

Frequently Asked Questions

COVID-19: Plan of Communications to Families
Issue 0.1 : 23.03.2020

What preventative measures have been put in place to prevent spread in the centres?

Big Fat Smile have implemented a range of measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our centre. These include but are not limited to:

Establishment of a BFS COVID-19 Critical Incident Team

Enforcement of Government Directives related to travel and self-isolation

Children and families to wash hands/sanitise upon arrival

Children will no longer be self-serving food at meal times

Meal times will be staggered to avoid large groups of children eating together

In most centres, where possible, Children will no longer use drink bottles whilst at the centre

Educators discussing and role modelling good hygiene practices to the children daily

Programmed activities and free play experiences will be re-evaluated to limit the amount of children at each activity and the time they are in close proximity

Increased frequency of cleaning of high-touch surfaces including Sign in/out iPad

Unwell Children and staff will be sent home and asked to seek medical advice

Cancellation of all centre excursions and upcoming visitors to the centre- to be reviewed for Vacation care closer to the commencement dates.

Encouraging families to limit the time spent at the centre during pick up and drop off

If my child is forced to self-isolate, will I still be charged full fee?

If you are currently unable to attend our service due to self-isolation, this is treated as would be any other illness and absence as per our policy. We are working with the State and Federal Governments on how they are supporting families. The most current information is that families should use their 42 days Allowable Absences. Where the 42 days have been used, additional absences have become available to access.

Whilst utilising absence days requires ongoing payment of your fees, which remain eligible for Child Care Subsidy, it secures your placement at the centre.

For families experiencing a loss of income, such as casual workers or those in self-isolation due to exposure to risk, you may be eligible for the Additional Child Care Subsidy (Temporary Financial Hardship). This subsidy is available for up to 13 weeks and, in most cases, the full cost of childcare will be covered. This can be accessed by contacting Services Australia.

Below is a link with more information on how to apply for Additional Child Care Subsidy.

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/additional-child-care-subsidy>

If my centre is forced to close, will we still be charged full fee?

As per our current policy, parents are not charged fees when a centre is closed. Therefore, parents will not be charged for the days a centre is forced to close due to a COVID-19 outbreak.

I am making the choice to keep my child at home. Will the two week notice period apply if I choose to withdraw my enrolment?

Yes. As per our policies, you must give two weeks' notice when withdrawing your enrolment from a centre.

Where will I receive updates from Big Fat Smile?

- Kinderloop (Primary)
- SMS to the first contact mobile phone (if required)
- Email
- Telephone (if required)

My work situation has changed. What can I do?

Apply for Additional Childcare Subsidy on grounds of Temporary Financial Hardship. Should you meet qualifying criteria, this will allow your enrolment to remain active and ensure you do not lose your position with your centre/s.

To qualify, you must:

- be eligible for [Child Care Subsidy](#)
- have experienced temporary financial hardship due to an event that happened in the last 6 months (including lost your job, other than if you resigned or retired, suffered a loss of income or a business failure due to circumstances outside of your control, such as serious illness
- been adversely affected by a major disaster event
and
- have a substantially reduced ability to pay child care fees.

The ACCS will allow access to 100 hours of subsidised care for your child each fortnight.

It affords the lower of either:

- 100% of the fee charged where it's equal to or below the hourly rate cap
- up to 120% of the hourly rate cap, where the fee charged is above the hourly rate cap.

The additional subsidy is applied for a maximum of 13 weeks per event. You can apply for a higher percentage in exceptional circumstances.

See [here](#) for full details

See [here](#) for details of how to apply.

Will I be able to pause my child's enrolment due to my current work situation, self-isolation or for medical reasons?

Families receiving the Child Care Subsidy can use up to 42 absence days per child, per financial year, for any reason without requiring supporting evidence — which would cover those in self-isolation. Where the 42 days have been used, additional absences have been made available to families free of requirement for medical certificates in the wake of COVID-19

Will there be increases on the 42 Days of Absence Limit?

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Big Fat Smile

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Families remain entitled to the 42 days of absences per child, free of requirement for a medical certificate.

You can now access additional absence days in light of COVID-19, which will ensure your space is held with the centre. Fees remain applicable and are eligible for Child Care Subside (CCS).

Are there resources for talking to my children about the disease?

We refer you to our blog, where our Pedagogical Thinker in Residence, Dr Michele Peden will be providing resources and updates for parents relating to navigating children in the wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic. See our blog [here](#).

My child has a medical condition, do I need to give 2 weeks' notice?

If your medical practitioner provides a certificate to support the need to withdraw your child immediately as they are considered high risk, then we will assess the need to provide 2 weeks' notice on case by case basis. A reminder that you cannot end care on an absence or Child Care Subsidy will not be paid by the Government and parents will be responsible for the full fee.