

Inclusion Support Subsidy

C1. Description

From 1 January 2009, the Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS) is administered nationally by KU Children's Services, the National ISS Provider (NISSP). The ISS is paid to support child care services to include children with high ongoing support needs so that they can be cared for in environments with typically developing peers. The ISS is a contribution towards the costs associated with employing an additional carer or educator. It is also a Capacity Payment made to Family Day Care educators and In Home Carers in recognition of the additional care required by children with ongoing high support needs. The ISS is limited to a flat hourly rate, which is determined by the Department and is indexed annually.

C2. What the Inclusion Support Subsidy can be used for

The NISSP will ensure that the ISS is used in the following ways:

In centre based services:

- to engage an additional educator to increase the staff to child ratio when a child or children with ongoing high support needs are in care

In home based services:

- as a Capacity Payment to Family Day Care educators in recognition of the additional care and attention required by children with ongoing high support needs in their care and the impact of this on the educator
- as an Additional Payment to In Home Care carers in recognition of the additional care and attention required by children with ongoing high support needs in their care and the impact of this on the carer
- to engage an additional carer to accompany a Family Day Care educator or In Home Carer and child or children with ongoing high support needs on out-of-home excursions or other special activities, for example Family Day Care playgroups or vacation care excursions.

C2.1 Non-approved Purposes

The NISSP will ensure that the ISS is **not** used for the following purposes:

- specific assistance to the child to access non-mainstream child care, such as externally based early intervention programs, external one-to-one
- counselling, speech therapy, physiotherapy programs, therapeutic equipment (such as hearing aids, wheelchairs), medication and medical/nursing assistance
- to engage relief educators while educators attend training relating to the provision of medical/nursing assistance (see section C2.2)

- support services (not related to child care) for the family or the child care service, including transport for the child
- fitting of specialist equipment and/or training educators on the fitting of equipment
- settlement services for immigrants
- building modifications to the child care environment
- assistance for which funding is the responsibility of a state or territory Government or other body, such as respite care
- assistance to increase staffing levels in order to meet licensing requirements
- to fund educators to undertake medical/nursing assistance and procedures
- In home based care environments, ISS will not be paid for an additional carer in the home setting.

The list above is not intended to be exhaustive. Further clarification about “non approved purposes” will be provided by the National ISS Provider or the Department as required.

C2.2.1 Medical/Nursing Assistance

“Medical/nursing assistance” is defined as anything that is not covered by general first aid procedures and thus requires specific training. The NISSP will ensure that the ISS is **not** used to employ an educator to provide medical/nursing assistance or to engage relief staff while educators attend such training. It is the responsibility of child care services to ensure that an appropriately qualified person carries out these procedures.

Below are examples of medical/nursing assistance and procedures for which ISS funding cannot be used:

- catheterisation
- administration of insulin and monitoring of glucose levels
- tracheostomy suction and replacement
- administration of medication or feeding through a gastrostomy button and checking for blockages/displacement
- tube feeding
- administering rectal suppositories such as Valium
- oxygen administration and monitoring
- oral suctioning
- stomal therapy

This list is not intended to be exhaustive. Further clarification about excluded procedures will be provided by the National ISS Provider or the Department as required.

C3. How to access the ISS

C3.1 Eligibility

The ISS is limited to annual capped allocations available under the Australian Government Child Care Support Program. Eligibility for the ISS does not mean an automatic entitlement to ISS funding.

The NISSP will apply the following criteria in assessing an Application for ISS funding:

- ensure the child who is attending the child care service has ongoing high support needs
- a Service Support Plan (SSP) has been developed to assess the child care service's inclusion capacity and the service and the ISF assesses from the SSP that there is justification to proceed to apply for the ISS funding.

C3.1.1 Eligible Child Care Services

The NISSP will ensure that the ISS is only available to child care services that are approved for Child Care Benefit (CCB) or funded under the Budget Based Funding Program (refer to section A5 – IPSP Eligibility).

C3.1.2 Children with ongoing high support needs

Children with demonstrated ongoing high support needs include:

- children with a diagnosed disability
- children who are undergoing continuing assessment of a disability
- children from a refugee or humanitarian intervention background who demonstrate behaviours symptomatic with having experienced or having been subject to torture or trauma in their country of origin or during their refugee experience.

ISS Application Forms must include current documentary evidence of the child's diagnosed disability, continuing assessment of a disability or refugee status.

Some children with a diagnosed disability may not require ongoing assistance in order to be included in the care environment. For example, a child might only require environmental modifications to be included in a care environment. Where children require specialist equipment for their inclusion, refer to section F4 – Specialist Equipment.

The ISS age eligibility of a dependent is up to 24 years, at the discretion of Child Care Services in conjunction with relevant state and territory regulations. This is consistent with the upper level of the CCB Age limit.

C3.1.3 Short-term and irregular utilisation in centre based care

For children with ongoing high support needs who attend child care on an occasional basis or whose pattern of attendance is not regular and not likely

to be ongoing, services may need to apply for Flexible Support Funding (FSF), which is discussed at section F2. Child care services may seek advice from ISAs regarding FSF support.

C4. How to apply for the Inclusion Support Subsidy

The NISSP needs to ensure that child care services follow the steps outlined below when applying for ISS funding:

STEP 1 – Develop a Service Support Plan (SSP) with the assistance of an Inclusion Support Agency (ISA) to assess the child care service's inclusion capacity (refer also to section F1 - SSPs)

STEP 2 – Using the SSP, the child care service and ISA assess whether there is a need to apply for ISS funding. If yes, child care services complete the centre based care or home based care Application Form (available from the NISSP website at www.ku.com.au or local ISA)

STEP 3 – Child care services must submit the relevant documentary evidence to NISSP for the child's ongoing high support needs (see section C4.3)

STEP 4 – Receive endorsement from the ISA for the Application

STEP 5 – Submit the Application Form to the NISSP with the Service Support Plan (SSP) attached

At the review date:

STEP 6 – Review the SSP and Application to determine whether the need for the approved level of support has changed

STEP 7 – Apply for a Continuation of ISS funding by completing an Application Form (available from the NISSP website)

STEP 8 – Submit the Application Form to the NISSP

If there is a change in the child care environment which impacts on the level of ISS funding required:

STEP 9 – Complete an Application Form or Decrease Form (available from the NISSP website).

C4.1 Service Support Plan

The development of a SSP may be triggered by the enrolment of a child with ongoing high support needs. The focus of the SSP is building the capacity of educators to include the child in the child care environment and must reflect the needs and modifications educators will make to support the inclusion of all children. The completed and signed SSP must be included in the ISS Application Form.

Further information about SSPs is located in section F1 IPSP Guidelines – Service Support Plans.

C4.2 ISS Application Form

If a Service Support Plan (SSP) identifies the need for Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS) assistance, the service should complete an ISS Application Form, which is available from the NISSP website at www.ku.com.au or ISA (refer to Appendix B for contact details).

The Application Form must be endorsed by the local ISA for the child care service. The ISA will assist the service to complete the Application Form and endorse the form when completed. The completed ISS Application Form is then submitted to the NISSP.

C4.3 Documentary Evidence

The NISSP's assessment of an application for ISS funding is based on a child care service supplying documentary evidence of the child's refugee status and/or diagnosed disability or continuous assessment of a disability.

Evidence for a diagnosed disability may include:

- Centrelink documentation stating a parent's or guardian's eligibility for Carers Allowance with respect to the child
- the child's Health Care Card stating the disability code (CD)
- the child's Disability Support Pension (DSP), if the child is over 16 years of age
- a qualified medical practitioner's confirmation of a diagnosis
- the results of an assessment by a registered psychologist
- in rural, remote and very remote areas, evidence of disability may be provided by an allied health professional
- Carers Allowance Information Form.

Evidence for a child undergoing continuous assessment for a disability may include:

- an appointment letter for an assessment by a medical practitioner
- supporting documentation or diagnostic report signed by a qualified medical practitioner or registered psychologist
- in rural, remote and very remote areas, supporting documentation or report signed by an allied health professional attesting to the child undergoing further assessment for the purpose of diagnosing a disability.

Evidence for a child from a refugee background demonstrating behaviours symptomatic with having experienced trauma and torture may include:

- documentary evidence of the child's refugee status. As visa codes are subject to change, ISA's and/or child care services must check with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship for the current humanitarian-related visa codes
- the results of an assessment by a qualified medical practitioner or registered psychologist.

Documentary evidence provided with the Application Form must be current (dated within 12 months of the Application being submitted) and signed or otherwise validated by the medical practitioner or psychologist.

Documentary evidence will be assessed by the NISSP. In some cases the child care service will be notified that documentary evidence will not be required for future applications for this child while enrolled at the service.

C4.4 Exceptional Circumstances

Where it can be demonstrated that the child care service requires additional hours to include the child in exceptional circumstances, exemption from the ISS Guidelines may be granted by the NISSP in negotiation with the Department. The details of the need must be included in the SSP and included on the ISS Application Form submitted to the NISSP.

Exceptional circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis and are subject to approval by the Department. The Department will advise the NISSP of the outcome of the request for exemption.

C4.5 Shared Care Arrangements in Centre Based Care

Where more than one child with ongoing high support needs is in attendance in the same care environment, the child care service must explore the use of a Shared Care arrangement. A Shared Care arrangement occurs where one additional educator is employed to support the inclusion of more than one child in a care environment. When completing the ISS Application Form, the child care service (in consultation with the ISA) will determine if a Shared Care arrangement could meet the service's needs.

C4.6 ISS Assessment and Approval

The NISSP will assess the Application Form against the eligibility requirements as set out in these Guidelines and will notify the service of the outcome of the ISS Application.

If the ISS Application is approved, the NISSP will inform the service of the:

- approved level of funding
- the approved number of hours an additional educator can provide per week
- start and end date of the ISS funding period
- date that the ISS review process is to commence.

C4.6.1 Approval period

The NISSP can approve ISS for up to six months from the start date for eligible children undergoing continuous assessment and for up to 12 months for a child with a diagnosed disability or a refugee child.

The number of times an application for the continuation of ISS funding can be approved for a child undergoing continuous assessment will depend on the individual circumstances of each case. The NISSP will apply the following criteria in assessing an application for continuation of funding for a child undergoing continuous assessment:

Appointment for assessment is scheduled – Metropolitan Areas

Where the family has a scheduled appointment for assessment and this appointment is greater six months away from the start date of the current ISS Approval, the NISSP may approve one application for the continuation of funding for a further six months, providing a total of 12 months funding. Confirmation of the appointment date must be provided with at the time of review.

NOTE: It is expected that a new ISS Application and SSP would be completed at the 12 month mark.

Appointment for assessment is scheduled – Rural and Remote Areas

Where the family has a scheduled appointment for assessment and this appointment is greater six months away from the start date of the current ISS Approval, the NISSP may approve two applications for the continuation of funding for a further six months each, providing a total of 18 months funding. Confirmation of the appointment date must be provided with each review.

NOTE: It is expected that a new ISS Application and SSP would be completed at the 12 month mark.

No appointment for assessment is scheduled, however, a referral has been made recommending further assessment.

Where the family has received a referral for further assessment but has not made an appointment at the time of the request for the continuation of funding, the NISSP will only approve the ISS Application for six months.

Confirmation that an appointment for assessment has been made or an assessment is in the process of being undertaken must be provided at the time of review.

Exceptional Circumstances

Where extenuating circumstances, beyond the control of the family result in continuous ongoing assessment past the periods allowed for, consideration may be provided for the extended continuation of funding. A statement from the service explaining the individual circumstances must be provided to support the application.

C4.6.2 ISS agreement by child care services

The approval of an ISS Application is contingent on a child care service agreeing to the terms and conditions of the ISS Funding Application as detailed on the ISS Application Forms and NISSP website. This includes implementing an inclusive program and the actions in the Service Support Plan (SSP).

In addition, the child care service is responsible for:

- evaluation and revision of the SSP
- lodging the Claim for Payment and Attendance Record at the end of the ISS claim period
- employing an additional educator consistent with applicable industrial laws (see section C4.9)
- financial management and accountability of ISS funds and program delivery
- providing all reporting requirements to the NISSP
- utilising any ISS funds in accordance with these Guidelines and only for the approved purposes
- applying for a continuation of funding if required
- notifying the NISSP and the ISA of any changes to circumstances, including a reduction in hours of support required or when the child leaves the service, or when the service is sold/transferred to a new operator.

C4.6.3 Service Support Plan

In the case of ISS, a Service Support Plan (SSP) must be completed before the child care service is able to apply for the subsidy. The SSP must accompany the application for ISS.

See section F1 of IPSP Guidelines for details regarding SSPs.

C4.7 Review and Continuation of Funding

After the initial 6-month or 12-month approval period, child care services can apply for a continuation of ISS funds by submitting a Continuation of Funding Application to the NISSP. The review for ISS funding will be undertaken by a child care service in consultation with an ISA, and will involve:

- an evaluation of the previous SSP and care environment
- evaluation of whether ongoing ISS support is required
- evaluation of whether there is a change in the level of support needed.

Other events which can trigger a review of the SSP include:

- a child's needs change, impacting on the number of hours approved, Shared Care arrangements, or the physical environment
- a child with ongoing high support needs enters or leaves the service and/or care environment
- a significant change occurs in the care environment, such as staffing changes
- the service changes ownership

Where a review indicates that the required level of ISS funding has increased, the service can apply to the NISSP to vary their application. Variations to the original ISS approval may carry the same end date as the original approved application. A decrease in the level of support needed will require the service to notify the NISSP of this change.

A child care service must notify the NISSP if the required level of ISS support changes or is no longer required by completing and submitting the appropriate ISS forms. The NISSP is responsible for auditing claims made by child care services. See section C5.5.

C4.8 Variations or changes to the child care environment

C4.8.1 A child with ongoing high support needs enters or leaves the care environment and/or child care service

The level of ISS funding required is determined by the child care service's capacity to include children with ongoing high support needs. When a child with ongoing high support needs moves to another care environment and/or child care service, discussion with the ISA will determine whether to review an existing SSP or to develop a new SSP. Through the SSP process it will be identified if the child care service requires additional support to include the child and if so, what level of support is required.

C4.8.2 A service changes owner and/or operator

Where a child care service in receipt of ISS funding changes owner and/or operator, the new service operator is required to submit a **new** ISS Application Form. The service should contact the Inclusion Support Agency to assist in doing a review of the SSP to determine if ISS support is still required and what level of support is needed.

The new operator must notify the NISSP of a change to service ownership within 30 days, by completing a Change of Ownership Form. The new operator must then lodge an ISS Application Form as soon as they receive confirmation of their Child Care Benefit (CCB) approval. A copy of the CCB Approval Certificate or letter of CCB approval should be attached to the ISS Application Form.

If the Application is approved, the NISSP will, where appropriate, approve the Application from the date of the change in ownership, provided the Application is submitted within three months of the change of ownership date.

Claims for payment prior to notification of the outcome of the funding Application will not be accepted.

C4.9 Conditions relating to educators employed with the ISS

Where the child care service receives Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS) to employ an additional educator, the service is responsible for:

- complying with the requirements of the relevant state/territory legislation, regulatory requirements and Awards for child care employees or applicable Federal Industrial Relations Laws and its requirements and considering these requirements when employing additional educators
- ensuring that the number of ISS funded additional educators in a service at any one time is limited to no more than 10 per cent of the service's currently utilised child care places. Note: Due to the nature of vacation care bookings, Vacation Care Services that are unable to provide utilised child care places for the full application period may provide an estimate of expected utilisation based on usage over the past twelve months.

Where a child is absent from the child care service the ISS funded educator employed under ISS should receive appropriate notice in line with award provisions. If employed as a casual staff member, stand down provisions should apply.

Educators funded by the ISS funding **cannot** be used to meet state or territory licensing or regulatory requirements. Any educators funded by the ISS must be in addition to the number of staff already required by licensing or regulatory requirements.

Trainees can not be employed as the additional educator at the same time that they are completing their required trainee hours.