



Fact Sheet 1: Your Centrelink Mutual Obligation Activities When Domestic Violence is Occurring

1. Introduction

Many Centrelink payments require you to do certain tasks and activities to keep getting the payment. These are called 'mutual obligation activities' or 'MOAs'. Usually, if you do not complete your MOAs, there are penalties.

However, if you are experiencing domestic violence or have experienced domestic violence in the last six months, you may find that you are not able to complete your MOAs. This factsheet explains what MOA exemptions are available for people experiencing domestic violence.

2. What is an MOA?

Mutual obligation activities, or MOAs, are tasks and activities that you are required to do while receiving certain types of Centrelink payments. You need to complete MOAs if you receive any of these payments:

- JobSeeker Payment
- Youth Allowance as a job seeker
- Parenting Payment and are a compulsory ParentsNext participant
- Parenting Payment single after your youngest child turns 6
- Special Benefit paid under certain conditions.

Your MOAs might include:

- going to appointments with your job service provider or Centrelink
- doing approved training or study
- doing job searches
- applying for jobs

If you don't do your MOAs, you can be subject to penalties like demerit points, suspension, and cancellation.

3. What exemptions are there if I am experiencing domestic violence?

You can get an exemption from your MOAs if you are experiencing domestic violence or have experienced

domestic violence within the last six months. This is because Centrelink has exemptions for people if they are experiencing a major personal crisis, and domestic violence is considered a major personal crisis.

For most payments, the exemption can be up to a maximum of 16 weeks, but Centrelink will decide how long your exemption will be based on how long they think you need to deal with your personal crisis. If you receive the Special Benefit, the exemption can be up to a maximum of 2 weeks.

4. How do I apply for an exemption?

To apply for an exemption because of domestic violence, you can contact Centrelink directly and ask to speak to a Centrelink social worker.

If the domestic violence has resulted in a new or worsening physical or mental health condition, you can also get your doctor to complete a Centrelink Medical Certificate form. This form is available on Centrelink's website.

5. Where to get help

Centrelink and social security laws are complex, and the rules can be confusing. If you are experiencing domestic violence and having issues with Centrelink, you should get some legal advice.

Canberra Community Law specialises in social security law and can give you advice and assistance with Centrelink.

Disclaimer

This factsheet contains general information available at the time of publication. It does not constitute legal advice. If you have a specific legal problem please contact Canberra Community Law's advice line on 02 6218 7900.

Canberra Community Law is entirely independent of Centrelink. All assistance is free.