POL 7-P4 Fee Payment and Administration Policy and Procedure

1. Purpose

This policy and procedure explains how Affinity Education Group (Affinity) manages the charging, collection and administration of fees for education and care services. It outlines Affinity's approach to ensuring fee arrangements are transparent, consistent, fair and sustainable while supporting compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements and maintaining positive partnerships with families

2. Scope

This policy and procedure applies to:

- Approved Providers;
- Nominated Supervisors;
- Centre Managers;
- educators and employees involved in fee administration; and
- families enrolled at Affinity services.

This policy and procedure must be read together with:

- POL6-P1 Enrolment and Orientation Policy and Procedure
- State Based Funding Processes following Promapp 2.4 Manage Funding;
- POL 7-P1 Governance Procedure
- Child Care Subsidy requirements;
- Promapp 2.6 Manage Accounts and Collection

3. Definitions

The following definitions support consistent understanding of the terms used in this procedure.

Term	Definition
Child Care Subsidy (CCS)	The main Australian Government payment to assist families with the costs of education and care for their children. It is, with some exceptions, paid directly to providers to be passed on to families as a fee reduction. Families must make a co-contribution to their fees and pay the provider the difference between the fee charged and the subsidy amount received. Source: https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/resources/child-care-provider-handbook
Direct Debit	An authorised payment arrangement used to collect fees from a nominated financial institution account
Fee Statement	A statement detailing fees charged, payments received and account balances
Payment Plan	An approved arrangement allowing overdue fees to be repaid over time
Notice Period	The length of time stipulated by a service to notify families before making any changes that will affect the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected. The notice period must be at least 14 days.

4. Guiding principles

At Affinity, we believe that child safety is everyone's responsibility. We are committed to upholding the safety, rights and wellbeing of all children and promote a culture of child safety with a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and harm.

Affinity ensures the Paramountcy Principle is applied in all aspects of our work. All decisions and actions relate to the operation and delivery of education and care services must prioritise children's safety, rights and best interests above all other considerations.

The following principles guide how Affinity approaches fee payment and fee administration across all services and business operations:

- **Transparency and clarity** – Families are provided with clear, accurate and timely information about fees, payment methods, statements, notice periods, subsidies, discounts and charges so they can make informed decisions and understand their financial obligations.
- **Fairness and consistency** – Fee administration practices are applied consistently across Affinity services to support equitable treatment of families while ensuring decisions are made in accordance with approved business requirements and regulatory obligations
- **Partnership with families** – Affinity values respectful, open and collaborative relationships with families and promotes two-way communication to support understanding of fee requirements, account management and available support options.

- **Accessibility and inclusion** – Affinity aims to reduce barriers to participation by providing information about available government funding, subsidies and approved support arrangements, and by considering individual family circumstances where appropriate.
- **Financial sustainability and stewardship** – Responsible fee collection and account management practices support the ongoing delivery of safe, high-quality education and care services, ensuring resources remain available to meet children's learning, wellbeing and developmental needs.
- **Compliance and accountability** – Fee administration is managed in accordance with legislative, regulatory and organisational requirements, supported by accurate record keeping, effective governance and clear accountability for decision-making.
- **Respectful support during financial hardship** – Families experiencing temporary financial difficulties are treated with dignity and respect, with reasonable support and approved payment arrangements considered where appropriate and consistent with service sustainability (including child wellbeing ACCS support or additional support for foster carers and other non-parent carers)

These principles underpin all actions described in this policy/procedure and guide professional judgement when decisions are required.

5. Procedures

These procedures describe the requirements that support safe, consistent and compliant practice, with detailed processes maintained in Promapp.

5.1. Enrolment and Fee Communication

Ensure families understand fee obligations before care commences so that enrolment decisions are informed and fee arrangements can be implemented accurately. Following Promapp **2.2.02 Manage New Enquiries** and **2.2.04 Send Offer to Enrol**

Key expectations

Key expectations describe the standard that must be met and what good practice looks like in everyday work:

- Families receive an estimated quote that reflects the individual family’s enrolment requirements and CCS eligibility
- Families are informed of payment methods, fee schedules, notice periods
- Direct debit arrangements must be authorised and established before care commences
- The appropriate enrolment type should be offered

Key actions

The Centre Manager or delegate must:

- provide an individual estimated quote that reflects the individual family’s enrolment requirements and CCS eligibility
- inform family of payment methods, fee schedules, notice periods and the ‘No Jab, No Pay’ legislation regarding the ineligibility of financial assistance to non-immunised children (https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/what-are-immunisation-requirements?context=41186) explain CCS responsibilities and requirements;
- CCS and other relevant funding information (including Kindy or state based funding) is explained
- ensure Enrolment and Direct Debit Authorisation is completed in XAP/bank details have been entered
- advise families of booking, cancellation and notice period requirements; and
- provide access to this policy and procedure

Families must:

- contact Department of Human Services to arrange financial assistance and create a MyGov account, if not already done so. Until the centre receives written confirmation of CCS entitlements, full fees will be charged (https://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/dhs/centrelink)
- understand this policy and procedure on enrolment

5.2. Fee Collection and Statements

Ensure fees are collected consistently and families receive clear information about charges and account balances. Direct debit is the method of payment used by Affinity Education Group. (Exceptions may apply to government and agencies who are the responsible debt payers of the account.)

Key expectations

Key expectations describe the standard that must be met and what good practice looks like in everyday work:

- Direct debit is the standard payment method.
- Families receive invoices and Statements are available on Guardian Portal.
- Fee records are maintained accurately.
- Families are supported to raise account enquiries

Key actions

- Direct Debit Authorisation form via XAP is completed upon enrolment by families nominating a financial institution account which fees will be paid
- Fees are collected through approved third party payment platform.
- Families receive statements showing fees charged and payments received.
- Families are expected to review statements and advise the service of discrepancies.
- Affinity provides at least 14 days' notice before changes to fees or collection methods

Key Responsibilities

	Affinity Responsibilities	**Family Responsibilities**
Prior to commencement of care	Billing cycles run weekly	Completed enrolment and Direct Debit Authorisation Form
	The first week plus one billing cycle will be paid via Direct Debit (ensuring fees are paid at least one billing cycle in advance)	Paid any enrolment fees applicable at the centre (Refer to Fee Schedule at your centre)
Ongoing	Issue families with invoices, displaying the past week of charged care, the current week and the week in advance	Fees are to be kept at least one billing in advance. Families are able to make extra payments to manage their accounts and keep their account in credit by making additional payments through the XAP Guardian Dashboard.
	If the family does not discuss any discrepancies with the Centre Manager, the service will assume the account is correct.	Ensure the amount being charged on the invoices is correct. Any discrepancies should be brought to the attention of the Centre Manager.
	Fees are charged for every booking on every day the centre is operating, whether the child is in attendance or not. Fees are charged for all statutory public holidays.	
Exceptions		If families are waiting for their CRN, or the assessment of their childcare application full fees must be paid until the CRN has been issued. Families are responsible for following up with Centrelink on the status of their CRN.
		The management of their childcare subsidy and any changes that may occur, such as allowable absences, child care subsidy percentages or hour changes.
Late Fees	A 30-minute grace period will be applied for infrequent lateness with prior notice. Continual lateness may affect government subsidies being paid for hours of attendance.	Families are responsible to collect their children prior to the centre's closing time or a late fee of $20 for the first ten minutes and $1 per minute thereafter may be applied to the account.
Changes	Provides at least 14 days' notice before changes to fees or collection methods	Notify the centre in writing and comply with notice periods for changes to bookings or ceasing care.
		Manage their bookings and personal details through the XAP Guardian Dashboard. Notice periods still apply to booking changes made.
		Fees will be charged as per original booking if the applicable 2 or 4 weeks' notice has not been given, whether the child is in attendance or not. See 5.4 Changes to Bookings

5.3. Account Debt, Arrears and Financial Hardship

Ensure accounts are managed fairly, consistently and transparently while maintaining service sustainability. This can be followed in Promapp processes ***2.6.08 Create a Payment Plan*, *2.6.11 Manage Dishonoured Payments*, *2.6.06 Manage Active Debt* and *2.6.07 Manage Inactive Debt***

Key actions by role

Families

- If a family's payment declines, the family will receive an email via the XAP system. Families are expected to bring their account up to date by making a manual payment through the Guardian portal.

Centre Manager

- monitor overdue accounts through XAP decline report
- communicate with families regarding outstanding payments and collect the payment at the centre using the **Westpac Quick Stream portal** (https://quickstream.westpac.com.au). Or guide the parent to make a payment through the Guardian portal
- ensure the declined payment is received prior to the next scheduled to ensure no double payment is taken
- assist families to access available support options;
- maintain records of communications and agreed arrangements.

XAP Support Team

- assess approved payment plan requests;
- manage account escalations;
- coordinate debt recovery processes where required;
- process approved refunds.

If a family declines two weeks in a row, the family need to be advised that if it happens again the following week, care may be suspended. This is to ensure the debt does not continue to increase. It is expected that if CCS/ ACCS drops out, the family will pay full fees until CCS/ACCS is reinstated.

Payment Plans

If extraordinary circumstances cause accounts to fall behind, Affinity, using its absolute discretion, may offer a payment plan to bring the account back to credit following **2.6.08 Create a Payment Plan**. If fees remain in arrears after the implementation of the plan, the debt will be referred to the Family Support Team and care may be suspended. Whilst care is suspended, the child/ren will not be able to attend the centre until the account is paid in accordance with policy. In the instance where the payment plan is not adhered to or where no payment is received, the centre will cancel the enrolment and forward any outstanding debt onto the debt management team.

The external debt collection agency will make contact with the family, process the account and provide Affinity Education payment. Any additional fees from the external debt collection agency will be absorbed by the family.

Escalation and support

When fees remain outstanding despite reasonable attempts to resolve the matter:

- the account must be escalated to the XAP Support Team;
- payment arrangements may be reviewed;
- suspension of care may be considered in accordance with Affinity requirements; and
- debt recovery action may be taken where necessary.

5.4. Changes to Bookings

Ensure booking amendments are managed consistently and communicated appropriately following **2.3.03 Increase and Manage Casual Bookings** using **FRM 6-F7 Change of Booking Form**.

Key actions

- booking increases may occur where vacancies exist and doesn't require a notice period;
- reductions in booked days require two weeks' notice;
- cancellations and permanent-to-casual changes require four weeks' written notice following **3.1.09 End Enrolment or 6.2.34 Manage Permanent to Casual Conversion** and record to be retained on the child's file
- Fees will be charged as per original booking if the applicable 2 or 4 weeks' notice has not been given, whether the child is in attendance or not.
- **Where the family has cancelled the child's enrolment, and the child does not attend their final booked day or days, full fees will be charged as per the Cessation of Care requirement detailed in Services Australia**

5.5. Refunds, Discounts, Additional Subsidy and Additional Charges

Ensure refunds, discounts and additional subsidies or charges are applied consistently and transparently. This can be followed in Promapp processes **2.6.03 Manage Family Refunds** **2.6.04 Apply Booking Discounts** **and** **2.6.12 Manage Additional Child Care Subsidy (Child Wellbeing)**

Key actions

- refund requests must be supported by an approved refund form;
- holiday discounts may be applied where centre eligibility criteria are met (see Holiday and Discounts Eligibility);
- excursion and incursion charges may be applied where participation incurs a cost and will be applied to the families account (see Incursion/Excursion charges below);
- approved discounts outside standard arrangements require appropriate authorisation

Incursion/Excursion charges

From time to time, excursions or incursions may be organised to enhance the educational program for children. Where these incur a cost, the cost may be applied to the family's account to be debited. Where the family account is not up to date in accordance with the family's fee payment cycle and fee payment procedure, the cost will not be incurred and the child will not attend the excursion/incursion.

Holidays and Discounts Eligibility

Notice period of 2 weeks is required to be provided to the Centre to allow for assessment of eligibility for any holidays/discounts following **2.6.04 Apply Booking Discounts** using **FRM 7-D4 Holiday Application**. Any discount other than holidays must be approved by the Regional Manager.

- Holiday discount is 35% to the full session fee prior to any eligible CCS being applied (not all centres may be eligible for holiday discounts)
- Discount may be applied to 2 weeks of your regular booking pattern (taken in day blocks). Eg. If your booking pattern is 5 days per week, you are entitled to 10 days worth of holiday discount
- Holiday discount can be used for public holidays or other days throughout the year
- The approval of holiday discounted fees is on the provision that the family account is up to date in accordance with the family's fee payment cycle and fee payment procedure.
- Holidays are reset on the first week of the calendar year. Holiday discounts do not accrue and are not rolled over from the previous year.
- All discounts will be displayed on the family statement.
- Any other family discount, except holidays, must be approved by Regional Manager

5.6. Casual Bookings and Additional Care

Ensure additional care requests are managed consistently and according to service capacity following **2.3.03 Increase and Manage Casual Bookings** using **FRM 6-F7 Change of Booking Form**.

Key expectations

- Casual bookings are subject to availability.
- Fees are communicated before attendance.
- Cancellation requirements are clearly explained.

Key actions

- Families can request an additional booking via XAP
- casual bookings may be accepted where vacancies exist;
- Families will be charged their usual fee (with consideration to CCS entitlements) for casual booked days
- cancellations made with at least 24 hours notice period may avoid charges;
- cancellations outside the required notice period may be charged

6. Roles and responsibilities summary

The following table provides a summary of role responsibilities that align with the procedures and Promapp processes referenced.

Role	Responsibilities
Affinity Education	Ensures fee management practices comply with legislative and regulatory requirements, approves fee structures and oversees governance arrangements for fee administration.

	Notify families at least 14 days before changing policies and procedures if it will affect the fees charged or the way they are collected
Centre Manager/Nominated Supervisor	Implements this policy and procedure, communicate with families at enrolment about fees, including: • the amounts charged • payment periods and methods • how the Child Care Subsidy or other government subsidy (e.g. from your jurisdiction) will be applied • notice periods • how they can access copies of statements/receipts • financial hardship considerations and payment plans. supports fee collection processes, manages enquiries and escalates account issues when required
XAP Support Team (XST)	Manages fee administration systems, account monitoring, payment plans, refunds, debt recovery processes and specialist account support
Educators/Staff	Are familiar with this policy and procedure and direct families to the appropriate person for fee-related enquiries or support.
Families	Understand and meet fee obligations, maintain accurate account information, manage Child Care Subsidy requirements and communicate booking or account changes within required timeframes.

7. Related legislation and internal documents

The following legislation, regulations and internal documents inform and support this policy/procedure, ensuring compliance with legal requirements and consistent implementation.

Legislation	Section 2A Regulation 111 Regulation 168 Regulation 169	Regulation 170 Regulation 171 Regulation 172
Policy/Procedure, Process	POL6-P1 Enrolment and Orientation Policy and Procedure POL 7-P1 Governance Procedure 2.4 Manage Funding; 2.6 Manage Accounts and Collection 2.2.02 Manage New Enquiries 2.2.04 Send Offer to Enrol *2.6.08 Create a Payment Plan*, *2.6.11 Manage Dishonoured Payments*,	*2.6.06 Manage Active Debt* *2.6.07 Manage Inactive Debt* 2.3.03 Increase and Manage Casual Bookings 3.1.09 End Enrolment 6.2.34 Manage Permanent to Casual Conversion 2.6.03 Manage Family Refunds 2.6.04 Apply Booking Discounts 2.6.12 Manage Additional Child Care Subsidy (Child Wellbeing)
Forms	FRM 7-D4 Holiday Application FRM 7-F39 Current Fee Schedule FRM 6-F7 Change of Booking Form	
Learning artifacts		

8. Version history

The version history table below records updates to this document, including approval dates and a summary of changes made.

Version Control	Date	Author	Description of Change
1	Oct 2013	AEG	Update ECSNR
1.2	May 2015	AEG	Update
V3.16	Mar 2016	AEG	Revision, merge
V7.16	July 2016	AEG	Banking
V9.16	Sept 2016	AEG	Revision of payment methods, bond, debt management and dishonour Fee
V9.16a	Sept 2016	AEG	Revised bond
V6.17	June 2017	AEG	Payment method, removed bond
V10.17	Oct 2017	AEG	Casual bookings
V2.18	Feb 2018	AEG	NQS update
V6.18	June 2018	AEG	CCS reference
V7.18	July 2018	AEG	Session late fee

V7.18a	July 2018	AEG	9 and 10-hour sessions
V9.18	Sept 2018	AEG	Change of authorisation form name
V11.19	Nov 2019	AEG	Refined holiday and notice period
V2.20	Feb 2020	AEG	Enrolment fee *select centres
V6.20	June 2020	AEG	Holiday day blocks
V9.20	Sept 2020	AEG	Payment plan and billing cycle review
V12.20	Dec 2020	AEG	Holiday discount period updated
V8.21	Aug 2021	AEG	Added Quickstream information
V11.21	Nov 2021	AEG	Updated No Jab No Pay info and link
V5.22	May 2022	AEG	Updated to reflect SPM
V4.23	Apr 2023	AEG	Free Kinder - VIC
V7.23	July 2023	AEG	Scheduled review, grace period
V12.23	Dec 2023	AEG	Added RACI table and reference, updated XAP
V7.24	JUL 2024	AEG	Scheduled review, no change
V7.25	July 2025	AEG	Scheduled review, family responsibilities and changes in booking updates
V12	July 2026	AEG	Scheduled review – incorporated original procedure to align with Payment of service fees and provision of a statement of fees charged by services ACECQA guidelines Policy and Procedure and updated relevant forms