical reports and/or other professional reports, the supporting evidence must be considered to inform the assessment.

The child safety officer, senior team leader or senior practitioner is responsible for completing the complex support needs allowance application form (with assistance from business support staff, as appropriate), however if the child is placed with a care service, the form must be completed in partnership with a staff member of that service. The process of assessing the provision of complex support needs allowance for a guardian is the same as for a foster or kinship carer.

A member of the placement services unit may also be consulted, where the unit has an active role in supporting the carer or coordinating the placement in partnership with a care service.

The assessment should take into account the additional costs presented to the carer as a result of caring for the child, that exceed the fortnightly caring allowance and high support needs allowance. The carer's financial circumstance, including income and the receipt of Commonwealth benefits, will have no bearing on decision making.

The assessment should also consider the following:

- the longevity and frequency of the expected additional cost
- other support options available or being provided, for example by a care service, which may mitigate the financial impact on the carer's household.

The outcome of the assessment will be a realistic evaluation of the expected total costs over the period for which the CSNA is being considered, or over the coming 12 months if an indefinite period is being considered.

To determine the level which will be provided, average the fortnightly costs over the approved period. If the estimated average falls between two of the levels, the higher level should be paid. For example, if the additional costs to the carer are approximately \$200 per fortnight above the amount provided by the fortnightly caring allowance and the high support needs allowance, the CSNA should be provided at the level that fully covers these costs.

In making the assessment, use the [Complex Support Needs Allowance \(CSNA\) Application Form](#) for prompts and to document the process.

The manager of the child safety service centre can approve payment of the CSNA at one of three levels, in accordance with the appropriate financial delegations and standards.

The current rates of payment for the three levels are available on the Queensland Government website: <https://www.qld.gov.au/community/caring-child/foster-kinship-care/information-for-carers/money-matters/carers-allowances>

Duration

The duration for which provision of the CSNA is required for a child in care will be determined by the type of needs for which the allowance is provided, and their expected longevity. For example, where a child has suffered an accident and requires additional medical and physical care for a limited time period, the end date will reflect medical advice regarding the course of treatment and expected period of recovery.

The CSNA may be approved for an indefinite period of time where a child has been assessed as having an ongoing disability, medical or psychological condition.

The outcome of the Child Strengths and Needs Assessment and other supporting information, will be provided with the application for Application for CSNA for approval by the child safety service centre manager. The form must outline the timeframe for the provision of the CSNA.

Approval

Approval for the CSNA will be sought from the child safety service centre manager by submitting the Application for CSNA form and attaching the approved Child Strengths and Needs Assessment.

Where a child meets the eligibility criteria, the manager of the child safety service centre may approve payment of the CSNA either for a specified period of time or indefinitely as determined by the child's strength and needs assessment.

Decisions about the period of time the CSNA is provided are based on consideration of the child's assessed needs and the period of time in which they are likely to have a financial impact on the carer's household.

Review

The CSNA will be reviewed every twelve months except for a child or young person subject to a long- term guardianship order or permanent care order.

Where the CSNA has been approved for a child or young person subject to a long- term guardianship order or permanent care order the allowance will continue until the end date in the approved application, including up to a young person's 18th birthday.

Where a child has a National Disability Insurance Scheme plan approved, the CSNA must be reviewed in consultation with the care team to avoid duplication of costs funded through the CSNA and the child's National Disability Insurance Scheme plan.

If a child for whom the CSNA has been approved changes placement, the child's new carer will receive the allowance until a review of its continued need is conducted.

Administer the CSNA:

To commence payments of the CSNA:

- ensure placement dates are entered into ICMS
- complete the Application for CSNA form and attach the approved form to the placement event
- enter the start and end dates of payment into the high and CSNA grid in the Details screen of the Child profile in Carepay
- submit the task for approval.

The commencement date for payment of the CSNA will be the date of approval, unless back-dated payments have been approved. The end date will be the end of the period for which provision of the CSNA has been approved. If the CSNA has been approved for an indefinite period of time for a child in care, the end date will be the expiry date of the child's current order (including where the child is subject to an order granting long-term guardianship to a suitable person or permanent care order).

To discontinue payment of the CSNA, in Carepay edit the end date of the current high and CSNA grid entry to reflect the date the CSNA is to cease.

The CSNA is paid fortnightly in arrears and cannot be paid in advance.

When a child transitions from one placement to another, the CSNA will be paid to the child's new carer until the scheduled end date or next scheduled review.

Carers are not required to provide receipts demonstrating the expenditure of the allowance.

Long-term guardians and permanent guardians in receipt of the CSNA are required to advise the department if the child leaves their direct care.

Dual payments

When dual payments are made for respite placements, in accordance with policy 289 Dual Payment of Carer Allowances, both the primary carer and respite carer will receive the CSNA, on a pro rata basis, for the period of time that the child is in the respite placement. The Carepay system will automatically apply the CSNA to both the primary carer and respite carer where dual payments are approved.

Other Child Safety Services payments

The CSNA will be paid in addition to the payment of both the Fortnightly caring allowance and the HSNA. The HSNA will automatically be paid where payment of the CSNA is approved and recorded for payment in the Carepay system. The procedure for approving and commencing payment of the high support needs allowance does not apply.

Where the direct and additional indirect care costs associated with caring for a child exceed the upper rate of the CSNA, the carer may be eligible for further assistance through child related costs, in accordance with the relevant policies and procedures, and at the discretion of the child safety service centre manager.

Records File No.: CHS/04139
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Date to be reviewed: 6 December 2026

Office: Investment and Commissioning
Help Contact: Tertiary Care and Support

Links:

Complex Support Needs Allowance policy (612-4)

Related Policies

Case planning (263)
Expenses – Fortnightly Caring Allowance and inter-state foster payments (365)
Dual payment of carer allowances (289)
High support needs allowance (296)
Child related costs policy (645)

Related Legislation or Standard

Child Protection Act 1999
Child Protection Regulation 2023
Financial Accountability Act 2009
Adoption Act 2009

Related Government Guidelines or Policy

Child Safety Practice Manual
Statement of Commitment between the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women and the foster and kinship carers of Queensland.

Forms, Standard Letters or Memorandum

Application for Complex support needs allowance

Rescinded Procedure

612-4 Complex Support Needs Allowance

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