

FEE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Mandatory – Quality Area 7

PURPOSE

This policy and procedures are to provide guidance to parents/guardians of Moreland Early Years Management services about payment and collection of fees, the fee payment system and requirements, and to ensure the viability of all early years services managed by Moreland Early Years Management, by setting appropriate fees and charges.

Moreland Early Years Management has a responsibility to provide an equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided by all early years services managed by Moreland Early Years Management.

POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Moreland Early Years Management is committed to:

- Providing responsible financial management of all Moreland Early Years Management Early Years Services, 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 parents/guardians wishing to access Moreland Early Years Management early years services for their child/children.
- Maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of parents.
- Advising parents/guardians about program funding, including government support and fees to be paid by families.
- Providing equitable access for parents/guardians eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy.
- Considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for parents/guardians.
- Clearly communicating this policy and payment options to parents/guardians in a culturally-sensitive way.
- Collecting and receipting all fees.
- Collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documentation regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable.

BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides per capita funding for each child who is enrolled and attending a funded three or 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 educational program for children in early years services. These include:

- The employment of early childhood practitioners and staff and the provision of all award and condition entitlements.
- Providing required and professional development for all early childhood practitioners and staff managed by Moreland Early Years Management.
- Maintenance of early years services to ensure it is aligned with Education and Care National Law, Regulations, Australian Playground Standards and National Quality Standards.
- Day-to-day operation of by Moreland Early Years Management early years services.

In addition, the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (refer to Definitions) enables eligible children to attend a funded three or four year old kindergarten program free of charge for the year of enrolment.

DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy and procedure:

Early Start Kindergarten: A state government subsidy that provides a child free access to a 15 hour per week kindergarten program. To be eligible the child must:

- turn 3 years of age by the 30th April in the year of enrolment
- identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- the family has had contact with child protection services
- is from a refugee or asylum background

Kindergarten Program Fees: A charge per term for a place within an early years program at the service (Refer to the MEYM website)

Kindergarten non-refundable enrolment fee: A \$50.00 non-refundable payment is a charge to administer a child's enrolment at the Moreland Early Years Management early years' service and is payable on acceptance of enrolment.

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS): A state government subsidy paid in addition to per capita grants to subsidise the costs of parent/guardian fees and enables eligible children to attend a funded three or four year old kindergarten program free of charge. (Refer to the MEYM website for eligibility)

Late Collection charge: A charge that may be imposed by Moreland Early Years Management when families are late to collect their child/children from the program

Moreland Early Years Management: Moreland Early Years Management is an organisation that manages and supports the Early Years Services.

SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- The Kindergarten Funding Guide (Department of Education and Training): www.education.viv.gov.au
- Moreland Early Years Management Constitution

Related policies

- Complaints and Grievances Policy and Procedure
- Delivery and Collection of Children Policy and Procedure
- Enrolment and Orientation Policy and Procedure

Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic), as amended 2011
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Clth)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulations 168 (2) (n)
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- National Quality Standards, Quality Area 2,4 and 7
- Kindergarten Funding Guide 2016
- National Quality Standard, including Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership.

PROCEDURES

Moreland Early Years Management is responsible for:

- Inform all parents/guardians of applicable term kindergarten program fees and annual fees at the time of enrolment.
- Advise eligible parents of the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy arrangements. The fees charged must comply with the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy and be responsive to the local community and the viability of the service.
- Charge a non-refundable \$50.00 enrolment fee for every position offered. This payment is a charge to administer a child's enrolment at the Moreland Early Years Management early years' service and is payable on acceptance of the position. Families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy are exempt from the payment of the enrolment fee and the kindergarten program fees.
- Develop a fee policy that balances the parent's capacity to pay, with providing a high-quality program and maintaining service viability.
- Consider any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to parents/guardians enrolling at Moreland Early Years Management early years services and removing those barriers wherever possible.
- Considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for parents/guardians.

- Ensuring that the Fees Policy and Procedure is readily accessible at Moreland Early Years Management early years services.
- Provide all parents/guardians with Fee information.
- Ensure fees are collected and receipted.
- Collect all relevant information and maintain relevant documentation regarding families with entitlement to concessions, where applicable.
- Comply with Moreland Early Years Management Privacy and Confidentiality Policy regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of fees.
- Notify parents/guardians a one term's notice of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected.
- A schedule of early years service's fees and timelines for payment to parents (Refer to the MEYM website).
- Provide contact details at Moreland Early Years Management to discuss any questions regarding payment of early years services fees.
- Personal information provided to Moreland Early Years Management by families will remain confidential.

Parents/Guardians are responsible for:

- Reading and acknowledging the Moreland Early Years Management Fee Policy and the Fees and Charges information on the MEYM website.
- Notifying Moreland Early Years Management 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.
- Notifying Moreland Early Years Management of any change to their direct debit details within 7 days.
- Acknowledging the payment of the kindergarten enrolment fee and the term kindergarten program fees even, if a child is absent because of a short-term illness; on public holidays; family holiday during operational times; closure of the kindergarten for one or more days when a qualified staff member is absent and a qualified reliever is not available; closure of the kindergarten for staff training days; or closure of the early years service in extreme and unavoidable circumstances (unless the eligibility of the Kindergarten Funding subsidy applies).
- Acknowledging if the fees are not paid by the due date, then the Late Payment of Fees procedure will apply.
- Acknowledging if we are late in picking up a child/ren then the Late Collection Charge procedure will apply.
- Acknowledging and agreeing to the Refund of Fees procedure.
- Acknowledging and agreeing the full kindergarten program fees for the term will apply or a place may be offered to another child if the child's commencement has been delayed due to insufficient enrolment documentation being provided.
- Acknowledging a place cannot be held for a child unless fees are paid in full prior to commencement of each term.
- Acknowledging and agreeing if the eligibility of the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy lapses or valid documentation can not be provided within 14 days of the expiry, then the charging of the kindergarten program fees will apply from the date of the expiry.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Fee information for parents

Authorisation

22/09/2021

Review date: 22/09/2022

Attachment 1

FEE INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Setting of Fees

As part of the budget development process, Moreland Early Years Management sets fees for the programs for the following year (prior to letters of offer being sent out), taking into consideration:

- The financial viability.
- Funding requirement to provide a minimum of 15 hours per week (four year old program) and 5 hours per week (three year old program).
- Funding requirement to provide eligible concession card holders with access to fifteen hours per week of the funded kindergarten program free of charge.
- The level of government funding provided for the program, including the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy.
- The availability of other income sources, such as grants.
- The fees charged by similar early years services in the area.
- Reasonable expenditure in meeting agreed program quality and standards.
- Requirements of the *Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy* (details in *The Kindergarten Guide*: (Department of Education and Training) available under *early childhood / service providers* on the DET website: www.education.vic.gov.au).
- Moreland Early Years Management will regularly review the payment options and procedures to ensure that they are inclusive and sensitive to parents/guardians' cultures and financial situations. Procedures for payment will be flexible and clearly communicated to all parents/guardians.

Refund of Fees Procedure

Fees are **non-refundable**. Refunds/pro rata refunds apply only in the following cases:

- If a family becomes eligible for the kindergarten fee subsidy during a term, a full refund of the applicable term kindergarten program fee and enrolment fee will be provided.
- Moreland Early Years Management may consider a partial refund in exceptional circumstances. Applications for a refund must be in writing and emailed to the MEYM Finance Officer must clearly outline the reasons why the child ceased to attend the kindergarten. Any refund will be at the discretion of Moreland Early Years Management and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. An administration fee may be applied.

There will be **no refund** of fees due to the following: cancellation of a child's position or a deferral of a child's position at the direction of the parent, a child's short-term illness; public holidays; family holiday during operational times; closure of the kindergarten for one or more days when a qualified staff member is absent and a qualified reliever is not available; closure of the kindergarten for staff training days; or closure of the early years service in extreme and unavoidable circumstances.

Statement of fees and charges

A statement of fees and charges for four-year-old and three-year-old kindergarten will be provided to parents on enrolment (Refer to the MEYM website)

Late Payment of Fees Procedure

If the parents/guardians have not communicated the reasons for late or non-payment of fees, the following procedures will be implemented:

- A written reminder notice will be emailed after **2 weeks** of the due date stating fees are overdue, giving ten working days for payment. A copy of this letter will be kept on file. The letter will encourage the parents/guardians to contact Moreland Early Years Management. If contact is made, a record of the conversation will be recorded, a copy sent to the parents/guardians (if required) and a copy placed on file.
- A late payment fee of \$50.00 will apply, at the discretion of Moreland Early Years Management, unless parents/guardians have discussed late payment of fees with the Moreland Early Years Management. If payment is not received by the final due date as outlined in the reminder letter the late payment fee will apply.
- If payment has not been received by the specified date or no contact has been made with Moreland Early Years Management, the parents/guardians will be contacted by telephone to discuss alternative payment options and to develop an agreed payment plan. A record of the contact/conversation will be kept on file. If a payment plan is agreed on, both parties will sign the agreed plan and a copy will be given to the parents/guardians and placed on file.
- If parents/guardians fail to make a payment, Moreland Early Years Management will issue a second and final letter, requesting full payment within 10 working days, or attendance at a meeting to discuss alternative payment options (as per Step 2).
- If all avenues of communication have been exhausted, at Moreland Early Years Management's discretion, a decision can be made to withdraw the child's place at the kindergarten and the parents/guardians will be provided fourteen days' notice by email.

Debt recovery

Moreland Early Years Management reserves the right to take action to recover debts owing to the kindergarten. This can include the engagement of debt collectors. Using a debt collector will be considered as a final option after attempts to implement other payment procedures have been offered. Where a family owes outstanding fees to the kindergarten, Moreland Early Years Management reserves the right to **not** allow further placements in programs until all outstanding monies are paid, or a payment plan is agreed and adhered to by both parties.

Late collection charge

Moreland Early Years Management in conjunction with the early years services reserves the right to implement a late collection of a child/ren charge when parents/guardians are frequently late in collecting a child/ren. In these situations, the following procedure will apply:

- The qualified staff member will inform the parents/guardians that if it continues, Moreland Early Years Management will be notified and the parent will be charged a late fee.
- If after the reminder, the parent is between **10** and **20** minutes late, a fee of **\$5.00** for every 5 minutes, from the conclusion of the session will be invoiced by Moreland Early Years Management.

If the parent is over **20 minutes** late in collecting their child, the fee will be **\$10.00 for every 5 minutes**, from the conclusion of the session and will be invoiced by Moreland Early Years Management.