

How to Collect Your HUCTW Childcare Fund Award Money: Pros and Cons of the Two Delivery Methods

Collect your award money through a Flexible Spending Account (Tax Free)	Collect your award money through the HUCTW Office (Taxed at 38%)
HOW IT WORKS:	HOW IT WORKS:
<p>You may put up to \$5000 into a tax free Flexible Spending Account (FSA) for childcare expenses. You can put your Childcare award into the FSA, as well as money from your own paycheck, if you choose. In order to enroll in the FSA, you just fill out the PDF form that we have provided and submit it to the Harvard Benefits Office by November 20, 2015 (do not use PeopleSoft).</p> <p>A company called Benefit Strategies will manage your Flexible Spending Account. As you accrue childcare expenses in 2017, you can submit those expenses to Benefit Strategies for reimbursement. They will reimburse you using your award money, either by check in the mail, or by direct deposit. Or you may use the FSA “debit card” that Benefit Strategies will provide to you to pay for expenses directly.</p> <p>Be sure to read this entire document if you have never used an FSA before.</p>	<p>This is the default method of collecting your award, if you don’t elect to put your money into an FSA. If you use this method, your award will be taxed at a rate of about 38%. You will likely get some of this money back, when you do your 2017 taxes.</p> <p>Each quarter (every three months), you will need to fill out a “Verification Form.” On this form you list your childcare expenses from the last three months. Your childcare provider(s) then needs to sign it to verify that these expenses are accurate. You submit this form to the HUCTW office by email, fax, or mail. You can also save up all your expenses until November and submit a year’s worth of expenses at once.</p> <p>HUCTW will work with the payroll office to deposit three months worth of your Childcare Fund award into your paycheck for the following month (or 12 months of expenses at the end of the year if that’s what you prefer).</p>
MAJOR PROS:	MAJOR PROS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You do not have to pay tax on your award money, so if you receive an award from us for \$3000, you will actually receive the entire \$3000, as long as you submit at least \$3000 in eligible childcare expenses to Benefit Strategies during 2017. You can apply to Benefit Strategies for reimbursement anytime during CY2017, as long as it’s before March 2018. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public kindergarten and the daytime portion of overnight camp are considered eligible childcare expenses if you apply for reimbursement through the HUCTW Office (whereas, if you put your award money in an FSA, these expenses are not eligible). If you don’t use all of your Childcare Fund award money, there is no tax liability for the unused funds.
MAJOR CONS:	MAJOR CONS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you put your award money in an FSA, public kindergarten and the daytime portion of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You have to pay a high tax rate on your Childcare Fund award money (about 38%). For

overnight camps are not considered to be eligible expenses. You can see the full list of FSA eligible expenses on the Benefit Strategies website.

- If you put your award money in an FSA and you do not use all of it, you lose whatever portion you don't use. Additionally, you may have to pay tax on whatever portion you don't use. Don't put your award money into an FSA unless you know you will have enough childcare expenses to use up all or most of the award.

example, if we give you an award of \$3000, approximately \$1140 of that money goes towards taxes, so your actual award will only be \$1860 after taxes. You will get some of that money back when you do your 2017 taxes, but not all of it.

- If you choose to have your award money delivered to you through the HUCTW office and you do not use all of your award money, you will lose whatever you don't use. Additionally, if your actual expenses are significantly less than what you originally estimated on your application, we may need to lower your award.
- You can only apply for reimbursement once every three months.

IMPORTANT -- If you want to collect your award money through a tax-free FSA:

It is critical that you use the PDF form we have provided if you choose to put your Childcare Fund award money into a Flexible Spending Account (FSA). Do **not** enroll in an FSA using PeopleSoft. If you use PeopleSoft to sign up for the Dependent Care FSA, all of the money for the FSA will be deducted from your paycheck and **not** from the award money. Whereas, if you use our PDF form, you can put your Childcare award money in the FSA, **and** you can put money from your paycheck in as well, if you choose.

You can put up to \$5000 in total in the FSA if you file your taxes as "single" or "married, filing jointly," or you can put up to \$2500 in your FSA if you file your taxes as "married, filing separately." You can find more information on how Flexible Spending Accounts work here: https://www.benstrat.com/participants_fsa.php.

You can only claim expenses up to the amount that has accrued in your FSA. For example, even if you accumulate all of your childcare expenses during the summer months, you will not receive your full award until the last pay period in December. Funds accumulate on the same schedule as our paychecks and you will see the fund accumulation on your paystub.

If you are expecting your first child, you cannot elect an FSA at this time. You may elect to have your HUCTW Childcare award in an FSA during your "life-changing event open enrollment" (a 30 day period after the birth of your child during which you can change your benefits) by contacting Michelle Todd in the Harvard Benefits Office.

IMPORTANT -- If you want to collect your award money through the HUCTW office:

If you choose to collect your money from the HUCTW Office, you may want to consider filling out the Dependent Care Tax Credit form (IRS Form 2441) when you do your 2017 taxes. Doing this may enable you to get back some of the 38% tax that will be withheld initially: <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f2441.pdf>