

This fact sheet provides information on how your Centrelink payments may be affected when you are experiencing family and domestic violence. It also explains what extra payments you may be entitled to.

How can family and domestic violence impact my Centrelink payments?

Change of relationship status

If you are receiving Centrelink payments and are no longer in a relationship due to family and domestic violence, it is important to let Centrelink know as soon as possible as single payments are higher than the partnered rate and you could be eligible for a payment increase. You must also tell Centrelink within 14 days if you reconcile with your partner or start a new relationship.



Separated under one roof

You can be separated from your partner even if you are still living in the same place. This is called separation under the one roof. If you are separated under one roof you can ask Centrelink to NOT contact your ex-partner when you ask to be treated as single for your existing payments, or when you apply for a new payment as a single person.

Discretion to treat a person as not being a member of a couple for a special reason

Even if you do not consider yourself to be separated from your partner, if your partner refuses to give you any control or information about money, or refuses to support you and your children (financial abuse) Centrelink may decide to treat you as being single instead of a member of a couple. You may be eligible if:

- You are experiencing family and domestic violence and identify as partnered; or
- An assessment has found you to be a member of a couple, but the existence of family and domestic violence in the relationship means that both members of the couple should be treated as single.

More information is available on the Services Australia website:

<https://guides.dss.gov.au/social-security-guide/2/2/5/40#summary>

Crisis and Urgent Payments

If you are experiencing or at risk of family and domestic violence, you may be eligible for a one-off support payment from Centrelink (Crisis Payment) or a one off advance on your normal payment (Urgent Payment).



Am I eligible for Crisis Payment?

Crisis payment is a one-off extra payment equal to one week of the payment you are currently receiving from Centrelink, or have applied for. It does not include rent assistance or payments for children.

You might be eligible for Crisis Payment if:

- you are in severe financial hardship; and
- either you or your partner has had to permanently leave your home because of family and domestic violence; and
- you are receiving an income support payment from Centrelink, or have applied for one; and
- you contact Centrelink and register your intent to claim Crisis Payment within 7 days of either:

you leaving home and deciding that you cannot return, or the person(s) responsible for the domestic violence has left or been removed from your home; and you can be contacted by a Centrelink social worker to assess your situation.

If eligible, you can claim a Crisis Payment for family and domestic violence up to 4 times in a 12 month period.

How do I claim Crisis Payment?

Once you have contacted Centrelink to say you intend to apply for a Crisis Payment, you have 14 days to lodge your claim.

You can lodge your claim online via MyGov or the Centrelink ExpressPlus app, or in person at Centrelink, or you can call:



- Centrelink: 132 850
- Indigenous Call Centre: 136 380
- Centrelink Multilingual Line: 131 202

What information do I need to give Centrelink about my experience of family and domestic violence?

When you apply for Crisis Payment, it is important that you provide Centrelink with as much information as possible. Documents that may assist Centrelink with your claim include:

- Documents from police or courts about the domestic violence, e.g. Apprehended Violence Orders, police reports
- Letters or reports from doctors, counsellors, caseworkers, social workers, domestic violence services and/or community agencies
- Statements, letters or statutory declarations from yourself and family members or friends. Updated personal details such as a new address, new email, new phone number and new bank account details.

If you have not already been receiving a Centrelink payment you will need original identity documents for yourself and your children e.g. birth certificates, passports, marriage certificates, immigration documents.

You will also need to provide your tax file number and information about your income and assets such as payslips and bank statements.

What is an Urgent Payment?

An Urgent Payment is your existing Centrelink payment paid to you before you would normally receive it. If you have received an Urgent Payment, you will receive less money on the day you would usually receive your Centrelink payment.

Am I eligible for an Urgent Payment?

You may be eligible for an Urgent Payment if you are experiencing severe financial hardship due to exceptional or unforeseen circumstances, such as family and domestic violence. You can generally only get an Urgent Payment twice in 12 months but there are some exceptions to this.



How do I claim an Urgent payment?

You can apply for an Urgent Payment online via MyGov or the Centrelink ExpressPlus app, over the phone on 132 850 or in person at a Centrelink office.

Mutual Obligations

If you are experiencing family and domestic violence, you may be exempt from your usual Centrelink mutual obligations to apply for jobs and attend meetings with your employment service, for up to 13 weeks.

You may be able to get the exemption extended for more than 13 weeks if you are still experiencing a crisis.



You can also be granted an exemption from your mutual obligations if you are homeless, including when you are living in a hostel, refuge or moving every few days. The exemption will be granted for the length of time needed to arrange stable accommodation.

Keeping your Centrelink information safe

If you have given consent for Centrelink to give information about you to your partner or ex-partner, or if you have appointed your partner or ex-partner as your Centrelink nominee, you can contact Centrelink to change this. You can also consider changing your password for your MyGov account.

It is important to make these updates before updating your personal information with Centrelink, like bank accounts, address and phone number.

You will need to update Medicare and Child Support separately if you had given your partner or ex-partner permission to contact those agencies on your behalf.

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/keeping-your-information-safe-when-leaving-relationship?>

What if I am caring for children?

If you are caring for children and receiving Family Tax Benefit and/or Child Care Subsidy, it is important to update the Family Assistance section of Centrelink about your relationship status, and who is caring for your children. If you separate from your partner you will need to update your estimate of annual family income for Family Tax Benefit.

Family Tax Benefit has requirements for seeking child support from the other parent if you separate. However, there are exemptions from this requirement to apply for child support in situations of family violence.

You can find more information at: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/why-you-need-to-apply-for-child-support-while-you-get-ftb-part?context=22151#a3>

Centrelink Debts

Debts may occur due to incorrect reporting, delays in updating a change of relationship status, through 'dob-ins', or abusive partners or ex-partners giving false information to Centrelink. Get legal advice before talking to Centrelink if you have received a debt letter, or if you are being investigated by Centrelink.

Welfare Rights Centre can help:

- If your claim for a payment has been rejected
- If Centrelink makes a decision about your relationship that you disagree with
- If you have received a debt letter
- If you are worried about getting payments you were not entitled to



You can contact us for free confidential advice through our website at:

www.welfare-rightscentre.org.au

Or call us on 02 9211 5300 or 1800 226 028 – Monday or Wednesday, 9:30am to 12:30pm