

### FEES POLICY

#### WHY?

Thrive Group Tasmania has a responsibility to ensure that the fees and charges they set are in accordance with the *Education and Care Services National Law* and the *Education and Care Services National Regulations* – 168, 227 and 261. Thus meaning, Thrive has an obligation to ensure the fees are fair, consistent, transparent and compliant with the legislative guidelines.

#### WHO?

This policy applies to:

- Approved Provider (Thrive)
- Thrive Management
- Administration Staff
- Family Day Care Educators, Assistants and Relief Educators
- Volunteers
- Students on professional experience placements
- Others involved in the provision of education and care

All of the above will be made aware of the requirements of this policy and procedure and this will be undertaken as a part of the registration/induction process.

#### WHAT?

Thrive is responsible for ensuring Educator fees and charges, are in line with the legislative guidelines, for the education and care of children utilising the Educator's service.

#### WHEN?

Each family will be provided with a statement of entitlement on a fortnightly basis, relating to their child/children's education and care in family day care.

All fees must be paid in line with the statement of fees, as interest may be charged on overdue fees, with any associated outstanding charges forwarded to the person responsible for the account.

Failure to pay fees and charges in accordance with the statement of fees and this policy, may result in the cancellation of a child's enrolment, at the Educator's discretion and with the support of the service.

Thrive reserves the right to charge an administration fee on overdue, late or outstanding fees.

Thrive will provide all staff, Educators, Assistants and Relief Educators covered by this policy with the appropriate training so they are made aware of their responsibilities and obligations.

Thrive retains the sole discretion to reasonably vary, terminate or replace this policy from time to time. Thrive will consult before any amendments are made and will notify and train those to whom the amendments apply.

All persons covered under the paragraph 'Who' who breach this policy may be subject to the appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure or removal from the workplace or termination of services (workers, other than employees and other persons in the workplace).

**FEES PROCEDURE****HOW?*****Fees and Charges:***

Thrive will set an indicative schedule of fees and charges in the form of a minimum hourly rate per child and a maximum hourly rate per child during core hours (8am to 6pm), which takes into account the government child care subsidy rate. Any education and care outside of core hours may attract a loading up to one hundred percent of the standard hourly fee. Educators may charge different fees for outside core hours care, casual care, weekend and/or public holiday care, and these will be outlined in the Complying Written Agreement. Thrive may adjust their fee schedule when the Child Care Subsidy rates are changed by the government.

Thrive will notify the Department of Education (DOE) of their range and any updates via CCSS software.

***Educator Fees:***

Thrive will provide Educators with detailed fortnightly pay advices which outline the enrolled families' government subsidies and gap fees payable. Thrive will ensure that Educators are advised of the Thrive schedule of fees at the time of enrolment.

Thrive will also set an Educator levy based on the days worked.

***Thrive Levies:***

Thrive will ensure that families are advised of the Thrive schedule of fees at the time of enrolment. The Thrive fee schedule will be provided to families within the Family Day Care Handbook. Families will be provided a fee estimate for their Educators service upon request. Thrive will also set a family based levy based on the hours of care accessed per child. Thrive will ensure that families are made aware of these amounts and the method of payment, via email, at the time of their enrolment confirmation. Thrive will review the family levy as part of the annual budget process.

Each family will be provided with a written statement of entitlement about their childcare usage, fees and government subsidies, fortnightly.

Family Day Care Educators will determine their fees based on a range of factors including but not limited to services provided, additional meal inclusions, additional resources available, service demand and business requirements.

In doing this Educators will:

Ensure an approach which is equitable and non-discriminatory i.e. same fee for same type of care.

Ensure their fees cover all aspects of their business, including family levy.

Consider the merits of charging on a per child, per hour basis, compared to a sessional basis. If Educators apply sessional fee, they must be available for the entire session.

Not charging a fee when the Educator is unavailable to provide education and care.

## FEES PROCEDURE

Give families and Thrive a minimum of fourteen days' notice of any fee changes (including completing appropriate documentation in consultation with Thrive Business Services Staff). Educators should **not** include the Thrive Family Levy in their fees as this is a separate fee charged by Thrive to the family and has no direct association with the services or care provided by Educators. The total cost to the family for the care accessed therefore includes two separate components: the Educator charge (rate per hour set by the Educator and the Thrive Family Levy (rate per hour charged to the family by Thrive).

### ***Complying Written Agreements:***

The complying written agreement (CWA) will be developed by Thrive and families will be given sufficient time to peruse the document and clarify any points within the contract, prior to acceptance and signature.

A CWA will include the names and contact details of the Educator and the individual seeking care, the date the arrangement commences, the names and birth date of the child or the children to be in care, details of the care provided – including days and hours of regular care required, whether the care provided may be routine, casual or both, and details of the fees.

All stakeholders (Thrive, families and Educators) must adhere to the terms of the CWA.

CWAs will be reviewed, amended or replaced and updated in accordance with any fee or levy amendments or charges to a child's enrolled hours.

A signed copy of each CWA must be submitted to Thrive for staff to finalise the enrolment and ensure Educators receive the appropriate Child Care Benefit.

### ***Attendance Records:***

The deadline per legislative requirements, for attendance submittal is fourteen days after the end of the week when the sessions were provided. We recommend Educators submit their attendance records to Thrive weekly through our CCSS software, in order to allow for unexpected delays.

Thrive uses an electronic attendance timesheet system that records the dates and times of children's attendances as well as the person responsible for signing the child into and out of care (via PIN). Children need to be signed in and out using an e-signature. Guardians and/or Educators can PIN a child in or out whether or not there is a timesheet generated. Once a timesheet is created (either through a booking or creating a casual timesheet as a one-off) the e-signature for that day and times will automatically appear on the timesheet.

Educators may only PIN children in/out: due to school pick up/drop off; if it is not reasonable for the parent to PIN i.e. the last day of the timesheet period or if the parent is physically unable (this does not include not being able to find parking, being in a hurry for an appointment or not having time).

If an Educator PINS a child in or out a note **MUST** be included as to the reason. This can be in the e-signature section or on the timesheet itself. The guardian must PIN a child in or out of care at least once for any given session. The Educator should not PIN a child in and out from the same session.

## FEES PROCEDURE

If there is no e-signature at all (due to technical problems etc.) OR if the e-signature doesn't reflect the actual in/out times or that it was an absence, a note MUST be included on the timesheet stating actual attendance times or that it was an absence. This is only to happen in exceptional circumstances; this provision is not to be taken as permission to alter aforementioned standard e-signature practices.

This is a 'when all else fails' situation and is not to be relied upon in lieu of actually pinning the child in or out. Thrive Business Services Team will check the details provided on each attendance record and if there are suspicions of false reporting, the matter will be referred to the appropriate Person with Management and Control for further investigation. Only attendances that have been confirmed to be accurate will be submitted to CCSS. Suspected fraudulent and suspicious attendance records will be rejected and the Educator will be notified and the records will not be processed until the satisfactory conclusion of the investigation.

Where attendance records indicate, the Educator has breached their ratios, i.e. over numbers, Business Services will confirm the Educator was in fact over ratio and if confirmed, the following action will be taken: on the first occasion, a note will be placed on their file, a written warning given and no fees charge for the child. On the second occasion, and in addition to the warning, note and lack of fees, the Educator must enter into a quality assurance management plan. On the third occasion, the Educator will be deregistered.

### **Absences:**

Any child absences must be reported on the CCSS, including the reason for absence if entered using the Educator PIN. As soon as practicable thereafter, the parent/family member must approve the timesheet including the absence, as these cannot be processed by Thrive Business Service staff until they have been approved by the family.

If Educators are charging for an absence, they need to ensure they are available if the family's circumstances change and they require care i.e. if the parent is called into work at short notice. Educator's must also be contactable, and if not at the family day care premises, be able to return within a thirty-minute timeframe. If Educators do not want to make themselves available, they are not to charge for absence.

Families are entitled to a number of unexplained absences per year as determined by the Government. Any additional unexplained absences that occur after reaching the annual caps set out by the Government will not be eligible for child care subsidy.

Exceptions to this rule are listed in the Child Care Provider Handbook and proof of the exemptions is required by the service.

### **Payment of Fees:**

Educators will determine their preferred method of payments from families, (i.e. cash or by electronic transfer) and Thrive recommends fees are paid on a weekly basis.

Educators are to provide each family with an account detailing the amount owing, running tally of the allowable absences used, the period for which the account applies to care used in this period.

### FEES PROCEDURE

Educators must supply Thrive with a copy of all families' invoices and payment receipts.

As payments are made to Educators, they must provide a dated receipt to the family member and Thrive.

All financial records must be retained and stored by the Educator in compliance with the applicable legislative framework.

***Debt Collection:***

In the instance where a family has not paid the fees due to Thrive, the following shall apply:

Educators will forward a letter to parents detailing the outstanding amounts owing, the period for which the fees apply and the due date for payment of the overdue amount.

If efforts to recoup the outstanding fees are unsuccessful, Educators may then seek assistance in the recovery process. In such circumstances, Educators must provide the Director of Business and Financial Services with written details pertaining to the overdue fees (the amount outstanding, the period to which they relate and the efforts that have been undertaken to recover the fees independently). The Thrive Business Service team will provide the Educator with the contact details of the debt recovery lawyers supplied by Family Day Care Australia.

In the event that the outstanding fees remain unpaid, Educators then have the option of having the details of the outstanding debt forwarded to the relevant Collection Service for legal recovery. Educators will be invoiced for the associated collection costs and recovery fee/s by the collection service. This is not recommended for amounts below \$150.00.

***Review of Fees and Charges:***

Fees and charges will be reviewed annually or as required by Thrive's Board, General Manager & Director of Children's Services and the Director of Finance & Business Services.

Families and Educators will be notified in writing of any changes and provided with two weeks' notice before the charges come into effect.

**BREACH OF THE PROCEDURE**

Any breach of this procedure may result in disciplinary action including, but not limited to, termination of employment or registration.

Thrive retains the sole discretion to reasonably vary, terminate or replace this procedure from time to time. Thrive will consult before any amendments are made and will notify and train those to whom the amendments apply.