



Access to Medicare Cards: Children in Out of Home Care

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A child may enter out-of-home care (OOHC) on a temporary or long-term basis. Throughout, children in OOHC have continued access to Medicare. This factsheet summarises the avenues in which formal and informal carers can access a child's Medicare card information.

Formal (Statutory) Out of Home Care

When a child enters OOHC state and territory child protection agencies obtain a Medicare number and individual reference number for each child in their care. This is because state and territory governments are responsible for the provision of care, accommodation, and services to children in OOHC, including organising access to health care services.

For privacy reasons when a child enters OOHC the child protection agency will apply to copy the child onto their own, individual Medicare card. When a child is under 15 years old, the child protection agency will be recorded as the cardholder but will not appear on the card.

While the child protection agency is obtaining a new Medicare card number, an authorised child protection agency employee can obtain the child's existing Medicare card information directly from Medicare, by calling a dedicated 1300 Services Australia phoneline, if they are unable to obtain this information from the parents.

The child's original Medicare card number can be utilised for emergency or urgent care, before they've been provided with their own Medicare card.

If a formal foster or kinship carer requires access to a child's Medicare card number, they will need to contact their relevant child protection agency employee (case worker).

Informal Out of Home Care

Informal OOHC refers to situations when there is not a child protection order or a formal care arrangement in place (i.e. informal kinship care). Informal kinship care arrangements fall outside of the Statutory OOHC system, they are often verbal and unreported to state or territory child protection agencies. Under such arrangements the child's parents retain parental responsibility as they are the legal guardians.



There are limitations to the decisions an informal kinship carer can make without the parent's consent.

There are a number of avenues for an informal kinship carer to access a child's Medicare card number:

1. Ask the parents/legal guardians to provide the child's Medicare card number or immunisation information.
2. Attend a medical service and rely on the medical practitioner to use Health Professional Online Services (HPOS) to search and locate the child's Medicare number to process the claim. If they cannot locate the child on HPOS online (due to the child being on multiple Medicare cards) the medical practitioner is able to contact a dedicated HPOS phone line to speak with a Services Australia representative.
3. An Informal kinship carer can apply to **copy** the child onto a new or existing Medicare card without the consent of the child's parent/guardian if they can provide relationship documents and/ or evidence that the child is in their care. Services Australia can advise, on a case by case basis, the documentary evidence requirements to copy the child onto the informal carer's Medicare card.

When copying a child to a new or existing Medicare card the child remains listed on their parent's original Medicare card. Please note that children can usually be listed on a maximum of two separate Medicare Cards. In certain circumstances and when evidence of an informal kinship care arrangement has been provided the child can be copied onto a third Medicare card if required.

To note:

- 'Copying' means a person's name will appear on more than one Medicare card. All Medicare cards remain valid.
- 'Transferring' means a person's name will only appear on their new Medicare card with a new, unique number. Their original Medicare card number will no longer be valid.
- Young people aged 15 years and above are able to transfer onto their own Medicare Card without parent/guardian consent.
- For Medicare purposes:
 - a child is 0 to 14 years of age
 - a young person is 15 to 17 years of age, and
 - a young adult is 18 years or older

For further information see the Services Australia website:
www.servicesaustralia.gov.au or contact Services Australia on 132 011