

F2. Flexible Support Funding

F2.1 Description

Flexible Support Funding (FSF) is a funding subsidy administered by ISA's and paid to child care services to enable them to be more responsive to families and children with additional needs, such as those with a disability, from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background, a refugee child or an Indigenous child. In order to be eligible for FSF, the child care service must have already enrolled a child with additional needs.

If the SSP has identified the need for FSF, an FSF Application Form must be completed and submitted to the ISA.

The amount of FSF funding available in each ISA region is limited to an annual capped allocation. Eligibility for FSF does not mean an automatic entitlement to funding.

F2.2 Approved purposes for Flexible Support Funding

ISA's will approve FSF to assist the child care service to employ an additional educator to increase the staff-to-child ratio above licensing requirements. However, it can also be used as a financial contribution to family day educators and in-home carers to attend specialist training after hours.

Approved purposes for FSF include:

- assisting child care services to include a child with ongoing high support needs in circumstances where it is unclear whether ISS is required on an ongoing basis
- enabling release time for permanent educators to settle a child with ongoing high support needs into the child care environment, for example, a child who is transferring to a new care environment or type (such as from long day care (LDC) to outside school hours care (OSHC))
- enabling release time for permanent educators to attend specialist training that is relevant to the inclusion of a child with additional needs
- enabling release time for permanent educators to prepare a SSP to support the inclusion of a child with additional needs
- providing a financial contribution to family day educators and in-home carers unable to attend specialist training during business hours. Specialist training must relate specifically to the additional needs of the child in care

- providing home based educators with an additional carer so that a child or children with additional needs who attends on an irregular basis can participate in out-of-home excursions or other special activities, (for example, playgroups or vacation care excursions)
- assisting services to include a child with additional needs in circumstances where attendance may be irregular and an application for ISS may not be appropriate, for example, in occasional care, MACS, flexible/innovative services or mobile services
- assisting services in circumstances where ISS has already been approved but an emergency situation has resulted in the child requiring additional hours of care for a time-limited period.
- Details on the FSF subsidy rates and funding limits are provided at section F2.6.

F2.3 Types of Support that are not approved uses for Flexible Support Funding

ISA's will ensure FSF is not used to provide assistance for the following purposes:

- augmenting staffing levels to meet local licensing requirements
- as an interim or alternative source of funding while an application for ISS is being processed
- purchasing specialist equipment or resources
- transport costs
- medical and therapeutic interventions
- settlement services for immigrants
- support more appropriately funded through ISS or Bicultural Support
- support more appropriately funded by state/territory governments or other agencies.

F2.4 FSF Application and approval processes

Child care services wishing to apply for FSF should contact their local ISA. An ISA will help identify the support needs of the child care service and assist with the development of a SSP.

If the SSP identifies the need for FSF, the ISA will assist the service to complete an FSF application form. If a SSP has been completed, it must accompany the FSF application form. If the need for FSF is urgent, a child care service can commence a SSP over the phone and complete it once support is in place.

Once an ISA has received an FSF Application, the ISA must:

- notify the child care service within four business days of the outcome of their FSF Application and if approved, provide the service with an FSF approval letter

- provide a follow-up call or visit to the child care service within 10 business days of FSF approval to assess the appropriateness of the support provided
- process claims for FSF within 30 days of receipt of a correctly rendered invoice.

ISA's are responsible for assessing applications in line with the FSF guidelines. Once the child care service has been notified that the FSF application has been approved, the child care service can proceed with the employment of an additional educator/carer.

By signing and submitting an FSF Application Form, the child care service accepts that they will be entering into an agreement with the ISA with regard to the conditions for use and receipt of flexible support funding. FSF must be expended in line with these procedures and for the hours and purposes approved.

F2.5 FSF Claims

Child care services will be required to submit a FSF Claim Form, available from ISA's, to the local ISA within 60 days of the support end date. Claims submitted after this time will be invalid unless the child care service has applied for and received written approval from the ISA for an extension to the 60 days.

The claim for FSF must be for the actual hours the additional staff member was employed for, up to the approved FSF hours. The claim should be accompanied by evidence such as time sheets. Only expenses incurred following the approval by the ISA may be claimed through FSF. Claims for retrospective funding will not be accepted.

For Family Day Care (FDC) Schemes or in-home care (IHC) carers who are submitting a FSF claim on behalf of an educator/carer for out-of-hours training, the claim must be submitted within 60 days after training has been completed.

FSF is paid in arrears by the ISA directly to the child care service or the coordinating service/scheme for FDC and IHC. FSF cannot be claimed when the child care service is closed, for example, on public holidays, or when the child does not attend child care on the days that FSF has been approved.

F2.6 FSF subsidy rate

The FSF subsidy is a flat hourly rate that is indexed on 1 July each year. The rate is aligned to the ISS rate and is consistent across all states and territories. Actual staffing costs may vary from one area to another according to the state or award level, the contract of the additional employee, and the basis

on which they are employed. FSF is not intended to cover all employee costs but does provide a significant contribution to meeting these costs. The table below provides the current FSF subsidy rates and limits that apply across the different child care service types.

Limits apply to the number of daily and annual hours of FSF a child care service can access. These limits vary according to service type and activity (see table 1 below).

Table 1: Flexible Support Funding Limits Service Type
All eligible service types (excluding VC, FDC and IHC)
<p>Vacation Care</p> <p>Services are eligible for a \$15.95 hourly contribution with a daily cap of eight hours for a maximum of 80 hours each year, i.e. 12 months from date of approval, in respect of each eligible child enrolled.</p>
<p>Family Day Care and In Home Care</p> <p>Services are eligible for a \$15.95 hourly contribution with a weekly cap of five hours for a maximum of five weeks (or 25 hours) each year, i.e. 12 months from the date of approval, in respect of each eligible child enrolled.</p> <p>FSF can be used to employ an additional carer to increase the staff-to-child ratio above licensing requirements on out-of-home excursions such as playgroups or vacation care excursions.</p> <p>FSF can also be used to provide a financial contribution for educators who are unable to attend specialist training during business hours. Training must relate specifically to the additional needs of a child in care. Educators are eligible for a \$15.95 hourly contribution for a maximum of 15 hours each year or 12 month period.</p> <p>FSF cannot be used to employ an additional carer within the FDC or IHC home environment.</p>
All service types