



CARER PAYMENT & CARER ALLOWANCE

If you care for an adult or a child, you may be eligible for Carer Payment and/or Carer Allowance.

This Factsheet explains common issues which arise for people claiming either of these payments and what to do if Centrelink rejects your claim or cancels your payment.

Carer Payment

Carer Payment is an income support payment for carers. It is the same rate as the Age Pension. Among other requirements (such as residency) to qualify for Carer Payment, the carer will need to:

- provide 'constant care' in the home of the care receiver;
- achieve a certain point score on the relevant assessment tool through answering a questionnaire on the claim form; and
- show that the care is required permanently or for a minimum of six months unless the condition is terminal.

Carer Allowance

Carer Allowance is a supplementary payment for carers. It is not affected by income and assets and can be paid in addition to other payments.

To qualify for Carer Allowance:

- the care receiver must have a disability;
- the care receiver must receive care on a daily basis; and
- the care is required permanently for a minimum period of 12 months unless the condition is terminal.

Assessment of care

There are different requirements depending on whether you care for a child or adult, whether a child has one of a specified list of disabilities and whether you live with the care receiver or otherwise.

When you claim either payment, there will be two forms, one for the carer and one for the care receiver's doctor to fill in. Each answer to those questions is awarded a number of points according to the relevant assessment tool to determine if the carer qualifies or not for either Carer Payment or Carer Allowance.

You must answer all questions carefully and accurately. The questions are about what basic daily activities the care receiver can do as opposed to what they cannot do. You should answer the questions by taking into account any aids or medication the person uses.

You should answer the questions with reference to the care receiver's conditions on an average to bad day.

Supervision

Care can include the care receiver's need for supervision. For example the care receiver may be at risk of falling if they are left alone or they will not take medicine if not prompted to.

The Carer Payment and Carer Allowance forms do not specifically address if the person requires supervision. Where this is an important form of care (such as if the person has a mental health condition) it is important to request that the treating doctor attaches a short letter explaining the reasons why supervision is necessary for the care receiver and how much time is spent doing this by the carer.

Constant care

To qualify for Carer Payment for a child or an adult you must personally provide constant care.

Centrelink's policy defines constant care as personally providing care on a daily basis for a significant period each day, generally equivalent to a working day.

Tribunals have interpreted the meaning of constant care differently to Centrelink's policy definition. Sometimes a person can qualify although care is not provided every day or the care is provided less than a working day's equivalent.

If you are not sure you meet this requirement you should test your eligibility by claiming the payment. If you are not successful we can provide you with advice.

Working, studying or training

You are able to still receive Carer Payment and engage in paid work, volunteer work, education or training if you do not do these activities in excess of 25 hours a week. The 25 hours includes the time it takes for you to travel to and from those places.

Centrelink policy states that if you work, train or study for more than 25 hours a week you are not providing constant care and therefore not eligible for Carer Payment.

Breaks from caring

If you receive Carer Payment, you can take breaks from caring for up to 63 days in any calendar year and still continue to receive Carer Payment. These 63 days are called temporary cessation of care days. You will need to notify Centrelink before you take this respite care leave.

The 63 day period may be extended if you have 'special reasons'. If you think this applies to you, you should seek the extension from Centrelink.

In addition to the 63 days respite period, you may still qualify for Carer Payment if the person being cared for has entered hospital and meets the hospitalisation requirements which requires you to be involved in their care while they are in hospital.

Being paid overseas

Carer Payment and Carer Allowance can be paid if you go overseas with the carer receiver for up to 6 weeks if the absence is temporary and you continue to provide constant care. If you stop caring

overseas, the temporary cessation of care days can also be used.

If you travel without the care receiver, you may apply for a temporary cessation of care.

If the care receiver goes overseas without the carer, the carer may apply for temporary cessation of care.

Appeal rights

If your claim for these payments is rejected or cancelled you have the right to appeal that decision to an Authorised Review Officer. You will need to do this within 13 weeks of the date of the previous decision to ensure full arrears may be payable.

If the reason why Centrelink rejected your claim is due to insufficient points then the best approach is to have new forms completed by both yourself and the treating doctor (where both forms failed to attract sufficient points). If you or the doctor alter your answers within the forms it is best for them to provide a letter in addition to this to explain why the answer has changed (for example they filled in the form quickly or misinterpreted a question).

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