

Activity test and participation requirements for job seekers



What are activity test and participation requirements?

If you receive Newstart Allowance or Youth Allowance and have the capacity to work, you will have to show that you are actively looking for suitable work to remain eligible for payment. You may also have these requirements if you receive Parenting Payment or Special Benefit. These are called "activity test or participation requirements".

To meet your activity test or participation requirements you must:

- demonstrate that you are actively looking for suitable paid work
- accept suitable work offers
- attend all job interviews
- attend all interviews with Centrelink and your Provider of Australian Government Employment Services (PAGES)
- agree to attend approved training courses or programmes
- never leave a job, training course or programme without a good reason
- enter into and carry out an Activity Agreement if asked to.

Note: If you are assessed as having a partial capacity to work you will have part-time activity test or participation requirements.

What is an Activity Agreement?

An Activity Agreement lists the activities you agree to do in order to improve your chances of getting a job. The requirements for your Activity Agreement can be tailored to your individual needs.

You may be asked to enter into an Activity Agreement by your PAGES or Centrelink. The activities in this agreement may be voluntary or compulsory.

Requirements for principal carers of dependent children

If you are a single or partnered principal carer receiving an income support payment, you will be required to enter into an Activity Agreement once your youngest child is six years old.* Under the agreement you will need to be working, or looking for at least 15 hours of suitable work per week or engaged in another activity which has been approved by your PAGES or Centrelink.

* Some people do not have these requirements until their youngest child turns seven.

What happens if I fail to meet my activity test or participation requirements?

Your activity test or participation requirements will be:

- compulsory activities in your Activity Agreement, **and/or**
- interviews that you need to attend (with your PAGES, with Centrelink or a job interview).

If you do not meet your activity test or participation requirements and do not have a reasonable excuse this is called a participation failure.

If you incur a participation failure, your payment may be stopped until you re-engage with Centrelink and/or your PAGES. As long as you re-engage immediately when asked there will be no loss of payment.



If you have three or more participation failures in a 12 month period, you may incur a non-payment period of eight weeks.

This means that you will not be eligible to receive a payment again for eight weeks. **If you start receiving payment again your first payment will be two weeks after the end of this non-payment period.**

What is a serious failure and what does it mean to me?

A serious failure applies if you:

- become unemployed voluntarily without a reasonable excuse
- become unemployed due to misconduct
- refuse or do not accept suitable job offers without a reasonable excuse, **or**
- do not start, attend or complete full-time Work for the Dole, when arranged.

If you have a serious failure applied to you, you will incur a non-payment period of eight weeks. This will occur on your first serious failure and on every serious failure after that.

How can I avoid a failure?

The best way to avoid a failure is to meet your activity test or participation requirements and to accept all offers of suitable work.

However, if you are unable to attend an appointment or meet a participation requirement it is important that you make contact as soon as you become aware you are not going to be able to meet the requirement—even if you have a reasonable excuse. If the appointment or requirement is with your PAGES you must contact them to let them know—where possible this contact is expected prior to the scheduled activity. If the appointment or requirement is with Centrelink you must contact Centrelink on **13 2850** or visit your nearest Centrelink Customer Service Centre as soon as possible.

If you have a job interview, work commitment or opportunity to work at the same time as another activity test or participation requirement, you must contact the organisation that arranged the requirement to let them know. You should not cancel job interviews, work commitments or opportunities to work to meet other activity test or participation requirements.

To help you remember Centrelink appointments you can register to receive electronic reminders (SMS or email) by visiting www.centrelink.gov.au and selecting Online Services.

How to find out more?

Employment Services	13 2850
Youth and Student Services	13 2490
Family Assistance Office	13 6150
Disabilities, Sickness and Carers	13 2717
Retirement Services	13 2300
Indigenous Call Centre	13 6380
To speak to Centrelink in languages other than English	13 1202
Customer Relations	Freecall™ 1800 050 004 (for complaints, compliments and suggestions)
Australian Government Services	
Fraud Tip-off Line	13 1524
TTY* enquiries	Freecall™ 1800 810 586
To make an appointment	13 1021

Go to our website at www.centrelink.gov.au

Check the "we speak your language" link on Centrelink's website for information in languages other than English.

Note: Calls from your home phone to Centrelink "13" numbers from anywhere in Australia are charged at a fixed rate. That rate may vary from the price of a local call and may also vary between telephone service providers. Calls to "1800" numbers from your home phone are free. Calls from public and mobile phones may be timed and charged at a higher rate.

Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication is intended only as a guide. The information is accurate as at November 2007. If you use this publication after that date, please check with Centrelink that it is still correct.