Title: Child Related Costs – Client support and family contact
Policy No: CPD598-7

Policy Statement:
The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services provides financial support for the care and protection of children and young people subject to statutory intervention, in accordance with the following requirements:

- for children in out-of-home care, reimbursement is for costs that are specific to the child’s individual needs; as recorded in the approved case plan, and are in excess of financial support provided by the allowances provided (including the fortnightly caring allowance, high support needs allowance and complex support needs allowance)
- for children residing at home, reimbursement is for costs that will enhance the child’s safety and wellbeing and minimise the need for more intrusive child protection intervention
- all other avenues of financial support have been explored, for example other government allowances and benefits
- expenditure is in accordance with appropriate financial delegations and standards
- all transactions are substantiated, and substantiating documentation (for example, invoices and receipts) is filed to ensure an audit trail
- all items purchased under this category belong to the child.

Principles:

- The safety, wellbeing and best interests of the child or young person are paramount.
- Carers have the right to support that will contribute towards ensuring 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.

Objectives:

To inform Child Safety staff of the eligibility criteria for use of the child related costs accounts detailed in this policy to support decision making and case planning.

Scope:
Child Related Costs may be provided for children and young people subject to statutory intervention under the Child Protection Act 1999. Eligibility for each account category is outlined below.
Roles and Responsibilities:

The Child Safety Officer is responsible for responding to requests for support by a child or young person, their carer or their parents.

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, or above, where specified, can authorise the provision of child related costs for children and young people. This is obtained by submitting a Child Related Costs Approval Form to the Child Safety Service Centre 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 form with required payment documentation (for example, receipts and invoices) to a child safety service centre administrative officer who will process the payment or reimbursement according to the Financial Management Practice Manual (FMPM). Once processed, the form is placed on the client file.

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

Carers must be advised by their Child Safety Officer that receipts for child related costs reimbursement should be submitted during the current financial year and therefore be less than 12 months old.

For young people subject to both child protection and youth justice orders, refer to the procedures for dual orders in the Child Safety Practice Manual.

Cost items

The following account categories are part of the Client Support and Family Connection cost category:

- Client support - Birth Certificates (G/L Code: 530417)
- Client support - Child and Vacation Care (G/L Code: 530420)
- Client support - Family Group Meetings (G/L Code: 530423)
- Client support - Furniture and Equipment (G/L Code: 530408)
- Client support - Support Costs (G/L Code: 530438)
- Client support - Recreation (G/L Code: 530430)
- Client support - Youth Support Payment (G/L Code: 530437)
- Client support - Transition from Care (G/L Code: 530441)
- Client support - Funeral Arrangements (G/L Code: 530425)
- Client support - Independent Social Assessment (G/L Code: 530435)
- Family connection - Support (G/L Code: 530423)

1. Client Support – Birth Certificates (G/L Code: 530417)

This account category is used for expenses incurred by Data Management Services (DMS) for the purchase of birth certificates on behalf of a service centre. Each child or young person placed in the long-term guardianship of the chief executive is to have a copy of their birth certificate placed on their file.
The Child Safety Service Centre Manager may also approve the purchase of a birth certificate to be provided to the carer. Alternatively, a certified copy could be provided.

For expenditure under this category, a child or young person must be subject to:
- a signed assessment or child protection care agreement where there is a demonstrated requirement for the birth certificate and the birth certificate is unable to be obtained from the parent/s or
- an adoption care agreement or adoption consent or dispensation of consent (certificates for these purposes are provided through Adoption Services) or
- a child protection order granting custody or guardianship to the chief executive.

2. Client Support – Child and Vacation Care (G/L Code: 530420)

This account category provides financial support to carers for the assessed gap for approved childcare fees, before/after school care and vacation care fees. This category can also be accessed for baby-sitting fees and other fees associated with child care/child minding incurred while the carer attends foster carer training, foster carer forums, and other carer-related activities.

The department will pay only the “gap” between the actual child care fees and the Child Care Benefit (CCB) including the Child Care Rebate (CCR). These two allowances must be accounted for in establishing the “gap”. It is the responsibility of the carer to establish their CCR & CCB entitlements.

Reimbursement under this category is at the discretion of the Child Safety Service Centre Manager and must be included as part of a child’s case plan and where applicable, Education Support Plan. Access to child care is not an entitlement and these arrangements must have demonstrable benefits for the child recorded in the case plan and where applicable, the Education Support Plan. Child care arrangements are to be reviewed regularly.

For expenditure under this category, a child or young person must be subject to:
- a signed assessment or child protection care agreement or
- an adoption care agreement or adoption consent or dispensation of consent or
- a child protection order granting custody or guardianship to the chief executive.

For children under school age, refer to Operational Policy Early Childhood Education in Care Participation Minimum Gap Payment (640), which outlines the payment processes for early childhood education and care, and approved child care services.

3. Client Support – Family Group Meetings (G/L Code: 530423)

This account category is for costs relating to a family group meeting under any circumstance and this may include travel costs.

The types of expenditure that this might include are:
- family travel expenses (for example, fuel, bus and train fares, toll charges, parking fees, and taxi fares)
- catering
- resource materials.
For expenditure under this category, a child or young person must be subject to statutory intervention under the *Child Protection Act 1999*.

4. **Client Support – Furniture and Equipment (G/L Code: 530408)**

This account category is for costs relating to the purchase of furniture and/or other items to facilitate the placement of a child or young person or provide in-home support or a child residing at home. For example, this may apply where a carer has made a decision to increase their placement capacity or change their age category and requires, a bed or cot, a cupboard and/or shelving.

The purchase of items under this category must be approved as part of a case plan, and ownership of relevant items must be noted on a personal assets register for the child or young person. For example, where a cot may belong to the carer for future placements, a suitcase would belong to the child or young person.

It is expected that if the child or young person moves to another placement those items identified as theirs will move with them.

For expenditure under this category, a child or young person must be subject to:
- statutory intervention under the *Child Protection Act 1999* or
- an adoption care agreement or adoption consent or dispensation of consent.

This account cannot be accessed for placements funded through highly complex placements funding.

5. **Client Support – Support Costs (G/L Code: 530438)**

This account category is for any additional approved placement support costs, in-home support costs, or independent living support costs for a child or young person placed with a carer, a child or young person residing at home, or a young person living independently not in accordance with a transition from care plan. Types of costs may include:
- support program expenses such as life skills, not medical or educational in nature
- expenses incurred by Child Safety Officers for meals and/or toiletries purchased for a child or young person (excludes carer costs for meals, toiletries and grooming which are covered in the fortnightly caring allowance)
- nappies for an older child where the carer does not receive the high support needs allowance or complex support needs allowance
- emergency relief or accommodation support provided by the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre.

Subject to approval of the Child Safety Service Centre Manager, a prepaid essential gift card may be used where an emergent situation has arisen requiring the purchase of items by or on behalf of a child or young person. Emergent situations may include the purchase of food, toiletries and clothing where:
- children and young people are placed with carers where carer payments have not yet commenced
- children and young people are placed in emergent accommodation
• young people are living independently where they have not yet received a Centrelink allowance.

Prior to purchasing a gift card, other methods of purchase must be considered, such as corporate card, purchase order or petty cash. The gift card must prohibit the purchase of alcohol or tobacco. The Woolworths Essential Card is the preferred type of prepaid gift card. Kmart, Coles and Target brand gift cards may also be purchased. Coles-Myer gift cards must not be purchased.

For further details, refer to the finance procedure ‘Prepaid gift cards’ for guidance on the purchase, control and issue of prepaid gift cards.

For expenditure under this category, a child or young person must be subject to:
• statutory intervention under the Child Protection Act 1999 or
• an adoption care agreement or adoption consent or dispensation of consent.

All recreation costs are covered in the fortnightly caring allowance, except for one school camp per year.

This account category is for recreation costs for a child in out-of-home care who demonstrates a talent and/or ability for a particular activity that should be encouraged as part of their development, for example district or state representation, coaching, music lessons, or art classes.

This category can also be used for ongoing costs associated with recreational activities that are recommended by a medical practitioner as being therapeutic in nature in circumstances where the costs cannot be met by the high support needs allowance or complex support needs allowance. Examples may include:
• special sporting requirements or equipment
• entry fees to a significant or unique social event reflecting the child or young person’s interest (for example, participating in a concert, conference, recreational camp, or a competition)
• advanced coaching or tuition to allow the child to develop higher levels of proficiency in an ongoing activity (for example, district or state representation, or entry in high level events).

For expenditure under this category, a child or young person must be subject to:
• a signed assessment or child protection care agreement or
• a child protection order granting custody or guardianship to the chief executive or
• an adoption care agreement or adoption consent or dispensation of consent.

7. Client Support – Youth Support Payment (G/L Code: 530437)
This account category is for provision of financial support to a young person in order to maintain an independent living arrangement and is provided at the same rate as the Commonwealth Youth Allowance at the independent rate.

The Commonwealth Youth Allowance must be applied for by the young person. This account is only for those young people who are ineligible for the Youth Allowance.
Financial assistance provided under this category is to be in accordance with the Youth Protocol: An agreement concerning referral, assessment, case management and support for homeless and unsupported young people.

To be eligible for payments under this category, a young person must be living independently and subject to statutory intervention under the Child Protection Act 1999.

8. Client Support – Transition from Care (G/L Code: 530441)

This account category is for all Transition from Care related expenditure.

Transition from care financial support is not an 'exit payment' on leaving out-of-home care, but is provided to support and resource an approved plan based on the assessed needs of the young person. The provision of transition from care funding does not invalidate the option for other eligible child related costs funding to be made available, or continue to be made available, to the young person or their carer. Transition from care funding can be accessed for the duration of the transition from care plan (documented in the young person’s case plan). A plan for using transition from care funds may span several years and may continue for a specified period/defined purpose after a young person has left care.

Expenditure under this category can include independent living establishment expenses for a young person, (for example, white goods or assistance with a bond for a rental property), life skills development, (for example, driving lessons, car maintenance, cooking classes, parenting classes, budgeting etc.) and employment related activities. All expenditure is to be included as part of the young person’s approved case plan.

All efforts to obtain quotes for white goods, computers, or other goods should be made. When suppliers is not willing to provide quotes, and attempts to obtain quotes and ensure best value for money are demonstrated, the Child Safety Service Centre Manager may approve the purchase of goods without quotes.

For expenditure under this category, a child or young person must be at least 15 years of age and:

- subject to a child protection order granting custody or guardianship to the chief executive or
- have already left care and previously been subject to a child protection order granting custody or guardianship to the chief executive, particularly where a transition from care plan was developed and implemented while the child was still in care.

Transition from care funding is not intended to provide compensation, or be a support fund, for people who have already left care, but for those who present to the department requesting financial support and/or assistance.

All young people transitioning from out-of-home care should be assisted in accessing the financial support provided through the Australian Government’s Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA) program. Young people transitioning from out-of-home care are eligible for both departmental transition from care support and TILA funding, and planning must ensure that the goods or services supplied through both these avenues are used to promote optimum outcomes for the young person.

For further procedures in relation to transition from care, refer to the relevant procedures in the Child Safety Practice Manual.
9. **Client Support – Funeral Arrangements (G/L Code: 530425)**

This account category is used for all costs associated with the funeral of a deceased subject child or young person, for example, burial clothing, funeral notices, plaque, flowers and all other requirements.

Funeral arrangements are to be made in accordance with the wishes of the parent/s and the parent/s wishes take precedence. Where the child has been placed with carer/s for a significant period of time, departmental officers should encourage the parent/s to involve the child’s carer/s and their family members in the funeral arrangements.

To be eligible for expenditure under this category, the child or young person must have been subject, at the time of death, to:
- a signed assessment or child protection care agreement or
- an adoption care agreement or adoption consent or dispensation of consent or
- a child protection order granting custody or guardianship to the chief executive.

10. **Client Support – Independent Social Assessment (G/L Code: 530435)**

This account category is used for the payment or reimbursement of fees and service fees incurred by the child safety service centre associated with an external assessment or review of a child protection matter.

Examples of appropriate assessments include:
- independent review
- child death review
- family assessment report.

For expenditure under this category, a child or young person must be subject to statutory intervention under the *Child Protection Act 1999*.

11. **Family Connection – Support (G/L Code: 530423)**

This account category provides financial support for the child or young person's costs associated with family contact or cultural connection. For expenditure under this category, a child or young person must be subject to:
- a signed assessment or child protection care agreement
- an adoption care agreement or adoption consent or dispensation of consent
- a child protection order granting custody or guardianship to the chief executive.

This category covers direct and indirect costs, for example:
- one set of school photographs per school year
- cultural activities and events
- life diaries
- gifts (under circumstances where they are not covered in the fortnightly caring allowance)
- accommodation and associated costs
- external agency staff wages and costs.
Gifts
All birthday and Christmas gifts are covered in the fortnightly caring allowance as a normal everyday expense that any family would incur and carers are expected to budget accordingly.

However, the Child Safety Service Centre Manager may approve expenditure under this account category for gifts in the following circumstances:

- a child or sibling group has been placed with a carer just before Christmas or other major holiday or life event and the carer has had no capacity to budget for gifts
- gifts for the child or young person’s parents or siblings, who are either not in out-of-home care or in a different placement, typically to a maximum of $20 expenditure, giving consideration to the child’s age and age of the intended recipient of a gift.

Accommodation and associated costs
This account category may also be used for support costs to facilitate family contact visits for both a child or young person’s family or carer, such as accommodation and associated costs, where overnight stays or other supports are required.

The account category must not be used for travel and transport costs. For travel and travel-related costs, refer to policy “Child Related Costs – Travel”.

Meals purchased by a carer for family contact are covered by the fortnightly caring allowance, as the carer would be providing meals for a child in their care regardless of whether they were on a family contact visit or not. However, there may be occasions where additional support is required.

It is expected that a child’s family provide for their meals and those of the child for family contact visits. However, the Child Safety Service Centre Manager may approve the use of child related costs for this purpose in cases of financial hardship.

External agencies
Under circumstances where family contact is supervised or undertaken by an external agency this category is also used for the agency staff wages and other associated costs.

Authority:
Child Protection Act 1999
Financial Accountability Act 2009

Delegations:
The use of child related costs will be in accordance with departmental financial delegations and standards.
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Date to be reviewed: 7 March 2012

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

Links:

Related policies
Case planning (263)
Intervention with parental agreement (343)
Investigation and assessment (386)
Expenses – fortnightly caring allowance and interstate foster payments (365)
Expenses – fortnightly caring allowance and interstate foster payments (procedure 365)
High support needs allowance (296)
High support needs allowance (procedure 296)
Complex support needs allowance (612)
Complex support needs allowance (procedure 612)
Early childhood education and care participation minimum gap payment (640)
Child related costs – carer support (597)
Child related costs – education support (599)
Child related costs – long-term guardian support (608)
Child related costs – long-term guardian support (procedure 608)
Child related costs – medical (596)
Child related costs – outfitting (600)
Child related costs – travel (595)

Related Legislation or Standard
Child Protection Act 1999
Child Protection Regulation 2011
Adoption Act 2009
Financial Accountability Act 2009

Related Government Guidelines
Statement of Commitment Between the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services and the foster and kinship carers of Queensland 2012
Financial Delegations Schedule
Child Safety Practice Manual
Financial Management Practice Manual

Forms
Child Related Costs Approval Form

Michael Hogan
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