

POLICY

Title: Payment of financial assistance to adoptive parents

Policy Number. 635-1

Policy Statement:

In exceptional circumstances the Chief Executive may approve the payment of financial assistance to adoptive parents (including prospective adoptive parents) of a child whose adoption was made under the *Adoption Act 2009*. Financial assistance may be paid if the Chief Executive considers it necessary to ensure the wellbeing and best interests of an adopted child.

Payment of financial assistance to adoptive parents is only expected to affect a small cohort of young people and their families.

Principles:

The wellbeing and best interests of an adopted child, both through childhood and the rest of his or her life, are paramount considerations in all adoption matters. (*Adoption Act 2009*, section 6).

Adoption is an appropriate long-term care option for a child if the child's parents choose adoption for the child's long-term care or the child does not have a parent who is willing and able to protect the child from harm and meet the child's need for long-term stable care. (*Adoption Act 2009*, section 6).

Objectives:

This policy aims to provide guidance to assist the decision maker to make a decision regarding the payment of financial assistance to:

1. couples who have been assessed as willing and able to meet the child's needs, who without financial assistance will not be able to meet the costs of the child's care needs due to the complexity of the child's needs
2. adoptive parents and prospective adoptive parents who have adopted or are adopting a child whose support needs were not known at the time of the adoption or placement, or the support needs have increased significantly since the adoption order or placement was made, and financial assistance is considered necessary to ensure the wellbeing, stability and best interests of the child and placement.

Scope:

Payment of financial assistance to adoptive parents of a child less than 18 years of age may be considered where:

- the child's adoptive parents were approved to adopt the child because they were willing to parent the child,
- the adoptive parents had the assessed ability to meet the child's needs and it was assessed

that if they were to receive financial assistance they would have the financial capacity to be suitable adoptive parents for the child;

- it would not have been possible to secure a permanent adoptive placement for the child in a timely manner if financial assistance was not paid to adoptive parents,
- the child's needs have increased significantly since the adoption order was made and the payment of financial assistance to the adoptive parents is considered necessary to ensure the wellbeing and best interests of the child.
- foster carers or adoptive parents have the capacity to adopt a child in out-of-home care who has high support needs, and financial barriers are preventing the child from being adopted.
- the adopted child has needs that require a high level of support and the costs of meeting these needs cannot be met by other government allowances, benefits or publicly available services.

The decision to seek approval for financial assistance to be paid to adoptive parents or prospective adoptive parents will be considered on a case-by-case basis having regard to a child's specific needs.

Payment types:

Adoption fortnightly caring allowance

The Adoption fortnightly caring allowance is paid at the same rate as the fortnightly caring allowance paid to approved foster and kinship carers.

The payment of the Adoption fortnightly caring allowance may be approved where the adopted child has needs that require a high level of support and the costs of meeting these needs cannot be met by other government allowances, benefits or publically available services.

Payment of the Adoption fortnightly caring allowance is reviewed each year by Adoption Services. A condition of payment is that adoptive parents will provide information each year, or more regularly if requested, to assist the department to determine whether the payment of the Adoption fortnightly caring allowance continues to be required.

Adoption high support needs allowance

The Adoption high support needs allowance is a fortnightly supplement to the Adoption fortnightly caring allowance and is paid at the same rate as the Carer high support needs allowance. Approval may be given for adoptive parents of a child who has demonstrable high support needs, who receive the Adoption fortnightly caring allowance, to also receive the Adoption High Support Needs Allowance if:

- the child is assessed as having needs that require a high level of support, consistently resulting in costs that exceed the Adoption fortnightly caring allowance. and
- placement decision making and a comprehensive assessment were completed at the time of the child's adoption and the assessment (including any specialist disability assessment undertaken) provide evidence that the Adoption high support needs allowance is required to ensure the wellbeing and best interests of the adopted child.

Payment of the Adoption high support allowance is reviewed each year by Adoption Services. A condition of payment is that adoptive parents will provide information each year, or more regularly if requested, to assist the department to determine whether the payment of the Adoption high

support needs allowance continues to be required to ensure the wellbeing and best interests of the child.

Adoption complex needs allowance

The Adoption complex needs allowance is a fortnightly supplement to the Adoption fortnightly caring allowance and the Adoption high support needs allowance and is paid at the same rate as the Carer complex support needs allowance. Approval may be given for adoptive parents of a child who has demonstrable high support needs, who receive the Adoption fortnightly caring allowance, and the Adoption high support needs allowance to also receive the Adoption complex needs allowance if:

- the child is assessed as having complex or extreme needs that result in even greater costs that exceed both the fortnightly caring allowance and high support needs allowance: and
- placement decision making and a comprehensive assessment were completed at the time of the child's adoption and the assessment (including any specialist disability assessment undertaken) provide evidence that the Adoption complex support needs allowance is required to ensure the wellbeing and best interests of the adopted child.

Payment of the Adoption complex needs allowance is reviewed each year by Adoption Services. A condition of payment is that adoptive parents will provide information each year, or more regularly if requested, to assist the department to determine whether the payment of the Adoption complex support needs allowance continues to be required to ensure the wellbeing and best interests of the child.

Child Related Costs – Adoption

Child Related Costs – Adoption are one off payments for child related costs the Chief Executive may make to adoptive parents of a child whose adoption was arranged under the *Adoption Act 2009*.

The expenditure, or reimbursement, of Child Related Costs – Adoption to adoptive parents, to meet significant costs relating to a child's care, may be approved where the adopted child has needs that require a high level of support and the costs of meeting these needs cannot be met by other government allowances, benefits or publically available services.

Decisions regarding approval of Child Related Costs – Adoption must comply with section 61 of the *Financial Accountability Act 2009* and all goods and services purchased must be considered reasonable by the relevant financial delegate.

All transactions are to be substantiated (i.e. receipts) and all reimbursement documentation is to be maintained to ensure an adequate audit trail.

All items purchased under this category belong to the adopted child and his or her adoptive parents.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The delegation to approve payments or give assistance to an adoptive parent is held by the Director-General, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services. (*Adoption Act 2009*, section 325).

Adoption Services will prepare a Memorandum for Approval for the Director-General requesting approval for financial assistance to be paid to adoptive parents to ensure the wellbeing and best interest of an adopted child.

Administration of payments:

Regular adoption care payments can be made through SAP via a General Purpose Expenditure Voucher.

Authority:

Adoption Act 2009, section 325

Delegations:

Director-General, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

Records File No.: 12/270/99554-P1

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Office: Child Protection and Adoption Design and Commissioning

Help Contact: Child Protection and Adoption Design and Commissioning

Links:

Adoption Practice Manual

The wellbeing and best interest of the child in adoption (CPD 626-2)

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Director-General