

Fees Policy

Policy introduction

Weldon Children's Services strives to provide high quality care, education and leisure programs. To achieve this aim we need to be financially viable at all times. Prompt payment of fees allows us to plan with certainty. We have a commitment to ensuring our fees are as affordable as possible and that all families have access to any subsidies that are available to reduce the cost of care. We will advocate with governments for all children's rights to access early education and school age care regardless of their family's financial situation.

Our policy in action

Our financial health and access to our programs will be maximised by:

- Ensuring families are aware of all fees and fee payment requirements upon enrolment
- Keeping fee increases to a minimum
- Ensuring the cost of administering fee collection is minimised
- Following the appropriate priority of access requirements
- Following all legal compliance required by our access to government funding
- Managing fee collection to avoid bad debts
- Families are notified as far ahead as possible and no less than fourteen days in advance of any changes to fees or the ways in which fees will be collected
- Ensuring we issue invoices on a weekly basis

Statutory legislation and considerations

- Education and Care Services National Law 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- A New Tax System(Family Assistance)(Administration) Act 1999
- A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999
- Corporations Act 2009
- Australian Consumer Law 2011
- Fair Trading Act (NSW) 1987

Glossary of Terms

The Approved Provider

With the introduction of the National Quality Framework (NQF) on 1 January 2012, a new national regulatory system was introduced for education and care services across Australia. Under this system an Approved Provider is a person or an entity who holds a Provider Approval under the Children (Education and Care Services) National Law (NSW). This approval authorises the Approved Provider to operate an approved education and care service. Approved Providers were formerly known as licensees of children's services. The Approved Provider is legally responsible for ensuring an early or middle childhood program complies with the National Law and Regulations. This includes ensuring that a program is staffed appropriately, provides for the health, safety and well-being of each child, offers a required program and has a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) in place. In addition the National Law sets out a range of offences that incur penalties should failure to comply occur.

Nominated Supervisor

Under the NQF all early childhood and middle childhood programs are required to have a Nominated Supervisor. A Nominated Supervisor, in simple terms is the person with responsibility for the day-to-day management of an Approved Service. The Nominated Supervisor has a range of legal responsibilities under the Law and Regulations that govern the operation of education and care services. The role of Nominated Supervisor is similar to the role of Authorised Supervisor under the previous legislation.

Definition of a Permanent Booking

A permanent booking is one that is ongoing, i.e. there is no defined time limit on the booking. The booking is for the same days and times, whether that is for an early years booking on particular days or a before school care and/or after school care booking for specific days.

Definition of a Non-Permanent/Casual Booking

A casual booking is a booking that is for a finite period of time or there is no commitment for an ongoing booking and this is defined as a non-permanent (casual) booking. A casual booking includes adding additional days to an early years booking or a before school care and/or after school care booking where the additional days have not been specified as a permanent booking and there is no ongoing commitment for the booking.

A family may have a permanent booking for some days and a casual booking for other days. Unless there is ongoing commitment for a booking for all days, the casual booking days will attract the additional surcharge.

Changes to a Permanent Booking

A change to a permanent booking is one that reduces or increases specific days for an early years booking or increases or decreases a before school care and/or after school care booking for specific days. The change is an ongoing change, i.e. there is no defined time limit on the change in booking. A notice period of 10 working days is required for a change in a permanent booking. Swapping a day or adding a day constitutes a change to a permanent booking and requires notice, however, the amendment may be made sooner than the 10 working days, subject to availability.

Strategies for policy implementation

Priority of access - Fees

As the approved provider we will:

- Ensure the organisation complies with Family Assistance Law
- Ensure vacant places are filled under the appropriate priority of access policy for the programs we offer **refer priority of access guidelines – Enrolment and Orientation**
- Work with families to find a solution where families are experiencing hardship or where there are extenuating circumstances preventing families from keeping their accounts current or where the implementation of the policy creates an unreasonable financial burden
- Ensure adequate records of attendance are kept for each child as required

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- As required under family assistance law pass all fee reductions to families as advised by the Department of Education against an *attendance record report/child sign in sign out record* within fourteen days of being advised of the amount
- Ensure the organisation submits online weekly *attendance record reports* to the Department of Education for each child accessing care
- Comply with Australian Government or NSW Government funding agreements as required
- Ensure the organisation remains financially viable and can meet its debts and other obligations as they fall due
- Review fees annually in line with CPI and market forces
- Charge no more than the usual fee for fees paid by the Government such as “Additional Child Care Subsidy”
- Issue accounts for all children in respect of whom fee reductions are provided to provide families with a complete record of the CCS and or other fee reductions that have been provided by the organisation at least monthly
- Only collect and disclose personal information about children and families to the Department of Education/the Family Assistance office (FAO/the Department of Education and Communities where the disclosure is legally required

Our nominated supervisor will:

- Ensure all families are made aware of program fees and available subsidies on enrolment
- Ensure Invoices of fees are given to the families on a weekly basis

Families will:

- Obtain a CRN - Customer Reference Number from Centerlink as soon as practicable before or on enrolment at the program
- Sign in and Out and record the arrival and departure times of their child/children attending care
- Pay fees as they are due even if a child is absent due to illness or accident

Fee Payment Processes

Our nominated supervisor will ensure the families are aware of the fee payment requirements as follows:

- **Bond deposit** - on enrolment a bond (security deposit) equal to the sum of two full weeks is payable for all permanent bookings. Bonds are held separately to general accounts and can be paid over an agreed period of time should the initial cost cause financial hardship to a family
 - where a security deposit payment plan is in place, weekly fees must be paid in advance of the child’s attendance, plus an agreed amount towards the bond. The maximum amount of time available for the accumulation of a bond is twelve weeks. Defaulting at any time may result in immediate suspension of care and cessation of the payment plan arrangements
- **Holding deposit** - a non-permanent/casual booking will incur a \$60.00 holding fee deposit that will be deducted from the first fee charged. Fees for a non-permanent/casual bookings will be charged on the day the family uses the program unless the booking is for multiple days/weeks. If the booking is for multiple days/weeks the holding deposit will be applied to the first booking and

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payments must be a week in advance. A cancellation notice must be provided in writing 24 hours prior to the care session commencing for a non-permanent/casual booking.

- **Commencement of care** - a payment equal to the sum of two weeks of care is payable either before or on the first day of care – the current week and a week in advance
- We do **NOT** accept cash - fees are payable by Ipay – Debit system
- Fee receipts will be emailed to the parents/guardians weekly

Families will:

- Ensure all fees are kept a week in advance

Outstanding fees

Our nominated supervisor will:

- Implement an overdue fee process with any families whose fees are not a week in advance
- Follow up late payment accounts to organise a payment plan or suspend care
- Arrange for debt collection processes to commence where no arrangement is agreed to or an agreed arrangement is not kept up to date

Families will:

- Ensure that accounts reflect a zero or positive balance, exclusive of the bond

Late collection fees

As the approved provider we will:

- Levy a late fee for families who arrive after the program closing time. This fee is set at \$30 for the first 15 minutes or part thereof. Each minute after this will be charged at \$3 per minute up until 6.30pm, the charge will then increase to \$4 per minute. Late fees are charged to the first two siblings only

Our nominated supervisor will

- Ensure that families are made aware of the late collection fee on enrolment

Sibling discount Before and After School Care

Where a family books and pays for three or more sessions in a normal week of care and has two children attend three or more sessions in a normal week of care, the sibling will receive a 5% discount. Where more than one sibling attends these booked sessions each child after the first child will receive a 5% discount

Administration fee

An annual administration fee is payable for each family as they book to continue the care into the following year, this is usually during the last term of care in a calendar year or upon commencement. Administration fees are for all programs as follows:

- Out of School Hours Care
- Vacation Care
- Concord West ECS
- Weldon Occasional Care

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NOTE: where children are already booked into a Before and After School Care program and the administration fee has been previously paid to a program, no administration fee will be charged for vacation care

Vacation Care Bookings

Bookings for Vacation Care are accepted **ONLY** in the following circumstances:

- No outstanding fees for any program one week prior to the commencement of vacation care
- A relevant booking form is correctly completed and signed by the parents/guardians and the nominated supervisor/program coordinator
- Correct payment accompanies the booking form for new and inactive families
- All bookings are subject to availability

Alterations to booked days of care – notification

Families will provide **ten clear working days' notice in writing to:**

- Make a permanent alteration to a permanent booking inclusive of vacation care
- Cancel all or any of your permanent booking inclusive of vacation care – this is deemed to be a permanent change
- Swap a day within your existing booking – this is dependent on availability
- Add a day to your permanent booking – this is dependent on availability

All other absences are payable

Absences

Our nominated supervisor will:

- Ensure families are reminded of the current numbers of allowable absences allowed under CCS legislation and procedures for claiming allowable absences days. This is on the invoice sent out weekly.
- Charge full fees for any absence on the first day of care and any subsequent absent days until the child attends the program
- Charge for non-notification of absences

Families will:

- Provide documentation for additional absence days as required

Public holidays

Families:

- Are **NOT** required to pay for any booked day of education and care in both early years learning and school age care programs, which falls on a public holiday

Pupil Free Days during term time

Families:

Are **NOT** required to pay for any before and after school care programs, which fall on a pupil free day, however, they are required to pay a fee if they attend a program provided on a pupil free day.

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The fee charged will be set based on the program and activities provided. A pupil free day is set by an educational institution. On a pupil free day students do not attend school. Pupil free days attached to school holidays are not deemed to be vacation care.

Withdrawal from care

Our nominated supervisor will:

- Provide all families with a statement of outstanding fees on receipt of notification of withdrawal of a child from a program
- Advise our accounts department of an account finalisation and request refund of the family security bond
- Charge late notice penalties if notice to withdraw or reduce permanent placements is given after mid October, the actual date to be advised on the continuation of enrolment form. The late notice penalty will require full fees to be paid until the end of the operational year, regardless of the date of withdrawal if after the date advised on the continuation of enrolment form
- Charge penalties if notice to withdraw or reduce permanent placements for the start of the new calendar year is given after mid October in the previous calendar year, the actual dates to be advised on the continuation of enrolment form. The penalty will require full fees to be paid until the second week in March, regardless of the date of withdrawal if after the date advised on the continuation of enrolment form

Families will:

- Provide written notice for withdrawal or reduction of permanent placements in a calendar year no later than mid October (the actual date is advised on the continuation of enrolment form), which means the last day of attendance will be the end of October. Late notice penalties will be applied if notice is given after mid October. The late notice penalty will require full fees to be paid until the end of the operational year, regardless of the date of withdrawal if after mid October
- Provide written notice to withdraw or reduce permanent placements for start of the following calendar year no later than mid October (the actual dates are advised on the continuation of enrolment form). Penalty will require full fees to be paid for the new calendar year until the second week of March (the actual dates to be advised on the continuation of enrolment form)
- Except for the dates outlined above, provide ten clear working days' notice in writing to advise withdrawal from care. If the child does not attend during the ten days' notice period full fees will be chargeable for the last day they attended and any subsequent days until the end of the notice period. There are no CCS reductions claimable if the child does not attend and where full fees are charged
- Ensure any outstanding fees are paid in full

Procedures

Weldon procedures that support the implementation of this policy:

- Enrolment – which includes a face to face meeting with the family and signing of the enrolment agreement which includes a summary of the fee policy and fee payment procedure
- Parent Information – Parent Handbook
- Communication – display board
- Newsletters

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Links to other policies

- Enrolment and Orientation
- Family Communication and Participation
- Record Keeping

National Quality Framework

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

Education and Care Services National Regulations: 168 (2) (n), 172

National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care QA7-Standard: 7.1 Element 7.1.2

Sources

- Community Child Care NSW NQF in a Box – policies
- Child Care Service Handbook 2017/2018, Department of Education

Policy Details

Review Date: December 2018

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