

Rationale

SDN is committed to the effective management of resources. Fee charging structures are carefully considered and budgets are designed on a break-even basis. In order to remain financially viable and to avoid cash flow difficulties, fees need to be collected from families on time.

Scope

This policy applies to SDN Children’s Education and Care Centres, and the families and children enrolled at the Centres, including children of SDN staff.

Policy

SDN Children’s Education and Care Centre Fees

Families will have the option to pay the fees on a weekly or fortnightly basis. Fees will be paid in advance for:

- weekly payments – fees will be paid at the start of the week plus one week
- fortnightly payments – fees will be paid at the start of the fortnight plus two weeks.

Fees are payable by direct debit from bank or credit card accounts or by a Centrepay deduction. For the safety of staff working in centres and children, and to avoid loss, SDN will not accept cash payments.

SDN staff with children enrolled at a centre may choose to pay by salary sacrifice only if they are enrolled under the correct arrangement type.

Fees will:

- be payable for all booked days of care. This includes absences for any reason, including family leave and illness. SDN reserves the right to fill absences with another placement on a casual basis.
- be charged according to SDN’s fee schedule
- not be charged for any declared public holidays.

Full fees will be charged if a child is absent on their first day or last day of enrolment, in line with requirements of the Australian Department of Human Services for Child Care Subsidy (CCS) assistance.

Fees and accounts are to be paid up to date. Continuation of a child’s place at any centre will be contingent upon the family’s account being up to date.

All SDN Children’s Education and Care Centres are approved for CCS purposes. It is the responsibility of the family to submit all necessary documentation to the centre to ensure CCS can be claimed. Where CCS has not been confirmed or where the eligibility criteria have changed, full fees will be charged.

Families will be able to get CCS (if eligible) for 42 absence days, including public holidays, per child each financial year. These can be for any reason and will not require proof.

CCS may also be received for additional absence days (above the 42 days) for specific reasons only. There is no limit on these days, however, families are required to provide documentation to support the absence, such as a medical certificate; otherwise, full fees will be charged.

Families will be notified at least 14 days, prior to any changes that will affect the fees charged or the way fees are collected.

Changes to family circumstances

Families must advise SDN of any changes to any child care assistance payments that they may be receiving at time of enrolment.

SDN staff with children enrolled at an SDN centre must inform the Centre Administrator immediately if they are ending their employment with SDN but continuing their child's enrolment.

Bonds

Families, any third party agency, and SDN staff with children enrolled in a centre will be required to pay a bond on the confirmation of enrolment. This amount will equate to two (2) weeks of full fees for the days of attendance, and will not consider any CCS payments and/or reduced fees.

Payment plans for bonds can be arranged for families, if required. All arrangements will be negotiated with the Centre Director and managed by the Centre. The bond is payable prior to the child commencing at the centre.

Where there is financial hardship, requests for waiving of family bonds may be requested and will be considered by the relevant Community Leader, in line with SDN's *Equity, Social Justice and Social Inclusion Policy*.

SDN reserves the right to offer the place to another family, if the bond payment has not been received prior to the date of commencement.

Bonds are payable by direct debit, from bank or credit card accounts or by Centrepay deduction.

Cheques, Eftpos (debit cards and credit cards – Visa and Mastercard only) are also acceptable. Cash payments are not permitted.

Under no circumstances, is the bond to be used to offset overdue fees, for the continuance of a child in care.

Bonds will be adjusted for any changes in:

- days of care
- fees.

If a bond is paid to keep a place which is not utilised, SDN has the right to keep the bond.

Bond and fee refunds are processed after CCS is finalised and processed 2 to 3 weeks after a child/children leave the centre. Refunds for remaining credit will be processed after the Department of Human Services (CentreLink) has paid attendance to the last day of care.

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Casual/Occasional care

Casual/occasional care bookings can be made provided there are available places and staff to accommodate the additional booking.

To ensure that families have fair access in taking up vacancies, cancellation for casual/occasional care bookings will require at least 24 hours' written notice. Full fees will be charged for families who provide cancellation notice less than 24 hours and whose children are absent for their booked casual care.

Emergency/critical incident closure

In the event of an emergency/critical incident which has an impact on our ability to care for or educate children, it may become necessary to protect children, staff and families by making a decision not to operate and close the service to maintain the safety of all concerned. In the event of a closure of more than 48 hours, fees may be reduced at the discretion of management.

Overdue accounts

If payment is more than one (1) week overdue:

- families will be notified in writing
- SDN reserves the right to withdraw a child's place at a centre.

Where there is financial hardship, a payment plan may be negotiated and will need to be in place before fees are in arrears, to avoid the child's place being withdrawn. Agreement to a payment plan will be at SDN's discretion and will be supported by a direct debit or Centrepay authority to pay the agreed amount.

Reducing days

Families will be required to provide at least four (4) weeks prior notice in writing to reduce the number of days they are enrolled for. The notice period starts from the date SDN is notified.

Termination notice

Families will be required to provide at least four (4) weeks prior notice in writing by completing SDN's *Intention to Terminate Enrolment Form*. The notice period starts from the date the Form is received by SDN. The termination notice period does not include close down periods.

If a family leaves the centre within the four weeks' notice period, any balance of fees owing will be deducted from that family's bond.

Centre Transfer

Where a child is transferring from one SDN Centre to another SDN Centre, notice periods may be negotiated at the Centre Directors' discretion to facilitate the transfer.

Related SDN Documents

Policies

- GI-HLP-1.04: Equity, Social Justice and Social Inclusion

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- SD-OP-2.07: Enrolment, Orientation and Transition into SDN Services
- HR-OP-3.10: Enrolment of Children of Staff Members

Procedures

- SD-PRO-2.07-01: Enrolment, Orientation and Transition into SDN Services
- HR-PRO-3.10-01: Enrolment of Children of Staff Members

Forms/Templates

- FIN-FRM-5.04-01-01: Bond/Fee Refund Request Form
- FIN-FRM-5.04-01-02: Intention to Terminate Enrolment Form
- FIN-FRM-5.04-01-03: Letter to Parent – Warning
- FIN-FRM-5.04-01-04: Letter to Parent – Termination
- FIN-FRM-5.04-01-05: Letter to Parent – No Longer at the Centre with Outstanding Debt
- FIN-FRM-5.04-01-06: Weekly Statement of Monies
- FIN-FRM-5.04-01-07: Direct Debit Request Form
- FIN-FRM-5.04-01-08: Payment Plan Form

Other SDN Documents

- SDN Brighter Futures Invoice Template for SDN Centres
- SDN Brighter Futures Guideline for SDN Centres
- SDN Brighter Futures Child Care Package

Relevant Legislation/Regulations

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations, regulations 168 (2)(n) and 172(2)
 - Schedule 1: National Quality Standard, quality area 7, standard 7.3 and element 7.3.5

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