

Exceptional resource funding Procedure

1. Purpose

To ensure the Department for Child Protection (DCP) is committed to minimising risks to children and young people by ensuring appropriate exceptional resource funding (ERF) needs are considered. This procedure supports compliance with the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* and specifies the processes for ERF. ERF payments are made pursuant to section 112A of the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to DCP staff who are involved in the process of seeking, endorsing and authorising ERF to support the needs of children, birth families and carers.

2.1 Legislative context

- [Children and Young People \(Safety\) Act 2017](#)

2.2 Whole of Government requirements

- [Treasurer's Instruction 8 - Financial Authorisations](#)

2.3 DCP requirements

- [Financial authorisations Procedure](#)
- [Financial authorisations register](#)
- [Accounts Payable Policy](#)

3. Procedure requirements

ERF is provided for children and young people in care, to assist with additional placement support in providing a standard of living that ensures they are not disadvantaged and can maximise their opportunity to grow up in a safe and stable environment to help reach their full potential.

ERF payments generally should not exceed \$20,000 (inclusive of GST) per application; higher amounts may be approved if deemed necessary pursuant to the [DCP Financial Authorisations](#).

Where assessed as required and appropriate, DCP may provide these payments to meet individual and/or specific needs for children and young people.

ERF forms part of the child related incidental costs by regions (or other specified areas) to cover major or exceptional expenditure related to:

- establishing a child or young person in a placement
- maintaining the child or young person in the placement.

3.1 Funding and monitoring

Performance and Finance within Finance and Corporate Services establishes an ERF budget for regions annually. Regional Directors, supported by nominated staff are responsible for managing this budget, including the consideration of committed expenses that may spread over multiple financial years (i.e. school fees).

Regional Director's must ensure appropriate business support practices exist to ensure expenditure and commitments are monitored against the budget and to ensure the ERF register is updated and regularly monitored.

3.1.1 Review of the ERF Register

Regions are required to maintain an ERF register which accurately records all approved ERF applications per financial year. All fields on the ERF Register are required to be completed.

Regional Directors are ultimately responsible for having oversight of the ERF Registers and associated funding and financial commitments. The ERF register and commitments are to be tracked against the general ledger transaction reports, at least monthly, to ensure payments have been coded to the correct young person.

All regions should be reviewing the ERF register, at least on a monthly basis to identify undrawn and carry-over commitments. Regular reviews of the register will identify:

- accuracy of undrawn commitments due to approvals that have lapsed. Some approvals may only be partly applied (or not proceed at all) for various reasons (e.g. placement breakdown requiring the young person to be moved from the arrangement). This is important toward year-end as commitments which will not be drawn may provide budget for other applications/purposes.
- carry-over commitments which have been approved but not yet drawn. This will impact future budgeting along with associated reporting/forecasting.

Upon request, regions are expected to provide Finance and Corporate Services a copy of the ERF register for compliance reviews or to support budget or finance processes during the year.

3.2 Eligibility

To be eligible for financial support through ERF the carer and child or young person in the placement must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- the child or young person is in the care of a foster, kinship or specific child only carer who is approved pursuant to Section 72 of the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*
- the child or young person is under the Guardianship of the Chief Executive
- the carer must sign an agreement and acknowledgment form when seeking financial support for vehicle leasing, purchasing and modifications and home modifications, rental properties, transportable homes or caravans.

Note: Short-term care arrangements should only consider leasing/renting options. Short-term is defined as care arrangements under 12 months. An exemption can be made for the following:

- short-term care arrangements that are likely to become a long-term arrangement
- short-term arrangements that will support family reunification
- where there is evidence that a lease/renting option is less cost effective.

The Case Worker must document in the ERF application if the short-term care arrangement is an exemption and provide a long-term planning assessment for this exemption.

Note: Children or young people under the following types of care are not eligible for ERF:

- Long Term Guardianship (Specified Person) (LTGSP)
- temporary placement
- financially assisted adoption
- post 18 years old

- adoptions from care, unless applications for additional financial support are agreed to at the time the adoption order is made due to DCP having an existing and ongoing arrangement to pay for a child or young person's non-Government school fees and/or specialist therapeutic interventions.

3.2.1 Other financial support sources

DCP staff must explore all options where alternative financial support sources are available. Refer to the [Manual of Practice - Access health services for the child or young person](#) for the health services agreement for children and young people in out of home care. This sets out how DCP and SA Health will work in partnership to ensure that the health needs of children and young people in care are met through timely assessment and referral. This includes dental and orthodontic care.

Dental and Orthodontic Care is covered below. Refer to the [Other Financial Support Factsheet](#) for information on financial support that is available from other sources including other state and federal government payments and schemes (i.e. Medicare, NDIS).

Where an ERF is still deemed necessary after the above alternative support options have been considered (where necessary), full disclosure information must be provided in the ERF application to justify what was considered and why the option was not pursued.

Dental and Orthodontic Care

Prior to seeking ERF approval for dental and orthodontic care, DCP case workers should first seek a [referral](#) from:

1. SA Dental Services - DCP has a [Memorandum of Administrative Arrangement \(MoAA\) with SA Dental](#) which covers dental costs for eligible children and young people in care and orthodontic treatment where there is a clinical need
2. Where SA Dental Service have deemed an orthodontic treatment has not met the clinical threshold, DCP case workers should consider requesting a referral through the Australian Dental Foundation via the DCP office manager/supervisor.

DCP has a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\) with the Australian Foundation](#) to cap orthodontic costs per child or young person. The Australian Dental Foundation can:

1. Approve the referral and arrange an appointment with a participating partner clinic; or
2. Determine there is a clinical need and provide additional information that clarifies clinical need for DCP case workers to arrange another appointment with SA Dental Services.

3.3 Expenses covered under ERF

ERF can be used to assist with the following, provided they are deemed essential, reasonable and provide continuity of support:

- goods or services deemed essential to support the placement beyond subsidies/ financial support available
- vehicle leasing, purchases or modifications
- home modifications or rentals
- transportable home or caravan
- private schooling.

These expenses shall be apportioned, either directly to a specific child or to multiple children. The expenses may also be related to support for a carer so that they, in turn, can provide appropriate care for children. Where applicable, all applications should be accompanied with three quotes for comparison. Applications where this wouldn't be applicable include school fees and carer reimbursements (carer already paid and

seeking reimbursement). Where three quotes are not obtained, clear reasoning should be provided on the ERF Application form.

Leasing/ renting options should always be considered prior to applying for ERF funding for the purchase of any assets, including high value assets. High value assets are defined as greater than \$20,000. An ERF application seeking the purchase of a car, caravan or transportable must provide a through explanation to justify why leasing /renting was not viable, i.e. cost-benefit analysis. A cost-benefit analysis shall consider the following:

1. Cost of purchasing/modifying vs leasing/renting
2. Pros and cons of purchasing/modifying vs leasing/renting.

Note: Business managers may be required to assist Case Workers with calculations in the cost-benefit analysis.

3.3.2 Other services essential to support the placement beyond subsidies available

In some unique or limited situations, it may be permissible to cover costs for goods or services where other funding sources have been exhausted.

Common examples of essential services where funding sources have been exhausted include dental and medical, tutoring and mentoring, and additional schooling activities/programs. There is no general rule as to the level of funding that can be applied for. Individual circumstances of the child/young person, as well as other available sources of funding will influence this decision. Funding must be approved in line with the DCP Financial Authorisations.

3.3.3 Vehicles

To support the placement of children and young people in care, ERF may be used to contribute to the cost of:

- Short-term leasing of a vehicle (excludes leasing to own a vehicle)
- purchasing or modifying a vehicle.

Prior to entering any arrangement considered by the delegate, the carer is required to sign either a:

1. [Vehicle Lease Agreement and Acknowledgement Form](#)
2. [Vehicle Purchase Agreement and Acknowledgement Form](#); or
3. [Vehicle Modification Agreement and Acknowledgement Form](#).

Leasing a motor vehicle

In some situations or with short-term arrangements, it may be permissible to make a payment/ contribution toward the lease of a vehicle that the carer would not otherwise have required, due to the special needs or circumstances of the child/young person(s) in the placement.

For higher value leases (greater than \$20,000), three quotes should be sought. SG Fleet (SA Government's vehicle fleet provider) is not to be used as a provider. The lease agreement must be between the carer and the lease company, not DCP.

The carer will have the responsibility of maintaining the vehicle to an acceptable standard including running costs, and ensuring the vehicle is returned to the lease company in an acceptable condition.

The respective regional office is required to review DCP's contribution towards the lease at least every six months. Refer section 3.3.7 'Directing Payment' for support in facilitating the payment.

Purchasing/modifying a vehicle

In some unique situations, it may be permissible to make a contribution toward the cost of purchasing or modifying a vehicle for a carer in support of a placement. The contribution will take the form of a one-off

payment. There may be specific circumstances where a contribution towards a vehicle is required which exceeds \$20,000 (inclusive of GST) (refer [DCP Financial Authorisations](#)).

Reasonableness of the vehicle request must be applied. For example, vehicles that are intended to be people mover vehicles (seat 7 or more passenger) would support a placement with four or more children (including carer's biological children). Exceptions may apply to carers of children with special needs or placements or in regional areas where motor vehicles are required to travel long distances where there are less than four children (including carer's biological children). In addition, luxury upgrades, that are not essential should not be added to the purchase of a new vehicle.

Where carers are replacing their former vehicle, and are selling their former vehicle, DCP's contribution should only be a top up, i.e. paying the difference between the sale price and vehicle cost.

Where a used vehicle is being purchased, the vehicle must meet the requirements of an appropriate safety and mechanical assessment and be covered by full comprehensive insurance. A copy of the safety and mechanical assessment certificate (i.e. RAA vehicle inspection) must be submitted to DCP prior to payment. The cost of obtaining a safety mechanical certificate is the responsibility of the carer. This is not required for new vehicle purchases.

For vehicle modifications, the application form must also be accompanied by proof of value of the current vehicle for modification (e.g. Red book valuation) and at least three quotes.

The three quotes should be obtained from reputable businesses (i.e. registered with an ABN) for any vehicle modifications and/or purchases, with at least one of these quotes from a South Australian based supplier (or a supplier based in the region in the case of regional procurement).

Quotes from private sellers won't be accepted as it would pose a risk to DCP and its clients, especially from an insurance and liability perspective. Additionally, second-hand vehicles not from a dealership may have expired warranty periods (depending on the age of the car) and may not be road worthy.

The three quotes will be used by the delegate as a price comparison for the new or used vehicle being requested. In some circumstances multiple quotes for modifications may not be obtainable. Justification can be recorded on the application form and delegate discretion utilised in this instance.

The carer(s) will be responsible for maintaining the vehicle/modification to an acceptable standard including the running costs, insurance, maintenance or replacement of the vehicle.

3.3.4 Home

ERF may be used to contribute to the cost of:

- renting a home
- modifying/extending a home
- purchasing or leasing a transportable home or caravan

Applications will only be supported if it demonstrates the long-term benefit to the child or children in care, and preserves and supports a sustainable placement for the child or children in care until 18 years of age.

The DCP Case Worker should ensure that supports and services are provided, or have been arranged, through other agencies (e.g. Housing SA, NDIS) before proceeding with an application for home modification or rental assistance.

Renting a home (including transportable or caravan)

In some situations, it may be permissible to make a contribution toward the renting of a home which would not otherwise have been required, if it were not for the special needs of a child or young person.

DCP will not enter into a rental agreement to enable a carer to reside in rental accommodation. The rental agreement must be between the carer and the applicable rental agency or private individual, not DCP.

Carers will be required to enter into a formal agreement via a [Property Lease Agreement and Acknowledgement Form](#) with DCP prior to ERF application approval for the rental assistance.

Rental assistance will only be supported if the application demonstrates the need to accommodate a large sibling group or the need for a particular property to meet the special needs of a child.

Where carers are renting out their own home while paying rent to a new house that fits the needs of the child or young person in care, DCP's contribution to rental payments should only be a top up i.e. paying the difference between the rental income and rent payment. Refer section 3.3.7 'Directing Payment' for support in facilitating the payment.

Home modifications

The special needs of a child or young person may result in the need for modifications to be made to the carer's home.

Note: Special care is required for these types of requests as the value of the property can be impacted.

Home modifications will generally also be supported if the ERF application demonstrates the need to accommodate a large sibling group or demonstrates the need to modify the carer's home to meet the special needs of a child with a disability.

The ERF application should be for the total value of the home modification and should not be split per child. For example, if a transportable home of \$60,000 is required for a carer with three young people in their care, the application must be for the total value of \$60,000 and not split into three ERF applications of \$20,000.

It is essential that carers obtain quotes for all proposed modifications or extensions so that they can make an informed decision of their options and understand the support DCP is to provide, as well as any financial implications for them. Subsequently, it is crucial that all applications are appropriately costed, with records to verify and justify the anticipated expenditure.

The application must be accompanied by a minimum of three written quotes, with at least one quote from a South Australian based supplier (or a supplier based in the region in the case of regional procurement).

DCP will not provide financial support for modifications or extensions to rental properties.

Carers will be required to enter into a formal agreement via a [Home Modification Agreement and Acknowledgement Form](#) with DCP prior to ERF application approval for home modification/transportable home.

For home modifications over \$55,000 (inclusive of GST) for the purpose of additional occupancy e.g. home extensions and transportable homes, DCP.Legal@sa.gov.au should be consulted.

A contract that is tailored to the specific ERF requirements may be required to enable DCP to recover the costs of the contribution if circumstances change with the carer (generally the relinquishment of young person in care).

DCP Legal should be contacted by the Regional Director prior to approving the ERF application to identify what legal arrangements will be required.

DCP will not enter into a contractual relationship with a builder or other tradesperson to undertake a modification or extension to a carer's home. The contractual relationship is between the carer and the builder or tradesperson. The carer must obtain a 'Certificate of Compliance' from all tradesperson(s) undertaking modification or extensions to the carer's home that is subject to ERF. Copies of all certificates must be provided to DCP.

3.3.5 School fees

An ERF may be used to contribute to the cost of paying for a child or young person to enrol in a non-government school.

School fees for a non-government school will be supported when:

- the child or young person is enrolled in the non-government school at the time they are taken into care and it is preferable to maintain continuity of their education
- other siblings (birth or foster) are enrolled in the non-government school and it is demonstrated that it would be detrimental for the child or young person to be enrolled in a different school
- a special program is offered at the school that is not offered elsewhere (within reasonable travelling distance)
- the child or young person is gifted or has a particular talent that the non-government school can facilitate
- the child or young person has been awarded a scholarship and there is a funding gap
- the child or young person has a special need that can be best met by the non-government school.

An ERF for school fees is to be approved for only one school per application. An overarching ERF can be approved for either an entire primary or secondary schooling period, and should include an additional 10% buffer to account for annual increases in school fees.

Applications cannot be made for:

- both primary and secondary periods (e.g. R-12) in its entirety; or
- under a year period (except for new school applications where the primary or secondary schooling period remaining is less than a year).

Note: A new ERF must be completed if the previously approved school changes.

Following approval of the ERF, payments for yearly school fees may be made as per the general financial authorisations where they abide within the approved ERF amount. School fees must not be paid in advance of one year of schooling. An appropriate monitoring process exists per section '3.1.1 Review of the ERF Register' to ensure school payments do not exceed ERF approvals.

Other educational expenses (i.e. uniforms, excursions, etc.) are to be managed by the respective DCP local office.

Adoptions from care applications for additional financial support may be agreed to at the time the adoption order is made due to DCP having an existing and ongoing arrangement to pay for a child or young person's private school fees.

3.3.6 Funding criteria

Applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis, with consideration given to:

- the needs of the child or young person
- history of child/young person
- care and protection/order arrangements
- length of time in placement
- financial assessment/co-contribution
- rationale for resource
- safety and placement stability
- sibling/family connections
- ERF application/approval history

3.3.7 Processing and approvals

The Case Manager is the first point of contact who will liaise with the carer in consultation with other staff as required (i.e. Senior Practitioners, Principal Aboriginal Consultants and Practice Leaders) to discuss the infants, child or young person's needs, options and financial assistance requirements. When addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants, children and young people's needs, cultural consideration must be taken.

The Case Worker completes the Exceptional Resource Funding application form and attaches any relevant supporting documentation.

The appropriate Business Manager reviews the application and provides recommendations to the Regional Director as the delegated decision-maker.

The Directorate Business Manager must ensure documents are appropriately completed and that any supporting documents (i.e. safety and mechanical assessments, certificates of compliance) are correct and accurately included.

The Regional Director must ensure appropriate budget monitoring exists per section 3.1. Funding and Monitoring. Where the ERF is seeking home modifications for more than \$55,000 the Regional Director must consult with DCP Legal prior to approving the ERF to determine appropriate legal arrangements for recouping assets or funds if required.

The ERF must be approved in accordance with the DCP Financial Authorisations (specific authorisations).

Following approval, the application can be processed for payment and ERF documents must be uploaded to C3MS. The case plan is required to be updated to reflect what resources/funding has been allocated to the child or young people in care.

A decision not to approve an ERF application is a reviewable decision. If an ERF application is declined the applicant must be provided with a letter setting out the reasons for the decision and advising that they are entitled to apply for an internal review of the decision.

3.3.8 Directing payment

ERF payments should be made to the vendor/contractor and not the carer.

Refer to the [Accounts Payable Policy](#) for types of invoicing and payment methods. If vendors are invoicing DCP, vendors are required to forward invoices directly to SSSA (APinvoices@sharedservices.sa.gov.au). Vendor must address invoices to the relevant DCP office or Case Manager for SSSA to flow invoices to the correct business unit/work group for approval. For invoices relating to lease/rental payments that are under the carer's name, payments should be processed as an online payment request (OPR). The OPR process is also governed by the [Accounts Payable Policy](#).

No payments should be made until the carer signs the appropriate agreement and acknowledgment form.

3.3.9 Recouping assets or funds

Advice should be sought from DCP Legal to consider recouping assets or funds from a carer if any of the following circumstances occur:

- the carer fails to comply with the signed agreement and acknowledgement form including using the asset for any purpose other than the agreed purpose
- the carer ceases to provide care to the child/ren due to relinquishing care of the child/ren or as a result of the child/ren being removed from their care before they reach the age of 18 years.

Options for recouping will include seeking repayment of the asset at market value or transferring ownership of the asset to DCP. Costs of recouping will need to be considered and documented to assess the cost versus benefit (i.e. stamp duty costs).

The Recovery of Assets letter – template can be used where recommended by DCP Legal. DCP Legal will assist with completing the template. The letter will be signed by the appropriate Regional Director.

4. Compliance, monitoring and evaluation

As part of the Policy Governance Framework, this procedure will be reviewed and updated by Service Delivery and Practice in accordance with the review date shown at 'Document Control'.

5. Related Documents

Related documents, forms and templates
Exceptional resource funding application form
Home modification – agreement and acknowledgement form
Property lease – agreement and acknowledgement form
Vehicle lease – agreement and acknowledgement form
Vehicle purchase – agreement and acknowledgement form
Vehicle modification – agreement and acknowledgement form
Recovery of Assets letter – template

Document control

Reference No./ File No.			
Document Owner	Lead Writer (position)		
Directorate/Unit: Financial Systems and Compliance	Financial Systems and Compliance Coordinator and Manager, Financial Systems and Compliance Services		
Accountable Director: Chief Financial Officer; Executive Director, Child and Young Person Services			
Commencement date	16 May 2025	Review date	14 May 2027
Risk rating	Consequence Rating	Likelihood	Risk Rating
Risk Assessment Matrix	Moderate	Unlikely	Moderate

REVISION RECORD		
Approval Date	Version	Revision description
April 2017	0.1	Original Draft
December 2017	0.2	Financial Authorisation Delegations
February 2018	0.3	Private schooling, vehicle purchase, home modifications clarifications and updates
August 2018	0.4	C3MS procedure revision



REVISION RECORD		
Approval Date	Version	Revision description
September 2018	0.5	DCP contribution towards Carer vehicle purchases and home modifications are suspended pending a review.
July 2019	0.6	New directive document developed after review conducted.
September 2019	1.0	Minor amendments requested from the Minister's office
November 2021	2.0	Replacing the ERF Directive with a procedure. Inclusion of guidance for school fees.
14 May 2025	3.0	Whole of procedure review, including eligibility, ERF register, expenditure areas, leasing guidance, purchasing guidance, etc.