# PAYMENT OF FEES POLICY

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Montessori Stepping Stones™

A global children community

“A home for learning and development, a pre-school for life.”

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1. PURPOSE
Montessori Stepping Stones’ (MSS) setting and payment of fees takes into account all requirements of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, Australian Tax Office, Privacy Act and the guidelines contained within the Australian Government Child Care Service Handbook. All records held at our centre will be maintained in accordance with Confidentiality and Privacy Policy. MSS understands the importance of maintaining accurate fees statements and providing clear information to families on fees payment processes.

2. SCOPE
All people involved in the payment and collection of fees at MSS relating to the education and care of children at Montessori Stepping Stones—including Families, educators and staff who assist in the continuous improvement and implementation of quality practices.

3. DESCRIPTION/GENERAL
Montessori Stepping Stones’ (MSS) approach to equal access for all families is based on the principles of equity and inclusion. We aim to provide a quality education and care service at an affordable price to families eligible to attend under the Australian Government Priority of Access Guidelines. Fee levels will be set by MSS each year on completion of the annual budget and according to the service's required income in order to provide a quality education and care service.

LEGISLATION AND GOVERNMENT REQUIREMENTS
Laws relating to protection of privacy and confidentiality; duty of confidentiality arising from contract with parent; to whom and when information must be disclosed;
- Guidelines on child care fees payments (Child Care Service Handbook 2012-2013);
- Privacy Act 1988;
- A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 2000
- Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act (2012);
- Education and Care Services National (WA) Regulations (2012)
NATIONAL LAW AND REGULATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Law</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>175</td>
<td>Offence relating to requirement to keep enrolment and other documents</td>
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<tr>
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NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Area</th>
<th>Standard/Element</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.1.1</td>
<td>There is an effective enrolment and orientation process for families.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6.1.3</td>
<td>Current information about the service is available to families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.3.1</td>
<td>Records and information are stored appropriately to ensure confidentiality, are available from the service and are maintained in accordance with legislative requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.3.3</td>
<td>The Regulatory Authority is notified of any relevant changes to the operation of the service, of serious incidents and any complaints which allege a breach of legislation.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.3.5</td>
<td>Service practices are based on effectively documented policies and procedures that are available at the service and reviewed regularly.</td>
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4. DEFINITIONS/PRINCIPLES/STRATEGIES FOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Children's needs
For continuity of care and family support where payment of child care fees is an issue.

Families' needs
Advice about fee levels and CCB application process with a simple fees payment process providing accurate fees payment statements. Where possible provide information about available financial support and understand family difficulties in maintaining fees payments to act in order to prevent any negative impact on the care provided to children.

Educator/Staff needs
Clearly explained fees payment process to assist families to maintain fees payments. Maintain confidentiality about fees payment issues as not to impact negatively on the relationships between educators, children and families.

Management needs
Sufficient fees income to ensure maintenance of a quality service by ensuring fee payments to be up to date with accurate fees collection records being maintained.

Fees and payment accounts
MSS will determine the required fee level to meet budget prediction for the next year. The fee schedule and fees payment policy will be fully explained to families during the enrolment process. Families will be given a minimum of 14 days notice of any fee increase.

The same fee will be charged to all families for equivalent care arrangements.

(continued on next page)
Families are required to pay fees through the national and government approved Child Care Management System (CCMS) and associated direct debit system, which is activated during the first week of a child’s formal attendance. A dated invoice statement, in accordance with Australian Government Guidelines, is provided once a week provided for each payment.

Families pay for a place and may elect to book a full-time, part-time place with 2 days as a minimum attendance. Families who elect to book full-time or part-time places are required to pay fees on public holidays if the holiday falls on their normal day of care.

Fee payment will be recorded according to Australian Government Guidelines.

Details of an individual's account and all completed forms kept by the service will be confidential and stored appropriately. Individual families may access their own account records at any time. Particulars of fees will be available in writing to parents upon request. Families may also view details about their child care usage and total fees charged and the fee reductions calculated by the Family Assistance Office (FAO) on the View Child Care Attendance online statement available through the FAO website.

Parents/Guardians should contact the service to advise of their child's inability to attend as soon as this is known. Fees will still be required on days the child would normally attend.

**CCB and CCMS**

Montessori Stepping Stones comply with the Australian Government requirements to be an approved education and care service for the purposes of Child Care Benefit (CCB). The on-line Child Care Management System (CCMS) reporting requirements and any other requirements for claiming and administering CCB will be maintained by the service.

It is the parent/guardians responsibility to complete and lodge their CCB application with the Department of Human Service (formerly Centrelink) /Family Assistance Office FAO. Families need to apply for each of care they will use i.e. Long Day Care, Before School Care, After School Care, Vacation Care, Family Day Care.

CCB will be deducted from a family's fees within 14 days of the service being notified of the amount via CCMS.

Families with children under 7 years seeking CCB for the first time will be required to meet the Australian Government's immunisation requirements. MSS will provide when required information to these families in regard to this requirement.

Families will only be eligible for CCB if child care attendance records are accurately completed and signed by the parent/guardian or other responsible adult, and other eligibility requirements are met.

Families are entitled to 42 absence days for each registered child in each financial year. CCB is paid for these days provided that the child would normally have attended on that day, and fees have been charged. Additional absences can be claimed when the first 42 days have been used. Supporting documentation may be required for approval of additional absences.

All documentation pertaining to CCB will be kept for the specified period of time and made available to Australian Government Officers on request.

Educators/staff will have a basic knowledge of CCB requirements but will refer all specific queries to the authorised contact person for CCMS.

The nominated supervisor/certified supervisor/administrator will be trained in the implementation of CCMS reporting CCB fee payment procedures.
Overdue fees
Parents/Guardians with overdue fees will be encouraged by the nominated supervisor to discuss any difficulties they may have in meeting payments and make suitable arrangements to pay. If this is not done, or the agreed arrangements are not kept, the following procedure will apply:

- after one week overdue - a polite written reminder will be forwarded to the parent/guardian;
- after two weeks overdue - a letter advising that the place may be cancelled if the account should become three weeks overdue. The letter will include a reminder that parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss payment difficulties and make suitable arrangements to pay with the nominated supervisor;
- after three weeks overdue - if no arrangements to pay have been made or kept, the place will be cancelled.

Late collection fees
Whenever possible the parent/guardian should ring the service to advise they will be late to collect their child.

A late collection fee will be charged to parents/guardians for each child not collected from the centre by closing time. The fee charged for late collections is determined by:

- MSS’ need to recoup expenses incurred in employee overtime wages; adult-to-child-ratio.
- The need to deter families from becoming a habit of late collections.
- Special circumstances accident or vehicle breakdown, will be given consideration in relation to the administration of late collection fees.

When a parent/guardian is continually and regularly late arriving at the service to collect their child(ren), the nominated supervisor will discuss other child care options with the family. (See Delivery and Collection of Children policy.)

5. Responsibility (IES)

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<td>Quality Practices, Routines &amp; Tasks</td>
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<tr>
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6. Review, Evaluation & Amendment

The Payment of Fees Policy, Process, Procedure and/or associated Tasks/Forms are to be reviewed as required or immediately if deficiencies are identified (at least once a year from last publishing).

7. Quality Practices (Procedures, Routines and Tasks)

Useful tools in the implementation of this policy. List our precise steps for achieving each action. Ask yourself when, how, where and who is responsible for what actions.

- Confidentiality Statement
- Attendance record Form
- Enrolment Form; .............................................................. (continued on next page)
MONTESSORI STEPPING STONES

- Registration Agreement;
- Suggestions, Grievance and Complaint Form;
- Late Collection (Action Plan);
- Late Collection Form;
- Orientation checklists;
- Access to personal information procedure;

8. RELATED POLICIES

- Delivery and Collection of Children;
- Confidentiality and Privacy;
- Enrolment and Orientation;
- Equal Opportunity;
- Suggestions, Grievances and Complaints;
- Partnerships and Communication with Families;
- Records Management;

READINGS/SOURCES/WEBSITES

DEEWR Child Care Service Handbook 2012 - 2013;
Section 4.9 Information Management
Section 5.5 Key obligations imposed on approved child care services under family assistance law
Section 6.3 Priority of access
Section 8.1 Overview (CCB and CCR)
Section 9.3 Reporting enrolment information
Section 10 Reporting attendance information
Section 11 Calculation of fee reductions and payments to services
Section 13 Absences from child care Section 14 Special CCB
Section 15 Child Care Rebate

