

PAYMENT OF FEES POLICY

Quality early education and care provides the foundation for children's development and social engagement whilst supporting workforce participation of parents and carers. Our Family Day Care Service is committed to supporting our approved educators provide quality education and care to all children at affordable fees for families.

As an approved childcare service, Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is available to reduce fees to eligible families. 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.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Coordinator, Administrative staff, Educators, Educator Assistants, children, families, and visitors of the Family Day Care Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our FDC Service aims to ensure families understand the fee schedules and payment process required for education and care to be provided for their child. We are committed to meet our obligations to maintain financial integrity and comply with all Child Care Subsidy legislative requirements. We have effective compliance systems in place to ensure childcare funding is administered appropriately and our approved educators adhere to their responsibilities as 'fit and proper persons' under Family Assistance Law. Our FDC Service and educators ensure the confidentiality and privacy of all personal information provided to the Service about the enrolled child and family.

Approved educators operate as self-employed small business owners and set their own hourly fees, days of operation and minimum hours for provision of education and care. Educators are approved under the approved service of Clarence Family Day Care.

Families will be provided with a fee schedule for the educator that their child(ren) is attending. Educator fees may vary due to educator qualifications, resources on offer, excursions/incursions, location, hours of care provided including casual and permanent fees, overnight fees, weekend rates and the age of the child. Some educators provide food, nappies and transport and these will be added to the hourly fees. If you are late to pick your child(ren) up from your educator, late fees may be charged and will be detailed on the fee schedule.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Fees are charged for each session of care.
- Each family's eligibility for Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is different. CCS requirements and obligations are set out by the Federal Government, and it is parent's responsibility to be aware of these.
- CCS is paid directly to the FDC Service and this is used as a fee reduction (visible on a family's statement)
- Families are required to contribute to the cost of child care and pay the 'gap' fee to Clarence Family Day Care.
- The 'gap' fee (aka parent gap) is the difference between the fee charged and the Child Care Subsidy amount
$$\text{Hourly Fee} \times \text{Booking} = \text{Child Care Fees} - \text{CCS} = \text{Parent Gap}$$
- Fees must be kept in advance of a child's attendance. The amount of fees in advance is equivalent to X weeks.
- Fees are payable in advance for every session that a child is enrolled at the FDC Service. This includes pupil free days, sick days, and family holidays but excludes periods when the educator is closed. The FDC educator may close their service due to periods of local emergency such as bushfire or flood or pandemic.
- If a session of care falls on a public holiday, families are required to pay normal fees. CCS will be paid for sessions that fall on public holidays.
- Casual days may be offered to families if available.

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 child care provider
- Child care 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 child care 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
- Discounts will only be offered as outlined in the CCS Handbook.
- Child Care Subsidy does not apply to first day(s) or last day(s) absences and full fees will apply.

PAYMENT OF FEES

- Families are required to pay fees each week and be a week in advance.
- Families are required to be up to date with their fees.
- Families will be issued with an invoice.
- Families will be required to pay their child care fees via the payment portal in place.
- Families can access their invoices and statements of entitlements via the Parent Portal.
- Families 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

FROM 1 JULY 2023 – CURRENTLY ENROLLED CHILDREN/FAMILIES

The Federal Government has implemented a wide range of changes to Child Care Subsidy that come into effect from 1 July 2023. This has required us to make some operational changes. For all children/families that are enrolled with our Service before 1 July 2023 and for care that occurs after 3 July 2023, the following applies:

- Parents/Guardians are required to pay the child care gap fee directly to Clarence Family Day Care service via electronic funds transfer methods ie direct debit.
- Parents/Guardians are required to pay their child care fees weekly. If families are unable to do this they are required to contact the office ASAP to discuss.
- Fees are required to be one week in advance by 29 September 2023. Families will receive an invoice by 28 July 2023 based on their parent gap.
- If parents/guardians are required not able to pay their child care fees via electronic methods they are required to contact the office ASAP to discuss.

FROM 1 JULY 2023 – CHILDREN/FAMILIES WHO ENROL AFTER THIS DATE

The Federal Government has implemented a wide range of changes to Child Care Subsidy that come into effect from 1 July 2023. This has required us to make some operational changes. For all children/families that are enrolled with our Service after 1 July 2023, the following applies:

- Parents/Guardians are required to pay the child care gap fee directly to Clarence Family Day Care service via electronic funds transfer methods ie direct debit.
- Parents/Guardians are required to pay their child care fees weekly. If families are unable to do this they need to be required to contact the office ASAP to discuss.
- Enrolment fee will be charged.
- Fees are required to be one week in advance.
- If parents/guardians are required not able to pay their child care fees via electronic methods they are required to contact the office ASAP to discuss.

ABSENCES FROM FDC SERVICE

- Families are requested to contact their FDC educator if their child is unable to attend a particular session
- Families must still pay the 'gap' fee to the Service if their child is unable to attend.
- Under the Child Care Subsidy families are allowed 42 absence days per child, per financial year.
- Allowable absences can be taken for any reason, including public holidays and when children are sick.
- Additional absences can be claimed for the specified reasons as defined by the Family Assistance Law
- Records and evidence will be kept by the Service for each additional absence, where required
- Families can view their absence count through their Centrelink online account via myGov.
- In a period of local emergency, such as bushfire or pandemic, and our Service is temporarily shut down on public health advice, families may be provided with additional absence days as per Family Assistance Law legislation.
- In accordance with Family Assistance Law, educators cannot charge for, or record a session of care where provision of care is not available. Educators are not able to charge a different rate for the same type of care provision. Therefore, if the educator is unable to provide care due to illness or leave, they are unable to charge for that particular session of care.

FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

- If a family is experiencing financial difficulties, a suitable payment plan may be arranged with authorisation of Management.
- Families can apply for Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) through Centrelink if they are in temporary financial hardship
- There are four different payments under Additional Child Care Subsidy:
 - Additional Child Care Subsidy (child wellbeing)—to help children who are at risk of serious abuse or neglect. The approved provider is involved in determining children who may require additional support who are at risk of harm
 - Additional Child Care Subsidy (grandparent)—to help grandparents on income support who are the principal caregiver of their grandchildren. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment
 - Additional Child Care Subsidy (temporary financial hardship)—to help families experiencing financial hardship. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment
 - Additional Child Care Subsidy (transition to work)—to help low-income families transitioning from income support to work. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment

DEBT RECOVERY PROCEDURE

- If a family fails to pay the required fees on time, a reminder 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 our FDC Service to repay outstanding fees. 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 may be terminated if payment has not been made, for which the family will receive a final letter terminating the child's position. At this time the FDC Service will initiate its debt collection process, following privacy and conditional requirements.

LATE PAYMENT OF FEES

- The service may charge a late payment of account fee.

LATE PICK-UP FEES

- It is unacceptable to pick children up late from an educator's residence/venue. A late fee will apply where children are not picked up prior to closing time.
- A review of the child's enrolment will occur where families are consistently late picking up their child from care.
- A review of the child's enrolment will occur where families are consistently late with paying their fees.

CHANGE OF FEES

- Fees are subject to change at any time provided a minimum of two weeks 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 two-weeks written notice of their intention to withdraw a child from care.
- If termination from the FDC Service is required without notification, families can 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

RESPONSIBILITY OF MANAGEMENT

The Coordination Unit/Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:

- ensuring families are aware of our Payment of Fees Policy
- providing families with educator fee schedules (these may be different for each educator due to education qualifications, hours and days of care provided, overnight fees etc.
- ensuring enrolment information are submitted correctly with appropriate enrolment information
- providing families with regular statement of fees payable
- notifying families of any overdue fees
- providing families with reminder letters as required
- terminating enrolment of children should fees not be paid
- discussing fee payment with families if required
- providing at least 2 weeks written notice to families of any fee increases or changes to the way fees are collected

RESPONSIBILITY OF FAMILIES

- Provide the FDC Service with the correct enrolment details to facilitate the CCS claim, if required, including:
 - Centrelink Reference Numbers for child and CCS claimant
 - Date of Birth for child and CCS claimant
- Ensure payment of fees as per policy
- Notify Centrelink of any changes that may affect their CCS entitlement
- Confirm their child's enrolment through the parents myGov account.

RESPONSIBILITY OF EDUCATORS

- To submit accurate timesheets/sessions of care reports

- To send through any changes of hours/days prior to the changes occurring
- To send through cease care forms, at least 5 business days before the care ceases.
- Not to accept cash payments for fees.
- To not claim sessions of care that have not occurred.

THIRD PARTY PAYMENTS

Parents are generally liable to pay the co-contribution for child care fees. Only state and territory governments (and their agencies) can contribute to the cost, in part or full, of child care fees for families.

Where an agreement has been made between an employer or charity to assist in the contribution of fees the fees must be reduced accordingly before CCS has been applied. Our FDC Service will record all documentation regarding any third-party payments.

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 Coordination Unit/Nominated Supervisor in the first instance. The Coordination Unit/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

NATIONAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK

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

NATIONAL ECEC REGULATIONS

168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
172	Notification of change to policies and procedures

RELATED LEGISLATION

- Family Assistance Law

SOURCE

- A ACECQA. (2021). Policy and procedure guidelines. *Enrolment and Orientation*.
- Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment. (2019) Child Care Provider handbook
- Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment. (2019) Guide to Additional Child Care Subsidy (child wellbeing)
- Australian Government Services Australia – Australian Immunisation History Statement
- Services Australia – Child Care Subsidy
- National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance. (2021). No Jab No Play, No Jab No Pay
- NSW Government Health. (2019). Questions and answers about vaccination requirements for child care