POLICY

Title: Child Related Costs – Travel
Policy No.: CSPR565-8

Policy Statement:
The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (the department) 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 Services 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.

The following account categories are part of the Travel cost category:

- Travel - Client Support (Account code: 54580)
- Travel - Education Support (Account code: 54561)
- Travel - Family Contact (Account code: 54571)
- Travel - Medical (Account code: 54550)
- Travel - Overseas (Account code: 54472)

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.
Motor Vehicle Allowance - Carers

When a carer is required to travel extensive distances as part of an approved case plan the carer is entitled to claim the kilometric allowance for all mileage in excess for the 250km threshold per child per week.

Carers intending to transport children and young people in care are to possess a full driving licence and either comprehensive motor vehicle insurance or third party property damage insurance in order to receive the kilometric allowance reimbursement as per the Public Service Commission Motor Vehicle Allowances Directive.

Mileage up to 250km per week is covered in the fortnightly caring allowance. Where travel exceeds 250km, only the distance exceeding the 250km limit will be reimbursed. The 250km threshold is calculated pro rata if more than one child is being transported, for example:

- if the carer transports 2 children on a 100km journey for attendance at a school camp, this counts as 50km to each of their 250km thresholds
- if the carer transports child A on a 100km journey for attendance at a school camp, but has child B who is not attending the camp and is too young to be left at home, in the car, this counts as 100km toward child A’s 250km threshold.

The exemptions from the 250km threshold rule are:

- family contact
- attendance at carer training.

If foster carers are entitled to be paid for travel costs while using their motor vehicle then the rates set out in the Motor Vehicle Allowances Directive may be used to calculate payment.

For further details please refer to the Private Motor Vehicle Claims Procedure in conjunction with this policy. The process outlined in the Private Motor Vehicle Claims Procedure also applies to carers claiming motor vehicle allowance.

Reimbursement of Fuel Costs

The process outlined in the Private Motor Vehicle Claims Procedure - Reimbursement for Fuel Costs also applies to carers seeking reimbursement of fuel costs.

Translink Go Cards

All mileage and associated travel costs for family contact and carer training are excluded from mileage threshold and remain claimable through child related costs.

Subject to Child Safety Service Centre Manager approval, a TransLink go card may be purchased or credited to meet the public transport costs for a child, young person or parent in exceptional circumstances. Consideration must be given to reimbursement for eligible travel related to go card use in the first instance.
Where the travel meets the eligibility conditions and requirements as outlined in child related costs policies, and the Child Safety Service Centre Manager has determined that a pre-purchased and credited go card is the only option available to support the travel, go cards may be purchased and topped up to a maximum amount of $50.

In these circumstances, the go card will be purchased by the department with the department set up as the account holder, with the child, young person or parent as the card holder. A separate register is maintained for clients’ go cards that states the name of the child, young person or parent, client ID, date of the case plan, relevant Child Safety Officer, as well as information from the standard go card register.

The amount to be credited is determined by the frequency and cost of the anticipated travel expenses as identified in the child or young person’s case plan. Translink reports will be run monthly and reconciled against the travel costs outlined in the CRC. Discrepancies between approved travel and travel taken need to be resolved with the child, young person or parent and noted on the register prior to the next credit.

For further details, refer to ‘Corporate and Executive Services Policy and Procedure: TransLink’s go card’.

**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.

Delegations for approving intrastate, interstate and overseas travel are in listed the Child Safety Practice Manual, chapter 5.

The whole-of-government travel policy and delegations apply for all travel concerning carers and children and young people in out-of-home care, for further information please refer to:

- Air Travel Policy
- Travel – Domestic and Overseas Policy No: FSE002.9

**Cost items**

1. **Travel - Client Support (Account code: 54580)**

This account category is used to provide financial support for general (that is, non-medical and non-educational) travel costs for carers, including mileage in excess of the 250km threshold, and can include attendance at court, transport to and from child care or vacation care, respite, carer assisted driving lessons for young people and for costs associated with a change of placement. This account category may also be
used to assist parents with travel costs, where children are subject to statutory intervention under the *Child Protection Act 1999* and are residing at home, for attendance at court, other child-related appointments, or departmentally provided respite.

Young people who are living independently may be provided with financial assistance for travel related costs through this account for the purchase or reimbursement of fares (eg. bus, train ticket or taxi fares).

To be eligible for payments under this account 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.

### 2. Travel - Education Support (Account code: 54561)

This account category is used to provide financial support to carers for travel expenses, including mileage in excess of the 250km threshold, associated with a child or young person attending school in the public or private education systems or for their attendance at an educational camp or school excursion. The account category may also be used to assist parents with costs, where children are subject to statutory intervention under the *Child Protection Act 1999* and are residing at home, for travel associated with attendance at school or other educational activities (such as school camps and excursions).

This account also provides for financial support where the department requires a child or young person to attend a specific school as part of their case plan. Circumstances where this would apply include where the selected school is not the closest to the carer’s home or the child or young person is attending boarding school or tertiary institution.

Travel costs that may be reimbursed under this category include:

- flights
- coach and/or bus fares
- kilometric allowance in excess of the 250km threshold.

Care must be taken in the agreed method of transportation. The cheapest and safest option must be used, for example train or bus rather than taxi (CabCharge). This arrangement must be documented as part of the approved case plan.

Any applicable subsidies offered by the Department of Education, Training and Employment must be claimed prior to the department meeting the costs associated with school travel.

To be eligible for payments under this account 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.
3. Travel - Family Contact (Account code: 54571)

This account category is used to provide financial support to either the child's carer or family to enable family contact visits to take place in accordance with an approved case plan. The 250km mileage threshold does not apply to this account category.

This category is also used to enable a child or young person to attend a funeral of a family member or significant person.

This support can include:

- kilometric allowance for carers, as per ‘Directive: Motor Vehicle Allowance’
- fuel costs for family members
- flights
- bus, train and taxi fares.

To be eligible for payments under this account 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.

4. Travel – Medical (Account code: 54550)

This account category is used to provide financial support for travel expenses, including mileage in excess of the 250km threshold, for a child or young person who requires medical or therapeutic services.

In the first instance, for ongoing medical treatment, eligibility for the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme (Department of Health) available to all Health Care Card holders should be explored. The Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme (PTSS) provides direct assistance to patients and in some cases their carers to access specialist medical services that are not available locally. A subsidy can be provided to approved patients and carers (escorts) to assist in the cost of travel and accommodation to the nearest specialist medical service that is more than 50km from the patient's nearest hospital.

To be eligible for payments under this account 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.

5. Travel – Overseas (Account code: 54472)

This account category is used to provide financial support for expenses related to overseas travel such as the purchase of passports, passport photographs, visas, travel insurance and other travel-related costs. If a passport is purchased by the department, it is to be returned to the department on completion of travel.

The consent of the guardian is required for a child or young person in out-of-home care to travel overseas. Approval for travel (no cost) when the chief executive has guardianship must be granted by the Regional Director. For all overseas travel,
regardless of the destination, the Regional Director must endorse the child’s daily care arrangements.

Approval for overseas airfare and accommodation costs for a child or young person in out-of-home care must be granted by the Director-General in circumstances when the flight is under five (5) hours in duration eg: New Zealand. If the overseas travel time is beyond five hours then it needs to be approved by the Minister as stipulated in the whole of government Travel Policy. Approval for these costs will be considered only:

- to maintain family contact where it is assessed as essential for the well-being of children-in-care or to support a reunification plan
- to enable gifted children in care to participate at the international level in their field of excellence (for example, sporting competitions, academic competitions, cultural rewards)
- in cases where exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated that indicate the overseas travel is essential in maintaining a child or young person’s safety, best interests and well-being.

Approval will not be given to a child or young person in out-of-home care to participate in school excursions overseas where costs are involved.

Any costs relating to domestic travel required to enable overseas travel such as domestic airfares, are to be included as part of the total costs of the overseas trip.

Incidental costs for overseas travel, such as passport fees, visas and travel insurance may be approved by the Child Safety Service Centre Manager.

Where the Director-General has approved or refused overseas travel costs, letters of advice to the carer will be prepared by the region.

A Queensland Government Overseas Travel Approval Form (FIN–26) is not required for travel by a child in out-of-home care.

To be eligible for payments under this account 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.

6. Travel – Interstate and Intrastate

There is no specific account category for reimbursement of expenses related to interstate or intrastate travel. Interstate or intrastate travel expenses should be charged to the account code relating to the reason for travel such as client support, education support or family contact, in accordance with the prescribed eligibility criteria.
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**Links:**

**Procedures**
- Child Safety Practice Manual
- Directive no. 10/14 motor vehicle allowances
- Private motor vehicle claims procedure
- Overseas travel procedure
- Air Travel Policy

**Related Legislation or Standards**
- Child Protection Act 1999
- Child Protection Regulation 2011
- Adoptions Act 2009
- Financial Accountability Act 2009

**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)
- Child related costs – carer support (597)
- Child related costs – client support and family contact (598)
- 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)

Related Government Guidelines:
Statement of Commitment between the Department of Child Safety and the foster care services and the carers of Queensland
Schedule of Financial Delegations
Child Safety Practice Manual
Financial Management Practice Manual

Forms, Standard Letter or Memorandum
Child related costs approval form
Go card register child related costs form
FIN 11- Motor vehicle allowance
FIN 25 - Application for use of private motor vehicle for departmental purposes

Rescinded Policies
Child Related Costs – Travel CPD565-7

Michael Hogan
Acting Director-General