

Summary of Key Points

Including but not limited to:

Alteration to attendance days for care - notification

Ten (10) business days' written notice is required to reduce and/or increase your child's days of care for both Before/After School Care and Vacation Care.

Casual Care Bookings

- Casual bookings are subject to availability.
- Early Years Learning - Casual Booking - absences must be notified by 6.00 pm on the previous day.
- After-school care bookings – absences must be notified by 9:00 am on the day.
- Before-school care bookings – absences must be notified by 7:00 am on the day.
- Please note that you will still be charged for the booked casual session if cancellations are not notified within the above timeframes.

Vacation Care Bookings

All alterations, cancellations and absences follow the same guidelines as permanent bookings.

Non-notification fee

- Absences should be marked via the OWNA app; instructions are here.
- After-school care bookings – absences must be notified by 9:00 am on the day.
- Please note that you will still be charged for the booked session if your child is absent.
- If parents do not notify the program that their child will be absent and will not attend after-school care, \$20 will be charged.
- This policy accounts for rostered staff for the session per the ACECQA staffing ratio.

Extended Absences

Under the Family Law Agreement, families are entitled to 42 allowable absences per child each financial year to maintain eligibility for the Child Care Subsidy (CCS). Should you require additional absences, you must provide supporting documentation, as we will need to submit this to Centrelink. Please contact your Program Director as soon as possible to discuss the most suitable arrangement.

For example, if your child goes on holiday mid-term for two weeks, you will be marked absent for all missed permanent sessions, and hence, you will be charged as usual.

Late fee

- A late fee will apply if parents arrive after 6.00 pm to pick up their child/ren.
- You will be charged:
 - \$30 if you arrive within the first 15 minutes.
 - After 15 minutes have passed, you will be charged \$3.00/minute from 15 to 30 minutes late.
 - Then, \$4.00/minute after 30 minutes.
 - This will apply for a maximum of 2 children per service account.

Termination of Care

- Ten (10) business days' written notice is required to terminate Care for your child from both Before/After School Care.
- Centrelink won't pay CCS any days after your child's last physical attendance. You must pay total fees for absent days after the last day your child physically attends the service.

Policy Introduction

Weldon Children's Services strives to provide high-quality care, education, and leisure programs. To achieve this aim, we must always be financially viable. Prompt payment of fees allows us to plan with certainty and meet our commitments. Our approach is to ensure our fees are as affordable as possible and that all families can access any available subsidies 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 individual families' financial situation.

Purpose

This policy aims to give families a clear understanding of Weldon's fee structure, payment requirements, and Child Care Subsidy benefits before enrolment. It explains the fee payment process, the necessity of ensuring children's fees are paid on time, and the impact of failing to pay fees on time.

Strategies for policy implementation

Weldon aims to ensure families understand the fee schedule and payment process required for high-quality care, education, and leisure programs for their child/ren. We are committed to meeting our obligations to maintain financial viability and comply with all Child Care Subsidy (CCS) legislative requirements. We have effective compliance systems to ensure childcare funding is administered appropriately. Weldon ensures the confidentiality and privacy of all personal information provided to our Programs about the enrolled child and family.

The Approved Provider will:

- Ensure the organisation complies with Family Assistance Law
- Ensure vacant places are filled under our programs' appropriate priority of access policy (refer to priority of access guidelines – Enrolment and Orientation Policy).
- 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 notified 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.
- Where assistance is provided by the Government's "Additional Child Care Subsidy," Weldon will not charge additional fees.
- Issue accounts to provide families with a complete record of the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and/or other fee reductions the organisation has provided weekly via the OWNA portal.
- Only collect and disclose personal information about children and families to the Department of Education and/or the Family Assistance Office as legally required.

Our nominated supervisor will:

- Ensure all families are made aware of program fees and bond deposit requirements.
- In conjunction with the Approved Provider, work with families to find a solution where they are experiencing hardship, where extenuating circumstances prevent them from keeping their accounts current, or where the policy implementation creates an unreasonable financial burden.
- Ensure adequate records of attendance are kept for each child as required.

Families will:

- Obtain a Customer Reference Number (CRN) from Centrelink for the parent(s) and the child as soon as practicable before or upon enrolment in 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 Structure

Our fee structure includes.

Administration fee

An annual administration fee is payable for each family upon initial enrolment and/or as bookings are confirmed to continue the care into the following year. Administration fees are payable for all program types.

NOTE: The administration fee is annual per family, irrespective of the number of children attending the programs noted above. For example, no administration fee will be charged for Vacation Care if children are already booked into a Before- and After-School Care program and the administration fee has been previously paid to that program.

Bond deposit

On enrolment of a permanent booking, a bond (security deposit) equal to two full weeks' fees is required. The bond is due and payable upon confirmation of enrolment. Bonds are held separately from general accounts. The bond may be adjusted from time to time based on changes in fee charges or booking requirements, such as decreases or increases in days booked.

Non- Notification of an Absence fee:

A non-notification fee is charged when parents have booked their children into a placement for an early-year learning program or a before- or after-school care program and do not advise the program of an absence by the set times.

Late Fees

Weldon recognises that families can experience unforeseen circumstances, and we will work with families to ensure late fees are only applied in the appropriate circumstances.

- Weldon is not licensed or insured to have children on the premises after hours. To have children on the premises after hours is a breach of the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations.
- A late fee will apply when children are picked up after closing time.
- A review of the child's enrolment will occur where families are consistently late collecting children.

Commencement of care

A payment equal to two weeks of care is payable before the commencement of care, i.e., the current week and a week in advance. Note: We do NOT accept cash for any payments—fees are payable only by Fat Zebra, a debit system that works with our OWNA software (the childcare management system).

Child Care Subsidy (CCS)

- Parents/guardians are required to register for CCS through their myGov account linked to Centrelink and provide documentation to support the CCS payment.
- In most instances, CCS is paid directly to the program, which is used to reduce fees (visible on a family's tax invoice).
- Centrelink automatically ceases a child's enrolment after 14 weeks of non-attendance. Suppose your child's enrolment ceases before starting care, and your child is absent on the first days of care. In that case, Families are not entitled to CCS until the first day the child physically attends the service and are only entitled to it until the last day the child physically attends it.

Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS)

- Families can apply for ACCS through Centrelink for assistance with fees.
- There are four different payments under the Additional Child Care Subsidy:
 - ACCS (child wellbeing) helps children who are at risk of severe abuse or neglect. The approved provider is involved in determining children who may require additional support and who are at risk of harm.
 - ACCS (grandparent): to help grandparents on income support who are the principal caregivers of their grandchildren. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment.
 - ACCS (temporary financial hardship): this payment is to help families experiencing financial hardship. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment.
 - ACCS (transition to work): this payment helps low-income families transition from income support to work. Families must contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment.

General Fee Information

- Fees are charged for each session of care and vary depending on the age of the child in care and the family's eligibility for Child Care Subsidy (CCS).
- CCS is paid directly to the program and used as a fee reduction (visible on a family's tax invoice).
- Families must pay the difference between the fee charged and the subsidy amount- the 'gap' amount.
- Fees will be paid weekly through Fat Zebra, a direct debit system.
- Fees are payable in advance for every session a child is enrolled in, including absent days and family holidays.
- If a session of care falls on a public holiday, Early Years Learning families must pay for that day for a permanent booking unless it is a public holiday that falls within Weldon's close-down period.
- If a session of care falls on a public holiday before and after-school care, families are required to pay for that day for a permanent booking unless it is a public holiday that falls within Weldon's close-down period, during a vacation care period or on a pupil-free day.
- Fees are not charged for any before- and after-school care programs that fall on a pupil-free day (staff development day); however, students are required to pay a fee if they attend a program provided on a pupil-free day. The fee charged will be set based on the program and activities provided. An educational institution sets a pupil-free day. On a pupil-free day, students do not attend school. Pupil-free days attached to school holidays are not deemed to be vacation care.
- Fees are charged for the full sessions booked (regardless of the actual hours attended). Late fees apply to families who arrive after the program closes to collect their children.
- Where a family has two or more children attending a program with permanent bookings in a typical week of care, the older sibling (or older siblings if there are three or more children) will receive a 5% discount.

Payment of Fees

- Families are required to pay fees using Fat Zebra, a direct debit system that works in conjunction with our OWNA software. Upon enrolment, the family must complete their direct debit details within OWNA.
- All fees, including those associated with the direct debit system, are outlined upon enrolment.
- A dishonour fee will apply for direct debit transactions with insufficient funds to cover the fees.
- Families will be issued a weekly tax invoice based on the fee payment and regulatory requirements.
- Families will be issued a statement of entitlement fortnightly per the fee payment and regulatory requirements.
- The tax invoice will include details of the sessions of care provided, associated CCS payments received, and payments from the family.
- The statement of entitlement will include details of the sessions of care, care summary, fees and subsidy summary, and date of absences. More information can be found here: <https://guides.dss.gov.au/family-assistance-guide/4/6/1/40>
- The tax invoice and statement of entitlement are generated using our OWNA software, which meets all requirements per Family Assistance Law legislation.

Fat Zebra

- When paying by Fat Zebra, the following charges apply:
 - When paying from a bank account (EFT) – no fees are incurred. (In this case, a charge per transaction by Fat Zebra is paid for by Weldon.)
 - Visa/Mastercard percentage (calculated on transaction value)
 - Failed Transaction charge (per failed or returned transaction attempt)
- The above fee types are charged to the benefit of the Fat Zebra service provider. Weldon does not receive any of the above fees for this Fat Zebra service.
- The current list of these fee charges is available at the program, noted on the tax invoice, and provided to families each year as fees and charges are reviewed.

Outstanding fees

Weldon recognises that families can experience unforeseen circumstances, and we will work with them to agree on an arrangement to assist them when they experience undue financial hardship.

Where there are outstanding fees, the Nominated Supervisor will, in conjunction with the Approved Provider, implement an overdue fee process with families whose fees are not a week in advance. The Nominated Supervisor will follow up on late payment accounts to organise a payment plan or, as a last resort, suspend care.

Arrangements for debt collection processes to commence after 30 days will be made where no arrangement is agreed to or an agreed arrangement is not maintained.

Change of Fees

- Fees are subject to change at any time provided a minimum of 14 days written notice is given to all families.
- The CPI may increase CCS hourly rate caps at the commencement of each financial year; CCS governs any CCS hourly rate changes, which are automatically adjusted through our CCS Software.

Absences

- Families must contact the program if their child cannot attend a particular session. The preferred contact method is within the OWNA app or portal, alternatively by telephone, email, or text message.
- The latest time required to notify your absence differs for each program type:
 - Early Years Learning - Permanent Booking—Absences should be notified the evening before or as early as possible; however, they must be notified by 10.00 am on the day at the latest.
 - Early Years Learning - Casual Booking - absences must be notified by 6.00 pm on the previous day.
 - After School care bookings – absences must be notified by 9:00 am on the day.
 - Before School care booking – absences must be notified by 7.00 am on the day.
- Families must still pay the 'gap' fee to the program if their child cannot attend any permanent bookings.
- Families must pay the non-notification of absence fee to the program if they have yet to alert the program about the absence or cancel the casual booking in the required timeframes (as above). This applies to Early Years Learning and After School Care.
- Under the Child Care Subsidy, families are entitled to 42 allowable absence days per child each financial year and, in some circumstances, may be entitled to additional absence days. (Refer to the Child Care Subsidy Handbook)
- The program will keep records and evidence for each additional absence, where required.
- Families can view their absence count through their Centrelink online account via , as well as the weekly tax invoice and statement of entitlement.

Withdrawal of Enrolment

- Parents must provide ten business days' written notice of their intention to withdraw a child from the program and complete a termination form via OWNA.
- If withdrawal from the program is made without notification, the Child Care Subsidy may only be paid until the child's last physical day of attendance. In this instance, full fees will be charged.
- The child needs to attend the program on the last day of the notice period to receive CCS.
- The entire bond will only be refunded if fees are current and the child attended the last day of care.
- Withdrawal from the program without the required ten business days' notice may result in the forfeiture of the bond.

Bookings and Enrolments:

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

- No outstanding fees for any other program one week before the commencement of vacation care
- A relevant vacation care booking is undertaken via the Casual Booking process in OWINA
- All booking confirmations are subject to availability.

Changes to Permanent Bookings:

- A change to increase specific days on an ongoing basis or swap permanent days requires notice in writing and will be accommodated as soon as possible, subject to availability.
- 10 business days' notice in writing is required to reduce days on any permanent booking.
- 10 business days' notice in writing is required to cancel or change a Vacation Care booking.

Annual Re-enrolment Process

Families will:

- Provide a written notice for withdrawal in a calendar year by mid-October or during the re-enrolment process (whichever occurs sooner). If families are not re-enrolling for the coming year, the last opportunity to provide withdrawal notice will be at 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 current operational year (i.e. late December), regardless of the date of withdrawal if after mid-October.
- Provide written notice to withdraw or reduce permanent placement days for the start of the following calendar year no later than mid-October (dates are advised on the re-enrolment form). When written notice to withdraw or reduce permanent placement days is not received by the required date in mid-October, full fees are to be paid for the new calendar year until the second week of March (dates to be advised on the re-enrolment form).
- Ensure any outstanding fees are paid in full and provide bank account details for the refund of bond monies.
- Bond refunds will be made as soon as practical after final attendances have been confirmed and processed.

Definitions:

Approved provider: The approved provider is the legal entity that holds the approval to run a program and is legally responsible for managing it. Weldon is the approved provider of all the programs it operates.

Nominated Supervisor: The person nominated by the Approved Provider for the day-to-day responsibility of the program and who has consented to nomination in writing. In Weldon's programs, the Nominated Supervisor is the Director or Coordinator of the program.

Permanent Booking: A permanent booking is for the same specific day/s or session/s each week or fortnight, with no defined end date on the booking.

A permanent booking is ongoing. Please note that the minimum number of days for a permanent booking in an Early Years program is two days (consecutive days are preferred).

Casual/Non-Permanent Booking: A casual booking is made on an ad hoc, non-permanent basis, not on an ongoing basis. It has a start and end date and may be for an additional day or session that is not part of a permanent booking or for a one-off day as required.

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

Links to other policies:

The following policies may be linked to this policy:

- Enrolment and Orientation Policy

Sources

- Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority.
- Australian Government Department of Education Child Care Provider [Handbook](#)
- Australian Government Department of Education <https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood>
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2018).
- [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#). (2011).
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (
- Guide to the National Quality Framework. (2023)

Weldon Children's Services fees policy is reviewed annually in June. 14 days notification will be given to families for any changes made to this policy via email and OWNA.