

DEBT RECOVERY POLICY

Happy Haven Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) provides quality education and care for primary school-age children outside of school hours and during school holiday periods. Our OSHC service is committed to supporting workforce participation of parents and carers, and to providing quality education and care to all children at an affordable fee for families.

Happy Haven OSHC understands that circumstances outside of our families control can cause significant financial hardship, and we value open communication to ensure that suitable payment arrangements can be put in place to allow families continued access to our services.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP		
7.1	Governance	Governance supports the operation of a quality service
7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service
7.1.3	Roles and Responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood and support effective decision making and operation of the service

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
172	Notification of change to policies and procedures

RELATED POLICIES

Enrolment Policy Payment of Fees Policy Termination of Enrolment Policy	Privacy and Confidentiality Policy Governance Policy Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Governance Policy
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RELATED LEGISLATION

Child Care Subsidy Secretary's Rules 2017 A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999	Family Law Act Family Assistance Law
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PURPOSE

For parents and carers to gain a clear understanding of Happy Haven OSHC's Debt Recovery Policy, payment requirements, and procedures in place in case of failed payment and bad debt. This policy explains the process of recovering bad debt, as well as the consequences for failure to pay fees on time.

SCOPE

This policy applies to families, management and senior leadership.

IMPLEMENTATION

FAILED PAYMENTS AND DEBT COLLECTION PROCESS:

Happy Haven OSHC direct debit accounts weekly on a Thursday for all families (unless you have made contact for an individual payment arrangement). Happy Haven OSHC direct debit a week in arrears, so account holders are paying for care that has already been utilised and after Child Care Subsidy (CCS) has been applied.

Below is the outlined process for following up failed payments in family accounts.

1st Failed Payment:

- An automated email is sent through to the account holders email address from Fully Booked with notification that the weekly scheduled payment has failed (account holders should ensure emails from Fully Booked are not going to junk/ spam)
- A charge of \$12.00 is added to the account for failed payment of the balance owing (Happy Haven OSHC are charged a fee from the debit system, Ezi Debit, which is then passed on to families)

2nd Consecutive Failed Payment:

- A member of Happy Haven OSHC's Families Team will attempt to reach the primary contact of the account via the mobile numbers listed in the account. If contact is successful, a discussion will follow with possible payment options and arrangements available to the account holder,

as well as information regarding further steps if payments continue to be unsuccessful. An email with the arrangement will be sent through to the account holders email address if it requires a payment plan.

- If no contact can be made after 7 days, an email is sent through to the account holder informing them of the Ceased Care placed on the account. All future bookings will be removed, and access to bookings switched off until full payment of the account is made.
- A follow up text message will be sent via SMS to the account holders mobile number to notify of the email sent through to their account and asking for contact to be made to our Families Relation Team contact number.
- Families will be given 7 days to make contact to pay the account before debt escalation occurs.

3rd Consecutive Failed Payment

- A final attempt to contact the account holder via the numbers listed in the account will be made. If this call is answered payment must be made within 24 hours to avoid the account being sent through to our debt collection agency, Brodie Collection Services. A voicemail will be left asking for contact to be made if the phone call is unanswered.
- If there is no answer, and no communication has been made, the account will be locked, and details will be sent through to Brodie Collection Services. No payments will be taken via Happy Haven OSHC and all further communication must be made through the debt collection agency.
- Once an account has been sent through to Brodie Collection Services, the family will be unable to utilise any Happy Haven OSHC services in any location moving forward.

FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY AND ADDITIONAL CHILD CARE SUBSIDY (ACCS):

Happy Haven OSHC understands that unexpected circumstances can have a severe impact on a families ability to pay outstanding fees, or substantial debts. Financial stress significantly impact on a family's health and relationships with others, and Happy Haven OSHC want to ensure there are options available to reduce this impact on our enrolled families.

For account holders currently experiencing financial difficulty the below options are available:

ADDITIONAL CHILD CARE SUBSIDY (ACCS):

Additional Child Care Subsidy is available to further reduce the gap fee payable by eligible families.

Eligible families are:

- An eligible grandparent getting an income support payment

- Transitioning from certain income support payments to work
- Experiencing temporary financial hardship
- Caring for a child who is vulnerable or at risk of harm, abuse or neglect

To find out whether you are eligible and apply for [Additional Child Care Subsidy](#), families can visit the [Service Australia](#) website.

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS:

Families who require extra time, or flexible payment arrangements are encouraged to contact our Families Relations Team to organise a suitable payment arrangement.

The Families Relations Team can organise:

- Fortnightly payments
- Separate payment days
- Payment caps
- Access to bank details to make additional payments alongside direct debits

If a payment arrangement is entered into with Happy Haven OSHC the account holder is agreeing to a set payment schedule that must be adhered to. Any failed or missed payments while the payment arrangement is active will result in immediate Ceased Care, and the account must be paid in full prior to continued utilisation of Happy Haven services.

If the account holder is aware that the scheduled payment may fail, or are experiencing financial hardship, we ask that contact is made as soon as possible to arrange for alternative payment options.

FURTHER RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES:

Services Australia Phone:

136 150 (Centrelink)

Phone: 1800 136 380 (Indigenous Call Centre)

Information and resources for families on the Services Australia website:

servicesaustralia.gov.au/assistance-child-care-fees

Payment and Service Finder to estimate family entitlements: humanservices.gov.au/paymentfinder

Express Plus Centrelink mobile app:

humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/expressplus-centrelink-mobile-apps

MyGov: my.gov.au—to create and then access a Centrelink online account, to make Child Care Subsidy claims and view the status of claims.

Child Care Finder: childcarefinder.gov.au—for information about child care services, including early learning and child care services, fees and vacancies.

Australian Business Register: abr.gov.au/business-super-funds-charities/applying-abn

National Quality Framework Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)

Phone: 1300 422 327

Email: enquiries@acecqa.gov.au

State and territory regulatory authorities: acecqa.gov.au/help/contact-your-regulatory-authority

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment provides a Child Care Tip-off Line can be used by parents, providers or their employees to raise concerns about practices relating to the management of subsidies. Concerns relating to the quality or safety of a service should be raised with the relevant state or territory authority (above).

Phone: 1800 664 231

Email: tipoffline@dese.gov.au

SOURCE

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

Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment. Child Care Provider Handbook

<https://www.dese.gov.au/resources-child-care-providers/child-care-provider-handbook>

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2018).

[Education and Care Services National Regulations](#). (2011).

Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).

Guide to the National Quality Framework. (2017). (Amended 2020).

Lifeline. *Financial Stress*. <https://www.lifeline.org.au/get-help/information-and-support/financial-stress/>

Services Australia (December 2021). *Additional Child Care Subsidy*, accessed on 08 February 2022, <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/additional-child-care-subsidy>

Services Australia (December 2021). *Child Care Subsidy*, accessed on 08 February 2022, <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/child-care-subsidy>

Department of Education, Skills and Employment (November 2020). *Family Assistance Law*. <https://www.dese.gov.au/family-assistance-law>

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED	FEBRUARY 2022	NEXT DATE	REVIEW	FEBRUARY 2023
MODIFICATIONS	New policy using new template			
POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS		NEXT DATE	REVIEW
Month YYYY	•		Month YYYY	
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