

KINDERGARTEN (VIC) PAYMENT OF FEES POLICY

Under the Education and Care Services National Regulations [regulation 162 (2)], the approved provider must ensure a comprehensive written fee policy is in place for the payment of fees and clearly communicate this policy with all families at time of enrolment.

Our Service is committed to supporting the Department of Education and training (DET)'s funded kindergarten programs providing access to all eligible Victorian children including those who face barriers to participation.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP		
7.1	Governance	Governance supports the operation of a quality service
7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service
7.1.3	Roles and Responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood and support effective decision making and operation of the service

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
172	Notification of change to policies and procedures

RELATED LEGISLATION

Child Care Subsidy Secretary's Rules 2017	Family Law Act 1975
A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999	See all related legislation for Child Care Provider Handbook in Appendix 1 https://www.dese.gov.au/child-care-package/ccp-resources-providers/child-care-provider-handbook
Children, Youth and Families Act 2005	Children Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
Disability Discrimination Act 1992	Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (No Jab, No Play) Act 2015

Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015	Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015
Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (MARAM)	

RELATED POLICIES

Arrival and Departure Policy CCS Accounts Policy Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Governance Policy Dealing with Complaints Policy Kindergarten Enrolment Policy (Vic)	Fraud Prevention Policy Governance Policy Orientation of Families Policy Privacy and Confidentiality Policy Termination of Enrolment Policy
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PURPOSE

This policy provides guidelines for the setting, collection and payment of fees for the range of kindergarten programs and high-quality childcare available at our Service. Information to ensure equitable access for all children is provided within this policy including Kindergarten Fee Subsidy and Child Care Subsidy benefits.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the approved provider, nominated supervisor and other management, educators, families, and children of the Service.

FAMILY ASSISTANCE LAW LEGISLATION AND FUNDED KINDERGARTEN

As an approved early education and care service, the Australian Government provides a *Childcare Subsidy* (CCS) under the Family Assistance Law to help eligible families with the cost of childcare delivered by our Service. The level of subsidy a family receives depends on the family's income, an activity test and the type of approved childcare service. CCS is paid directly to our Service and families are required to pay the difference between the subsidy amount and the fees charged.

Our Service sets fees each year for the various programs offered for children 0-6 including funded three-year-old and four-year-old kindergarten programs. Families may be eligible for CCS or other grants to assist the payment of fees. Our Service promotes participation of all children, particularly among children who require additional support, such as children with disability and Aboriginal children. Free or low-cost programs are available for eligible children through the Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) program.

Fees are based on our ability to provide the requirements of the Education and Care National Law and National Regulations, Family Assistance Law, the Australian Taxation Office and guidelines contained in the Child Care Provider Handbook and Funded Kindergarten Guide. Our Service provides a range of

support options for families experiencing financial difficulties as detailed below [see: *Financial Difficulties*] We will ensure deposits for placements do not present a financial barrier to families seeking to access an ESK place.

The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides a range of funding for each child in Victoria to attend a kindergarten program in the year before school. From 2022, the kindergarten funded program will be extended to include funded three-year-old kindergarten equating to providing two years of funded kindergarten for each child in Victoria.

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IMPLEMENTATION

Our Service aims to ensure families understand our fee schedule and payment process required for kindergarten programs and where applicable, childcare fees. We are committed to meet our obligations to maintain financial integrity and comply with all Funded Kindergarten and Child Care Subsidy legislative requirements.

We have effective compliance systems in place to ensure all childcare funding is administered appropriately. Our Service ensures the confidentiality and privacy of all personal information provided to the Service about the enrolled child and family and abide by the Victorian Protective Security Standards (VPSS) and Australian Privacy Principles (APP).

Responsibility of Management

The Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor/Responsible person are responsible for:

- ensuring all families are aware of our *Kindergarten Payment of Fees Policy*

- providing information to families of operating hours including term dates, planned closures and additional hours to account for closure [related to funded kindergarten programs]
- reviewing this policy annually and in consultation with families/staff and other stakeholders
- determining annual income from Government subsidies and setting fees for high quality funded kindergarten programs
- ensuring families are aware of payment options and procedures
- providing families with regular statement of fees payable for additional hours and charges if applicable
- ensuring families are notified of any additional charges – excursions/incursions in writing
- collecting all relevant information regarding families who are entitled to concessions and recording on the KIM system
- exempting children from priority groups from enrolment fees (see Kindergarten Funding Guide)
- notifying families of any overdue fees
- discussing fee payment with families if required
- providing families with reminder letters as required
- providing information to families of termination of enrolment of children should fees not be paid
- providing at least **14 days** written notice to families of any proposed fee increases or the way in which fees are collected. Families will be notified via email.
- adhering to the service's Privacy and Confidentiality Policy regarding financial and other information
- share or request information with other Information Sharing Entities (ISEs) under legislative principles of Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) or Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS)
- ensuring any person with management or control and any person responsible for the day-to-day operation of the service are fit and proper persons to be involved in the administration of Child Care Subsidy and Additional Child Care Subsidy (Family Assistance Law)
- ensuring background checks, including criminal history checks are carried out for any personnel administering Child Care Subsidy and Additional Child Care Subsidy (Family Assistance Law)

Educators and other staff will:

- read and adhere to the *Kindergarten Payment of Fees Policy*
- advising the Nominated Supervisor or management of any concerns or complaints regarding the management of Child Care Subsidy or kindergarten funding subsidy or grants raised by families

Responsibility of Families

- read and adhere to the *Kindergarten Payment of Fees Policy*
- provide the Service with the correct enrolment details to facilitate the Kindergarten Funding Subsidy (if applicable) and Child Care Subsidy, if required, including:
 - Centrelink Reference Numbers for child and CCS claimant
 - Date of Birth for child and CCS claimant

- providing proof of their child's immunisation status as per No Jab No Play legislation
- ensure payment of fees as per policy
- notify the approved provider/nominated supervisor if experiencing any payment difficulties
- notify Centrelink of any changes that may affect their CCS entitlement
- confirm their child's enrolment through the parents myGov account.

Complaints relating to the administration of Child Care Subsidy

Families who wish to raise concerns regarding the management of Child Care Subsidy should speak with the Nominated Supervisor in the first instance. The Nominated Supervisor will follow the steps as outlined in this policy, including advising the Approved Provider of all grievances.

Families can raise concerns regarding management of the Child Care Subsidy to the dedicated Child Care Tip-Off Line either via phone or email:

Phone: 1800 664 231

Email: tipoffline@dese.gov.au

Enrolment Fee and Kindergarten Fee Deposit

An enrolment fee of 4 weeks fees is charged upon confirmation of enrolment. This fee must be paid prior to commencement at the Service.

- A kindergarten fee deposit of 4 weeks fees is to be paid to hold a child's funded kindergarten position at the Service. Half of that deposit is put back off fees and the other half is refunded with 4 weeks notice to cancel enrolment.
- Kindergarten fee deposits may be waived for children who are considered vulnerable.

Funded Kindergarten Fees

Funded Kindergarten will be provided for three-year-old and four-year old children at our Service. This fee includes incursions, extra curricular activities.

General Child Care Fees

- 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 Service, and this is used as a fee reduction (visible on a family's statement).
- Families are required to pay the difference between the fee charged and the subsidy amount- the 'gap' amount
- Fees must be kept in 2 week advance of a child's attendance
- Fees are to be paid fortnightly by either direct deposit, credit card. Fees are payable in advance for every session that a child is enrolled at the Service. This includes pupil free days, sick days, and

family holidays but **excludes periods** when the Service is closed. The Service may be directed to close due to periods of local emergency such as bushfire or flood or a pandemic.

- **If a session of care falls on a public holiday, families are required to pay normal fees. CCS may be paid for sessions that fall on public holidays.**
- Fees are charged for full sessions only (regardless of the actual attendance hours any day).
- Casual days may be offered to families if available within the Service's license.

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
- Basic requirements that must be satisfied for an individual to be eligible to receive Child Care Subsidy. The child must:
 - be a 'Family Tax Benefit child' or 'regular care child' and
 - be 13 or under and not attending secondary school and
 - meet immunisation requirements
- The person claiming the Child Care Subsidy, or their partner must:
 - meet residency requirements and
 - be liable to pay for care provided under a Complying Written Arrangement (their written agreement) with their childcare provider
- Childcare must be provided by an approved provider
- Families level of Child Care Subsidy will be determined by:
 - combined family income
 - activity test of parents
 - type of early learning and childcare Service.
- Child Care Subsidy will be provided directly to the Service and this amount deducted from the parent/family account.
- Families must regularly check their details are correct and report a change in circumstance to Centrelink (family income, activity levels, relationship changes or any other changes to their circumstances).
- Any disputes with CCS payments is the responsibility of the family. The family will be referred to contact Centrelink directly for any enquiries regarding CCS payments.

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS)

Our Service **does not** offer Kindergarten Fee Subsidy. Families needing financial assistance may be eligible for ACCS. Please see the Director/Nominated Supervisor for information about this. Eligible families may also be able to access ESK. See page 10 for more information

OR

Families eligible for Kindergarten Fee Subsidy can access 5-15 hours of three- year-old and 15 hours of four-year-old kindergarten for free only if the kindergarten fees are not attracting any Child Care Subsidy (CCS) or Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS).

The following criteria must be met to be eligible for KFS:

- your child is identified by a parent, carer or legal guardian as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- your child is identified on their birth certificate as being a multiple birth child (triplets or more)
- your child holds, or has a parent or guardian who holds, one of the following:
 - a Commonwealth Health Care Card
 - a Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card
 - a Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card or White Card
 - eligible Refugee or Asylum Seeker visa.

Payment of fees

- Families will be sent a Kindergarten fee invoice **on a fortnightly basis in advance.**
- Families are required to pay fees using the Service's **direct deposit or credit card. We do not offer direct debit.**
- Families eligible for Child Care Subsidy will be issued with a *Statement of Entitlement* on a fortnightly basis in accordance with the fee payment and Regulatory requirements
- The *Statement of Entitlement* will include details of the sessions of care provided and the resulting fee reduction amounts
- The *Statement of Entitlement* is generated using our CCS Software which meets all requirements as per Family Assistance Law legislation.

Financial Difficulties

Our Service is committed to building supportive and trusting partnerships with families and children. Families experiencing financial difficulties are requested notify the Approved Provider. Eligible families can apply for Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) through Centrelink for additional fee assistance.

Debt Recovery Procedure

- If a family fails to pay the required fees on time, a reminder letter will be issued after one week and then again, after two weeks if the fees are still outstanding.

- At any time of the debt recovery process the family will be encouraged to enter a debt agreement with the service to repay outstanding fees. The family will be invited to attend a meeting to discuss repayment options.
- A written contract will be provided for the family to sign outlining repayment plan details. The repayment plan will provide information as to the duration and amount of the repayments as well as steps that will be taken if the repayment plan is not adhered to.
- A child's position will be terminated if payment has not been made after **6 weeks**, for which the family will receive a final letter terminating the child's position. At this time the Service will initiate its debt collection process, following privacy and conditional requirements.

Late Fees

- Our Service is not licensed or insured to have children on the premises after hours. This is a breach in the Education and Care Regulations.
- It is unacceptable to pick children up late from the Service. A late fee will apply where children are not picked up prior to closing time.
- Currently, a fee of \$**15.00** per **10** minutes block or part thereof will be incurred by the family.
- Late fees will not have Child Care Subsidy or Kindergarten Funding applied
- A review of the child's enrolment will occur where families are consistently late with fee payment.

Change of Fees

- Fees are subject to change at any time provided a minimum of **14 days** written notice is given to all families.
- CCS hourly rate caps may be increased by the [CPI](#) at the commencement of each financial year. Any CCS hourly rate increases are governed by CCS and are automatically adjusted through our CCS Software.

Termination of Enrolment

- Parents are to provide **four weeks** written notice of their intention to withdraw a child from the Service.
- If termination from the Service is required without notification, families may lose their Child Care Subsidy, resulting in the payment of requirement for full fees to be charged.
- In some circumstances CCS may not be paid for sessions if the child has not physically started care.
- Additionally, CCS may not be paid for absences submitted after a child's last physical day of care, unless conditions have been met as specified by Family Assistance Law.

Monitoring, Review and Evaluation of Policy

- Ongoing review and evaluation of this policy will support the continuing development of the Service.
- Evaluation will involve all stakeholders
- The policy will be reviewed to reflect compliance with all related legislation, research and best practice.
- The development of a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) will form part of the reflection procedure.

Definitions

Child Care Subsidy	A Commonwealth Government payment to assist families with childcare fees at approved education and care services. Payment is made directly to approved childcare providers. Eligible families can receive CCS under Family Assistance Law. [Child Care Subsidy]
Early Start Kindergarten	A program that provides eligible three-year old children with 15 hours of free or low-cost kindergarten a week for two years before starting school. Eligible children must be three by 30 April in the year they start kindergarten and include those who are from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or are known to Child Protection or Child FIRST [Early Start Kindergarten]
Enrolment application fee	A payment to cover administrative costs associated with the enrolment of a child at our service
Fees	Fees help meet the cost of operating the kindergarten program and early education and care at our service. Fees charged depend on the program, hours of care and any additional costs including excursions, infant fees (nappies, formula).
Health care card	A Commonwealth Government entitlement card providing concessions for persons receiving other government benefits such as JobSeeker, the highest rate of Family Tax Benefit Part A, or other allowance. [Health Care Card].
Kindergarten fee deposit	Payment to secure a position in a funded kindergarten program. The fee represents part payment for the term fee and is non-refundable.
Kindergarten Fee Subsidy	A subsidy paid in addition to other per capita grants to subsidise the costs of fees. Eligible children can access to up to 15 hours of funded kindergarten per week free of charge. [Kindergarten Fee Subsidy]
Late collection fee	An additional fee charged to families by the approved provider if they are late to collect their child/ren.

Statement of entitlement	A statement provided to parents eligible for CCS each fortnight detailing sessions of care provided and the resulting fee reduction amounts.
Statement of fees	A statement of total annual fees and charges related to three-year-old and four-year-old funded kindergarten programs including other related costs- excursions, maintenance etc.

Resources for Management- (Available on Childcare Centre Desktop- letters QA7)
 Overdue Fee Payment Procedure- including non-payment of fees letters to parents

Source

Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).
 Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment Child Care Provider Handbook
<https://www.dese.gov.au/resources-child-care-providers/child-care-provider-handbook>
 Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment *Early Childhood and Care*
<https://www.dese.gov.au/early-childhood>
 Australian Government Services Australia. (2021). [Child Care Subsidy](#).
 Department of Education and Training. (2016). [The Kindergarten Funding Guide](#).
 Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2018).
[Education and Care Services National Regulations](#). (2011).

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED	OCTOBER 2021	NEXT REVIEW DATE	OCTOBER 2022
MODIFICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New policy drafted for Funded Kindergarten (VIC) 		