

Outside School Hours Care (OSHC)

Information for Parents

Benefits of OSHC

OSHC supports children to develop social connection while having fun and learning with their peers. The benefits of OSHC include opportunities to engage in multi-age settings, participate in new activities, foster personal interests, and develop new friendships. Beyond benefits to children, OSHC services provide the opportunity for families to access an affordable and enriching care option that is local to a child's school or home.

Activities offered at OSHC

The activities and routine at OSHC will vary depending on the individual needs of the children, the community, and the service provider. All activities at OSHC are supervised by trained educators.

Each OSHC service delivers an educational program plan that is designed to meet the interests of the children at the service. Programmed activities may include such things as arts and crafts, sport and recreation pursuits, gardening and sustainability, music and drama, incursions, excursions, cooking, and engaging games.

OSHC services provide children with the opportunity to engage in unscheduled and outdoor play (adhering to the physical activity guidelines). Some children may choose to use their time at OSHC to complete their homework tasks, read or engage in quiet activities.

Food at OSHC

Typically, children are provided meals at before school care and after school care and bring their own food to vacation care.

OSHC services offer menus that must meet the National Regulations and National Quality Standard, the Australian Dietary Guidelines, and the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating. The food provided must consider any health requirements (such as allergies or intolerances) as well as any cultural or religious requirements. The Healthy Eating Advisory Service (HEAS) supports OSHC providers to adhere to the guidelines and standards for food at OSHC. A sample menu can be found at the [Healthy Eating Advisory Service](#). Parents are encouraged to raise concerns or specific requirements for food at OSHC directly with OSHC services.

Enrolling in OSHC

Parents are required to complete an enrolment form for their child to access the OSHC service. Each OSHC service will have its own enrolment process. The enrolment form will capture important information about the child, their interests, medical and allergy support needs, and emergency contact details.

Hours of operation

Hours of operation vary depending on the school's timetable and community need. Before school care generally operates from around 7am until the first school bell. After school care generally operates from the end of a school day until 6pm. Vacation care generally operates between 7am and 6pm, though not every OSHC service will offer all these types of care. Some services will also offer care on pupil-free days, and on days where school ends earlier than usual, such as the last day of term. Typically, the school council influences the OSHC hours of operation based on parent and wider community childcare needs.

Costs/Fees

A standard fee is between \$7 and \$10 per hour, though for most families, access to the Child Care Subsidy means that this is heavily subsidised. Almost all families will only pay between 15 percent and 50 percent of this cost. This may mean that a session of care can cost as little as \$3.00-\$5.00 which will usually include a meal or snack.

Subsidies available and eligibility criteria

Parents and Carers can apply for Commonwealth subsidies through Centrelink - Services Australia. The subsidies available include:

Child Care Subsidy (CCS)

This is a subsidy available for parents and carers who use an approved childcare service and are responsible for the fees. It applies to children aged 13 or younger, or aged 14 to 18 with disability who need supervision. Almost all families are eligible for CCS. The amount that is subsidised depends on two factors:

- **Activity Test:** Whether parents or carers are undertaking activities such as work, searching for work, study, or volunteering. The list of recognised activities is available on the Service Australia website.
- **Income Test:** For families earning up to \$70,015 per annum, 85% of the cost is subsidised. For example, if the cost of a session is \$20, a lower income family only pays \$3, with the remaining \$17 being subsidised. For families earning more than this, the amount of subsidy reduces on a sliding scale, which can also be found on the Services Australia website.

Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS)

This is a subsidy available to some parents or carers who use an approved childcare service and are responsible for the fees, however this level of subsidy differs to the CCS in acknowledgement of the extra help that may be required for the family. To be eligible a family must meet one of the following:

- an eligible grandparent getting an income support payment
- transitioning from certain income support payments to work
- experiencing temporary financial hardship
- caring for a child who is vulnerable or at risk of harm, abuse or neglect.

For more information on these subsidies, consult the Services Australia website: [Child Care Subsidy](#) and [Additional Child Care Subsidy](#).

Payments made to OSHC services

Payment methods will vary from service to service. Some services will operate with a BPAY account or a direct debit service that is facilitated through the OSHC booking system. Some OSHC services may hold an account with a school (if the OSHC is a school council delivered program). It is important that parents read the payment of fees policy when exploring OSHC services to understand the variety of payment methods available.

Qualifications of the educators at OSHC

OSHC service staff must meet the following criteria:

- At least one educator in attendance must have first aid, asthma and anaphylaxis qualifications
- At least one half of educators who are working directly with children must be working towards a Diploma-equivalent or higher qualification. The other half must be working towards a Certificate III-equivalent or higher qualification.

Supervision requirements at OSHC

Legally, the service must have at least one qualified staff member for each group of 15 children (or part thereof) in attendance. However, depending on circumstances, additional educators may be required to ensure adequate supervision, so this number is a minimum rather than a maximum. For smaller services, it is common that they operate with a single staff member and these smaller services will have policies and procedures in place to manage this.

Travel to and from the OSHC services

If a child is attending a service that is not at the school that they attend, the arrangements for travel to and from an OSHC service will vary depending on the distance of the OSHC service to the school site. In rural or remote settings, transportation such as buses may be arranged to transition a group of children from school to an OSHC service at another location. Generally, the following travel arrangements occur for OSHC services held on or within proximity to the school campus:

- A parent or authorised person will drop off a child at OSHC for before school care and vacation care
- At the start of a school day, children will make their own way from before school care to their classroom, with support of OSHC educators as required in a transition plan
- At the end of a school day, children will make their own way from their classroom to OSHC for after school care, with support of OSHC educators as required in a transition plan
- Children will be collected and signed out by a parent or authorised person at the end of after school care or vacation care

OSHC service delivery

The school council makes the decision as to whether it will deliver the OSHC service itself or outsource to a third-party provider. Most third-party providers are private companies, but in some cases, they can be local government or not-for-profit organisations.

All providers must hold approval under the National Quality Framework. Details of services operated by a provider, including the results of these services' Assessment and Rating against the National Quality Standard (NQS), are available at the Starting Blocks website. Services can be rated as "Working Towards NQS", "Meeting NQS", "Exceeding NQS" or "Excellent".

Supports available for children with special needs

Inclusion Support Agencies are funded in each state and territory to include children with disabilities or cultural differences in OSHC. In some circumstances, funding is available through an Inclusion Support Agency for OSHC services to access equipment or engage additional staffing. The Inclusion Development Fund and Specialist Equipment Library both support OSHC services to access equipment and resources and are facilitated through Inclusion Support Agencies. The Victorian Inclusion Support Agency is [Community Child Care Association](#) (CCCA).

Supporting children's medical needs and allergies

OSHC services are responsible under laws and regulations to ensure that medical needs and allergies are managed. If relevant to the child, parents must provide asthma, allergy

and anaphylaxis management plans to be followed by the service, and dietary requirements must be displayed at the OSHC service, visible for all staff. As above, every OSHC service must have an educator present at all times with first aid, asthma and anaphylaxis training. All plans must be updated either annually or as advised by the relevant medical practitioner.

Regulation of OSHC services

OSHC is regulated by the Victorian Department of Education and Training. The area of the Department that performs this function is Quality Assessment and Regulation Division (QARD). QARD can be contacted on 1300 307 415.

Difference between OSHC, long day care and family day care

OSHC is a standalone service that provides care outside school hours for children that attend school. OSHC services can provide care on pupil free days, before and after school hours as well as during school holidays.

Long day care and family day care are governed by the same legislation as OSHC. Long day care typically refers to care for young children (birth to 5 years) for a whole working day, starting and finishing between 7am and 6pm. Some long day care services may enrol children for OSHC if there is a community need and available spaces at the centre. Family day care is a type of care where a service operator coordinates care within educators' homes, or in community venues. In some rural or remote communities, OSHC can be provided under this model.

More information

- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) - [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#)
- Victorian Department of Education and Training – [Obligations to protect children in early childhood services](#)
- National Health and Medical Research Council – [Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services](#)
- Australian Government Department of Health - [Physical activity and exercise guidelines](#)
- Raising Children - [Child care in Australia: choosing the right type for your family](#)
- Care for Kids - [An Overview of Out of School Hours \(OOSH\) and Vacation Care](#) (*Please note that this website uses the acronym "OOSH" (Out of School Hours). This is the same as OSHC.*)