

7.03AV FEES - LONG DAY CARE

QUALITY AREA 7 | VERSION 1.0

PURPOSE

This policy provides a clear set of guidelines for:

- the setting, payment and collection of fees.
- ensuring the viability of LEVNT EC Services, by setting appropriate fees and charges.
- the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided by LEVNT EC Services.

POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

LEVNT EC Services are committed to:

- providing responsible financial management of the service, including establishing fees that will result in a financially viable service, while keeping user fees at the lowest possible level.
- providing a fair and manageable system for dealing with non-payment and/or inability to pay fees/outstanding debts.
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of parents/guardians.
- advising users of the service about program government funding and fees to be paid by parents/guardians.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge and, parents/guardians attending LEVNT EC Services.

BACKGROUND

Regulation 168(2) (n) of Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 requires that Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services have a comprehensive written fees policy, and the content of this policy must be communicated to families. The policy must include a written statement about the fees to be charged and the payment process. All families must be informed of applicable fees at the time of enrolment.

ECEC services providing approved childcare must abide by the *Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Jobs for Families Child Care Package) Act 2017 (refer to Legislation and standards)*. The Commonwealth Government supports working parents/guardians in making early childhood education and care more affordable and accessible through the Child Care Package (The Package). The Package includes the Child Care Subsidy and Child Care Safety Net. Together, they enable parents/guardians to participate in the workforce by making early childhood education and care affordable and accessible.

The Child Care Subsidy helps by assisting families with their childcare fees and provides greater assistance to low and middle-income families.

The Child Care Safety Net provides families and services extra support if they are vulnerable and disadvantaged, or located in a regional or remote community. The Child Care Safety Net includes:

- **The Additional Child Care Subsidy:** which provides extra payment on top of the Child Care Subsidy for families who need more help. There are four different payments:
 - o For families who need help to support their children's safety and wellbeing
 - o For grandparents who care for their grandchildren
 - o For families experiencing significant financial stress
 - o For parents transitioning from welfare to work
- **The Community Child Care Fund:** which helps services stay open and available to children in disadvantaged, regional and remote communities.

- **The Inclusion Support Program:** which provides support to Early Childhood Education and Care services to build their capacity and capability to include children with additional needs in mainstream services.
- **Subsidised Care for Low Income Families:** who earn \$69,390 or less a year can access 24 hours of subsidised care per child per fortnight without having to meet the activity test.

DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms refer to the Definitions file of each LEVNT EC policy folder.

Centrelink: The agency that delivers payments and services to parents/guardians on behalf of the Australian Government

Child Care Safety Net: Child Care Safety Net provides families and services extra support if they are vulnerable and disadvantaged, or located in a regional or remote community. Supporting children to access quality early childhood education and care services

Child Care Subsidy (CCS): A Commonwealth Government means tested subsidy to assist eligible parents/guardians with the cost of childcare. Payments are paid directly to approved childcare providers. Further information can be found at: www.dese.gov.au/child-care-subsidy

Excursion/service event charge: An additional charge required to meet the cost of special events or excursions that occur in response to emerging children's program needs. Events that are planned ahead and are included as an expenditure item in the service's budget do not incur this additional charge

Fees: A charge for a place within a program at the service

Enrolment fee deposit: A charge to secure a place that has been offered in a program at the Service

Late collection fee: A charge that may be imposed by the Approved Provider when parents/guardians are late to collect their child/children from the program

RESPONSIBILITIES

Actions which are legislated requirements of the ECEC sector are indicated with **LR**.

	Approved Provider and/or persons with	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day	Early childhood teachers, educators and all other	Parents, guardians and carers	Contractors, volunteers and those on student
Reviewing the current budget to determine fee income requirements	LR	✓			
Developing a fee policy that balances the parent's/guardian's capacity to pay, with providing a high-quality program and maintaining service viability	LR	✓			
Implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with parents/guardians, the nominated supervisor and staff, and in line with the requirements of the Commonwealth Government's Child Care Package	LR	✓			
Reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered	LR	✓			
Considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families	LR	✓			
Clearly communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally sensitive way, and where possible in the family's first language	LR	✓			
Ensuring that the <i>Fees Policy</i> is readily accessible at the service (<i>Regulation 171</i>)	LR	✓			
Providing all parents/guardians with fee information	LR	✓			
Providing all parents/guardians with a statement of fees and charges upon enrolment of their child/ren	LR	✓			
Providing all parents/guardians with a Fee Payment Agreement	LR	✓			
Ensuring fees are collected and receipted	LR	✓			
Collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documentation regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable	LR	✓		✓	
Complying with the service's <i>Privacy and Confidentiality Policy</i> regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of fees	LR	✓			
Notifying parents/guardians a minimum of 14 days before any proposed changes that will affect the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected (<i>Regulation 172(2)</i>)	LR	✓			
Addressing any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service in a timely manner	LR	✓			
Reading the LEVNT EC Services Fee information for families, and complying with the Fee Payment Agreement				✓	
Notifying the Approved Provider if they are experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees				✓	

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- assess whether a satisfactory resolution has been achieved in relation to issues arising from this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of a policy review cycle, or as required
- notify all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk

AUTHORISATION & REVIEW

This policy was adopted by Lutheran Education VIC, NSW, TAS and ACT Ltd as Approved Provider for this service on 8 December 2022.

REVIEW DATE April 2024 or earlier as required.

REFERENCES

LEGISLATION & STANDARDS

- A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999
- A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006 (Vic)
- Child Care Subsidy Minister's Rules 2017
- Child Care Subsidy Secretary's Rules 2017
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulation 168(2)(n)
- Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Vic)
- Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Jobs for Families Child Care Package) Act 2017
- National Quality Standard, including Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au

SOURCES

- Child Care Package: Commonwealth childcare fee assistance including the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS): www.dese.gov.au

RELATED POLICIES

- 1.03V Inclusion and Equity
- 2.10V Delivery and Collection of Children
- 2.24V Excursions and Service Events
- 6.01V Enrolment and Orientation
- 7.02V Privacy and Confidentiality
- 7.04V Compliments and Complaints