

Fees Policy

Purpose

This policy will provide a clear set of guidelines for:

- The setting, payment and collection of fees
- Ensuring the viability of Kinders Together Assoc. Inc. by setting appropriate fee charges
- Equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided.

Policy statement

1. Values

Kinders Together Assoc. Inc. is committed to:

- Providing responsible financial management of the centre, which includes establishing fees that will result in a financially viable centre while keeping user fees at the lowest possible level
- Providing a fair and manageable system for dealing with the 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/ren
- Maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of parents/guardians
- Advising users of the centre about how the programs are funded, including government support and parent fees
- Providing equitable access for families eligible for the kindergarten fee subsidy.

2. Scope

This policy applies to staff, the committee and to parents/guardians whose child/ren is/are attending, or who wish to enrol a child at a centre with Kinders Together Assoc. Inc.

3. Background and legislation

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) provides per capita funding as a contribution towards the costs of providing the four-year-old kindergarten program. Income from other sources, primarily fees, is required to meet all the additional costs incurred by the service in the delivery of the children's program. In addition, the kindergarten fee subsidy enables eligible families to attend the four-year-old kindergarten program at no cost, or a minimal cost.

Funding is also available to eligible three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection, to access ten hours of kindergarten in the funded program; where there is a shortage of places, they may access a three-year-old program free of charge. There is no other funding available for the three-year-old program.

The DEECD requires that funded centres have in place, and communicate to families, a comprehensive written fees policy:

- The Fees policy summary ([Attachment 7](#)) provides a summary of the Fees policy.
- The Fee schedules ([Attachments 8 and 9](#)) detail the fees charged by the centre and the arrangements for the payment of fees, as required under regulations 40(1)(e) and 41(2)(b) of the Children's Services Regulations 2009.

The Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria update outlines the criteria to be covered in the policy.

Relevant legislation may include but is not limited to:

- *Children's Services Regulations 2009 (CSR)*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1995*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992.*

4. Definitions

Commonwealth Child Care Benefit (CCB): Child Care Benefit is a Commonwealth Government payment to help families who use either approved or registered childcare. All eligible families can receive some Child Care Benefit.

Approved care: Care provided by a service provider that has been approved by the Family Assistance Office to receive Child Care Benefit payments on behalf of eligible families. Most long day care, family day care, before- and after-school care are approved childcare providers.

Registered care: Care provided by nannies, grandparents, relatives or friends, kindergartens, occasional care centres and outside school hours care centres that are registered with the Family Assistance Office. Eligible families can receive some reimbursement of costs when using a registered care provider.

DVA Gold Card: A Department of Veterans' Affairs health card for all conditions for Australian veterans.

Enrolment application fee: A payment to cover administrative costs associated with the enrolment application of a child for a place in a program at the centre.

Excursion/entertainment/centre 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. (Refer to the Excursions/centre events policy for further details.)

Fees: A charge for a place within a program at the centre.

Kindergarten fee deposit: A charge to secure a place that has been offered in a program at the centre. This is deducted from the annual fees

Health care card: A Commonwealth Government entitlement for low-income earners (incorporating the foster child health care card, the ex-carer allowance (child) health care card and the low-income health care card).

Kindergarten fee subsidy (KFS): A state government subsidy paid directly to the funded organisation to enable eligible families to attend a funded kindergarten program or funded three-year-old place at no cost (or minimal cost)

Kindergarten fee subsidy—fees policy: Provides operational guidelines for funded organisations providing a kindergarten program, in administering the kindergarten fee subsidy.

Kindergarten program: A universal early childhood educational program, funded by the state government, for children in the year prior to commencing primary school.

Late-collection charge: A charge that may be imposed by the committee when parents/guardians are late to collect their child/ren from the program (see [Attachment 1](#), 'Setting fees and other charges')

Other charges: A charge for items not directly related to the provision of the children's program.

Refundable levy: A payment that is refunded on participation in a specific activity, such as a working bee.

Three-year-old kindergarten: An unfunded program for three-year-old children provided by an early childhood teacher.

Three-year-old Pre Kindergarten: An unfunded program for three-year-old children provided by an appropriate Qualified Activity Group Leader.

Visas A–F: Bridging visas for asylum seekers.

Visas 447, 451, 785 and 786: Temporary Commonwealth Protection/Humanitarian visas.

Visas 200–217: Temporary Commonwealth refugee and special humanitarian visas.

Voluntary parent/guardian contribution: A voluntary payment for items not directly related to the provision of the children's program. The voluntary contribution is not a condition of attending the centre.

5. Sources and related centre policies

Sources

- *Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria, update 2009*
- DEECD 2008, *Kindergarten fee subsidy—fees policy*
- The centre's constitution
- Child Care Services Handbook

Centre policies

- Complaints and grievances
- Delivery and collection of children
- Enrolment
- Excursion/centre events
- Inclusion and equity
- Privacy
- Program participation

Procedures

Kinders Together is responsible for:

- Ensuring that this policy is based on the principles of the *Kindergarten fee subsidy—fees policy*
- Implementing and reviewing this policy, in consultation with the parents/guardians and staff and in line with the requirements of the DEECD *Victorian kindergarten, policy, procedures and funding criteria*
- Developing a fee policy that balances the capacity of parent's capability to pay, providing a high-quality program and maintaining service viability.
- Considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling with a Centre with Kinders Together Assoc. Inc. and removing those barriers wherever possible
- Considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families—for example, payment 'in kind' or accessing grants, such as foundations and service clubs
- Clearly communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally sensitive way in the family's first language where possible

- Setting fees according to the guidelines outlined in Attachment 1, 'Setting fees and other charges', of this policy
- Providing a copy of the Fee policy summary (Attachment 7), with the Fee schedules (Attachments 8 and 9), to all parents/guardians with their information/enrolment pack and making the Fees policy readily accessible at the centre (CSR r40[1f] and 41b)
- Collecting and receipting all fees as per the guidelines outlined in Attachments 3 and 4 of this policy
- Documenting the type of concession card and expiry date of eligible concession card holders
- Complying with the centre's Privacy policy in regard to any information it receives relating to the financial situation of parents/guardians and the payment/non-payment of fees
- Notifying parents/guardians within twenty-eight days of any changes to the arrangements for the payment of fees (CSR, r42)
- Ensuring a notice outlining the fees charged by Kinders Together Assoc. Inc member centre is displayed prominently in the main entrance to each centre as required by CSR r40f.

The staff are responsible for:

- Informing Kinders Together Operations Co-ordinator of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding the fees at the centre
- Referring parents'/guardians' questions in relation to this policy to Kinders Together Assoc. Inc.
- Assisting Kinders Together Assoc. Inc. as required in sighting supporting documentation for parents'/guardians' eligibility to access the kindergarten fee subsidy.

The parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Reading the Fee policy summary (Attachment 7) and Fee schedules (Attachments 8 and 9)
- Signing and complying with the Fee payment agreement form (Attachments 5 and 6)
- Notifying the contact person if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees
- Providing the required documentation to enable the service to claim the kindergarten fee subsidy for eligible families.

Evaluation

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes, Kinders Together will:

- Assess the effectiveness of the payment options and procedures for the collection of fees
- Review the current budget to determine fee income requirements
- Take into account feedback from staff and parents/guardians regarding the policy
- Monitor complaints and incidents regarding the policy
- Review the number of families experiencing financial hardship and the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered
- Monitor the number of families/children excluded from the centre because of the non-payment of fees.

Attachments

Attachment 1: Setting fees and other charges

Attachment 2: Subsidies and discounts

Attachment 3: Invoicing, receipting and collection of fees

Attachment 4: Procedures for late payments/refunds

Attachment 5: Fee payment agreement—four-year-old (funded) kindergarten program

Attachment 6: Fee payment agreement—three-year-old kindergarten program

Attachment 7: Fees policy summary

Attachment 8: Fee schedule—four-year-old (funded) kindergarten program

Attachment 9: Fee schedule—three-year-old kindergarten program

Authorisation

This policy was adopted by Kinders Together Assoc. Inc. board of management on the 1st January, 2010 for all its Member Centres.

Review date: 31st December, 2011