



FEES POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 7

9/12/21

PURPOSE

This policy will provide a clear set of guidelines for:

- The setting, invoicing, payment and collection of kindergarten fees
- Ensuring the viability of the Shine Bright EYMs Kindergartens by setting appropriate fee charges as *per the DET Kindergarten Guide (October 2016)*.
- Equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Shine Bright EYM (Shine Bright) is committed to:

- Providing responsible financial management of the service, which includes establishing fees that will result in a financially viable centre while keeping parent fees at the lowest possible level
- Providing a fair and manageable system for dealing with the non-payment and/or inability to pay fees/outstanding debts
- Maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of parents/guardians
- Advising families/guardians about how the programs are funded, including government support and parent/guardian fees
- Providing high priority access for families eligible for the kindergarten fee subsidy and early start funding.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to Shine Bright as the Approved Provider, Shine Bright staff and parents/guardians whose child/ren is/are attending, or who wish to enrol a child at a Shine Bright kindergarten.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides per capita funding as a contribution towards the costs of providing three-year old and four-year-old kindergarten programs. Income from other sources, primarily fees, are required to meet all the additional costs incurred in the delivery of the children's educational program. In addition, the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (refer to section 4 Definitions) enables eligible families to attend the three-year old kindergarten program and the four-year-old kindergarten program at no cost.

DET funding is also available to eligible three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children known to Child Protection or referred to Child FIRST to attend Early Start Kindergarten. This is an additional funded early childhood program that is planned and delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher free of charge. Shine Bright receives funding for children who meet the eligibility criteria. Contact Shine Bright for further information.

The Kindergarten Guide (October 2016) outlines the criteria to be covered in this policy –

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/funding/kinderpolicycriteria.pdf>

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006 (Vic), as amended 2011*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic), as amended 2012*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulation 168(2)(n)*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Vic)*
- *National Quality Standard, Quality Area 7: Leadership and Service Management – Standard 7.3: Administrative systems enable the effective management of a quality service.*



4. DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy.

Approved Provider: An individual or organisation that has been approved by the DET as Fit and Proper (in accordance with Sections 12, 13 and 14 of the National Law) to operate one or more education and care services. BKS is the Approved Provider for all BKS Services.

Early Start Kindergarten: A funding program that enables three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children known to Child Protection to attend a kindergarten program that is planned and delivered by an early childhood teacher for a specific number of hours.

Enrolment application fee: A non-refundable payment to cover administrative costs associated with the processing of a child's enrolment application for a place in a kindergarten program via the Central Enrolment System.

Fees: A charge for a place within a kindergarten program.

Health Care Card: A Commonwealth Government entitlement providing concessions for low-income earners and other eligible people. Details are available at www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/payments.conc_cards_hcc.htm

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS): A State Government subsidy paid directly to Shine Bright to enable eligible families to attend a funded kindergarten program free of charge.

Kindergarten program: A universal early childhood educational program, funded by the state government, for children in the year prior to commencing primary school.

Late collection charge: A charge that may be imposed by Shine Bright EYM when parents/guardians are late to collect their child/children from the program (see *Attachment 1, 'Fee Details'*)

Other charges: A charge for items not directly related to the provision of the children's program, such as sun hats.

Visas A-E: Bridging visas for asylum seekers.

Declined direct debit administration fee: A \$2.50 charge from Shine Bright EYM to parents/guardians if a direct debit declines.

PROCEDURES

Shine Bright as the Approved Provider is responsible for:

- Implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with parents/guardians and staff and in line with the requirements of *DET The Kindergarten Guide (October 2016)*
- Developing a fee policy that balances the capacity of parent/guardian's capability to pay, providing a high-quality program and maintaining service viability
- Considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at kindergarten and removing those barriers wherever possible
- Considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families
- Clearly communicating this policy and payment options to families
- Setting fees according to the guidelines outlined in *Attachment 1, 'Fee details'* of this policy
- Making the *Fees Policy (full version)* readily accessible on Shine Bright EYM's website and at the centres
- Collecting and receipting all fees as per the guidelines outlined in *Attachment 1* of this policy
- Documenting the type of concession card and expiry date of eligible concession card holders
- Complying with the Shine Bright Confidentiality/Privacy Policy in regard to any information it receives relating to the financial situation of parents/guardians and the payment/non-payment of fees
- Notifying parents/guardians within 28 days of any changes to the arrangements for the payment of fees



Shine Bright Staff are responsible for:

- Informing Shine Bright of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding the fees at the service
- Referring parent's/guardian's questions in relation to this policy to Shine Bright EYM Central Office, Finance Department.
- Complying with Shine Bright's Confidentiality/Privacy Policy regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of Fees
- Assisting Shine Bright Central Office as required in collecting supporting documentation for parents/guardians eligible to access the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy
- Informing Shine Bright Central Office of any changes regarding the eligibility of concession entitlements (i.e. Health Care Card for the year).
- Ensuring a notice outlining fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to the kindergarten as required by Kindergarten Guide (October 2016)
- Informing Shine Bright Central Office if a child leaves the service or has not attended for more than 4 weeks.

Parents/Guardians are responsible for:

- Paying fees by the due dates
- Ensuring Shine Bright have current contact details
- Reading this Fees Policy available on the website
- Signing and complying with the Fee Payment Agreement (Attachments 2 &/or 4)
- Notifying Shine Bright EYM Central Office if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees
- Providing the required documentation to Shine Bright Central Office to enable Shine Bright to claim the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy for eligible families, eg Commonwealth Health Care Card
- Informing Shine Bright Central Office if their child is withdrawing from the service by completing Attachment 5 Withdrawal Form.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes are met, Shine Bright will:

- Assess the effectiveness of the payment options and procedures for the collection of fees
- Review the current budget to determine fee income requirements
- Take into account feedback from educators (staff) and parents/guardians regarding the policy
- Monitor complaints and incidents regarding the policy
- Review the number of families experiencing financial hardship and the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered
- Monitor the number of families/children excluded from the centre because of the non-payment of fees.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Fee Details
- Attachment 2: Fee Payment Agreement – Funded kindergarten program
- Attachment 3: Fee Payment Agreement – Extended Care Program (Kunawaa kindergarten only)
- Attachment 4: Withdrawal Form

AUTHORISATION AND REVIEW DATE

This policy was adopted by the Shine Bright EYM on 15th October 2015 and reviewed on 9th December 2021.



ATTACHMENT 1 – FEE DETAILS

1. Setting Fees and other charges

As part of the budget development process, Shine Bright sets fees for the programs for the following year, taking into consideration:

- Funding requirement to provide a minimum of fifteen hours per week for a 4YO kindergarten program
- Funding requirement to provide a minimum of five hours per week for a 3YO kindergarten program
- Funding requirement to provide eligible families with access to a funded kindergarten program at no cost.
- Financial viability of kindergarten and programs
- Fees charged by similar services in the area
- Level of government funding, including the kindergarten fee subsidy, provided for the program
- Availability of other income sources, such as grants
- Capacity of parents/guardians to pay
- Reasonable expenditure, ensuring agreed program quality/standards
- Requirements of the *DET Kindergarten Funding Guide (October 2016)*

Fundraising

Fundraising provides important additional funds while bringing together families and the wider community. Participation is generally carried out by Parent Advisory Groups and is voluntary.

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/guardians will be given notice one term in advance of any required fee increase.

Late collection charge

Shine Bright reserves the right to implement a "late collection of children charge" when parents/guardians are frequently late in collecting a child/ren from kindergarten. In these situations, the qualified staff member will inform the parents/guardians/carer that if it continues Shine Bright will be notified and the family will be charged a late fee. The charge will be advised.

2. Subsidies and discounts

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy - Children attending the funded kindergarten program are eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS) if,

- the parent/guardian/or the child has a :
 - Commonwealth Health Care Card
 - Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card
 - Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card or White Card
 - Refugee visa (subclass 200)
 - In-country Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 201)
 - Global Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 202)
 - Temporary Humanitarian Concern Visa (subclass 786)
 - Protection visa (subclass 866)
 - Emergency Rescue visa (subclass 203)
 - Woman at Risk visa (subclass 204)
 - Bridging visa A-E



- or the Child:
 - Is identified on their birth certificate as being a multiple birth child (triplets or more)
 - Is identified by a parent, carer or legal guardian as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

To obtain the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy from DET, supporting documentation relating to concession cards or visas *must* be sighted by Shine Bright Central Office staff prior to or at the commencement of Term 1 or when the child becomes eligible. The type of concession card or visa and expiry date will be recorded on the child's file. A Centrelink Customer Confirmation Written Consent form is required to be signed to give Shine Bright permission to check on expiry dates during the year to maintain eligibility.

NB: Central Enrolment processes – You would have provided a copy of the concession card, if applicable, at the time of the enrolment with the relevant Central Enrolment Office. If the expiry date is prior to the year in which you are enrolling your child into the Kindergarten program, we will require an up-to-date copy of your concession card to be eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy from DET.

Early Start Kindergarten - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection who turn three on or before April 30 in the year they attend, are eligible for Early Start funding which provides access to up to 15 hours of an early childhood program that is planned and delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher. Contact Shine Bright for further information.

3. Collection of fees

A Fee information pack will be provided to parents/guardians prior to their child starting kindergarten. Fee information provided will include:

- *Fee Payment Agreement Form (Attachments 2, 3) - depending on relevant program*
- *Statement of Fees/Fee schedule*
- *Payment options*
- *Direct Debit Request form*
- *Centrepay form*

Procedure for fees collection

Parents/guardians choosing to pay fees upfront to attract the 3% discount must make payment by no later than 31st January 2022. No "upfront fee" to attract the 3% discount will be accepted after this date. If parents/guardians still wish to pay upfront after this date, the full amount will be charged.

Kindergarten fees can be paid by families/guardians in a number of ways:

- By Internet Banking/Direct deposit (preferred option)
- At any Bendigo branch or agency
- Cash presented to our Central Office
- Debit and/or credit card merchant facilities - "Eftpos" – by phoning through card details or visiting our Central Office
- Through payment plans by either Direct Debit or Centrepay. Relevant forms will be included in the Fee information pack sent out to families.



Shine Bright EYM Late payment/non-payment of fees procedure

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

- An initial reminder in writing (email or letter) stating that fees are overdue along with a statement, giving ten (10) days for payment
- If payment is not received or an agreed payment plan drawn up, the parents/guardians will be contacted by telephone, and a second written reminder issued, giving seven (7) days for payment
- If payment is not received or an agreed payment plan drawn up, a final written reminder will be sent notifying parents/guardians that unless payment is made within seven (7) days, there will no longer be a place available at the service for their child. This letter will also include information on a range of support options available for the family
- If a decision is made to withdraw the child's place at a service, the parents/guardians will be provided with 14 days notice in writing
- If a parent continues to send their child to preschool after receiving the withdrawn letter and fees are still not paid, a note will be in/at the sign in book to see the teacher before the child is signed in. Upon seeing the teacher, the parent will be given a letter stating clearly that effective immediately their enrolment is withdrawn until fees are paid and they are unable to leave their child this session at the service.

Inability to pay accounts

Shine Bright understands that unexpected and difficult situations may occur for which you are not financially prepared and which can lead to financial hardship. Shine Bright will individually assess each request for assistance. To make an assessment we will ask you to provide details about how your situation has changed. If you are experiencing financial hardship, contact the Shine Bright Finance Manager as soon as possible on 5443 1229.

Financial Assistance

Where families are experiencing financial difficulties in paying fees, funding may be available to assist for Kindergarten fees only. Shine Bright EYM has a discretionary fund to help families to pay fees. Please contact the Shine Bright Finance Manager for further details.

Debt recovery

Shine Bright reserves the right to take action to recover outstanding kindergarten fees. This can include the engagement of debt collectors to which all costs, including legal will be forwarded on to the account holder (parent/guardian).

Refund of fees

Refund/pro rata refunds apply only in the following cases:

1. If a family becomes eligible for the kindergarten fee subsidy during a term, a pro rata refund of the applicable fees will be provided following the provision of eligibility evidence
2. For withdrawals from Shine Bright kindergarten programs, Shine Bright may consider a partial refund in exceptional circumstances. You must complete a withdrawal form and email it to arofficer@shinebright.org.au and must clearly outline the reasons why a refund should be considered. Any refund will be at the discretion of Shine Bright and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. If you qualify for a refund, you may be charged the equivalent of two weeks fees for administration costs for withdrawing your child.



PLEASE NOTE A REFUND OF FEES IS NOT AVAILABLE FOR:

- Child absence due to illness
- Family holiday during operational times
- Public holidays
- Closure of the service for one or more days when a qualified staff member is absent and a qualified reliever is not available,
- Closure of the service for staff training days,
- Closure of the service in extreme and unavoidable circumstances e.g. Code Red days, lack of essential services like power, water etc.
- Closure of the service for planned events e.g. parent teacher interviews, Open Days, special celebrations etc.



ATTACHMENT 2 – FEE PAYMENT AGREEMENT – FUNDED KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

FEE PAYMENT AGREEMENT - 2022 Kindergarten program

This form must be completed and returned to Shine Bright EYM (53 Wills Street, BENDIGO 3550 or arofficer@shinebright.org.au) before the commencement of the kindergarten program in 2021

Part A – Personal Details

| | | | |
|----------------------|--|---------------|--|
| Name of Kindergarten | | | |
| Parent's full name | | | |
| Child's full name | | | |
| Email address | | | |
| Phone number | | Mobile number | |

Part B - Kindergarten Fee Subsidy

Some families may be eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy, which is a State Government subsidy paid directly to Shine Bright to enable eligible families to attend a funded kindergarten program free of charge. Please indicate if you are eligible for one of the following:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Triplet or Quadruplet (please supply birth certificate) | <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commonwealth Health Care Card | <input type="checkbox"/> In-country Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 201) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card | <input type="checkbox"/> Global Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 202) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card or White Card | <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary Humanitarian Concern Visa (subclass 786) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Refugee visa (subclass 200) | <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Rescue visa (subclass 203) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Protection visa (subclass 866) | <input type="checkbox"/> Bridging visa A-E |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Woman at Risk visa (subclass 204) | |

*To obtain the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy, supporting documentation relating to concession cards or visas must be sighted by Shine Bright EYM staff prior to or at the commencement of Term 1 or when the child becomes eligible. **Please attach a copy of this supporting documentation when submitting this Fee Payment Agreement.***



Part C – Payment Options

If you do not have a concession card please complete this section. Please select your choice of fee payment methods:

- Up-front annual fee payment (*3% discount for accounts paid in full by 31 January 2022*)
- Payment plan via Direct Debit (please complete the attached Direct Debit Request form)
- Payment plan via Centrepay (please complete the attached Centrepay form)

Please note that Direct Debits will be made over 20 fortnightly payments. The first payment will be made on Friday 25 February 2022, with the last payment made on Friday 18 November 2022.

Part D – Fee Payment Contract

I/we acknowledge that the kindergarten program is a service which is partly funded by the state government, with the balance of the funds coming from fees paid by parents/guardians. The kindergarten program cannot operate without fees paid by parents.

I/we acknowledge that our child is not currently accessing a place in another funded kindergarten program.

I/we understand that I am only entitled to obtain the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy while I have a current concession card. If my eligibility lapses I understand I will be responsible for pro-rata payment.

I/we acknowledge that if fees are not paid within the payment terms specified, the procedures for late payments/non-payment of fees/refunds/debt collection will be processed to recover any outstanding fees.

I/we have read and understand the Shine Bright Fee Policy available online at www.shinebright.org.au.

Signed: _____ (Parent/Guardian)

Date: _____



Part E - Customer Confirmation Written Consent regarding use of Centrelink Confirmation eServices

If you are the holder of a Commonwealth Health Care Card or a Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card which expires during 2021, we will require evidence that a new card has been issued. We are able to access this evidence using the Centrelink Confirmation eServices, however we do require your authorisation to do this. Could you please sign and date this authorisation below and return this page to Shine Bright along with the Fee Payment Agreement.

I _____ authorise:

Shine Bright EYM to use Centrelink Confirmation eServices to perform a Centrelink/DVA enquiry of my Centrelink or Department of Veterans' Affairs Customer details and concession card status in order to enable the organization to determine if I qualify for a concession, rebate or services.

Services Australia (the agency) to provide the results of that enquiry to Shine Bright EYM.

I understand that:

- The agency will disclose personal information to Shine Bright EYM including my name, payment type, payment status and concession card type and status to confirm my eligibility for relevant educational concession/rebate.
- This consent, once signed, remains valid while I am a customer of Shine Bright EYM unless I withdraw it by contacting Shine Bright EYM or the agency.
- I can get proof of my circumstances/details from the agency and provide it to Shine Bright EYM so my eligibility for relevant educational concession/rebate can be determined.
- If I withdraw my consent or do not alternatively provide proof of my circumstances/details, I may not be eligible for the educational concession/rebate provided by Shine Bright EYM.

Signed: _____ (Parent/Guardian)

Date: _____



ATTACHMENT 3 – FEE PAYMENT AGREEMENT – EXTENDED CARE PROGRAM

FEE PAYMENT AGREEMENT - 2022 Extended Care program

This form must be completed and returned to Shine Bright EYM (53 Wills Street, BENDIGO 3550 or arofficer@shinebright.org.au) before the commencement of the kindergarten program in 2021

Part A – Personal Details

| | | | |
|----------------------|--|---------------|--|
| Name of Kindergarten | | | |
| Parent's full name | | | |
| Child's full name | | | |
| Email address | | | |
| Phone number | | Mobile number | |

Part B – Payment Options

Please select your choice of fee payment methods:

- Up-front annual fee payment
- Payment plan via Direct Debit (please complete the attached Direct Debit Request form)
- Payment plan via Centrepay (please complete the attached Centrepay form)

Please note that Direct Debits will be made over 20 fortnightly payments. The first payment will be made on Friday 25 February 2022, with the last payment made on Friday 18 November 2022.



Part C – Fee Payment Contract

I/we acknowledge that the Extended Care program is a service which is solely funded by the parent fees and there is no state government funding. The Extended Care program cannot operate without fees paid by parents.

I/we acknowledge that if fees are not paid within the payment terms specified, the procedures for late payments/non-payment of fees/refunds/debt collection will be processed to recover any outstanding fees.

I/we acknowledge that if I withdraw my child I will be charged the equivalent of two weeks fees for administrative costs. To withdraw my child I need to complete a withdrawal form and email it to arofficer@shinebright.org.au

I/we have read and understand the Shine Bright Fee Policy available on line at www.shinebright.org.au.

Signed: _____ (Parent/Guardian)

Date: _____



ATTACHMENT 4 – WITHDRAWAL FORM

KINDERGARTEN PLACE WITHDRAWAL FORM

| | |
|---|--|
| DATE OF REQUEST | |
| CHILD'S FULL NAME | |
| CHILD'S DATE OF BIRTH | |
| KINDERGARTEN ATTENDING | |
| DATE YOUR CHILD LAST ATTENDED KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM | |
| REASON FOR WITHDRAWING YOUR CHILD | |
| PARENT'S NAME | |
| DATE CHILD WILL BE WITHDRAWING | |
| TEACHER HAS BEEN NOTIFIED OF WITHDRAWAL | |

NB: Notification of withdraw will be deemed the date this form is received if later than the date withdrawn stated above.

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

PLEASE READ BELOW IMPORTANT INFORMATION IN RELATION TO WITHDRAWAL AND REFUNDS OF FEES.

REFUNDS OF FEES:

Please note that you will be charged the equivalent of two weeks fees for administration costs for withdrawing your child. A copy of our Fees policy can be accessed on our website. Shine Bright EYM may issue a pro rata refund in exceptional circumstances.

Please email the completed form to info@shinebright.org.au