

Background

Early childhood education and care services must comply with the Early Education and Care National Regulations 2011 and the National Quality Standard 2018 in the way they manage the collection of fees and inform parents about this process including any pending changes to the fees. Early childhood education and care services must comply with Family Assistance Law and protect the integrity of public funds allocated to assist families in meeting their child care costs, such as Child Care Subsidy (CCS).

Policy statement

This policy details the Service's procedures in relation to fees, methods of payment and associated provisions.

Strategies and practices

GENERAL FEES

- The Service has a flat fee in which will be provided to each family. Families should not accept enrolment at the Service if they are unable to meet their fee obligations.
- Fees are charged for each session of care and vary depending on each family's eligibility for Child Care Subsidy (CCS).
- CCS is paid directly to the Service and is applied as a fee reduction which is visible on each family's Statement of Entitlement.
- Families are required to pay the difference between the fee charged and the subsidy amount – known as the 'gap' amount.
- Fees are charged for full sessions only, regardless of the actual attendance hours.
- Families will be issued a Statement of Entitlement on a weekly basis in accordance with Regulatory requirements.
- The Statement of Entitlement will include details of the sessions of care booked for the current week and the resulting fee reduction amounts in accordance with each family's CCS entitlements.
- The Statement of Entitlement is generated using our CCS software (Qikkids) which meets all requirements as per Family Assistance Law Legislation.

Sessional Care Options

- Choose between a 9 hour (8:00am -5:00pm), 10 hour (6:30am-4:30pm or 7:30am-5:30pm) or all day 12 hour session. Your session window is between the set start time and end time for a session at the Service.
- A grace period is also offered at the Service. We understand your schedule can sometimes get complicated by unplanned delays, so a grace period is offered either side of the daily session times. No grace period applied for the Services 12 hour session as this runs for the duration of the Services operating hours. A 30 minute grace period is applied on either side of the 10 hour session and a 15 minute grace period either side of the 9 hour session.

Upon commencement the following fees must be paid;

- Enrolment fee: - a one off payment of \$40 per family **if children are enrolled together**. The enrolment fee is non-refundable and only paid when a position is accepted by the family immediately before the child commences in care.
- Week of attendance AND 2 week's bond, which equates to 2 weeks of the gap fee. *Maximum of \$300.00 per individual or \$500.00 per family.*

Other fees;

- **Public Holidays:** Normal fees apply.
- **Annual Holidays:** Families are provided with two weeks per financial year at a holiday discount rate of 50% off the full fee price for the week. The family must notify the Service two weeks prior to the date. Holidays must be taken in full weeks, not part thereof.
- **Outside Grace Period Fee:** An additional admin charge of \$3 per child applies if you drop off and/or collect your child outside the grace period (but within operating hours). Nominated Supervisors will need to discuss with Sunkids Management regarding the charge of the grace period fee and the final decision will derive from Sunkids Management.
- **Late Fee:** \$2 per minute per family after closing time.

Make-Up Days - In order to treat all families equitably, 'make-up' days will not be offered for absences or public holidays occurring on a normal booked attendance.

Child Care Subsidy (CCS)

- Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is a payment made by the Australian Government of Human Services to families to assist with the cost of child care fees. Families using Sunkids Children's Centres can claim CCS as the centres are approved by the Australian Government of Human Services.
- Centrelink will assess your income based on information provided by you; a re-assessment can be requested if family circumstances change. You must apply to be assessed for CCS before commencing care or full fees will apply. All claims can be made by phoning Centrelink on 13 61 50.

IMPORTANT: The child MUST be signed in and out of the centre daily using the electronic system (Qikkids). The Service cannot claim child care subsidy for any child not signed in or out. Should this occur, the family will be charged full fees for that day.

ALLOWABLE ABSENCES

▪ Each child is eligible to receive CCS for an initial 42 days of absences in a financial year, across all Services. These absences include public holidays. The number of absences is provided to families on their weekly Customer Account and is shown as "Allowable Absences taken to date". Once these days have been exhausted, full fees will apply for any absences thereafter. Additional absences can be claimed in certain circumstances.

ADDITIONAL ABSENCES (once initial 42 days is exhausted)

Additional Absence reasons are: -

- Illness with a medical certificate
- Outbreak of an infectious disease and child is not immunised

- Due to sickness of the child, parent or sibling – medical certificate required
- Parent on a rotating shift or rostered day off
- Temporary closure of a school or pupil free day
- Shared custody arrangements due to a court order, consent order or parenting order
- Exceptional circumstances

CCS will not be paid if the child does not attend on the first day of expected attendance or the last day of attendance, if leaving the Service. Full fees will apply in these circumstances. It is critical that the parent/guardian accurately completes the sign in and out details every day on the electronic device in order for the Service to claim CCS. Failure to sign in and out will result in full fees applying. Absences are also recorded on the attendance record/electronic device.

CONTINUOUS ABSENCES

Under the relevant laws and regulations, you are not able to claim the Child Care Subsidy where your child is absent for a prolonged continuous period.

- If you anticipate that your child/ren will be absent for a continuous period of 4 weeks or longer, we require this in writing, advising of the exact days and dates.
- Sunkids Management will consider all the relevant factors and determine if we are able to hold your child's position in the Service or if care needs to be ended. In the event that care needs to be ended, you are able to recommence care upon your return if there is a position available.
- If we determine that care needs to be ended, and you wish to hold your child's position, we can do this however no Child Care Subsidy can be claimed, meaning that you will need to pay the full amount of the fee.
- When an absence longer than eight weeks is planned, a new Complying Written Arrangement and enrolment notice will need to be submitted to CCS on your return.

PENDING ENROLMENT

- Parent has not lodged a CCS claim for their child (may have claimed for other children)
- Parent has lodged a CCS claim and it is being processed (requires manual assessment)
- Parent has lodged a CCS claim and is not eligible for the child
- Parent has lodged a CCS claim and is eligible but has not confirmed enrolment via MyGov

CONFIRMED ENROLMENT

- Parent has reviewed and confirmed the enrolment/booking patterns via MyGov

ADDITIONAL CHILD CARE SUBSIDY (ACCS)

- Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) is an extra payment provided where the child is at risk of abuse or neglect. There is a maximum period of 6 weeks available if criteria is met. Families should advise the Nominated Supervisor if they believe that ACCS may apply to them. Please refer to Centrelink (My GOV Account) for further additional subsidies available.

METHOD OF PAYMENT

- **DIRECT DEBIT:** Arrangements can be made to have the fees deducted from a nominated account. A form must be completed at the Service via Debit Success.

- **DIRECT DEPOSIT:** An automatic transfer to the Service account via internet banking.
- **EFTPOS:** Manual EFTPOS payments can be made via the EFTPOS machine at the Service.
- **CREDIT CARDS- Please note: We do not accept American Express.**
- **CENTRE PAY:** At participating services, fees can be deducted from the Centrelink payment. This can be arranged through Centrelink or see the Nominated Supervisor for details.

DIFFICULTIES IN PAYING FEES

- It is vital that any family finding difficulty in meeting their fee obligations, should discuss the matter immediately with the Nominated Supervisor so an alternate interim arrangement can be negotiated. All such arrangements will remain confidential. A compulsory direct debit arrangement may be imposed if fees are persistently in arrears.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF FEES FALL BEHIND?

- You will receive a reminder letter if fees fall 1 week in arrears. You must attend to your account immediately. The child's position at the Service will cease should fees fall behind by two weeks and no other arrangements have been made with the Nominated Supervisor.
- The Service reserves the right to charge a late fee should your account fall further than 1 week in arrears.

WHAT IF YOU BELIEVE AN ERROR HAS OCCURRED WITH YOUR ACCOUNT?

- The Nominated Supervisor should be advised so the account can be reviewed.

STAFF WITH CHILDREN IN CARE

- Staff are required to meet the same standards as families.

CHANGES TO FEES

- The Approved Provider of an education and care service must ensure that parents of children enrolled at the Service are notified at least 14 days before making any changes that will affect the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected. Sunkids will endeavour to make minimal fee changes; generally once a year. Families will be advised in writing of any changes to fees.

FEE COLLECTION FOR OUTSTANDING MONIES

- Should fees owing remain outstanding after reminder letters have been issued or no agreement has been made to repay the debt, a final letter of demand will be issued.
- Failure to comply with the letter of demand will result in our solicitor being instructed to commence full recovery of the amount plus costs. We trust that families will acknowledge, value, and respect the care provided to their child and legal action will not be necessary.

PARENT REFUNDS

- Upon cancelling care at a service, if the account has a remaining positive balance, this credit will then be refunded to the account holder.

- Please note that refunds will be processed on inactive accounts once all Child Care Subsidy payments are finalised.
- All refunds will be processed within five business days.

FEE AGREEMENT

As part of the enrolment form, the parent/guardian will be required to sign a fee agreement, the details are as follows: -

I understand and agree to the following fee requirements:

- (a) When completing the continuation of enrolment documentation, I understand my child's bookings and charges for bookings continue unless notice is given to terminate care or change days.
- (b) I understand my child's booking is permanent and all absent days and extended leave periods are paid to secure bookings.
- (c) I understand if I choose to withdraw my child for an extended period, I will not be guaranteed the same booked days on my return.
- (d) I understand if I choose to not secure booked days I will need to go back on the waitlist for availability.
- (e) All booked days will be charged for. This includes public holidays, sick days, holidays, and other absences.
- (f) A non-refundable enrolment fee of \$40.00 per family when children are enrolled at the same time.
- (g) Fees must be paid within 5 days from date of invoice.
- (h) An additional admin charge of \$3 per child applies if you drop off and/or collect your child outside the grace period (but within operating hours).
- (i) A late fee of \$2 per minute/family will apply if a child is collected after closing time.
- (j) Two weeks written notice is required when changing a child's booked days or leaving the Service.
- (k) Child must attend their first and last day of attendance or CCS will not be paid by Centrelink.
- (l) Failure to meet fee requirements may lead to cancellation of enrolment.
- (m) A bond equal to 2 weeks fees will be held separately which is fully refundable when 2 weeks' notice is given, if leaving and all fees are up to date.
- (n) Failure to notify the Service of a child's absence for more than 2 weeks will result in the position being lost and the bond forfeited.
- (o) Fees due for the provision of care cannot be withheld as compensation for missing personal items brought to the centre by a family.

Additional safe practices for babies

- N/A

Responsibilities of parents

- To ensure fees are kept up to date.
- To keep the Service informed of any changes in attendance e.g. family holidays, other absences.
- To respond promptly to communications from the Family Assistance Office to maintain CCS eligibility.

Procedure and forms

- Payment of Late Grace Period Fee
- Payment of Late Fee
- Holiday Discount Application Form
- Parent Refund Application Form

Links to other policies

- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Interactions with Families Policy

Links Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, National Quality Standard 2018

Reg	168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
	172	Notification of change to policies or procedures

QA	6.2.2	Effective partnerships support children's access, inclusion and participation in the program
	7.1.2	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service

Sources

- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Services Australia. Child Care Subsidy. <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/child-care-subsidy> accessed 25 June 2025
- Australian Government. Department of Education. Family Assistance Law. <https://www.education.gov.au/family-assistance-law> accessed 25 June 2025
- Department of Education (Australian Government). Child Care Package. <https://www.education.gov.au/child-care-package> accessed 25 June 2025
- Guide to the National Quality Standard 2018

Further reading and useful websites

- Department of Education – <http://education.gov.au/> accessed 25 June 2025
- Department of Education. *New Child Care Package - information resources for families.* <https://www.education.gov.au/child-care-package> accessed 25 June 2025

Policy review

The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur, and any issues identified as part the Service's commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.

Version Control

Version	Date Reviewed	Approved By	Comments/Amendments	Next Review Date
1	8 January 2018	Kaylene Harper	Updated to changed NQF requirements 1 February 2018. Service to modify policies to its specific needs.	January 2019
2	31 January 2019	Kaylene Harper	Reviewed Policy, Updated sources and further reading to correct CCS information	January 2020
3	29 January 2020	Kaylene Harper	Reviewed Policy, Updated sources and further reading.	January 2021
4	25 September 2020	Kaylene Harper	Reviewed policy. Accessed sources and further reading/useful websites.	September 2021
5	22 September 2021	Kaylene Harper	Reviewed policy	September 2022
6	30 September 2022	Linda Hollard	Reviewed policy Accessed sources	September 2023
7	29 September 2023	Tiffany Boeske	Reviewed policy Accessed sources	September 2024
8	1 July 2024	Tiffany Boeske	Reviewed policy Accessed sources Added links to Family Assistance Law	July 2025
9	25 June 2025	Gen Mahaki	Reviewed policy. Updated sources and useful websites.	June 2026