



Nature Alliance Family Day Care Service

Fee Policy



THE POLICY IN THIS SECTION IS REQUIRED BY

Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012:
Education and Care Services National Regulations (WA) 2012, 197; 206; 220

DESE – Childcare Handbook

National Quality Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care (2018)
Standards: 7.1;7.1.2; 7.1.3

PURPOSE: Nature Alliance Family Day Care Service aims to comply with the Childcare Subsidy obligations outlined under Family Assistance and National Law to prevent parents from receiving Government rebates for childcare when their portion of fees has not been paid.

For parents to gain a clear understanding of all fees including educator fee structures and administration fees and Childcare Subsidy benefits prior to enrolment. This policy explains the process of fee payment and the necessity of ensuring children's fees are paid on time and consequences for failure to pay fees on time. Nature Alliance Family Day Care Service acknowledge that approved educators operate in a contractual arrangement with our Service and provide a fee schedule to families upon enrolment.

SCOPE: This Policy applies to the Service, the Educators and families using the service.

PRINCIPLES: The Commonwealth requires the Family Day Care Service to make every endeavor to ensure that the fees charged by the Educators and any fee or levies charged by Nature Alliance Family Day Care Service provide the family with high quality, accessible and affordable early childhood education and care.

Our Service is approved to administer Child Care Subsidy on behalf of eligible families. We take compliance with the law seriously and aim to meet the required conditions for continued approval to administer childcare funding. Payment of the parent portion of the fees are included under this law.

POLICY:

Our FDC Service aims to ensure families understand the fee schedules and payment process required for education and care to be provided for their child. We are committed to meet our obligations to maintain financial integrity and comply with all Child Care Subsidy legislative requirements. We have effective compliance systems in place to ensure childcare funding is administered appropriately and our approved educators adhere to their responsibilities as 'fit and proper persons' under Family Assistance Law. Our FDC Service and educators ensure the confidentiality and privacy of all personal information provided to the Service about the enrolled child and family.

GENERAL FEES PROCEDURE:

Approved educators operate as independent contractors and set their own fees, days of operation and minimum hours for provision of education and care under Nature Alliance Family Day Care Service.

The Service will provide a copy of the Educator's Approved Fee Schedule to the parent at the time of the enrolment. Educator fees may vary due to educator qualifications, location, hours of care provided including casual and permanent fees, overnight fees, weekend rates and the age of the child. Some educators provide food, nappies and transport and these may be added to the hourly fees. Late collection fees may be detailed on the fee schedule.

ENROLMENT FEE AND GAP FEE PAYMENT IN ADVANCE

1. An enrolment fee of \$25 is charged upon confirmation of enrolment. This fee must be paid prior to commencement of care. This fee is non-refundable.
2. The equivalent of 2 weeks Gap Fee on booked sessions in advance is to be paid to hold a child's position at the FDC Service. This fee will be referred to as the Holding Fee.
3. The Holding Fee referred to above will be refunded to families if all accounts are paid in full and no amount is outstanding when the child leaves the FDC Service. The family must notify via email their nominated bank account.
4. If a parent is unable to pay the Holding Fee in advance, they should contact the Nature Alliance office to discuss payment options.
5. The Service will review their fees annually.

GENERAL FEES

1. The Holding Fee must be paid by Direct Debit via redPay and the authorization for this to occur will be forwarded to the parent at the time of the enrolment. The family is required to provide banking details to facilitate set-up of the direct debit or BPay account.
2. Fees must be paid weekly and kept in advance of a child's attendance.
3. Fees are payable in advance for every session that a child is enrolled at the FDC Service. This includes pupil free days, sick days, and family holidays but excludes periods when the educator is closed. The FDC educator may close their service due to periods of local emergency such as bushfire or flood or pandemic.
4. In accordance with Family Assistance Law, educators cannot charge for, or record a session of care where provision of care is not available. Educators are not able to charge a different rate for the same type of care provision. Therefore, if the educator is unable to provide care due to illness or leave, they are unable to charge for that particular session of care.
5. If a session of care falls on a public holiday, families are required to pay normal fees. CCS will be paid for sessions that fall on public holidays.
6. Fees and charges associated with direct debit system are outlined upon enrolment.
7. Families will be issued with a Statement of Entitlement on a weekly basis in accordance with the fee payment and Regulatory requirements.
8. The Statement of Entitlement will include details of the sessions of care provided and the resulting fee reduction amounts.
9. The Statement of Entitlement is generated using our CCS Software which meets all requirements as per Family Assistance Law legislation.

CASUAL ENROLMENTS AND SCHOOL HOLIDAY CARE ONLY

1. Casual sessions may be offered to families if available.
2. For casual enrolments, one \$25 enrolment fee per calendar year and the equivalent of 2 days Gap Fee will be required to secure the enrolment. This applies to children who only attend on the school holidays or have multiple session bookings.
3. If a single day is booked, this will be deemed "exceptional" and only one day gap fee will be charged. The \$25 enrolment fee still applies.
4. Invoices will be generated by redPAY for the cost of care and the family can request via email to have the advanced Gap Fee refunded to their nominated bank account or they may decide to leave it in place for the next casual day they require or for school holidays.

NON-PAYMENT OF FEES

1. Nature Alliance will invoice parents for their portion of the fees weekly in arrears - after the care has occurred.
2. If fees are not received after six days from the date of the invoice, the Educator and the parent will be contacted by email and text to advise of this situation and request payment. If payment is not made immediately, the child's booking will be cancelled, and the care will not be available.
3. If parents are unable to pay due to circumstances that were beyond their control and they have written support or can obtain such, they will be directed to the Department of Human Services and advised to apply for Additional Child Care Subsidy under "hardship" rules.
4. If ACCS is approved or payment is made, verification of payment must be sent to Nature Alliance. On receipt of this, the booking will be reinstated.
5. As payment must be kept 2 weeks in advance, a payment plan may be initiated if the parents are unable to fulfil this requirement. The payment plan will include the 2 weeks gap fee in advance.
6. A dishonour fee will apply for direct debit transactions where there are insufficient funds to cover the fees.

DEBT COLLECTION:

1. If for some reason, payments are not made and a debt to the service is accrued, the service debt recovery processes will be implemented.
2. Once the debt has been identified, an invoice and letter requesting payment within 3 working days or options of entering into a payment plan will be offered to the parent.
3. If the parent fails to respond to the invoice or letter, a second letter will be sent via email and post advising that the services of a Debt Collection Agency or proceedings through the court system to recover the funds may be implemented and all costs incurred in the recovery of this debt will be at the parents' expense.
4. If there is no response after the second letter (reminder) a final notice will be sent via email and post advising of the points above and confirming that the service is required to report any unpaid parent gap fee payments to the Department of Education and this may affect their CCS Entitlements.
5. At any time during the debt recovery process, the family will be encouraged to enter a Debt Agreement with our FDC Service to repay outstanding fees. A written contract will be provided for the family to sign outlining repayment plan details. The repayment plan will provide information as to the duration and amount of the repayments as well as steps that will be taken if the repayment plan is not adhered to.
6. Nature Alliance will consider where it is uneconomical to further pursue a gap fee debt and "write it off".

TERMINATION OF ENROLMENT

1. If the parents wish to finish care, they will need to give notice as per the individual Educator's fee schedule.
2. If the Educator decides to terminate care the same notice period will apply.
3. The service may terminate an enrolment in exceptional circumstances where consultation has taken place with the Educator.

SOURCE:

Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).
Compliance

General guidance for suitability under the Family Assistance Law

<https://www.dese.gov.au/compliance-child-care>

Supporting Documents:

NA-TEM-0031: 1st Letter Outstanding Fee

NA-TEM-0032: 2nd Letter Outstanding Fees

NA-TEM-0033: Service Final Letter of Demand – Bad Debt

NA-TEM-0034: Nature Alliance FDC Payment Plan