

Policy Statement

This policy acts to ensure that:

- We are committed to providing all families the opportunity to enrol their children at our Service, with a clear, transparent and inclusive fee structure
- We are committed to ensuring that our Fee Structures and processing methods are compliant with the Family Assistance Law

Explanation

- Our fees are as affordable as possible, and we ensure that all families have access to any subsidies that are available to reduce these fees
- The setting and payment of fees takes into account all requirements of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, Australian Tax Office, Privacy Act and the guidelines contained within the Child Care Provider Handbook
- All records held at the Service will be maintained in accordance with the Service's Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
- Families will be provided with accurate fee statements and clear information regarding fee payment processes

Goals

- To enable our Service to provide high quality early education and care for children we need to ensure we are financially viable at all times
- Our Services financial health and access to our service will be maximised by ensuring families are aware of all fees and fee payment requirements upon enrolment

Strategies

Fees Payable/Accounts

- The Approved Provider will determine the Fee Schedule for each year
- The Approved Provider will provide Family Day Care Educators with a fee range within the market rate to apply to their service
- The fee schedule and fees payment policy will be fully explained to families during the enrolment process
- Upon enrolment families will be charged a holding deposit, which is the equivalent of 2 weeks of full fees. The holding deposit secures their child's placement. The holding deposit will be returned to family's accounts upon notice being given of the child finishing care with our service. The holding deposit is then used as the fees for the final two weeks of care

Policy Created
February 2016

Policy Last Updated
October 2023

Policy Review Date
October 2025

- Fees payable will be based on the weekly bookings and the fees charged for that care
- Families will be given a minimum of 1 months' notice for any fee or levy increase
- The same fee will be charged to all families for equivalent care arrangements
- Fees are charged weekly in arrears
- A statement of fees will be sent to parents/guardians weekly, which shows the fees charged for care used the week prior
- The Statement of Entitlement will be sent out to Families each week, detailing the sessions of care and Child Care Subsidy claimed by CCEL on each Families behalf.
- Fee payments will be receipted, in accordance with Australian Government Guidelines
- Fees are payable for absences where a child has an ongoing permanent booking
- Families are required to pay fees on Public Holidays if the holiday falls on their regular booked day
- Families can also view details about their childcare usage, total fees charged, and the fee reductions calculated by the Centrelink Office (FAO) on the View Child Care Attendance online statement available through the FAO website
- Families should contact the Service to advise of their child's inability to attend any session as soon as this is known. Fees will still be required to be paid for days the child would normally attend

Family Day Care Fee Schedule

- Educators are required to provide CCEL with six weeks' notice of any fee increases for families and one month's notice to families

Levy	Rate
Parent	\$1.50
Educator	\$0.35
CCEL Fee Range (8am – 6pm)	\$11.85 – \$17.85
CCEL Fee Range (non-standard and Casual Bookings)	\$11.85 - \$25.00

Child Care Subsidy System (CCS)

- Our Service will comply with the Australian Government requirements to be an approved Education and Care Service for the purposes of Child Care Subsidy, reporting requirements and any other requirements for claiming and administering CCS will be maintained by the service
- It is the enrolling parents/guardian's responsibility to apply for CCS, maintain their eligibility and accept the enrolment offer sent by our Service in their "MyGov" account
- All fees are charged at the full rate, each family's eligibility for CCS is then calculated and the service is then forwarded these funds. Families are then responsible for paying the "Gap Fee"
- Families will only be eligible for CCS if the child attendance records are accurately completed and signed by the parents/guardians or other responsible adult, and other eligibility requirements are met
- When processing attendance, absences and claiming CCS on behalf of the parents/guardians, CCEL will comply with the Family Assistance Law. It is the parents/guardian's responsibility to be aware of their eligibility for CCS when approving attendance records, and will be liable to pay the full fee when they do not meet the CCS eligibility requirements
- Families are entitled to 42 Allowable Absence days for each registered child in each financial year. CCS is paid for these days provided that the child would normally have attended on that day, and fees have been charged
- Additional Absences can be claimed when the first 42 days have been used. Supporting documentation may be required for approval of additional absences – such as medical certificates
- All documentation pertaining to CCS will be kept for the specified period of time and made available to Australian Government Officers on request

Payment of Fees

- Fees are payable from the agreed commencement date and must be paid within a fortnight of the care being provided
- It is each guardian's responsibility to sign their children in and out of care on the Kidsoft or Harmony programs each time that they deliver or collect their child from care
- It is each families' responsibility to check their Account Statement each week to ensure that their child's bookings and absences are correct, and to notify the service of any discrepancies by the Friday of the week the Account Statement is received. This ensures that any errors can be fixed within the CCS 14 day window for adjustments

- Families' fees payable to the service are calculated according to each family's eligibility for CCS
 - Account Statements outline the full fee charged, the amount of CCS applied, and the Gap Fee
 - The "Gap Fee" is the amount owed by families to the service once CCS has been applied

Country Kids Club

- Weekly Invoices will be distributed to families from CCEL via the Kidsoft Parent Portal and Email
- All families are required to pay through the Kidsoft Parent Portal by either setting up a Direct Debit or using the "One-Off Payment option"
- Fee payments can be made weekly or fortnightly
- Fees are not payable when the service is closed over the Christmas/New Year break
- Country Children's Early Learning will notify families in writing by October each year of their proposed Christmas Shutdown dates to enable families plenty of time to organise their own leave

Family Day Care

- Family Day Care Educators will submit weekly attendance records to CCEL for processing weekly on Mondays
- Weekly Invoices will be distributed to families from CCEL via the Harmony Parent Portal and Email
- All Families are required to pay via Direct Debit through the Harmony Parent Portal, Direct Debits will be deducted weekly on Tuesdays
- Family Fee Payments will be distributed to Family Day Care Educators as they are received via the Parent Portal
- Child Care Subsidy claimed by CCEL on the eligible Guardians behalf will be distributed to the relevant Family Day Care Educator weekly minus the current Family and Educator Levy Schedule
- Fees are not payable when an Educator is not available to provide Family Day Care
- Family Day Care Educators will notify families at the earliest possible convenience in writing prior to closing their Family Day Care Service due to illness or other leave
- Where Family Day Care Educators have other charges, these must be clearly detailed on their annual Fee Schedule and in writing to families.

Overdue Fees

- Country Children's Early Learning will contact families if fee payments are not made within the required timeframe
- A reminder notice will be issued by the Service if fees are not paid by the due date on the Account Statement
- If fees continue to be outstanding into the next fortnight a notice with a payment timeframe will be issued by Country Children's Early Learning
- If a family is having difficulty paying their account they are encouraged to contact the Service so that suitable arrangements for payment and ongoing care can be discussed
- If fee payments are continually made late or in arrears the child/children's position with the Service may be jeopardised
- Debt collection services will be used to follow up unpaid fees
- Where debt collection is required for the recovery of fees, the account holder will be liable for all costs incurred
 - The Family Account Holder will pay Country Children's Early Learning for all costs incurred for which the Service may be contingently liable in any attempt to collect any monies owed by you to Country Children's Early Learning under this Agreement, including debt collection agent costs, repossession costs, location search costs, process server costs and solicitor costs on a solicitor/client basis.

Late Pick Up Fees

- Families are asked to be on time to collect their child/ren from care. We do realise that sometimes running late is unavoidable, and out of courtesy that you call and notify the Service if you were going to be late
- If a family is continually late to collect their child/ren, the service reserve the right to implement a late pick up fee
- Late pick up fees will be charged at \$20.00 for the first 5 minutes and \$2.00 per minute thereafter that a family is late to collect their child
- The late pick up fee is based on the service's need to recoup expenses incurred in employee overtime wages

Changing or Ending Care

- Families are required to provide two weeks' notice in writing when ending or reducing care arrangements
- If a child is absent from care on their last day/s of care with the service full fees will be charged. Under CCSS Rules a service is unable to apply CCS for a child who does not attend care on their last day/s with that service

- Each family's eligibility for CCS absences at the beginning of and at the end of care will be determined by the current childcare subsidy system rules. Each family's eligibility for CCS payment will also depend upon their eligibility
- For a booked casual day 50% of the daily fee will be charged if the child is absent, unless 24 hours' notice has been given in writing for cancellation of the casual day
- Cancellation of a Vacation Care booking past the cancellation date will incur a fee which is 50% of the daily charged fee
- Families after additional care days will be placed on the internal Waiting List, once a vacancy becomes available families will be notified
- Care days can only be increased when the service has vacancies

Family Day Care

Attendance Records and Fee Payments

- Educators and families are required to sign the Daily Attendance Record as evidence of the mutual agreement of the hours used and fees accrued over the week
- Educators are required to have the children signed in and out of care with the authorised persons PIN. If the authorised person does not have a PIN, the Educator may use their PIN and make comment on the timesheet for CCEL records
- Educators are required to ensure any other children residing at the Family Day Care home or in the care of the Educator who are not eligible for CCS are also registered with CCEL and submit attendances for these children to CCEL
- Educators are responsible for completing the Attendance Record in full, checking hours and calculations are correct, verifying this with the Parent/Guardian via e-signature and submitting to CCEL by Harmony Web by 4:00 PM every Monday
- The payment of childcare fees secures the child/ren's position with the Service. Payment is still required for any absences including the child being ill, public holidays and annual leave days
- Educators are only to provide care for and submit attendances for up to seven children in total at any one time. Four under school age children and three school aged children or seven school age children
- Educators will follow changes in their practises according to their COVID-19 risk assessment to ensure health and hygiene practises maintained in regards to signing children in and out of care and enabling families to use their remote signature facility

Public Holiday Charges

- Fees will be charged for Public Holidays if the Public Holiday falls on a day that your child would normally attend care
- Fees will not be charged for public holidays if the Educator is closed the day before the public holiday or the day after the public holiday
 - For Example: If the Educator is closed the Thursday before Good Friday, the public holiday cannot be charged.
 - For Example: If the Educator is closed the Tuesday after the Queen’s Birthday Public Holiday, the Public Holiday cannot be charged
- Fee’s will not be charged for Public Holidays that fall during the Educators “Shutdown Period”. EG: when they take holidays

Public Holiday Charges

Day/s Prior to Public Holiday	Public Holiday	Day/s After Public Holiday	Can I Charge for the Public Holiday?
Closed	Public Holiday	Closed	No
Open	Public Holiday	Closed	No
Closed	Public Holiday	Open	No
Open	Public Holiday	Open	Yes

- Fees will not be payable when the Educator is not available to provide care
- Educators will notify CCEL and families in writing by 1 October each year of their proposed Christmas Shutdown dates to enable families plenty of time to organise their own leave
- Families will be made aware of what Government Assistance E.g.: Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is available for families via the Parent Handbook and other current information

Continual Monitoring and Improvement

- Continual improvement and monitoring will occur in the following ways:
 - Incidental and planned consultation with families
 - Approved Provider and Coordinators accessing current relevant information
 - Approved Provider, Coordinators and Educators accessing current and relevant training
 - Internal evaluation of incidences and the improvement of systems

LINKS TO:

- Education & Care Services National Law Section 167
- Education & Care Services National Regulations 111, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172
- National Quality Standards/Elements: 6.1, 7.1, 7.2
- Child Safe Standards 1, 3, 4, 5, 10

SOURCES

- Education and Care Services National Regulations - December 2021
- Education and care Services National Law - January 2022
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations - October 2017
- Guide to the National Quality Standard - January 2020
- Implementing the Child Safe Standards: A Guide for Early Education and Outside School Hours Care Services, NSW Department of Education, 2021
- A Guide to the Child Safe Standards, NSW Office of the Children's Guardian, 2020
- ACECQA – FDC Approved Provider compliance responsibilities – October 2017
- Be You
- My Time Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia
- ECA Code of Ethics
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- ACECQA – FDC Approved Provider compliance responsibilities
- Child Care Provider Handbook
- Services Australia -Child Care Subsidy

LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES:

- Enrolment & Orientation
- Governance & Management