POLICY STATEMENT

Title: Child Related Costs – Carer Support
Policy No. CPD597-4

Policy Statement:
The Department of Communities (Child Safety Services), may provide financial support to children and young people subject to statutory intervention, in accordance with an approved case plan. In addition, financial support will be in accordance with the following criteria:

- Child related cost (CRC) reimbursement is approved for costs that are specific to the child or young person’s individual needs over and above the financial support provided in the fortnightly caring allowance and the high support needs allowance if this is also provided. However, all other avenues of financial support must be explored first, for example, other government allowances and benefits.
- Decisions regarding access to CRC must be in accordance with the Financial Accountability Act 2009 and all goods and services purchased must be considered reasonable by the relevant financial delegate.
- All CRC expenditure is in accordance with the appropriate financial delegations and standards.
- All transactions are to be substantiated (ie. receipts) and all reimbursement documentation is to be maintained to ensure an adequate audit trail.
- All items purchased under this category belong to the child or young person.

Principles:
- The safety, well-being and best interests of the child or young person are paramount.
- Carers have the right to receive support that will contribute towards ensuring a safe and caring environment in which the needs of children and young people are met.
- The child or young person has a right to be placed in a care environment that best meets their needs.

Objectives:
This policy aims to provide information for child safety officers (CSOs), team leaders and Child Safety Service Centre (CSSC) managers regarding the eligibility criteria for use of the child related costs accounts detailed in this policy to support decision making and case planning.

Scope:
To be eligible for payments under this policy, a child or young person must be placed in out of home care and subject to:
- an assessment or child protection care agreement.
• a temporary custody order
• an adoption care agreement or adoption consent or dispensation of consent
• an assessment or child protection order granting custody or guardianship to the Chief Executive unless otherwise noted.

The term “carer” within this document is inclusive of foster carers, kinship carers and provisionally approved carers.

Roles and Responsibilities:
The child safety officer (CSO) for the child is responsible for responding to requests for a support by a child or young person or their carer.

As part of the case planning process, the pre-approval of the financial delegate is required for any child related cost reimbursement or expenditure to proceed. Only these delegated officers can authorise the provision of child related costs for children and young people. This is obtained by submitting a Child Related Costs Approval Form (CRC) to the CSSC manager or the relevant financial delegate who can approve the child related costs.

The processing of approved child related costs expenditure or reimbursement is made by submitting the approved CRC with required payment documentation (receipts, invoice, etc), to a CSSC administration officer who will process the payment or reimbursement according to the Financial Management Practice Manual (FMPM). Once processed the CRC is placed on the client file.

Wherever practical, reimbursement of CRC expenses should be processed when the accumulated total of the receipts is $50 in value or higher.

Carers must be advised by their CSO that receipts for CRC reimbursement should be submitted during the current financial year and therefore be less than 12 months old.

For young people on dual orders (both child protection and youth justice), please refer to the relevant procedures of the Child Safety Practice Manual Chapter 5, What if 10. What if a child is also subject to youth justice intervention?

The following items are covered in this policy:
Carer Support – Property Modifications (Account code: 54489)
Carer Support – Motor Vehicle Expenses (Account code: 54493)
Carer Support – Support Costs (Account code: 54478)

1. Carer Support – Property Modifications (Account code: 54489) [Director-General approval required]

This account category is to provide financial support for the costs associated with approved modifications to the home or property of a carer directly related to the case plan in support of a long term placement. All submissions must be endorsed by the Regional Director and be forwarded to the Director-General for approval through Regional Service Delivery Operations.
Once Director-General approval is granted all costs can be approved by the CSSC manager, unless they fall outside their financial delegation.

Examples of appropriate costs applied to this category are:
- installation of ramps for wheel chair access for a child or young person with a physical disability
- installation of hand rails
- other safety and security modifications required to meet the specific needs of a child or young person
- modifications to a motor vehicle.

To be eligible for expenditures under this category, a child or young person must be subject to a long-term child protection order with guardianship to the Chief Executive.

2. Carer Support – Motor Vehicle Expenses (Account code: 54493)

This account category is used for all costs associated with approved lease, maintenance and running costs for a motor vehicle leased for a carer.

Wherever possible the lease arrangements should be made through Q-fleet. However, Avis, Budget and any other type of vehicle leased by a carer will be charged to this account. Regional Director approval must be granted prior to any lease arrangements taking place.

The lease of any vehicle for a carer must be part of an approved case plan and have demonstrated benefits for the child or young person. The lease must be for a specified period and/or purpose and must be the most efficient, effective and economic use of the child related costs funding, as per the requirements of the Financial Accountability Act 2009. For example, where a vehicle is leased to enable a carer to meet the needs of a child with a disability who is placed in their care, when the placement ceases, the lease should be terminated and the car returned.

CSO’s are expected to calculate and monitor expected kilometre use and ensure that neither the kilometrical stipulations in the lease contract are exceeded, nor other contractual arrangements concerning:
- service requirements
- repairs and maintenance
- timeframe stated in the contract.

Carers and CSO’s need to be aware that Q-fleet (as do all other car lease companies) apply heavy penalties for non-compliance with contractual arrangements, including excess mileage.

All lease contract details should be detailed in the case plan, agreed to and signed by the carer.

All repairs, maintenance and damage costs over and above those covered in the contract remain the responsibility of the carer.

In circumstances where a carer chooses to lease a vehicle for reasons not included as part of an approved case plan, the costs will be met by the carer.

This account category provides financial support to a carer for safety equipment and/or for support services under circumstances where acute illness, stress or crisis, is impacting on the carer’s ability to care for the children and young people in their care.

Safety equipment may be purchased for a carer in emergent situations where the carer has not had the opportunity to prepare for a new placement and requires immediate access to safety equipment such as a car seat, safety locks and child barriers.

Day-to-day baby sitting costs are covered by the fortnightly caring allowance. However, in-home services may be arranged to assist the carer in the day to day care of a child or young person under the circumstances mentioned above. This must be a short term arrangement only and regular review must be undertaken. The approval of the CSSC manager must be sought prior to the engagement of an in-home service provider such as a cleaner, and the arrangement must be added to the Placement Agreement and included in the case plan.

The approval for any in-home services must be based on the estimation of the ongoing likelihood of the need for the services, including the hours per week, the hourly rate and the number of weeks for which the service is required. These arrangements are not to be ongoing and must be reviewed every four weeks.

Please also see policy Dual Payment of Carer Allowances if emergent respite is considered a more appropriate solution.

Authority:
Child Protection Act 1999
Financial Accountability Act 2009
Adoptions Act 2009

Delegations:
Director-General
Deputy Director-General, Communities, Child Safety, Youth and Families
Associate Director-General, Regional Service Delivery Operations
Director, Statewide Services
Regional Executive Director
Regional Director, Child Safety, Youth and Families
Manager, Child Safety Service Centre
Manager, Child Safety After Hours Service Centre
Records File No.: CHS/12105
Date of approval: 15 December 2011
Date of operation: 11 January 2012
Date to be reviewed: December 2014

Office: Communities, Child Safety, Youth and Families,
Help Contact: Child Protection Development – 3235 9411

Links:
Related legislation or standards:
Financial Accountability Act 2009
Child Protection Act 1999
Child Protection Regulation 2000
Adoptions Act 2009

Related Government Guidelines:
Child Safety Practice Manual
Financial Management Practice Manual
Statement of Commitment between Department of Child Safety and the foster Carers of Queensland 2006

Related Departmental Policy:
Child Related Costs – Outfitting (600)
Child Related Costs – Medical (596)
Child Related Costs – Client support and family contact (598)
Child Related Costs – Travel (595)
Child Related Costs – Education support (599)
Child Related Costs – Long-term guardian support (608)
Expenses - Fortnightly caring allowance and interstate foster payments (365)
Regional/Remote loading for carers (379)
Dual payment of carer allowances (289)
High Support Needs Allowance (296)
Complex Support Needs Allowance (612)
Special payments (including Ex-gratia) (FSE009)
Transitional placements (including emergent accommodation) and flexible funding (602)
Expenses – General (FSE001)
Payment methods (FSE008)
Financial Delegations
Forms:
Child Related Costs Approval Form

Rescinded policy:
597-3 Child Related Costs – Carer Support

Linda A Apelt
Director-General