Frequently Asked Questions: Foster Care Allowance Changes

Young people turning 18 while at school.

Due to changes made in 2007 to the age children are required to commence prep, many young people will now finish year 12 after they turn 18.

In response, the Expenses - Fortnightly Caring Allowance and Interstate Foster Payments policy (No: 365-12) has been amended to reflect that Foster and Kinship Carers, Long-Term Guardians and Permanent Guardians who have a young person in their care who is turning 18 and still enrolled in school will continue to receive the Fortnightly Caring Allowance. This change will provide permanency and stability for young people who are completing their final year of schooling.

In addition, from mid-2020, eligibility to receive the fortnightly caring allowance will increase to provide support to young people up to 19 years of age. CSYW will be working with key stakeholders in devising the processes to implement this change. This adds to supports already provided by Child Safety funded programs such as the Smith Family's Care 2 Achieve scholarships, Next Steps - Life Without Barriers (LWB) and the Pyjama Foundation.

Please find below a list of frequently asked questions in relation to these changes. If there is a query that is not listed below, please contact your Foster and Kinship Care Agency or Child Safety Officer (CSO) to seek further information and monitor Child Safety webpage for updates.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is this important?

Child Safety recognises that transition to adulthood is not achieved simply because the young person reaches 18 years of age. The transition to adulthood is not a point in time occurrence, but a developmental process. Child Safety is committed to supporting young people through their transition to adulthood to ensure ongoing consistency and stability and that their best interests remain paramount.

Is the fortnightly caring allowance relative to all full-time study or just the senior year of high school?

For carers to be eligible for the continued payment of the allowance, the young person must be enrolled in high school or an equivalent course. This includes courses that contribute to the young person obtaining a Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE).

Tertiary courses, such as university courses can be considered and should be discussed and planned for with Child Safety in transition to adulthood planning.

What if a young person needs to ‘repeat’ or complete another year of schooling?

Should a young person be required to complete Year 12 again (repeat), the fortnightly caring allowance will continue as long as the young person is enrolled in school.

What if a young person leaves or becomes absent from the placement during their final year of study?

Under these circumstances the general procedure for the payment of the Fortnightly caring allowance is to be followed. Please refer to Procedure: Expenses – Fortnightly caring allowance and inter-state payments (365).
When will the Fortnightly caring Allowance end?

The allowance will cease on the final day the young person attends school. Please note this may not be the end of the school term, as in many circumstances Year 12 students complete their schooling year earlier than other students. Carers will be required to provide the date of the young person’s final day at school to their CSO.

Will the CSO and the Child Safety Service Centre (CSSC) continue to provide case management for the young person?

Case Management will not continue for a young person who has turned 18, however a support service case will be opened.

Is a Support Service Case required to facilitate the ongoing provision of the Fortnightly Caring Allowance?

The support service case will enable the provision of payments for the ongoing Fortnightly caring allowance.

Will a young person remain in the care of the department under this arrangement?

Once a young person turns 18, they are no longer subject to a Child Protection Order. However, they will be invited to continue to work with Child Safety under a Support Service Case.

If a young person is placed with a General or Kinship Carer and the approval status is due to expire after the young person turns 18, do they need do go through a renewal?

Foster Carers and Kinship Carers will not be required to go through a renewal as the young person is now considered an adult. If there are other children in care in the household, the young person will be considered an Adult Household Member and will be required to apply for and/or hold a valid Blue Card.

Will carers continue to receive support through their Foster and Kinship Care agency for the young person?

As the young person will be classified as an adult there will be no requirement for the Foster and Kinship Care agency to provide support to the carer.

Does the Expenses – Fortnightly caring allowance and inter-state foster payments include Residential Care?

The policy does not extend to young people being cared for in Residential Care. Alternative arrangements will need to be discussed between the Residential Care provider and Child Safety for the ongoing care requirements for young people who turn 18 whilst enrolled in school and who are placed in Residential Care.

Will any other additional supports be put in place for foster and kinship carer’s once a young person has completed their final year at school?

Provisions for ongoing supports for young people exiting care can be developed and implemented through their Transition to Independence plan, in addition Child Safety are currently exploring additional ongoing supports for young adults who have exited care but are still receiving ongoing support from their previous primary carers. It is anticipated that these changes may come into effect from mid-2020.

What will the ongoing supports look like for young people who are 19 years of age and transitioning to adulthood?

The processes surrounding this change are still being developed and the Department will advise when more details are at hand. Child Safety’s best hopes are that young people will have strong connections with support networks, be connected to family, community and culture, have necessary life skills, have plans for education, training or employment, be able to access safe and stable accommodation, and know who to contact for assistance.