



Parent Handbook



Government of South Australia
Department for Education

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Welcome

Welcome and thank you for registering your child with the Department for Education's (the Department's) Family Day Care (FDC) service. By choosing the Department as your family day care provider, you are choosing a provider that has operated a family day care program in South Australia for over 50 years.

This handbook, along with the educators' individual service information, provides families with a handy reference tool for using the Department's FDC service.

What is family day care?

FDC is a quality, home-based early education and care service that offers peace of mind and flexibility for your family. Educators provide care in their own homes, creating a safe and nurturing environment for children to learn, play, and grow. Care is provided for up to seven children at a time, with no more than four under preschool age.

What are the benefits of family day care?

Caring for children in small groups allows the educator to bond with and get to know your child. Your family day care educator will build a relationship with you and your child to understand their needs and tailor individual learning to suit.

What hours does family day care operate?

FDC offers flexible hours, with some educators providing care during school holidays, overnight and weekends.

What qualifications do family day care educators hold?

FDC educators in South Australia must hold an approved early childhood qualification before starting in a family day care service. All educators in the Department's FDC service are registered and approved by the Department.

What are the regulations that govern family day care in South Australia?

As an approved provider of FDC, the Department's services are governed by the [National Quality Framework](#) (NQF). In Australia, the [Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority](#) (ACECQA) oversees the implementation and delivery of the NQF at a national level and the regulatory authority at a state level.

In South Australia, the regulatory authority is the [Education Standards Board](#) (ESB).

The NQF incorporates the following legislation, regulations and standards:

- Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act (SA) 2011
- Education and Care Services National Regulations

The Department ensures compliance and works with FDC educators to maintain standards. Educators must follow Department policies, procedures, code of conduct and guidelines for family day care.

How are family day care educators supported?

FDC educators are supported by a dedicated Coordinator who visits at least every eight weeks to support wellbeing, learning, development, quality and compliance. Coordinators monitor the safety of the FDC premises through regular announced and unannounced visits, including an annual property assessment. If hazards or risks are identified, Coordinators work with FDC educators - including in remote locations - to address them promptly.

FDC educators and our Coordinators are also supported by the Business and Customer Support Centre (Business Centre).

What rights and responsibilities do parents have?

Family rights and responsibilities help create secure, positive environments. We are committed to respectful, cooperative relationships and fostering partnership.

Family rights include:

- Receiving quality early learning and care that promotes child wellbeing and development
- Ensuring privacy and confidentiality is respected
- Expecting a safe and supportive environment
- Participating in decisions regarding their child's education and care
- Contribute to the learning programs
- Receive timely communication.

Family responsibilities include:

- Maintaining a safe environment, ensuring conduct is appropriate and language is respectful
- Respecting the confidentiality of sensitive information, including on social media
- Signing attendance record each day your child is enrolled
- Ensuring authorised nominees collect children and the educator is notified
- Updating the educator about any changes or important information
- Respecting the premises and property
- Understanding and complying with relevant policies.

We work with families to resolve issues and may exclude individuals from premises if needed, without affecting the child's enrolment. These rights and responsibilities guide behaviour expectations and support a proactive, solutions-oriented approach.

Who are our family day care educators?

The Department's FDC educators are:

- Registered with the Department's FDC program
- Self-employed, home-based early childhood educators – not Department employees
- From diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds
- Over 18 years of age
- Mandated notifiers, legally required to report any suspicions of child abuse.

Each educator has:

- Provided character references
- Provided a medical report from their regular doctor
- Has a current Working with Children Check. This includes other adults in the home
- Completed a Certificate III or Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care
- A current First Aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) certification
- A current Asthma & Anaphylaxis qualification
- Completed Responding to Risks of Harm, Abuse & Neglect – Education and Care (RRHAN-EC)
- Completed National Child Safety Training (via Gecco)
- Signed registration conditions ensuring they comply with National Quality Framework
- Current public liability insurance, covering the risks associated with caring for children
- Ongoing professional development plans.

What can be expected from a family day care program?

FDC educators are required to deliver and document a quality educational program aligned with national learning frameworks:

- Belonging, Being, Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).
- My Time, Our Place – Framework for School Age Care in Australia (MTOF).

FDC educators use a planned, reflective approach with an assessment and planning cycle. The educational program must be available to families, Department staff and regulatory authorities upon requested.

How are family day care educators supported by the Department for Education?

While you will develop a close relationship with your educator, Department staff work behind the scenes to support families and educators. Staff are available to discuss your care or any concerns.

- **FDC Services Manager:** Leads the operational the Department's FDC services and supports high quality education and care.
- **FDC Service Leader:** Provides strategic oversight to the operation of the Department's FDC services, focusing on quality of care provided to children and the wellbeing of educators.
- **FDC Educational Leader:** Guides the development, and implementation of quality educational programs.
- **Coordinators:** Support educators and monitor the delivery of care.
- **Business and Customer Support Centre (Business Centre):** Manages the administration, including Child Care Subsidy (CCS) payments, enrolments, bookings, timesheets processing, fee approvals, and debt collection. Business Centre also issues fortnightly statements of entitlement and investigates and reports suspicious or fraudulent behaviour.

Our Policies

- [Family day care health and safety policy](#)
- [Family day care programming, physical environment and relationships policy](#)
- [Family day care governance, leadership and staffing policy](#)

Our Procedures

- [Management of complaints incidents and non-compliance in family day care and respite care program procedure](#)
- [Family day care fee and levy charging procedure](#)
- [Family day care fee and levy charges 2025/2026](#)

Enrolment

Family day care is authorised to administer CCS payments, an Australian Government subsidy for eligible families.

Before care begins, your child's enrolment must be accepted in the CCS system, regardless of their eligibility, as required by Family Assistance Law (FAL). Only children with an active enrolment can only be cared for by a FDC educator.

To activate your child's enrolment, you must:

- Apply for CCS with Centrelink with your MyGov account
- Contact the Business Centre for an enrolment form (either online or over the phone)
- Provide your and your child's Centrelink Customer Reference Number (CRN)
- Provide your child's up-to-date immunisation record
- Complete a booking request form with your educator who will submit it to the Business Centre at least one week before care is due to start
- Accept the enrolment confirmation emailed from the Business Centre
- Following acceptance, the Business Centre submits the enrolment and booking to Centrelink via the CCS system.
- Confirm the enrolment with Centrelink through your MyGov account.

All steps must be completed before care commences. Starting care without an active enrolment breaches legislation and may risk your educator's registration.

Starting care

To support a smooth transition, your educator will work with you to understand your child's routines, interests, needs, and medical requirements. Educators will also provide you with their service information.

Educators are experienced at supporting children transitioning into care. Strategies include:

- Discussing settling options (e.g., short visits, reading a story)
- Talking with your child about what to expect in FDC (e.g., who might be there, pick up time)
- Bringing a favourite toy or familiar item from home
- Saying a confident goodbye to your child when leaving
- Calling the educator after 10 minutes if your child is upset to see how your child is settling
- You can check in with your educator at any time.

What do I need to bring to care?

What to bring to care will differ for each child, but it's recommended to pack a complete change of clothes for messy play and toilet training. Please discuss specific items to pack with your educator.

Food

Some educators provide food for your child at an extra cost, or you may be required to provide food daily. The Department's FDC Health and Safety Policy ensures healthy eating, safe food practices and hygiene.

In FDC, you can expect:

- Educators to promote and provide healthy food, positive mealtimes, and nutritional education
- Discussion of your child's food preferences and allergies
- Food served safely and hygienically, in line with the Food Safety Standards by Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ).

We ask families to follow our healthy food guidelines, which align with:

- [Get Up and Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Guideline](#)
- [Australian Dietary Guidelines](#)

If you or your child has religious, medical or dietary needs, please discuss them with your educator to ensure your child is supported.

Signing my child in and out of family day care

The Department's FDC educators use the Harmony Web portal for electronic sign-in and sign-out of children in care. Parents or authorised individuals must use their own unique PIN, which must not be shared with anyone, including the educator. The PIN can only be used by the person that it has been assigned; to any unauthorised usage is a breach of FAL.

If you or an authorised person needs to reset your PIN, please contact the Business Centre on 8372 7523.

What will my child be doing each day?

Educators offer a play-based program in a safe environment, providing a wide range of experiences tailored to your child and the group. Routines are flexible to accommodate individual and group needs.

Will my child go on excursions?

Educators can take children on excursions with your written permission. Routine excursions occur regularly (e.g., weekly visits to the local park, library, etc). Non-routine excursion are excursions in the community or somewhere special, such as the zoo. Please make sure you read the risk assessments and signed permission forms - even if you have provided permission on the enrolment form.

Will my family day care educator provide transport?

Some educators provide transport to take children to school, kindergarten, or home. Transport differs from excursions, and you will need to sign a permission form for your child to be transported, or for your child to travel with children being transported.

For more information, please speak with your family day care educator and refer to our [Family Day Care policy and procedures](#).

Non-standard hours and overnight care

Care is usually provided Monday to Friday during the day. Some educators offer non-standard hours or overnight care, which requires approved sleep spaces and written parental consent. Please speak with your educator to see if these options are available.

Health, safety, and wellbeing

Safe use of digital technologies and online environments

Educators must use a registered device to take, store and transmit images of children in care. Educators will discuss their risk assessment with you and assist you to complete a consent form for images and videos of your child, while in care.

Supervision

Educators are required to actively supervise children while they are in care.

Sun safety

Educators help protect children from over exposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun. SunSmart practices and family authorisation requirements are explained in the Educator Service Information.

Prescription medication

Educators have a duty of care to ensure medications are administered as directed by health professionals and according to Department procedures. All medications must be in the original pharmacy container with a prescription/pharmacy label that includes:

- Child's name
- Date of dispensing
- Medication and strength
- Dose (how much to give) and timing (when the dose should be given)
- Administrative instructions (e.g. to be taken with food)
- Expiry date (or dispensed within last 6 months, if no date).

The first dose of new medication must be given at home by a parent/caregiver before an educator can administer it in their care setting. This does not include emergency medications (e.g., epi-pen or Ventolin). Medication cannot be administered without a signed Medication Agreement, unless it is covered in an anaphylaxis action plan or asthma care plan. A health support agreement and safety and risk management plan are also required.

Medication labelled 'to be taken as required', 'as directed' or 'PRN' does not provide enough information and CANNOT be administered by educators.

Over the counter medication

Over the counter medication (e.g., Dimetapp, teething gel, vitamins) must be in the original container with a pharmacy label and accompanied by a parent-completed medication agreement form. Please discuss any medication needs with your educator.

Immunisations

Since 1 January 2020, the South Australian Public Health Act 2011 requires children to be fully immunised to enrol in an early childhood service. Early childhood services, including FDC, must keep copies of each child's immunisation records while enrolled.

Parents and guardians are legally required to provide their child's immunisation records to their FDC educator and update records whenever their child receives new immunisations.

Illness in family day care

If your child is unwell, please keep them home until they are feeling better. Children are usually most infectious when showing symptoms (for example, sneezing, coughing, vomiting, or diarrhoea) but can still be contagious before or after illness. If a child becomes unwell during care, educators will contact the parent to collect them. It is important to discuss your educator's policy on sick children and have a backup care option, as services may need to close at short notice due to illness.

All educators are guided by [Staying Healthy 6th Edition Preventing infectious diseases in childhood Education and Care services](#).



Fees

Charging fees

FDC educators set their fees according to the Department's [hourly fee schedule](#).

FDC educators charge the same fee for every child in their service, regardless of eligibility for CCS or Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS). ACCS is provided to families facing barriers to affordable child care and helps cover all or most gap fees.

Contact Centrelink if you believe you may be eligible for this subsidy.

Fee schedule

Your educator's fee schedule lists all service charges, showing the total cost of care. Some costs may be eligible or ineligible for CCS. Eligible costs are:

- Educator hourly fee
- Meals
- Travel
- Nappy services
- Excursions
- Parent administration levy (a fee charged per hour for each child in care to cover the Department's costs to administer family day care).

One off charges such as advance payments or penalty fees (late fees) are ineligible for CCS.

You must sight and sign your educator's fee schedule at least two weeks before care is to commence, or when fees are to be increased during your child's enrolment.

Payments

Advance payments

Your educator may request an advance payment to cover potential fee losses if outstanding payments arise during your child's enrolment. This advance payment is a private arrangement between you and your educator, and you will receive an invoice and receipt upon payment.

Remaining funds at the end of enrolment may be used to offset the final invoice. Any balance will be returned, providing all fees are paid.

To confirm if an advance payment is required, please refer to your educator's fee schedule and service handbook.

Gap fee payments

If you are eligible for CCS or ACCS, you must pay a gap fee - the difference between the total cost of care and your subsidy amount.

You will receive a statement of entitlement detailing the care provided, fees charged and subsidy paid.

Gap fees are paid via a direct debit arrangement that is set up before care commences. Gap fee payments are processed every two weeks, after care is provided, by taking money from a bank account or credit card. Please note there are transaction fees connected to these payments, see below:

- Transaction fee \$0.70
- Credit card surcharge 1.9% of invoice total

If payment is not made within seven days, you will be contacted to arrange payment. Failed direct debit payments incur an \$8 dishonour fee per each failed transaction.

If payments are overdue by 14 days without an advance payment, a fee payment plan will be set up. Care will stop if there is no payment plan in place, and all outstanding fees must be paid before care can resume.

Financial hardship

If you are experiencing financial hardship, please contact the Business Centre to discuss alternative payment options or support.

Bookings

Your educator will explain the types of bookings available in their service:

- Routine (regular pattern of care)
- Casual (care as needed)
- Temporary (care continuing for a minimum two weeks, maximum six weeks).

If you need to change your child's booking, please discuss it with your educator. All booking changes must be submitted by your educator to the Business Centre by Tuesday of the week prior to the change.

Sessions of care

A session of care refers to the minimum time for which a service charges a fee. The educator must be available for the entire session when claiming care. If your child needs to be collected early due to your educator's unavailability, only the actual hours worked can be claimed.

The allowable sessions your educator may provide are:

- Hourly sessions within standard hours from 8am-6pm weekdays
- Hourly sessions within non-standard hours (after 6pm and weekdays)
- Daily sessions within standard and non-standard hours, to a maximum of 10 hours (Monday to Friday)
- Half day part time sessions
- Overnight care (to be approved by FDC's Service Manager).

Consult your educator's service booklet and fee schedule for the sessions of care available.

Claiming for care provided

Your child's sessions of care are recorded on a weekly timesheet, sent via the Harmony Web system. You must sign each timesheet to approve the care. Once approved, it will be processed and submitted to the CCS system by the Business Centre. Unsigned timesheets will be returned to you for completion. Please remember to sign your child in and out of each session using your PIN to ensure accurate records.

Claiming for absences

You may be charged for a session your child did not attend if your educator claims an absence through the CCS system.

Absences on public holidays can be claimed if a routine booking is in place and your educator is open before or after the public holiday. All claimed absences are paid at the usual hourly rate, with CCS and gap fees unchanged.

Centrelink allows up to 42 absences per financial year; additional absences require a doctor's certificate for CCS to be paid. Some circumstances allow more than 42 absences. Contact the Business Centre for details.

Generally, CCS does not cover absences at the start or end of an enrolment, including holding fees or absences after your child's last day of physical attendance in care. Exceptions do apply in certain cases; contact the Business Centre for details.

Termination of care

We understand that circumstances may require care to be terminated. Either the educator or parent must give two weeks' notice for the termination of care. Your child must attend their last day for CCS to be applied; otherwise, the full rate will be charged.

Educators may cease care without the two weeks' notice if a fee payment plan has been implemented, and the parent has failed to comply; or outstanding fees remain unpaid.

Educator availability

FDC is a sole operator service, meaning that the educator is the only person providing care onsite. Educators usually provide at least two weeks' notice for leave or holidays.

While educators work hard to provide continuity, they may be unavailable due to illness or household sickness to ensure a safe environment. We encourage families to have backup care options, in case the educator is not available. The Business Centre can assist families with finding alternative care if needed; however, options at short notice may be limited. No fees are charged if your educator is not available.

Protecting your personal information

In accordance with the Privacy Act 1988, your personal information is used solely for the Department's FDC purposes and will not be disclosed outside the Department unless authorised by you or required by law. Educators must have signed permission from families to take and use photos of your child, including on online platforms.

Providing feedback

If you wish to provide us with feedback, including complaints, concerns and compliments, as well as questions about our family day care service, please contact us.

Phone (metro): 8372 7523

Phone (country): 1300 551 890

Email: education.FDCCorporate@sa.gov.au

Please also feel free to access our family day care website at www.education.sa.gov.au/family-day-care for more information.

Contact Us

North Group Family Day Care Office

20 Langford Drive, Elizabeth

P: 8207 9100

E: Education.familydaycare@sa.gov.au

South Group Family Day Care Office

Level 3, Noarlunga House, Noarlunga Centre

P: 8207 3657

E: Education.familydaycare@sa.gov.au

Central Group Family Day Care Office

20 Beatty Street, Flinders Park

P: 8416 7400

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