FEES POLICY

Quality Area 7

PURPOSE

This policy provides a clear set of guidelines for:

- the setting, payment and collection of fees
- ensuring the viability of St Francis of Assisi OSHC by setting appropriate fees and charges
- the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided by St Francis of Assisi OSHC

St Francis of Assisi OSHC is 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
- ensuring there are no financial barriers for families wishing to access an early childhood program for their child/children
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of parents/guardians
- advising users of the service about program funding, including government support 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 St Francis of Assisi OSHC.

RESPONSIBILITIES	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
Ensuring that policies and procedures are in place for the payment of fees and the provision of a statement of fees charged by the service *(Regulation 168)*, and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed *(Regulation 170)*	**R**	√			
Reviewing the current budget to determine fee income requirements	R	√			
Developing a fee policy that balances the parent's/guardian's capacity to pay, with providing a high-quality program and maintaining service viability	R	√			
Communicating with families at enrolment about fees, including: • the amounts charged • payment periods and methods • how the Child Care Subsidy or other government subsidy will be applied • notice periods • how they can access copies of statements/receipts • financial hardship considerations and payment plans	**R**	√			
Implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with parents/guardians, the nominated supervisor and staff, and in line with the requirements of the Commonwealth Governments Child Care Subsidy and Additional Child Care Subsidy *(refer to Sources)*	**R**	√			
Reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered	☐	☐			
Considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families	☐	☐			
Clearly communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally sensitive way, and where possible in the family's first language	R	√			
In OSHC settings, where Child Care Subsidy or Additional Child Care Subsidy is applicable, ensure that all subsidies a child is eligible for are applied to reduce cost to families (CCS and ACCS can be accessed	R	√			
Ensuring that the ***Fees Policy*** is readily accessible at the service ***(Regulation 171)***	☐	☐			

Providing all parents/guardians with fee information ***(refer to Attachment 1)***					
Providing all parents/guardians with a statement of fees and charges ***(refer to samples in Attachments 2 and 3)*** upon enrolment of their child					
Providing all parents/guardians with a Complying Written Arrangement *(refer to Definitions and Attachment 2).* All arrangements must be recorded, either on paper or electronically, and must be kept by the provider	R	√			
Ensuring fees are collected and receipted					
Collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documentation ***(refer to Definitions)***					
Complying with the service's ***Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*** regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of fees					
Notifying parents/guardians a minimum of 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected ***(Regulation 172(2))***, and ideally providing one term's notice.					
Addressing any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service in a timely manner					
Reading the St Francis of Assisi OSHC Fee information for families ***(refer to Attachment 1***), and complying with the Complying Written Arrangement (refer to Definitions and *Attachment 2)*				√	
Notifying the approved provider if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees					
BOLD tick √ indicates legislation requirement					

BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

St Francis of Assisi, OSHC operates on a non-profit basis. Any surplus will be allocated to purchase equipment and resources for the children's program, minor upgrades and service improvements as specified by the Committee of Management. Fees will be set by the Committee of Management and are subject to change. Fees are charged on a per session basis, per child, for all booked sessions. Fees are set to cover the cost of the service and to meet the projected budget for the service.

Regulation 168(2) (n) of Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 requires that Early Childhood Education and Care 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.

Australian families receive help with the cost of child care through the Child Care Subsidy (CCS). The Victorian Government Department of Education (DE) and Services Australia, administers the Child Care Subsidy (CCS). Providers must be approved by the department to receive CCS.

DE is responsible for the legislation that underpins CCS. This legislation is called Family Assistance Law (FAL). All providers that receive CCS must follow the rules under FAL. DE monitors providers' compliance with FAL.

The Australian Government subsidises the cost of child care. State and territory governments are responsible for the health, safety, wellbeing and educational outcomes of children.

The Australian Government considers that immunisation is an important health measure for children and their families, as it is the safest and most effective way of providing protection against harmful and often deadly diseases. To meet the Child Care Subsidy immunisation requirements, children must be immunised according to the standard vaccination schedule, be on an eligible catch-up vaccination schedule or have an approved exemption from being immunised.

CCS is paid directly to approved providers and passed on to families as a fee reduction.

Additional Child Care Subsidy provides additional fee assistance to support vulnerable or disadvantaged families and children. This support recognises the preventative and protective influence of quality child care on a child's health, wellbeing and development; and the importance of continuity of care.

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.
- Additional Child Care Subsidy (grandparent)—to help grandparents on income support who are the principal caregiver of their grandchildren.
- Additional Child Care Subsidy (temporary financial hardship)—to help families experiencing financial hardship.
- Additional Child Care Subsidy (transition to work)—to help low-income families transitioning from income support to work.

The Inclusion Support Program is designed to assist early childhood education and care services to include children with additional needs by providing support, in the form of practical and tailored advice and strategies on effective inclusive practice, from contracted Inclusion Agencies as well as funding to address more challenging inclusion barriers.

The Community Child Care Fund is designed to help eligible child care providers address barriers to child care participation, particularly in disadvantaged communities, including Indigenous communities.

Permanent and Booked Care

Fees for permanent and booked care will be charged weekly in arrears. Invoices are issued immediately when they are processed and returned from Services Australia (Centrelink). Accounts must be finalised by the due date on the invoice. Due to delay in processing from Services Australia (Centrelink), occasionally invoices may not be issued weekly. However, it is expected that families continue to make weekly payments. Fees for casual or emergency care are required to be paid on the day of care.

It is under the discretion of the Committee of Management that if a child does not fulfill their permanent position they will be asked to go casual.

Casual and Emergency Care

Fees must be paid for on the day of care.

Relevant legislation and standards include, but are not limited to:

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006 (Vic)
- 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)
- National Quality Standard, including Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership

DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms e.g. Approved provider, Nominated supervisor, Notifiable complaints, Serious incidents, Duty of care, etc. refer to the Definitions file of the PolicyWorks catalogue.

Centrelink: The agency that delivers payments and services to individuals and families on behalf of the Australian Government.
Child Care Safety Net: Targeted assistance to vulnerable and at-risk children and their families, as well as supporting child care services in disadvantaged communities to address barriers in accessing child care.

The Child Care Safety Net has three components:

Additional Child Care Subsidy
Community Child Care Fund
Inclusion Support Program

Child Care Subsidy (CCS): A Commonwealth Government means tested subsidy to assist eligible parents/guardians with the cost of child care. Payments are paid directly to approved child care providers.

Complying Written Arrangement: A written arrangement between a child care provider and an individual to provide child care in return for fees. The arrangement includes certain required information:

the names and contact details of the provider and the individual(s)
the date the arrangement starts
the name and date of birth of the child (or children)
if care will be provided on a routine basis and if so
- details about the days on which sessions of care will usually occur
- the usual start and end times for these sessions of care
- whether care will be on a casual or flexible basis (in addition to, or instead of, a routine basis)

details of fees charged under the arrangement (providers can reference a fee schedule or information available on their website), which the parties understand may vary from time to time.
Additional information can be included to support the individual's understanding of their payment obligations

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 *(refer to Excursions and Service Events Policy).*

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 St Francis of Assisi OSHC

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 *(refer to Attachment 1)*



SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

SOURCES

Department of Education: Child Care Subsidy (CCS): www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/child-care-subsidy

The Child Care Provider Handbook: www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/resources/child-care-provider-handbook

RELATED POLICIES

Compliments and Complaints
Delivery and Collection of Children
Enrolment and Orientation
Excursions and Service Events
Inclusion and Equity
Privacy and Confidentiality



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, particularly in relation to affordability, flexibility of payment options and procedures for the collection of fees
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- monitor the number of families/children excluded from the service because of their inability to pay fees

- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required

- notifying 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 *(Regulation 172 (2))*

ATTACHMENTS
Attachment 1: Fee information for families
Attachment 2: Complying Written Arrangement

WHY FEES ARE NECESSARY

The St Francis of Assisi OSHC fees are developed to maintain the service's financial viability.

ADDITIONAL CHARGES:

Additional charges levied by St Francis of Assisi OSHC are included on the Statement of Fees and Charges. These include:

- **Registration:** An annual registration fee of $70 per family applies (prices are subject to change). The registration process can be lengthy; therefore, it is essential that registrations are received 14 days prior to care required. When the process is complete, an invoice is generated and the fee must be paid by the date detailed on the invoice. Failure to do so will result in the registration being cancelled. Children cannot attend the program until a registration is received and approved by the service.
- **Change of Care Fee:** Families must notify the service of any changes to booking arrangements. Seven days notice is required, in writing, for change of permanent booked care. Families who wish to cancel for one week (or more) must email the service and a $5 change-of-care fee per family will apply. Families who do not notify the service of their intention to cancel permanent care will be charged the full session fee for a one-week period. CCS does not apply to this fee.
- Please note: Families who continually cancel permanent care bookings will be required to transfer their booking arrangement to casual care.
- **Cancellation of Care**: Full session fees will be incurred for any cancellation of care not received via email or phone 24 hours prior to the commencement of the session for which care is booked. Cancellation of care received after 6pm on Friday will not be considered 24 hours' notice for Monday bookings. In the event of a public holiday, cancellation must be received prior to 6pm on the previous workday to avoid full fee.
- **Activity and Excursion Fee:** To enhance the educational value of the program, special activities and excursions may be available. In some instances, these special events may incur additional charges for the family. Families will be notified in advance of any additional charges. These additional charges may not attract CCS. Families will be invoiced for these additional activities within the normal billing period.
- **Late Pick-up Fee**: The After School Care Program closes at 6 pm each evening. Care provided after the advertised closing time will incur $2 per minute per child. This late pick-up fee is added to the child's weekly invoice for care. This additional charge does not attract CCS.
- **Failure to log child in/out of the service fee**: A $5 administration fee is charged (per family) on every occasion the parent/guardian omits to log their child in or out of the program. CCS does not apply to this fee.
- **Failure to log child in/out of the service using SmartCentral portal:** A $5 administration fee (per family) is charged on every occasion the parent/guardian elects to log the child in/out of the service utilising a paper document. This administration fee is incurred to compensate for the additional administration tasks resulting from this practice. CCS does not apply to this fee.
- **Late Payment/Non Payment of fees:** All fees for care must be paid by the due date which appears on the weekly statement. If payment is not received by the due date, a $10 late fee (per family) will be charged. CCS does not apply to this fee.
- **Late/Same Day Booking:** The fee structure includes an additional tier for bookings not received 24 hours prior to the commencement of the session for which care is required or bookings received on the same day of care required.
- **Vacation Care/In-Service Day Bookings** received after the due date nominated on the information sheet (calendar) will incur an extra cost. Once applications are received, no changes can be made. Cancellations will incur full fee.
- **Administration Fee:** An Administration Fee is incurred for supplementary administration duties encountered to achieve requests from parents/guardians. These tasks can include (and are not limited to:)
    - Transfer of attendances/information to an alternative parent
    - Re-issuing invoices

  The fee payable is determined by the timeframe and complexity of tasks. CCS does not apply to this fee.

- **Children who do not attend Fee**: If parents/guardians have failed to notify the service that their child will not be attending the session for which they are booked, educators will follow practices to learn the child's whereabouts. A $5.00 administration fee will apply for this practice. CCS does not apply to this fee.

OVERDUE ACCOUNTS

- If you are experiencing financial difficulties, it is important for families to contact the service to organize an agreed payment arrangement.
- If you are experiencing financial difficulties, you may be entitled to access Additional Child Care Subsidy.
- Families excluded from the service due to non-payment of fees will be provided with information regarding Family Support and/or Financial Advising Services available in the local community.
- If accounts fall more than 3 weeks in arrears for any timeframe during the school term, children may be excluded from care until payment is received. When payment has been received, the exclusion of care will be lifted.
- All accounts must be finalized at the conclusion of each term. Failure to do so will result in a suspension of care the following term until payment is received.
- If late payment of accounts continues, a member of the Leadership Team and/or the Approved Provider reserve the right to suspend children indefinitely. The account will then be forwarded to the school bursar who will take necessary steps to recover funds.
- Bookings for Vacation Care can only be accepted if accounts are at a nil balance prior to the conclusion of the preceding term.

IMPORTANT NOTE

If a child is registered with the service and they have not been collected from the school at the conclusion of the day, the School Principal or Teacher will accompany the child to the service. Families are responsible for payment of associated fees for this care.

PAYMENT OF FEES

Direct Deposit	Bank:	National Australia Bank
	BSB:	083-363
	Account Number:	507 652 657
	Account Name:	St Francis of Assisi OSHC Service
	Reference:	Child's Name

FUNDRAISING

Fundraising is an additional aspect to the financial management of the service. All fundraising activities will have a specific purpose for which stakeholders will be notified. No family will be placed under pressure to participate in the fundraising activities of the service. All fundraising income is used in the way it is advertised to families.

• ATTACHMENT 2. COMPLYING WRITTEN ARRANGEMENT.

[Service Letterhead]

Please complete this form and return to St Francis of Assisi OSHC by [Date]

Parent Name			
Parent CRN			
Address			
Mobile		Email	

Child's Name:			Start Date		
Date of Birth			Child CRN		
Care Arrangements Type:					
Routine Sessions Only ☐			Casual Sessions Only ☐		
Times	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Please include the Start & Finish Times for all booked days					
Week 1					
Week 2 (if Different)					

I/we acknowledge that the childcare service is funded by fees paid by parents/guardians. The service cannot operate without the fees paid by parents/guardians.

I/we agree to pay "[enter amount]" fees in full in advance prior to commencing at St Francis of Assisi OSHC and remain "[enter amount]" in advance at all times

I/we acknowledge having received and read the attached summary of St Francis of Assisi OSHC fees policy, which sets out the procedure for fee payment

I/we understand that fees are non-refundable.

I/we agree that if our activity and financial circumstances change, we will immediately notify Centrelink to ensure our Child Care Subsidy entitlements are up to date

I/we acknowledge that if fees are not paid by the due date, St Francis of Assisi OSHC will implement the late payment of fees procedures, as outlined in the Fee Information for Families, which could result in the withdrawal of my/our child's place at the service and no further enrolments until the outstanding fees are paid.

I/we agree that if my/our financial circumstances change and I/we am/are unable to pay as agreed, I/we will immediately notify the [responsible position] to discuss alternative payment options.

I/we acknowledge that I/we have received and read the service's Fee information for families, which outlines the procedure for payment of fees.

I/we Agree to pay fees while the child is absent. Examples include annual leave, public holidays, illness, closure due to unforeseen circumstances etc.

I/we acknowledge a late fee of [enter amount] will be charged to families for late payment of their account.

I/we agree to collect my child/ren from St Francis of Assisi OSHC prior to closing time.

I/we agree to give [enter amount] written notice of when my child/children will be leaving St Francis of Assisi OSHC.

Signature (parent/guardian): _____ Date: _____

Note: invoices, receipts and collection of fees will be in accordance with the St Francis of Assisi OSHC *Fees Policy*