

What financial support might I be eligible for?

The Australian government – through Centrelink - offers a range of financial support, both ongoing and one-off. Some of these payments are specifically for people who have experienced family and domestic violence.

You might also be eligible for financial support under the *ACT Victim of Crime Act*.

Below you will find information about Centrelink payments and compensation under the *Victim of Crime (Financial Assistance) Act (ACT)*.

Centrelink support and payments

Centrelink can help you if you are in, have left, or are preparing to leave a situation where you are affected by family and domestic violence. Centrelink may help you with social worker support, financial support and crisis payments, as well as opportunities to look for work.

You may be able to get paid an income support payment immediately, even if you are not already receiving a Centrelink payment. The type of payment or assistance that you may be able to get will depend on your individual circumstances.

If you need to and you are able, access Centrelink as early as possible.

Access to social workers

Centrelink employs social workers who are experienced in helping women who are thinking about leaving, have left or are rebuilding their lives after violence. Social workers are located in service centres and on the phone to help people experiencing a crisis, have no support or are unsure how to access the right assistance.

Their social workers offer private and confidential interviews for counselling and support. They can help you work out your options including assessing your payments and exemptions to some requirements. They can also help you access other support services in the community.

Phone: To speak to a Centrelink social worker call 132 850.

Eligibility for Centrelink payments

Centrelink will consider if you are eligible for a range of payments and services such as parenting payment, income support payments, crisis payments and exemptions from seeking employment or collecting child support based on your personal situation.

There may be specific payments and services that can help you:

- If someone has been removed from your home, or you have had to move houses due to violence
- If you are in financial hardship due to circumstances relating to domestic violence
- If you are under 21 and unable to live at home due to violence
- If you are unable to search for work due to illness, injury (permanent or temporary) or other related issues of experiencing domestic violence
- If you have recently moved to Australia and are unable to be supported by others due to domestic violence
- If applying for or collecting child support would put you or your family's safety at risk due to domestic violence

Depending on your circumstances you may be eligible for the following payments:

- Crisis Payment – This is a one-off payment to help people in difficult or extreme circumstances. You may be eligible if you are experiencing financial hardship, you cannot return to your home due to extreme circumstances like domestic violence, or you are remaining in your home after experiencing domestic violence, and the family member responsible has left or has been removed. **In order to be eligible for the crisis payment you must submit your claim within 7 days after the event that led you to claim.** This payment can either be paid into your bank account or given to you through an Electronic Benefit Transfer card which can be used only once and can be used at most ATMs.
- Special Benefit
- NewStart Allowance
- Rent Assistance
- Parenting Payment
- Child Care Benefit
- Concession and health care cards - These cards can help you with costs like medical, transport and household bills.

Discuss your circumstances with a Social Worker or Centrelink officer. They will help you get the payment that best suits your and your family's needs. You can contact Centrelink by:

- Calling **132 850** and ask to speak to a social worker. This line is open from 8 am to 5 pm Monday to Friday.
- Visit a service centre where someone will refer you to a social worker.

- Going online for more information:
- <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/subjects/family-and-domestic-violence/how-we-can-help-you-family-and-domestic-violence-concerns>

How long will I have to wait for my Centrelink support payment once my application is approved?

You will need to have a current bank account to receive ongoing Centrelink Payments. You can find out more about bank accounts by looking at the “Opening a bank account” section. Once your bank account has been organised, Centrelink can put your payments through an Electronic Bank Transfer (EBT) directly into your account.

Normally, payments may take a few days to enter your bank account. This waiting time depends on your bank and the date and time of payment processing.

Centrelink may also be able to put a payment straight into your account with a real time payment. This option will be helpful if you have left violence and you need to access a payment quickly.

It is essential that you tell Centrelink if your account is overdrawn. If your account is overdrawn your payment will be affected because your bank will automatically deduct overdrawn money and fees.

Centrelink Appointments

As a requirement of receiving Centrelink support payments you will need to attend appointments which are necessary to assess you and your family’s eligibility and circumstances. ***You can bring a family member or a friend to your appointment.***

Try to always attend any appointments that have been organised by Centrelink. If you can, gather together and bring all information and documentation that they might need or have asked you for.

Remember once you are receiving Centrelink payments, if you do not attend an appointment you may be penalised with a participation failure. A participation failure or penalty happens when you do not satisfy the requirements of your Centrelink payment, which includes not doing things like attending organised appointments or not reporting. If you do not have an excuse that Centrelink considers reasonable (like you had work or could not get childcare) your payments may be affected.

If you cannot attend an appointment always try to notify Centrelink in advance.

They will help reschedule a new appointment to meet your needs.

Reporting to Centrelink

If you receive a payment from Centrelink you will need to report any income that you receive in addition to that payment. Always report your income accurately, honestly and on your reporting date before 5pm. This will help make any dealings you have with Centrelink easier and make sure that your payments are regular.

Victims of Crime Financial Assistance Scheme

The Victims of Crime Financial Assistance Scheme is designed to assist victims of violent crime to recover from the physical and/or mental injuries sustained by providing a means to recover expenses reasonably incurred in treating those injuries. For more information contact Victim Support ACT.

Opening hours: 9am to 5pm Mondays to Fridays

Address: Level 2

11 Moore St, Canberra City

Phone: 1800 8222 72 or 6205 2066