

Early Learning Fee Policy

1. Policy Statement

Uniting Early Learning is committed to:

- Supporting the Victorian Government’s Free Kindergarten initiative
- Increasing access to quality early learning services for all Victorian and Tasmanian children
- Providing responsible financial management of services, including establishing fees that will result in a financially viable service, while keeping user fees at the lowest possible level
- Ensuring parents are informed of applicable fees in Child Care and providing invoices in a timely manner, with a clear payment schedule
- Providing a fair and manageable system for dealing with non-payment and/or inability to pay fees/outstanding debts in Child Care
- Advising users of Child Care services about program funding, including government support and fees to be paid by parents.
- Working with families enrolled in Child Care who are experiencing financial barriers to accessing an early childhood program.
- Maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of parents
- Providing equitable access for families eligible for Government subsidies.

2. Scope

This policy applies to the following groups working in Uniting Early Learning:

- Approved provider and persons with management or control
- Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge.
- ECT, Educators, FDC educators and all other staff
- Parents/guardians

3. Policy

Executive Summary

Uniting is a not-for-profit community organisation committed to working with the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our communities. Fees charged by Uniting Early Learning for families using Child Care services, go towards the operational costs of program delivery to ensure the service remains viable.

Any income generated is used to further the mission of the organisation and will not be for individual gain. Fee levels are set by the Approved Provider each year on completion of an annual budget to enable services to provide quality education and care and fulfil service and funding agreements. Application of fees across the programs provided by Uniting Early Learning will be equitable and non-discriminatory and be attuned to minimise financial barriers to access services.

The fee schedule, payment and collection arrangements for families attending Child Care services will be documented and explained to families before or during the enrolment process and a schedule of fees and/or a *Complying written arrangement*

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(CWA) (refer to *Attachment 14b*) will be provided at this time. To accommodate families' cultural backgrounds, an interpreter may be required to minimise communication barriers and maximise understanding of the roles and responsibilities of all parties.

Fees will be reviewed with 14 days' notice of any change provided to families.

Current Environmental Context

The Best Start, Best Life reform help all Victorian children dream even bigger through increased access to quality early childhood education and care. A critical part of the reform is Free Kindergarten, which will support access to two years of high-quality kindergarten programs for all Victorian children.

All children enrolled in a funded kindergarten program at a participating service are eligible for **Free Kindergarten**. In line with existing policies for per capita funding, children must only receive Free Kindergarten funding at one service. If a child attends more than one service that offers a funded kindergarten program (e.g. a sessional service for some days and a long day care service on other days), the family must nominate which service they will receive their free funded kindergarten program.

The majority of Uniting kindergartens will be:

- Delivering 15-hour programs for three and four-year-old children
- Offsetting the funded kindergarten program component of parent fees for three and four-year-old children enrolled in integrated kindergarten at long day care services.

The Australian Government 's commitment to reduce child care costs for Australian families:

- Support parents' and carers' choice to increase their workforce participation, particularly women
- Make early childhood education and care more affordable for more families
- Extend to more children the benefits early childhood education and care brings to children's school-readiness and long-term outcomes.

Child Care Subsidy rates increased up to 90 per cent for eligible families earning less than \$530,000. Families will continue to receive existing higher subsidy rates of up to 95 per cent for any additional children in care aged 5 and under.

Child Care Subsidy period of emergency

The Australian Government Department of Education may declare a Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency in parts of Victoria or Tasmania for an event that:

- Affects a widespread area
- Has a severe impact on the lives of a significant number of people in that area, and
- Prevents children from attending a service or may make attending dangerous.

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All of these conditions must apply for a CCS period of emergency to be declared.

During a period of emergency, we can waive the gap fee for families if:

- A child does not attend care
- Your service is closed as a direct result of the emergency.

Gap fee waivers do not apply for partial closures or if children have attended part of the day.

During a CCS period of emergency, families in affected regions won't have to use their annual allocation (42 days) of allowable absences.

Children who live or attend a service in an affected region will get extra allowable absences for the duration of the CCS period of emergency. These absences will be automatically applied in the Child Care Subsidy System if we declare a CCS period of emergency.

The following fee schedules can be found on Uniting SharePoint: [Forms](#)

Form 14a:	UF-EL-019-Gap Fee Waiver Application-14a.docx
Form 14b:	UF-EL-020-Fee Pmt Agreement Late collection fee-14b.docx
Form 14c:	UF-EL-021-Statement of fees 2025 Funded kindergarten-14c.pdf
Form 14d:	UF-EL-022-Schedule of Fees Outside school hours care - Vacation care and Occasional care-14d.docx
Form 14e:	UF-EL-023-Uniting Family Day Care Client Fee Schedule-14e.docx
Form 14f:	UF-EL-024-Statement of Fees and Charges Long daycare 2025-14f.docx

Review This policy is to be reviewed by: 5/10/2025

4. Responsibilities relating to the Fee Policy

Responsibilities	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	ECT, Educators, FDC educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Agency staff, Contractors, volunteers, and students
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
Provide families with a minimum of 14 days' notice if this policy and or prescribed fees change <i>R 172</i>	R	✓	✓	✓	
Read, comply, and implement the <i>Fee Policy R 170</i>	R	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensure the <i>Fee Policy</i> balances the parent's capacity to pay with providing a high-quality program and maintaining service viability <i>Victorian Kindergarten Funding Guide</i>	✓				
Review the current budget to determine fee income requirements <i>Victorian Kindergarten Funding Guide</i>	✓				
Advise families of the Free Kindergarten program <i>Victorian Kindergarten Funding Guide</i>	✓	✓	✓		
Provide communication to families explaining their access to one year of three-year-old and one year of four-year-old or pre prep program <i>Victorian Kindergarten Funding Guide</i>	✓	✓	✓		
Apply the fee offset regularly and clearly indicate the offset amount labelled Victorian Government Free Kinder offset on invoice statements <i>Victorian Kindergarten Funding Guide</i>	✓	✓			
Ensure families that attend a sessional kindergarten or integrated kindergarten service nominate and document which service the child will participate in the free funded kindergarten program <i>Victorian Kindergarten Funding Guide</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Ensure any non-funded kindergarten positions are enrolled in accordance with the <i>Victorian Kindergarten Funding Guide</i>	✓	✓			
Ensure families are not charged any kindergarten compulsory out-of-pocket levies or maintenance fees (voluntary fundraising and payments/donations are permitted) <i>Victorian Kindergarten Funding Guide</i>	✓	✓			
Ensure any surplus funding is used in line with acceptable uses of kindergarten funding, including to promote increased participation and/or enhance program quality <i>Victorian Kindergarten Funding Guide</i>	✓	✓			
Ensure that children eligible for KFS are not charged for excursions or incursions <i>Victorian Kindergarten Funding Guide</i>	✓	✓			
Consider any fee-related issues that may be a barrier to families enrolling at a Child Care service and work to reduce them where possible	✓	✓			

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Responsibilities	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	ECT, Educators, FDC educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Agency staff, Contractors, volunteers, and students
Review the number of families enrolled in Child Care experiencing financial hardship and the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered	✓	✓			
Clearly communicate this policy and payment options to families enrolled in Child Care in a culturally sensitive way, and in the family's first language where possible <i>R 171</i>	R	✓	✓		
Notify parents at least 14 days prior of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected <i>R 172</i>	R	✓	✓		
Provide all parents with a schedule of fees and charges upon enrolment of their child <i>Family Assistance Law</i>	R		✓		
Provide all parents with a fee payment agreement (refer to agreements 14.1, 14.2, 14.3 & 14.4 available on the internet and intranet) or the <i>Complying Written Arrangement (CWA) Family Assistance Law</i>	R	✓	✓		
Assist in the collection of relevant concessions/ subsidies		✓	✓		
Comply with the <i>Privacy policy</i> regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of fees	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensure a notice outlining fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance <i>Family Assistance Law</i>	R	✓			
Inform the Approved Provider of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service		✓	✓		
Provide the required documentation to enable the service to claim the various Government subsidies for eligible families				✓	
Notify the service if your child will not be attending a child care program for an extended period. To hold your child's place while not attending the program, parents are required to continue to pay all fees.				✓	
Note: <i>Volunteers, contractors, and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures</i>					

5. Reference/Sources

Child Care Service Handbook Department of Education and Training (Aus)
Children’s Services Regulations 2020: Regulation
Children’s Services Amendment Act 2019
 Commonwealth and State service and funding agreements
Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006 (Vic)
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Vic)
 Kindergarten Funding Guide, Department of Education & Training (Vic)
A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999
A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999
Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006 (Vic)
Child Care Subsidy Minister’s Rules 2017
Child Care Subsidy Secretary’s Rules 2017
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
 Tasmanian Licensing Standards for Centre Based Child Care 2014 Class 5
 Victorian Kindergarten Funding Guide
 Family Assistance Law

6. Related documents

Uniting

[Diversity Statement](#)
[Child Safety Commitment Statement](#)
[Code of Conduct](#)
 Child Safety Policy
 Child Safety Code of Conduct
 Inclusion, Diversity & Equity policy
 Privacy Policy

Early Learning

Complaints and Grievances Policy
 Delivery and Collection of Children Policy
 Excursions, Regular Outings and Service Events Policy
 Enrolment and Orientation Policy
 Service Closure Policy
 Feedback Policy

Forms

Current forms can be found on the Uniting Intranet. [Forms](#)

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Fee information for families

How fees are set

As part of the budget development process the service takes the following into account when setting fees for programs:

1. The financial viability of the service
2. The level of government funding provided for the program, including any subsidies and concessions
3. The availability of other income sources, such as grants
4. Reasonable expenditure in meeting agreed program quality and standards
5. The requirements of State and Commonwealth Government service and funding agreements

Schedule of fees and charges

A schedule of fees and charges or a *Complying Written Arrangement* (CWA) for the program in which the child is enrolled will be provided to parents on enrolment.

Late collection charge

It is the responsibility of the parents to ensure their child is collected at the end of the session or prior to the service closing. If the parent does not contact the service to advise of unavoidable delays in collecting their child, a fee may be imposed. If the parent continues to be late in collecting the child, a late fee will be imposed.

The long day care and kindergarten late collection fee is \$10 for every 10 minutes. Parents will be invoiced separately from their fees and Child Care Subsidy will not be applied. The responsible person and family will sign the late collection form, which will be considered and authorised by the person in day-to-day charge of the service.

Fundraising

Fundraising activities are an additional way the service can raise funds for specific purposes. While participation in fundraising is voluntary, the support of every family is encouraged. Fundraising activities are also an opportunity for families and communities to come together.

Purchase of additional unfunded Kindergarten Sessions

Subject to availability some services may be able to offer unfunded kindergarten places or additional fee-paying sessions for children attending the three (3) and four (4) year old kindergarten program. If this is available, parents will be required to consent to the payment agreement, number 14.4.

Due to funding agreements between Uniting and The Department of Education it is a requirement that every child be able to participate in two years of kindergarten. For this reason, in the unlikely event that all places at the kindergarten are filled and a child requires a funded year of kindergarten we may need you to forgo the program or additional fee-paying session. Uniting will return any unused funds to you.

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Payment of fees – additional unfunded kindergarten sessions

Payment of unfunded additional kindergarten sessions is required prior to the commencement of each term:

- For term one 2025, payment is required prior to commencement of term 1
- For term two 2025, payment is required by 14 March 2025
- For term three 2025, payment is required by 20 June 2025
- For term four 2025, payment is required by 12 September 2025

Full payment for the year in advance will attract a 10% discount.

Centrepay

Uniting does have an option to pay by Centrepay.

To organise the setup of Centrepay payments, please contact accountsreceivable@vt.uniting.org or call 03 9051 5100 to speak to our Accounts Receivable team.

Child Care Subsidy

Child Care Subsidy assist eligible families with the cost of Child Care fees. Child Care Subsidy will be paid directly to the approved provider to reduce the fees you pay. For further information contact the service.

- CCS Helpdesk on: ccshelpdesk@education.gov.au or 1300 667 276

The Child Care Safety Net provides families and services extra support if they are vulnerable and disadvantaged or located in a regional or remote community. The Child Care Safety Net includes The Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS). The ACCS provides extra payment on top of the Child Care Subsidy for families who need more help.

There are four different payments:

- For families who need help to support their children's safety and wellbeing
- For grandparents who care for their grandchildren
- For families experiencing temporary significant financial hardship
- For parents transitioning from welfare to work

Further information can be found at the Services Australia website: [Click here](#)

No Jab, No Pay National Child Care

Your child must meet immunisation requirements to get Family Tax Benefit Part A and/or child care subsidy assistance.

The [National Immunisation Program Schedule](#) provides a list of the vaccines currently recommended.

Some [exemptions](#) apply, but vaccination objection is not a valid exemption.

To check whether your child is fully immunised, visit the [Australian Immunisation Register \(AIR\)](#).

If your child is not fully immunised and you wish to receive family assistance payments, contact your health care provider to organise a vaccination catch-up program.

You can read more [here](#)

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Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Cessation

Families are liable to pay full fees in cases where CCS entitlements drop out or cease. To avoid this families must regularly check their details are correct and report a change in circumstances to Centrelink (family income, activity levels, relationship changes or any other changes to their circumstances). Any disputes with CCS payments are the responsibility of the family. The family will be referred to contact Centrelink directly for any enquiries regarding CCS payments.

First and Last Day Absences

If a child begins or ends child care with an absence, the parent is not entitled to receive subsidy for the session/s and will be required to pay the full fee.

Termination of Enrolment at Child Care

Families must provide two weeks' written notice of their intention to withdraw a child from the service. Fees will continue to apply for the two weeks' notice period even if the child does not attend during the two weeks.

Staff Discount – Child Care

If a permanent part-time or full-time early learning staff member is enrolling a child for which they have primary care responsibilities, a 60% discount applies for each child after the Child Care Subsidy has been applied. All other Uniting employees who have primary care responsibilities, a 10% discount applies for each child after the Child Care Subsidy has been applied.

Payment of fees – Child Care

Fees will be invoiced to parents directly and must be paid by the date indicated on the invoice. Each invoice will be accompanied by payment instructions.

Parents of children attending **long day care and** are required to pay fees by **direct debit** on a fortnightly basis. Families who have a 3rd party organisation paying their fees on their behalf will be exempt. All long day care services charge fees two weeks in advance. Families who have a 3rd party organisation paying their fees on their behalf will be exempt.

Parents of children attending **Occasional Care with a regular ongoing booking** will be charged fees two weeks in advance. Casual booking fees will be charged in arrears. Parents are required to pay fortnightly via direct debit. Families who have a 3rd party organisation paying their fees on their behalf will be exempt.

Parents of children attending **Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) /Vacation Care** will be invoiced two weeks in advance. Parents are required to pay fortnightly via direct debit. Casual bookings for OSHC/Vacation Care may attract a higher fee. Booking cancellations for Casual OSHC or Vacation Care made within 7 business days of the booked session will be charged as a full fee absence. Vacation Care Excursion Days require cancellation 10 business days prior or will be charged as a full fee absence. Casual and Vacation Care bookings cancelled prior to these times will not attract a fee.

Permanent bookings at all services will attract fees for each session, including child absences, unless otherwise advised by the approved provider. Gazetted Public Holidays and voluntary closures for professional development days or during December/January shut down periods do not attract any fees. Waiving of daily fees is at the sole discretion of the Approved Provider and is not guaranteed.

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There is a surcharge added when using a credit card for direct debit. Using a bank account incurs no additional fee:

- 1.45% for Visa/Mastercard
- 3.60% for AMEX
- Failed direct debits incur a dishonor fee of \$8.80 per dishonor.

Direct debits are processed before 5am on your scheduled payment day. Please ensure you have funds available the night before the payment is due to be processed.

Families experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to contact accountsreceivable@vt.uniting.org or call 03 90515100.

In relation to a family's financial/personal circumstances, the Privacy policy will always be complied with.

Unpaid fees

If fees are not paid by the due date, the following steps will be taken:

- An initial reminder will be given to parents and will include information on how to contact our Accounts Receivable team where there are concerns regarding payment
- A second reminder will be given to families requiring a payment plan
- A third reminder will be given to families advising that the child will need to cease care unless full payment is made.
- If payment is not made, a letter of demand requiring immediate attention will be given to families
- If parents do not respond to the the letter of demand, Uniting will proceed to employ the services of a debt collector
- Uniting reserves the right to vary this process on compassionate grounds.

Refund of fees

There will be **no** refund of fees in the following circumstances:

- A child's short-term illness
- Public holidays
- Family holiday during operational times

Fees may not be refunded if a service closes due to extreme and unavoidable circumstances. This decision will be made by the Approved Provider. (refer *Service Closure* policy).

In addition, there will be no refund where a parent chooses not to send their child to the program for the maximum number of hours for which they are enrolled.

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Gap Fee Waiver Application

As part of our strategy to support vulnerable families, we are implementing a process where, we will waive the Gap Fee for the calculated weeks with families to continue paying their gap fee to reduce their debt.

Closure of service for staff training days

To support the positive correlation between educator ongoing professional development and improved learning outcomes for children, Uniting facilitates professional development opportunities for all educators. If staff are required to attend when the usual program is operating, the service will be closed. Days will be identified on a yearly basis depending upon the professional learning needs and requirements of individual service type. Parents will be notified of the dates in advance to enable alternative care arrangements to be made. Fees will not be charged when services are closed for educators to participate in professional development.

Children turning three during the year of enrolment

For a kindergarten program in Victoria, children must turn three years of age by 30 April in the year of attendance. Children can only attend the three (3) year old program once they have turned three years of age. If a child turns three after the program commences, their place will be held. Pro-rata fees will apply once the child commences.

Financial support services

Parents experiencing financial hardship may require access to family support services. Further information can be obtained from your early years' service.

Notification of fee changes during the year

Fees set for the year would only be reviewed in extraordinary circumstances, for example, if attendance rates fall below the budget 'break even' point. Parents will be notified in advance of any required fee increase and will be offered the option to request a payment plan.

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