



Frequently Asked Questions – Young Parents

This fact sheet contains general information about some of the frequently asked questions we receive at Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service WA.

WRASWA is a not for profit community legal centre that provides independent advice, information, referral, representation and advocacy in relation to Centrelink, Family Assistance, Tenancy and Social Security prosecution matters.

The information contained in this fact sheet does not constitute legal advice. If you need legal advice in relation to Centrelink in Western Australia please contact:

1. Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service on 08 9328 1751; or
2. Sussex Street Community Legal Centre on 08 6253 9500; or
3. Fremantle Community Legal Centre on 08 9432 9790.

What is Parenting Payment?

Parenting payment is paid to a person who is the **principal carer** of a child or children for whom they are receiving Family Tax Benefit Part A.

You may be the principal carer of a dependent child if you are:

- the child's natural or adoptive parent;
- the child's step parent;
- partnered with the child's parent; or
- a foster carer for the child.

A young person is considered to be a dependent child of an adult if:

- The adult has legal responsibility, whether alone or with another person, for the day to day care, welfare and development of the child and the child is in the adult's care or
- is not a dependent child of someone else and is wholly or substantially in the adult's care.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is Parenting Payment?	1
Parenting Payment Partnered	1
Member of a couple	2
Parenting Payment Single	2
Child no longer of age	2
Common issues with claiming Parenting Payment	3
Debt	3
Useful tips	3
Helpful links	4

If you are receiving parenting payment the rate and some of the rules will depend on whether you are single or partnered – this depends on whether you are considered a member of a couple for social security law purposes.

Income and assets: The amount of Parenting Payment you receive will depend on the income and assets of both you and your partner (if you are partnered).

Search “income and assets parenting payment” on the Department of Human Services Centrelink website for more information on the income and assets test.

Residency requirements: In order to receive Parenting Payment you must be living in Australia and hold a permanent visa or Australian Citizenship.

Parenting Payment Partnered

Parenting Payment Partnered is paid to a person who is a member of a couple.

If you are a member of a couple, payment can only be paid up until your youngest child is 6 years of age.

Member of a couple

You will be recognised as a member of a couple if you are married, in a registered relationship or in a de facto relationship with someone of the same or opposite sex.

Centrelink will consider the following factors to assess if you are in a de facto relationship:

1. The nature of the household;
2. The financial aspects of the relationship;
3. The social aspects;
4. The nature of commitment to each other; and
5. Any sexual relationship that exists.

If you are married but are able to demonstrate that you have separated from your partner you will not be considered a member of a couple. A higher rate may be paid if you are separated due to illness, respite care or your partner is in prison.

You may be treated as a single person where there is a special reason to do so. Usually this occurs where members of a couple are unable to pool their resources together. For example, if you are partnered with someone who is serving a newly arrived residents waiting period and is unable to work and has no income or assets.

If you are in a polygamous relationship it may be the case that more than one person is found to be a partner of one person and may qualify for Parenting Payment Partnered.

Parenting Payment Single

Parenting Payment Single can only be paid up until your youngest child is 8 years of age.

If you share the care of your child with another person only one of you can be paid Parenting Payment Single.

If Parenting Payment is claimed by more than one person, it will be paid to the person with the highest percentage of care.

If you have equal care of a child and another person has also claimed Parenting Payment Single the person who has the greatest financial need will receive the payment.

Once your youngest child is 6 years of age you will be required to enter a Job Plan and attend a Job Active or Remote Jobs and Communities Program unless you are given an exemption.

If you are separated but still living in the same house as your ex-partner you may still be able to claim Parenting Payment Single. If you are having difficulties in relation to this, contact your local Welfare Rights Centre.

If your child is no longer of age for you to receive Parenting Payment

If you are partnered, this is when your youngest child turns 6 years old. If you are single this is when your youngest child turns 8 years old.

It is important to lodge an early claim for another payment so there is no break in payments. A person can claim a new payment up to 13 weeks prior to losing eligibility for Parenting Payment.

A common payment people claim is Newstart Allowance. Depending on your circumstances however there may be another payment that is more appropriate for you. For example:

Austudy: If you are studying full time.

ABSTUDY: If you are of Aboriginal descent and are studying full time.

Carer Payment: If you are caring for a severely disabled child or another disabled person.

Disability Support Pension: If you have significant disabilities.

You can check your eligibility for all these payments and find out more information on the Department of Human Services Centrelink website.

Common issues

If you are having ongoing issues with any of the following, please contact your local Welfare Rights Centre.

- Unable to prove that you are separated. This can be the case if you are still living under the same roof as your ex-partner. You should speak with a social worker at Centrelink about proving you are separated.
- Unable to provide information about your or your partner's income, business or trust etc.
- Issues relating to proof of identity. If you are unable to provide proof of identity you should speak to a social worker at Centrelink about alternative ways to establish your identity.
- Waiting periods, for example if you are subject to a compensation preclusion period or have received a redundancy payment you will not be paid.

Debts

There are different types of debts that a person can incur whilst receiving Parenting Payment. Common examples include:

- There has been a change in care of children. This can occur where there is a change in the Family Court Orders, a person is imprisoned or the Department of Child Protection takes their children. (Abduction of a child will not necessarily mean that Parenting Payment is cancelled. Parenting Payment can continue to be received for at least 12 weeks where a person takes reasonable action to have their child returned to their care.
- Income has been incorrectly reported for you or your partner.
- There are issues relating to whether or not you are a member of a couple.

For more information please read our Centrelink Debts Factsheet available on our website.

Some useful tips to remember:

- Always ask for a receipt number when you speak to Centrelink officers and make a note of what was said
- If you provide documents to Centrelink ask for a stamped and dated copy of the document to keep for your own records
- Advise Centrelink of changes in circumstances within 14 days.
- Set up reporting reminders in your phone or diary - whatever works for you - to make sure you do not forget to report.
- Always read the front and back of letters, if you do not understand something, contact Centrelink to clarify.
- Never ignore letters/ requests from Centrelink.

Please note

This FAQ factsheet contains general information only and is accurate at May 2016. It does not constitute legal advice. If you need legal advice about social security entitlements, please contact your local Welfare Rights Centre/Advocate.

Welfare Rights Centres are community legal centres, which specialise in social security law, administration and policy. They are entirely independent of Centrelink. All assistance is free.

Contact Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service on (08) 93281751 or by email at welfare@wraswa.org.au

Helpful links

Fact Sheets

- There are a range of fact sheets available from the National Welfare Rights Network and the Welfare Rights Centres across Australia. Visit <http://www.welfarerights.org.au/factsheets> to see if any of the fact sheets can assist you.
- There are some additional fact sheets on our website. They can be found at <http://www.wraswa.org.au/resources/>.

Department of Human Services

- The Department of Human Services Centrelink website has a range of information. <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/dhs/centrelink>.
- They also have a range of YouTube videos which are helpful to provide an overview. You can browse the videos at <https://www.youtube.com/c/humanservicesgovau>.
- The Department of Human Services has a range of Facebook pages which are useful for keeping informed. 'Like' Student Update or Family Update to keep updated on your news feed.