

Childcare Fees

Purpose

PLEASE REFER TO THE [F 1.0 FEES POLICY](#) IN THE ECMS FINANCIAL POLICIES FOR A COMPREHENSIVE POLICY REGARDING FEES AND THE COLLECTION OF FEES.

Enrolment Application Deposit

To secure a new enrolment at an ECMS centre, some services will require families to make a non-refundable enrolment application deposit which will be reimbursed on the first bill for services.

The deposit amount will vary based on the centre location. In the event that a Centre Director believes the enrolment application deposit is preventing a family's ability to access the service, the Director has the discretion to reduce or waive the fee with approval from the ECMS Finance Manager.

Billing

Families will be billed on a fortnightly basis. Fees are expected to be paid 2 weeks in advance, at all times.

The payment method is for families to set up direct debit or credit card payment through Ezi Debit.

Overdue Accounts and Late Payment Fees

Parents will be notified when their fee payments are due or in arrears.

- A late payment fee will be charged when payments are in arrears without prior arrangements being made, in exceptional circumstances, if the Centre Director believes that the family should be considered to have this fee waived, the Coordinator may arrange this with approval from the Finance Manager. An additional late payment fee will not be incurred until after 8 days or more. When an account is 9 – 15 days overdue, the family will be contacted by the Director who will verbally request payment within a maximum 2 week period and this will be noted on the family's file.
- When an account is 16-30 days overdue, the family will receive an account statement with an alert that notifies them of the overdue status and the late payment fees, calling for immediate payment. The Centre Director will also contact the family verbally to suggest a payment plan if necessary and note the conversation in the family's file.
- The Centre Director, EYA and Regional manager will meet to identify any vulnerability for the family and decide on appropriate action to move forward.
- When an account reaches 31 days overdue or \$1,000 in arrears, the family will be given a formal letter requesting immediate payment of the outstanding amount (including late payment fees) and an invitation to contact the Director to arrange a payment. Copies of the letter will be posted to the family's residential address and placed in the family's file.

- In the event a family whose account is overdue 31 days or in arrears \$1,000 does not establish contact with the centre Director to arrange payment of the account their child's place at the service will be forfeited and the account put out to debt collection. In this event the family will not be allowed to return to the centre until the account has been paid in full and automatic payment arrangements have been agreed to and put in place.
- **Payment Plans**

Families experiencing genuine difficulty with payment of their fees must agree to a payment plan with their Centre Director. The payment plan should be designed to clear debts while maintaining regular payments for any ongoing early childhood education and care services, and it should be sustainable for both parties. The recommended additional payment each fortnight is 25%-50% of the regular fees paid by the family.

Payment Plans must be negotiated and agreed on the basis that ongoing fees for services will remain current and the additional payments are only to clear debts so that the arrears and late payment fees do not continue to increase.

The Centre Director will write the payment plan and terms of the agreement into a letter, with the family and Centre Director signing two copies. One copy will be kept on the family file at the centre, while the other copy will be given to the family.

Late Collection Fees

The daily fees are based on the opening hours provided for the centre. In the event that a family is late collecting their child from the service, additional costs are incurred.

A late collection fee will be charged at \$15 for the first 5 minutes and then \$10 every 10 minutes after that. This will be imposed at the discretion of the Director.

If a family is delayed through unavoidable circumstances, they must contact the Centre staff to advise the details and when the child will be collected. If the centre has not been contacted a staff member will attempt to contact both parents and emergency contacts before calling the police.

Public Holidays

Fees are calculated on weekly basis including public holidays. Families will be charged for public holidays at the same rate as a regular day of care.

Family Holidays and Non-attendance days

When a child does not attend the service for reasons such as illness or holidays, families will continue to be charged for services according to the child's regular booking.

Families who take extended holiday periods but wish to hold their child's place at the centre will be expected to pay the regular fees for the place at the Centre.

Absenteeism

If a child is to be absent for the day, parents are requested to telephone the service as soon as possible to inform educators. If the child is sick it is important to inform the service of the nature of the illness, symptoms and any diagnosis is helpful in containing the spread of illness.

ECMS Annual Conference Closure

ECMS believes that ongoing professional development and training is vital for our staff to remain at the forefront of their profession and continue to provide quality early childhood education and care. Each year all staff will attend the annual conference. On this day in mid-August, all ECMS centres are closed. Families will need to arrange alternative care for their children on this day and will be notified of the date in advance. Families will not be charged for services on this day.

Cancellation of Booking

Families are asked to provide 2 weeks written notice of the cancellation of a booking. Fees will continue to apply until a written cancellation of the booking is received. If your child

does not attend the service for the any of the last two weeks, without a medical certificate full fees will apply and you will not be eligible for Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate.

Fee Subsidy Entitlements

Most Australian families are entitled to the Child Care Benefit (CCB) and the Child Care Rebate. The level of CCB entitlements varies according to the family income. To be eligible, families must contact and apply via the Family Assistance Office (FAO) and provide the Customer Reference Number to the Centre Director. The FAO is available on 13 61 50 or www.familyassist.gov.au.

ECMS Children's Centres and Kindergartens are registered with the Family Assistance Office as Childcare Providers. ECMS services will undertake every effort to advise the FAO of the hours of care provided to ensure that families receive the appropriate benefits and rebates from the FAO, however ECMS has no influence over a family's eligibility or rebate payments. All terms and conditions of CCB and the rebate are available from the FAO.

Policy Created Date	July 2014, Reviewed September 2016
Policy Review Date	September 2018
Sources and Further Reading	Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 <u>Guide to the National Quality Standard</u> <u>http://www.acecqa.gov.au/links-and-resources/national-quality-framework-resources/</u>
NQF QA	7