

Fees Policy

Rationale

As a community-based centre, we operate on a not-for-profit basis. Our objective is to make our centre as accessible as possible to everyone in the community by keeping our fees affordable, but always ensuring that the needs of our staff and children are catered for within our annual budget.

Policy Statement

Nought to Five Early Childhood Centre will act in accordance with requirements of the Australian Government's Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) regarding administration of child care fees. In conjunction with these the Management Committee and office staff will ensure:

- The fee structure covers the operational costs of the centre and ensures the continued efficient running of the centre;
- Fees are reviewed on an annual basis, or more frequently if required;
- Communication with parents is effective and timely manner regarding changes to fees, fees owing, payments made, late collection fees and any additional fees such as excursions, fundraising, shows, etc.

Strategies and practices

Fees

Fees are reviewed annually by the Management Committee. The current rates can be obtained from the office.

Fees must always be paid at least one week in advance, including Public Holidays and absences for sickness or family holidays. These can be paid weekly, fortnightly or monthly.

Fees for the first week in January must be paid in December, prior to centre closure.

Parents can pay by:

- Cash or cheque (made payable to "Nought to Five Early Childhood Centre"). These should be placed in an envelope and marked with the child's name, the amount contained in the envelope and the days/weeks being paid for. The envelope should then be put in the **fees box**.
- Direct deposit into the centre account. Parents must ensure their name is clearly included with the deposit.

All fees need to be in the fees box **before 10.00am Friday** if they are to be processed that week. Internet payments will need to be made by Tuesday of each week to ensure they are received into our account by Friday morning. A \$20.00 Late Payment fee will be charged if fees fall behind more than a week.

If fees are in arrears by two weeks or more without explanation then the place of the child within the centre will be in jeopardy.

Additional Fees

Any extra curricula activities eg: excursions, entertainers, etc are charged at an additional fee. This will be added to the relevant fee week and shown as a separate charge.

Fee Concessions

A concession for the payment of fees is granted for the two week period that the centre is closed over Christmas and New Year.

Circumstances which do not attract a fee concession are:

- Public Holidays (except Christmas and New Year)
- If siblings are enrolled
- Family holidays
- Sick leave up to and including two weeks

Late Collection Penalty Charges

Our license finishes at 6.00pm sharp. Any children and parents still on the premises after this time put the centre in breach of our license. Therefore, a late collection fee of \$10.00 plus \$1.00 per minute is charged if a child has not been collected by 6.00pm. This fee will continue to accrue for as long as the parent is late.

If a parent feels that lateness occurred due to exceptional circumstances, the reason should be put in writing to the Management Committee. Each case will be individually assessed and a decision made by the President within 7 days. Parents will be notified of the decision by telephone or email. If late collection occurs twice in a month, the child's placement at the centre could be reviewed.

If a child has not been collected by 6.00pm and the parent has not notified the centre, every effort will be made to communicate with the parent. If unsuccessful, emergency contacts listed on the child's enrolment form will be contacted.

If we are unsuccessful in contacting the parents/ emergency contact person, Eastwood Police Station will be contacted for assistance.

Late Payment/ Non Payment of Fees

It is important that a debt is not left to accrue.

If a family has outstanding fees the following procedure is adopted:

- EVERY family must pay fees at a minimum, one week in advance.
- If by 10.00am each Friday the fees for the forthcoming week are not in the fees box or centre account a Late Payment penalty of \$20.00 will be automatically charged to your account.
- The statement issued on the following Monday will reflect the following:
 - The penalty charge incurred
 - The outstanding fee owing and
 - The fee currently due to bring your account back to one week in advance.
- By the following Friday (10.00am at the latest) the total amount on your statement **must be paid in full**.

If the debt remains the Director or Office Administrator will contact you by phone to organise a specific day and time for this payment to be made. Until this payment is made your child will be unable to attend the centre. You will still be charged for your child's normal attendance days during this time.

If this situation occurs with a family on more than one occasion you will be required to attend a meeting with a Management Committee Representative and/or the Director to decide on the viability of your child remaining at the centre.

Should the unfortunate incident of a dishonoured cheque occur, any penalty charges issued to us by our bank will be charged to the parents.

Child Care Benefit

Government assistance with fees can be obtained by applying to Centrelink or Family Assistance Office. Forms may be obtained from the office.

CCB may be taken as a reduction of each week's fees or as a lump sum payable at financial year end. Eligibility for Child Care Benefit (CCB) is based on and subject to a standardised income test. Once a claim is lodged and processed (approximately 2-3 weeks) the government department will notify parents of the percentage of fees to be subsidised. This percentage is then applied to the weekly fees and parents pay the outstanding balance. Parents must provide all relevant CRN numbers to the centre to enable CCB to be applied to their account.

It is a government requirement that all persons receiving CCB, notify the government of any changes in their financial circumstances. It is also a requirement to notify the government of any situational care arrangements, for subsequent children, that attracts the CCB subsidy eg: before & after school care, family day care, etc.

CCB Absences - the CCB subsidy is applied for allowable absences up to a total of 42 days. After this time full fees apply to retain a place.

Withdrawal/ Termination of a Child

The centre requires four weeks' notice of intention to withdraw a child from being enrolled. This allows time to reallocate the place and calculate fees owed and any refunds due. A form is available from the Office Administrator.

The security deposit will be refunded at this time, once all outstanding fees have been paid.

Absences from the Centre

Parents are required to inform the centre whenever their child is going to be absent from the centre. This is a mandatory government and centre requirement. Absentee forms are available at the sign in desk. In the case of illness, parents must notify the centre of their child's condition as the centre is obliged to inform the Health Department of any infectious diseases existing in the centre.

CCMS

The Child Care Management System (CCMS) was introduced on 1 July 2009. All Child Care Benefit (CCB) approved child care service providers are required by law to operate under CCMS. The CCMS is a national child care system used for all approved child care services to record child, enrolment and attendance information. We report this data to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) via the internet to allow calculation and payment of CCB fee reductions or child care rebates on behalf of children attending our service.

DEEWR uses this as part of a strategy to educate services and families about their responsibilities and help put in place procedures and systems to minimise the risk of incorrect payment and fraud. The Department also conducts unannounced visits and imposes sanctions and penalties where services engage in non-compliant activities

Fee related Administrative Tools

- **Fee Statements** – CCB requires these be supplied to parents every month however, our office will provide them fortnightly to keep parents updated on the status of their payments.
- **Initial Fee Advice** – a yellow form sent out with the letter of offer outlining the monies to be paid to enroll a child in our children's program.
- **Amended Fee Advice** form – details changes to a child's account when changes to fees are made.

Links to other policies

Waitlist; Enrolment

Related National Quality Standard

- 7.3 Administrative systems enable the effective management of a quality service.
7.3.2 Administrative systems are established and maintained to ensure the effective operation of the service.

Sources and further reading

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Programs/ChildCareforServices/Pages/default.aspx> 22/1/10

Revision History

April 03 - accreditation committee general revision of entire policy; **January 04** - updated with new CCB information; **May 10** - adjustments made with updated information; **December 12** - updated with changes to length of notice for Termination of a position