

6.02 FEES

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this policy is to ensure all families and educators are aware of their rights and responsibilities regarding the payment and collection of Family Day Care fees.

Scope

This policy applies to Family Day Care educators and families accessing education and care services.

Definitions

Early Start Kindergarten: a funding program that enables three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection to attend a kindergarten program that is planned and delivered by an early childhood teacher for a specific number of hours.

Fees: A charge for a place within a program at the Service.

Health Care Card: a commonwealth government entitlement providing concessions for low-income earners and other eligible people.

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS): a state government subsidy paid directly to the funded service to enable eligible families to attend a funded kindergarten program or funded three-year-old place at no cost (or minimal cost) to promote participation.

Department of Education and Training (DET): this state government department supports the development, health and wellbeing of babies and young children through services, legislation and care.

Policy Statement

THAT ALL FAMILIES ACCESSING FAMILY DAY CARE ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH WINDERMERE OUTLINING THEIR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN RELATION TO THE PAYMENT AND COLLECTION OF FEES. THIS CONTRACT WILL AIM TO ENSURE THAT ALL FAMILIES ARE TREATED WITH FAIRNESS AND EQUALITY.

Procedures

General

1. Child Care Benefit (CCB) and Child Care Rebate (CCR) are payments made by the commonwealth government to assist families with the cost of quality early years education. To register for CCB you need to contact the Family Assistance Office on 136 150. Families are responsible for updating their information with the Family Assistance Office to ensure it is always current and correct, and for providing Windermere with all relevant information to claim Child Care Benefit (CCB) and Child Care Rebate (CCR) on their behalf.
2. All families are required to verify attendance records by signing children in and out of care on a daily basis. The children's attendance and/or absence days are submitted to the Family Assistance Office for CCB and CCR payments. Attendance records are legal documents; parents/guardians must

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ensure the information they provide on the records is true and correct and provide a signature to verify.

3. The core hours of operation for home based care are 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday. All education and care provided between these hours is referred to as standard care and all education and care provided between 6pm and 8am on weekdays and all day on weekends is referred to as non-standard care.

Fees and Charges

1. Windermere, in collaboration with educators, review and set educator payments, fees and charges on a minimum annual basis. Educators are provided with an opportunity to negotiate their payment rate. Windermere will provide families with four weeks' notice of any change.
2. A current fee schedule will be provided on enrolment and/or request.
3. Families will be charged based on the educator. Rates charged with one educator may differ to the rates charged with another educator.
4. Fees will be charged on booked hours, with additional fees charged for any extra care provided outside of the booked hours.
5. Where an educator is unavailable to provide care, there will be no charge to families.
6. One week's notice is required for all cancellations of permanent bookings by the Family or Educator.
7. Windermere is entitled to charge families a late fee of \$1 per minute for children who are not collected by 15 minutes after the booked pick-up time. This fee does not attract CCB or CCR and must be paid in full by the parents/guardians.

Absences

1. Absences are charged at the normal rate and CCB/CCR is paid for 42 allowable absences, across all services per financial year (which includes public holidays, illness, curriculum day, etc). Absences above this number must be accompanied by the appropriate documentation, such as a medical certificate, for CCB /CCR to be paid.
2. Families are not entitled to receive CCB/CCR when care begins or ceases on an absence. This means a child must be in care on the first day of booked care and the last day of booked care (including the notice period) otherwise full fee for the days the child is not in care will be required from the parent/guardian.
3. CCB cannot be claimed for absences taken for more than six consecutive weeks.
4. Educators that would normally provide food for the child/ren are entitled to be paid the fee for food if less than 24 hours' notice of an absence is provided, as food would already have been purchased and possibly prepared in advance.
5. Full fees are payable on all absences, including public holidays, to maintain secured placement. Educators are not required to hold a place for families who do not pay the full absence fees.

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6. Note: Educators are not required to provide care on public holidays however if they do, fees will be charged at the public holiday rate.

Fee Payment

1. Families who apply for and are eligible for CCB and/or CCR (and have Windermere nominated to receive these payments) are only required to pay the fee not covered by the relevant subsidy. This is commonly referred to as the 'gap' fee.
2. Educators will receive payment from Windermere on a fortnightly basis, upon receipt and processing of compliant child attendance records. Family day care educators will be paid in full in accordance with their agreed hourly payment rate.
3. Payment for family day care is to be made by direct debit. If this is not a suitable option for families, they may speak with Windermere's finance team to make alternative arrangements.
4. Payment is required within seven days of issuing an invoice.
5. Receipts will be issued by Windermere for all fees and charges paid and are to show a true and accurate record of the actual amount charged and paid.

Overdue Payments and Debts

1. Windermere understands that from time to time families may experience financial difficulties. We require on families and educators to keep us informed through timely communication to insure we are able to support families during these times.
2. If parent/guardians are unable to pay due to financial difficulties please contact the Windermere Finance team immediately as we can support you with an agreed payment plan.
3. In the instance of non-payment of a parent/guardians account by the due date or notice of a dishonoured direct debit, Windermere will undertake the following processes:
 - a. Contact the parent/guardian by email and/or phone to arrange payment for dishonoured transaction. *NOTE: Parents/Guardians can agree to the processing of a manual direct debit immediately or on a specified day. Alternately, payment can be made with credit card over the phone.*
 - b. Send a payment reminder text message, advising of the overdue amount (where preferred payment method is BPAY).
4. Where accounts remain unpaid after contact has been established to finalise outstanding payment, Windermere will:
 - a. (After 7 days) forward a cease care letter stating the final day of care. *NOTE: If payment is not received prior to the date of care ending, the child's enrolment will cease immediately.*
 - b. Forward your details to a credit control agency. When an account is forwarded to a credit control agency the account holder will become liable for payment of the collection fees applied as a percentage of each payment at a rate of 25%.

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- c. Once the account has been forwarded to the credit control agency all communications regarding payments must be made directly with the agency. Windermere no longer has the authority to manage payments towards the account.

Financial Hardship

1. For families experiencing financial hardship, there are options available that may assist with the cost of education and care services. To request options for financial assistance, or to discuss payment options for overdue accounts, speak with the Manager for Early Childhood Education and Care Services. Options include:
 - a. Special CCB - This is provided by the commonwealth government and enables eligible families to access up to 13 weeks of paid child care. Eligibility criteria applies.
 - b. KFS – This is provided by DET and enables children to attend four year old kindergarten free of charge or at minimal cost. Eligibility guidelines apply and supporting documentation is required.
 - c. Early Start Kindergarten – This is provided by the DET and enables three year old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and those known to Child Protection to attend a funded early childhood program that is planned and delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher free of charge.

Relevant Standards/Legislation

- National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care Services including:
 - Education and Care Services National Law 2011
 - Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999
- Family Assistance Law

Related Policies & Links

- *Attendance Records* procedure
- *Record Keeping* procedure
- *Confidentiality and Privacy (Children & Families)* procedure