

Intereach Children's Services

OOSH Payment and Collection of Fees Procedure



Applies to	Intereach Out of School Hours (OOSH)				
Policy	NQS Seven: Governance and Leadership Policy				
Version	2.0	Date approved	09/06/2023	Next review date	09/06/2024

1. Objective

Intereach is committed to provide all families the opportunity to enrol their children at the service with a clear, transparent, fair and inclusive fee structure.

The objective of the Intereach Children Services Payment and Collection of Fees Procedure is to ensure:

- families gain a clear understanding of the services fee structure, payment and collection of fees;
- the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the services; and,
- the service meets all accountability requirements regarding payment and collection of fees.

2. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the General Manager or representative of the Approved Provider to:

- ensure that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations are met;
- ensure policies and procedures are in place relating to the fee schedule and payment options;
- review the current budget to determine fee income requirements; and,
- approve service fees and charges.

It is the responsibility of the Nominated Supervisor to:

- Implement procedures for the payment and collection of fees and take reasonable steps to ensure that educators and staff follow the payment and collection of fees procedure;
- ensure good governance and quality management of fees is practiced within the service;
- ensure there is two-way communication with the families at all times;
- comply with the Intereach Privacy Policy regarding financial and other information received, including all information to the payment/non-payment of fees;
- ensure systems are available to monitor payments are processed in a timely manner and receipts and statements are provided to families;
- monitor the application of the Child Care Subsidy or other government subsidy;
- notify families within 14 days of any proposed changes to fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected;
- consider options for payment when affordability is an issue for families;
- clearly communicate payment and collection of fee procedure and payment options to families in a culturally sensitive way, and in the family's first language where possible;
- ensure relevant records are collected and maintained for entitlements, exceptions etc;

It is the responsibility of the educators and staff to:

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- provide families with fee information upon enquiry/enrolment of their child;
- ensure that the payment and collection of fees procedure is readily accessible at the service;
- ensure families are informed that they are required to accept their child's Complying Written Arrangement (CWA) enrolment notice with Intereach OOSH.
- ensure a notice outlining fees charged by the service is displayed prominently at the service centre;
- collect and maintain all relevant information and documentation regarding those with entitlements, where applicable.
- provides 14 days' notice to the families of any changes to fees; including if fees are over the gap fee;
- provide a copy of fee schedule to new families or where requested;
- inform the Nominated Supervisor of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service; and,
- refer any questions from families in relation to this procedure to the Nominated Supervisor.

It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to:

- ensure they understand the service's fee requirements and expectations at enrolment and any ongoing changes;
- sign the CWA confirming the childcare arrangements either in writing or electronically;
- accept the Child Care Subsidy Enrolment through MyGov, if applicable;
- comply with the payment and collection of fees requirements; and,
- comply with the cancellation requirements when cancelling a service.

3. Procedure

3.1. Childcare Arrangements

- All families are provided with fee information upon enquiry/enrolment of their child, including the amounts charged, payment periods and methods, how the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) or other government subsidy will be applied, notice periods, how they can access copies of statements/receipts, financial hardship considerations and payment plan.
- All families are required to enter an arrangement with the childcare provider. This is called a Complying Written Arrangement (CWA). Families will be required to review and approve the CWA on enrolment. Sometimes if required the CWA will be printed and scan to families for approval.
- An enrolment notice will be submitted (once the family has confirmed the arrangement) within seven days, in line with the arrangement made between Intereach and the family.
- All families are required to verify attendance records by signing children in and/or out of care daily. The children's attendance and/or absence days are submitted to the Family Assistance Office for Child Care Subsidy (CCS) payments fortnightly by Intereach.

3.2. Childcare Subsidy

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is a payment made directly to providers by the Commonwealth Government to be passed onto eligible families as a fee reduction to assist with the cost of quality early years education and care. Families will make a co-contribution to their childcare

fees and pay the provider the difference between the fee charged and the subsidy amount, known as the 'gap fee'.

To register for CCS families need to apply through their MyGov account that is linked to Centrelink. Families are responsible for updating their information with the Family Assistance Office to ensure it is always current and correct. Due to privacy law, Intereach cannot contact Centrelink on your behalf to discuss/update CCS status.

CCS is paid for eligible sessions of care where a childcare session that is actually attended by a child, or an absence is reported.

More information on Child Care Subsidy can be accessed through:

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/child-care-subsidy>

- A Statement of Entitlement is provided to families of enrolled children, who have registered to claim Child Care Subsidy. This statement includes details of the sessions of care provided and the resulting fee reduction amounts. Statement of Entitlement are issued to families to ensure that families have a clear understanding of the fees they have been charged, what those fees have been charged for and how their Child Care Subsidy has offset those charges.
- Accept the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) enrolment via their MyGov account before Child Care Subsidy (CCS) will be paid (If a claim has been made).

3.3. Fees charged

- Families will be notified 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; and
 - financial hardship considerations and payment plans
- Current fee information and schedules will be provided on enquiry with the service and upon interview/ enrolment with the service.
- Service fees may exceed the maximum hourly rate cap for CCS (<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/type-child-care-you-use-can-affect-child-care-subsidy?context=41186>) meaning that families are required to pay full cost of anything above this allocated amount. Where applicable staff and educators will disclose and discuss this with families on interview.
- If families exceed their hourly allocation for CCS, they are required to pay full fees on these additional hours. Note: hours are allocated fortnightly and can be affected by the utilisation of care with another provider approved to receive CCS payment on the family's behalf.

Intereach OOSH will charge:

- fees for after school care and vacation care sessions, these fees will be reviewed and set annually and charged per session; and,
- additional fees during vacation care for excursion and other program activities.

Where fees exceed the CCS gap fee this must be disclosed to families at the time of interview or when fees are changed.

3.4. Payment of fees

- Families who apply for and are eligible for CCS are required to pay the fee not covered by the subsidy. This is commonly referred to as the 'gap' fee. Please note until CCS claims are processed and accepted full fee payment will be required.
- Payments are made through Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) which is a bank transfer or a direct deposit. Cash payment will not be accepted.
 - There are two payment options for direct debit:
 - Direct debit via bank account
 - Direct debit via credit card
- Families will receive receipts for fees paid from Intereach.
- Intereach issues accounts every two weeks of care and are due to be paid in full within two weeks of receiving an invoice:
 - statements are sent out within two weeks after Vacation Care; and,
 - statements for After School Care are sent out every two weeks .
- If an account is overdue the family will be informed that:
 - a direct debit payment plan will be put in place for outstanding balances;
 - If the plans are not adhered to and accounts are not paid, families will be required to pay the accounts in full to bring them up to date; and,
 - future bookings will also require payment in full in advance for sessions to be attended.,
- In extreme cases, where accounts continue to be overdue, any subsequent care bookings must be paid for in advance.
- Where accounts are outstanding by 6 weeks, care will be cancelled until fees are paid in full. During this time care positions will not be held.

3.5. Absences

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is payable for up to 42 absence days for a child in a financial year for sessions of care a child is enrolled in and did not attend, but only for sessions of care where an individual still incurs a genuine fee liability to pay for the care. A reason does not need to be provided for a child's initial 42 days of absence.

Once 42 absence days have occurred in a financial year, CCS can only be paid for any additional absences where they are taken for a reason set out in Family Assistance Law. These reasons are:

- the child, the individual who cares for the child, the individual's partner or another person with whom the child lives is ill and the service has been given a medical certificate by a medical practitioner;
- the child is attending preschool;
- alternative arrangements have been made on a pupil-free day;
- the child has not been immunised against an infectious disease, the absence occurs during an immunisation grace period and a medical practitioner has certified that exposure to the infectious disease would pose a health risk to the child;
- the absence is because the child is spending time with a person other than the individual who is their usual carer as required by a court order or a parenting plan, and the service has a copy of the relevant court order or parenting plan for the child;
- the service is closed as a direct result of a period of local emergency;

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- the child cannot attend because of a local emergency (for example, because they are unable to travel to the service), during the period of the emergency or up to 28 days afterwards; and,
- the individual who cares for the child has decided the child should not attend the service for up to seven days immediately following the end of a period of local emergency.

Generally, absences should occur between a child's first and last physical attendance at the service. There are some circumstances where families can get CCS if an absence occurs in the 7 days:

- before a child's first attendance at your service (inclusive of their first day), or
- after their last physical attendance at your service (inclusive of their last day).

These circumstances are:

- any of the additional absence reasons listed above
- the service has changed ownership
- the child's usual service is closed and the child attends a different service under the same provider
- a family tragedy has occurred;
- the enrolment ceased incorrectly
- following a period of emergency.

Please note CCS is not paid on any last day absences after the child's last physical attendance i.e. if the child is absent for four weeks prior to cancelling care all booked days within that four week period will be charged at full fee.

3.6. Hours of operation

OOSH Hours of operation is:

- Vacation care operates from 8am – 6pm'
- After School Care operates from 3:00pm to 6:00pm

OOSH is closed on public holidays; however, fees may still apply if any of the permanent usual days of attendance fall on these days.

3.7. Cancellations

Two weeks' notice is required from either families or service when cancelling care, excluding in the event of outstanding payment of fees for permanent bookings.

The following cancellation processes apply:

- OOSH After School Care:
 - Where a permanent booking exists:
Permanent bookings must be cancelled 2 weeks prior to care by sending an SMS to the service mobile to avoid being charged as an absence fee
 - Where a casual booking exists:
Casual bookings must be cancelled before 8am on the day prior to care by sending an SMS to the service mobile to avoid being charged as an absence fee

- OOSH Vacation Care:
 - All vacation care booking are considered casual and casual bookings must be cancelled before 8am on the day prior to care by sending an SMS or contacting the service via phone to avoid being charged as an absence fee.

In the event that fees are outstanding by 6 weeks, current care bookings will be cancelled until payment is received in full. This is inclusive of both casual and ongoing permanent bookings.

3.8. Fee waiver

Families who receive Child Care Subsidy (CCS) must ordinarily make a co-contribution to their childcare fees under Family Assistance Law. The Gap fee will only be waived in cases as determined by the Australian Government.

Where gap fee waiver announcements have been made this will be communicated with educators and families.

3.9. OOSH Refund of fees

Where a family is exiting the service and has a credit, a refund will be issued.

3.10. Overdue payments and debts

Intereach understands that from time-to-time families may experience financial difficulties. We require families and educators to keep us informed through timely communication to ensure we can support families during these times.

If parent/guardians are unable to pay due to financial difficulties, please contact Intereach immediately who will aim to provide relevant assistance.

In the instance of non-payment of an account by the due date or notice of a dishonoured direct debit, intereach will undertake the following processes:

- contact the parent/guardian by email and/or phone to arrange payment for dishonoured transaction. NOTE: Parents/Guardians can agree to the processing of a manual direct debit immediately or specify a day for this transaction to take place. Alternately, payment can be made by credit card over the phone.
- where the accounts remains unpaid after a concerted effort to finalise payment (or 6 weeks) intereach will:
 - forward a cessation of care letter stating the final day of care. NOTE: If payment is not received prior to the date of care ending, the child's enrolment will cease immediately.

3.11. Financial Hardship

For families experiencing financial hardship, there are options available that may assist with the cost of education and care services. To request options for financial assistance, or to discuss payment options for overdue accounts, speak with the Nominated Supervisor. *Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS)* - This is provided by the commonwealth government and enables eligible families to access extra help with the cost of childcare. Eligibility criteria applies.

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/additional-child-care-subsidy>

4. Monitoring, evaluation and review

This procedure will be reviewed annually and incorporate feedback and suggestions from children, families, educators, coordinators, volunteers, and students.

5. National Quality Framework

Element	Concept	Description
6.1	Supportive relationships with families	Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.
7.1	Governance	Governance supports the operation of a quality service.
7.1.1	Service philosophy and purpose	A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of the service's operations.
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.

6. Context	
6.1. Standards or other external requirements	National Quality Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Aged Care Guidelines for Early Childhood Settings
6.2. Legislation or other requirements	Education and Care Services National Regulations consolidated 2017 Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 Competition and Consumer Act 2010 Family Assistance Law including Acts, Schedules and Consolidated Disallowable Instruments
6.3. Internal documents	Intereach Privacy Policy Intereach Fees Policy Schedule of fees OOSH Family Handbook

7. Document control			
Version	Date approved	Approved by	Next review date
1.0	09/07/2020	R. Phillips - Acting Senior Manager, Children and Family Services	09/07/2023
2.0	09/06/2023	M. Piffero – General Manager Operations	09/06/2024