

	<b>Fees Policy &amp; Procedures</b>
<b>Version No.</b>	Version 6 2024
<b>Authorisation</b>	Director
<b>Expiry Date</b>	Policy to be reviewed Annually
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Director - Evolve Early Learning & Kindergarten
<b>Policy Owner</b>	Evolve Early Learning & Kindergarten

### **\*\*Kindergarten Specific Policy & Procedures**

#### **Policy**

Evolve Early Learning & Kindergarten is committed to:

- Providing an environment of mutual respect and open communication, where the expression of opinions is encouraged
- Complying with all legislative and statutory requirements
- Dealing with disputes, complaints and complainants with fairness and equity
- Establishing mechanisms to promote prompt, efficient and satisfactory resolution of complaints and grievances
- Maintaining confidentiality at all times.

#### **Purpose**

Evolve Early Learning & Kindergarten is committed to:

- The setting, payment and collection of Fees
- Ensuring the viability of Evolve Early Learning & Kindergarten by setting appropriate Fees and charges
- The equitable and non-discriminatory application of Fees across the programs provided by Evolve Early Learning & Kindergarten
- This policy has been adapted from Policy Works Manual - National Quality Framework released by the Early Learning Association Australia.

#### **Scope**

This policy applies to Evolve Early Learning & Kindergarten who is responsible for the direct education and care of children including offsite excursions and activities.

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, Primary Nominee, Nominees, Educators, Staff, Students on placement, Volunteers, Parents/guardians, Children and others attending Evolve Early Learning & Kindergarten's program and activities.

#### **National Quality Standards (NQS)**

## **Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership**

**7.1 Governance** – Governance supports the operation of a quality service

**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

### **Background**

- The Department of Education (DET) requires that funded services have a comprehensive written Fees policy in place, and the content of this policy must be communicated to families.
- All families must be informed of applicable Fees at the time of enrolment.

### **Education and Care National Regulations:**

- Education and care service must have policies and procedures (National Regulations 168)

### **Responsibility/Accountability**

The Approved Provider, according to Regulations is responsible for the implementation of this policy. This will be achieved through the Centre Manager and the staff:

- Reviewing the current budget to determine fee income requirements
- Developing a fee policy that balances the parent's/guardian's capacity to pay, with providing a high-quality program and maintaining service viability
- Considering any issues regarding Fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at the service and removing those barriers wherever possible
- Considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families
- Providing all parents/guardians with a copy of the document containing fee information for families
- Collecting and receipting all Fees
- 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 within 14 days of any proposed changes to the Fees charged or the way in which the Fees are collected (National Regulation 172)
- A notice outlining Fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to the service.

### **The Nominated Supervisor/Primary Nominee is responsible for:**

- Assisting the Approved Provider in developing this policy
- Implementing and reviewing this policy, in consultation with parents/guardians, the Approved Provider and staff, and in line with the requirements of DET
- Considering any issues regarding Fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at the service and removing those barriers wherever possible

- Discuss options with management for payment when affordability is an issue for families
- Providing all parents/guardians with a copy of the document containing fee information for families
- 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 within 14 days of any proposed changes to the Fees charged or the way in which the Fees are collected
- Ensuring a notice outlining Fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to Evolve Early Learning & Kindergarten

**Certified Supervisors and Nominees and other educators are responsible for:**

- Informing the Nominated Supervisor/Primary Nominee of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding Fees at the service
- Referring parent's/guardian's questions in relation to this policy to the Nominated Supervisor/Primary Nominee
- Assisting the Nominated Supervisor/Primary Nominee as required.
- Collecting and receipting all Fees

**Parents/guardians are responsible for:**

- Reading and complying with Evolve Early Learning & Kindergarten *Fees Policy and Procedure*
- Notifying the Approved Provider if experiencing difficulties with the payment of Fees.

**Definitions**

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy and related procedures. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *Glossary of Terms*.

<b>Word/Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Child Care Subsidy (CCS)</b>	A Commonwealth Government payment to help families who use either Approved or Registered childcare services. All eligible families can receive some CCS. Details are available at the Department of Human Services website.
<b>Fees</b>	A charge for a place within a program at the service.

# FEES PROCEDURE

## Purpose

This procedure will provide a process to:

- The setting, payment and collection of Fees
- Ensure the ongoing viability of Evolve Early Learning & Kindergarten, by setting appropriate Fees and charges
- Provide equitable and non-discriminatory application of Fees provided by Evolve Early Learning & Kindergarten

## Procedure

In terms of all children's services programs:

### Review of Fees

- Fees are set annually by Evolve Early Learning & Kindergarten and are based on the income required to deliver a high-quality affordable service that is financially sustainable.
- Parent/guardians are consulted in writing 14 days prior to any adjustments in Fees. (fees are increased annually on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July to coincide with increases in CCS rebates)
- Fees are charged for permanent bookings 365 days per year.
- Holidays are charged at normal rate, any holidays exceeding 4 weeks consecutively will be charged at ½ rate for 4 weeks only.

### Enrolment Fee

- Evolve Early Learning & Kindergarten does not charge an Enrolment Fee

### General Fees

- Evolve Early Learning & Kindergarten's daily fee rate is \$140.43
- Casual days will be available dependant on availability, permanent days cannot be swapped for another day.
- Fees are charged on a daily basis and will depend on each individual families CCS entitlement. If your child is not linked for CCS **Full Fee Rate** will be payable until your child is linked.
- All fees must be kept 1 week in advance of a child's attendance at all times
- Fees are to be paid weekly through a direct debit system Xpay. Direct debits will occur on a Thursday of each week unless otherwise arranged with the family.

### Payment of Fees

- Fees are to be paid weekly through Xpay our direct debit system. Direct debits will occur on a Thursday of each week unless otherwise arranged with the family.
- If a child attends for a casual day this will be added to your account and debited on top of your normal permanent bookings

## Kindergarten

Evolve Early Learning and Kindergarten offers an Integrated Kindergarten Program for 3 and 4 year old's.

Kinder 4 Monday and Tuesday 9.00am – 4.30pm (15 Hours) 40 weeks

Kinder 3 Wednesday and Thursday 9.00am – 4.30pm (15 Hours) 40 weeks

(ONLY 1 year only of Funded 3 Year old Kindergarten is accessible to families)

Families need to provide written confirmation that they are attending only ONE Funded Kindergarten Program at any one service.

## Kindergarten Fees

- Evolve Early Learning and Kindergarten offers a 3 & 4 Year Funded Old Kindergarten Program
- The 4 Year old Kindergarten Program runs on a Monday and Tuesday 9:00am – 4:30pm. (Children are welcome to attend for the full day as Childcare, for hours outside of the program for no additional cost)
- The total daily Fee for 4 Year Old Kindergarten is \$143.40 per day prior to CCS being applied.
- The 3 Year Old Kindergarten Program runs on a Wednesday and Thursday 9:00am – 4:30pm. (Children are welcome to attend for the full day as Childcare, for hours outside of the program for no additional cost)
- The total daily Fee for 3 Year Old Kindergarten is \$143.40 per day prior to CCS being applied.
- Fee's include all excursions and incursions throughout the year.

## Kindergarten Funding Subsidy (KFS) or Early Start Kindergarten Funding (ESK).

Early Start Kindergarten gives eligible children 15 hours of free or low-cost kindergarten a week for two years before starting school.

To be eligible, your child must be 3 Years of age by 30 April in the year they start kindergarten, and:

- Identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or
- Your family has had contact with Child Protection (or been referred to Child FIRST from Child Protection).
- You Identify as a Refugee or Asylum Seeker

**For Victorian School Term Dates please follow the link below**

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/department/Pages/datesterm.aspx>

## Kindergarten Fee Subsidy in long day care services

A child enrolled in a long day care service is **not eligible** for a Kindergarten Fee Subsidy where approved Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is applied to the fee charged for the time spent in the kindergarten program. In this case, families of children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy are able to access a 15-hour kindergarten program free of charge at another service.

## Collecting your Child/ren after centre hours

- The centre closes at 6:30pm, it is unacceptable to pick up children after this time. A late fee will apply if children are not picked up prior to closing time. A fee of \$15.00 per 15 minutes will be charged and part thereof.
- Allowances will be made for emergencies
- Transportation to and from Evolve Early Learning & Kindergarten is the responsibility of each parent. If you have transportation difficulties, please notify staff immediately.

## Procedure for children at Evolve Early Learning & Kindergarten after 6:30pm

- Staff will make all attempts to call contact numbers including emergency contact numbers.
- If staff are not successful in contacting anyone authorized to pick up, they will call the centre manager, approved provider, and DET
- Evolve Early Learning & Kindergarten staff will not take a child home.
- Police will be phoned if unsuccessful contact can be made, 2 Educators will stay with the child/ren until they arrive

## Late or non-payment of Accounts

Late or non-payment of a direct debit process

- Parents must pay accounts in full each week whether or not they are eligible for a Child Care Subsidy.
- If there is insufficient funds in your account when we process the Direct Debit, the family will receive an account statement with an alert that notifies them of the overdue status and the late payment fees
- The Centre manager will also contact the family verbally to ask for payment over the phone or suggest a payment plan if necessary and note the conversation in the family's file.
- A late payment fee of \$25 will be charged when payments are in arrears without prior arrangements being made, in exceptional circumstances, if the Centre manager believes that the family should be considered to have this fee waived, the Centre Manager may arrange this.
- If arrears are not paid families will receive a written notice stating they have 10 days to pay the outstanding balance.
- If payment is not paid within 10 days the family will receive a second written notice and the children will not be allowed to attend the Centre until the outstanding balance has been paid.
- Copies of the letters will be posted to the family's residential address and placed in the family's file

- If payment of arrears is not paid after 30 days Evolve Early Learning & Kindergarten may refer the matter to an independent debt collection agency. If this occurs, Fees payable will then include legal costs associated with 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.

### **Financial Hardship**

- Any families experiencing difficulty in meeting fee payments should contact the Centre Manager as soon as possible to discuss options available to them.
- A fee payment plan and agreements can be made to ensure families and children have continued access to the service

### **Absences from care**

- Absences from care fall into two categories that relate to eligibility for the payment of CCS:

#### **Absence days**

- Each child is eligible for CCS for the first 42 absences from care across all approved childcare services within each financial year.
- If your child is absent you will still be charged for the day, days cannot be swapped for another day, a casual day can be added for the child dependant on availability
- These absences can be taken for any reason and do not require supporting documentation, but they are only available on a day on which care would otherwise have been provided if the child was not absent, and the family was charged for the care.

#### **Additional absence days**

Once the first 42 absence days have been used, CCS is only payable for any additional absences where:

- The absence relates to a day on which care would otherwise have been provided if the child was not absent, and
- The absence is taken for an additional absence reason with supporting medical certificates/documentation
- The additional absence refers to the illness of child, parent or sibling, with medical certificate, non-immunisation, periods of local emergency, pupil free days or requirements of court orders or parenting plans.
- Documentation for additional absence days must be submitted within a fortnight of the absence date otherwise full Fees will be charged.

## **Public Holidays**

The service will be closed all Public Holidays and Approximately one week between Christmas and the New Year. (depending on public holiday days)

## **Cancellations**

- Cancellation of bookings can only be made up until the enrolment close date specified on the enrolment form. After that date, cancellations will only be accepted at the discretion of program management.
- If a casual booking is made and a child/ren does not show up on this day you will still be charged for this day as staffing will have been organised for ratios.
- To cancel a casual booking, 1 day notice will need to be given
- 4 weeks written notice is to be provided if a child is leaving the service.
- If written notice is not given 4 weeks prior, this will result in families losing their CCS, resulting in the payment of full fees to be charged.
- A child must attend the service on their last day of care to be entitled to receive CCS in accordance with Centrelink. Centrelink will forfeit the CCS and the families will be required to pay the full fee.

## **Bookings**

- Bookings can be made on the Xplor app days in advance or by contacting the service by telephone, to see if there is availability

## **CCS**

- Is a payment made by the Australian Government to assist families with the cost of childcare
- Parents/guardians are entitled to receive CCS if they are Australian residents.
- The rate of CCS a parent/guardian is entitled to depends on their combined gross household family income, the hours of activity and the service type they attend. Assessment is subject to meeting the full requirements of the State Government immunisation and Australian citizenship/residency requirements.
- To receive a reduction in Fees based on a family's CCS entitlement, families are required to link their child(ren) to the service.
- To do this the parent/guardian needs to contact the Department of Family Fairness and Housing (DFFH) and advise DFFH that their child(ren) will be using the service.
- Parent/Guardians are required to confirm their child's enrolment at the service through their MyGov account prior to care commencing to ensure a confirmed their CCS status.

## **DFFH**

- Provides the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS) with information on a family's entitlement to CCS, and the service uses this information to reduce Fees charged according to the percentage of CCS the family is entitled to.
- If the parent/guardian does not apply for CCS prior to care starting, full Fees will be charged until CCS is linked to the service.
- The service has no control over what percentage of CCS a family receives, and the parent/guardian is responsible for advising DFFH of any changes to their family income or eligibility for CCS. Further details regarding CCS can be found at the DFFH website.

## **References, Sources, Links to Legislation and Other Documents**



Please refer to Reference and Sources page.

**Related service policies:**

*Complaints and Grievances Policy*  
*Delivery and Collection of Children Policy*  
*Enrolment and Orientation Policy*  
*Excursions and Service Events Policy*  
*Inclusion and Equity Policy*  
*Privacy and Confidentiality Policy.*