

# your questions answered

Having trouble finding the right answers to new policy? Pola Nadas, FDCA's Policy Manager answers some frequently asked questions from carers and staff.

Please note that the term 'service' refers to individual carer businesses and to schemes as FaCSIA considers both parties responsible for the compliance framework, ie schemes monitor and carers implement.

## Can the fee charged by a childcare service be lower than the applicable rate of CCB?

There doesn't necessarily have to be a gap fee between the fee for service and the CCB entitlement of the family.

A service may charge a relatively low fee (ie equal to or less than the parents' entitlement to CCB) and have the full fee covered by CCB. However, it really doesn't advantage anyone to charge under the CCB rate, as a parent who is on maximum CCB will not pay a gap fee unless the fee is greater than their CCB entitlement.

Irrespective of whether the fee charged is lower than the CCB threshold, the CCB amount paid to the service on behalf of the family will not be more than the fee charged. In this case, the parents would not be eligible for the Child Care Tax Rebate (CCTR) as there is no gap fee.

## What do sole parent carers, whose youngest child turns six, have to be aware of in relation to Centrelink payments?

While the ATO considers you to be in business no matter what

your net income, the test for self-employment for Centrelink support is equivalent to 15 hours at the Federal minimum wage rate of \$13.47 per hour. This is approximately \$202 per week or \$11,000 per annum.

If a carer does not earn a net income above this threshold Centrelink will make contact and assist with placing the carer into voluntary or paid work that meets this requirement.

We urge carers who think they might be in this situation at the end of the financial year to talk to their accountant now about strategies to maximise income.

## How can a family change their CCB payment choice from fee reductions to a lump sum payment?

A family can either contact the FAO and the FAO will then notify the service of the change or, as the Handbook states, the service can obtain a written statement from a parent indicating that she/he wishes to pay full fees and claim a lump sum after the end of the financial year.

The letter should note the date that has been agreed between the service and the parent as to when the change should take effect. The letter should also be signed and dated by the parent.

Compliance Officers would be looking to see if the CCB percentage claimed is the one that is in the FAO Weekly Statement and if not, that there is the signed and dated statement from the parent indicating that the parent wishes to pay full fees.

## What happens to a scheme if it fails, due to technical difficulties, to get its report for vacancies through to the Hotline?

Services whose vacancy statistics are not provided can be sanctioned for late reporting under the new civil penalties scheme.

When services attempt to send in their reports and experience difficulty they need to contact the Hotline. A receipt number is then generated at the Hotline indicating that you had attempted to lodge your information. Hotline operators may also offer to take this information over the phone.

## Do the Hotline operators provide parents information about all service types in their area?

There is no policy or direction to Hotline operators to nominate or



mention service types in any particular order.

Operators will normally ask callers what care type they are seeking, as often callers already have a favoured service type in mind. If that particular service type is not available, operators will suggest other service types as options and will undertake a search on these if the caller asks them to do so. Where a caller has not nominated a service type but rather an area, the sequence of service types that is mentioned is determined by the order of services that the Child Care Access System identifies in the postcode and surrounding areas identified by the caller, and which of those services have vacancies.

### What are 'standard hours' and can they be varied?

Under Child Care Benefit Legislation it is stated that standard hours are:

- 8 continuous hours a day Monday to Friday
- not to commence before 7.00 am

- not to finish after 6.30 pm on any particular day

To vary standard hours a service is required to gain specific approval from the FAO.

### If a mother is hospitalised for 5-7 days, can 24 hour care be applied for on behalf of her other children?

If the mother's partner is unavailable due to shift work or other work commitments while she was hospitalised an application for 24 hour care would be supported.

### Is a doctor or social worker's request for 24 hour care adequate evidence of need?

A doctor's certificate or social worker's report could be used as evidence of the need for 24 hour care. However if the care is not work related the circumstances need to be exceptional. Each coordinator needs to allow the context of a request for 24 hour care to inform their judgement.

### Can a coordination unit make a correction to a timesheet?

Services are required to have accurate attendance records. If the coordination unit alters the time sheets to make them accurate, they should be noted and countersigned with an explanation attached so that the process is transparent. To expedite payments schemes can phone the carer/parent, make the correction and process the timesheet rather than hold it over for the next pay period.

### What assistance is there for schemes to change over to the new CCMS?

All family day care services should have received a set amount of \$1,000 to assist with transition costs by the end of October 2007. In addition you can apply for an additional amount up to \$2,100 to meet the costs of software, computer and internet connection costs. For additional information see Child Care News at <http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/childcare/ccms.htm> 