

Mansfield Autism Statewide Services

Service Fees Policy and Procedures

AA2	Accessible and Affordable	Service Fees Policy and Procedures
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What this policy aims to do	To provide transparent and accessible information about service fees
Who this policy applies to	MASS CEO, all staff, families (both current and prospective)
Who is responsible for carrying out this policy	CEO, Finance and Admin Staff
What words used in this policy mean	<p>A 'service fee' is a monetary charge for a service that has been provided by an organisation</p> <p>"School Fees" means the fee payable to attend the school for day students. The school fee is written in the Schedule of School Fees and may be altered annually at the discretion of the School.</p> <p>'Income' is money received on a regular basis from wages, social security or allowances</p> <p>"Fee Assist" means a concession fee approved by the CEO.</p> <p>'Residential statement' means mandatory information (fees, charges, hours of support) for people receiving accommodation services</p>
Legislation this policy is based on	National Disability Service Standards Victorian Human Services Standards
Other relevant policies	SA1 Client Rights and Responsibilities AS1 Guardians and Administrators

Version	Date	Author/Editor	Approved by	Notes
1.0	26/8/2016	Peter Lane		
1.1	31/5/2018	D Stephenson		Update format
1.2	20/5/2020	N Seymour	S. Reeves	Included Undue Financial Hardship Guidelines
1.3	14/01/2022	N Seymour	S Reeves	Change Director to CEO, annual review
1.4	28/06/2023	N Seymour	S Reeves	Annual review

1.5	27/02/2024	T de Vries	S Reeves	Incorporate school fees
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SERVICE FEES POLICY

Service Fees Policy

Broadly, MASS believes that people with disability and their families should accept the same responsibility as other people in the community to contribute to meeting the costs of services they use.

Where fees are set by government regulations (such as the National Disability Insurance Agency), MASS will not charge any more than the maximum set for the service.

Where MASS sets fees without regulation (such as school fees), we will be mindful of the fact that many people with disability have limited incomes and that families with a child or young person with autism may face a range of additional costs and will consider individual capacity to pay. MASS will apply *Undue Financial Hardship Guidelines* (see Attachment 1) to assess if people say they cannot pay fees.

The fees MASS charge will be fair, transparent and consistent across services. MASS will provide details of fee structures to all people who use MASS services in a format they can understand.

Fees will normally be invoiced fortnightly, with payment expected within 14 days, unless other arrangements have been agreed. Most services are GST-free, and MASS will give clear information if GST is required to be paid for any service.

School fees

At MASS we are committed to providing a student centred, enriching, caring, and dynamic learning environment for students with autism.

The school fees at MASS are essential in providing an individualised education for our students, and are used to:

- provide resources, materials, facilities and equipment
- provide teaching, administrative and ground staff
- maintain buildings, grounds and other facilities.

Information about MASS school fees is shared in the following ways:

- on the school website www.autismmansfield.org.au
- at enrolment interviews
- during Term 4, the following year's fees are advised in writing to all enrolled families
- on request.

On application for enrolment, parents are provided with the 'Enrolment Agreement' and 'Schedule of Fees' outlining the fees, charges, and term of business. The acceptance by parent(s)/guardian(s) of a position at MASS assumes the ability to pay fees in full by the due date. Parent(s)/guardian(s) accept a position for their child on signing the 'Application for Enrolment form'.

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Fee Assistance

MASS acknowledges that clients will, for various reasons from time to time, be unable to pay fees when they become due and payable to MASS. It is not the intention to cause hardship to any client through MASS's debt recovery procedures and consideration will be given to acceptable arrangements to clear the debt prior to the end of the current financial year, where possible. MASS recognises there are cases of genuine financial hardship requiring respect and compassion in certain circumstances. See Appendix B Undue Financial Hardship Guidelines.

School Students

We are aware that, from time to time, some families may find themselves in financial difficulty. With this in mind, our intent is to ensure no student will be excluded from our school due to a genuine inability to pay full or even part fees.

Fee assistance may be considered in cases where a family's financial circumstances have subsequently changed in such a way as to make fee adjustments necessary. An application for fee assistance should be made as early as possible in the billing cycle.

An application for fee assistance is valid only for the current school year. If assistance is required beyond the current year, a new application must be submitted at the commencement of the school year to enable a current assessment of the family's financial situation.

Fee assistance is means tested in line with Federal Government Poverty Guidelines. The assessment process takes into consideration all income (including wages, Youth Allowance, all other Centrelink and Child Support payments), as well as housing costs (including rent or mortgage/rates).

Transferring/leaving students

We appreciate that changing family circumstances will sometimes require that a student transfer to another school. Fees will be payable for the whole of the term in which the enrolment is terminated, except in cases where the Principal determines that fair notice is given or that fair notice was impractical. No refund of fees paid or waiver of any fees outstanding will be made if the student is withdrawn from the school during a term, or is absent for any reason.

MASS requires written notice provided at least one full term in advance of a student's intention to leave the school.

Non-Payment of Fees

On rare occasions, parent(s)/guardian(s) fail to pay their account, do not respond to reminder notices and do not contact MASS to make alternative arrangements. In these instances, MASS is reluctantly forced to consider engaging the services of professional debt collection agency and may involve the instigation of legal action.

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If this occurs, the matter then effectively passes out of the MASS' control and all negotiations for payment must then be made with the debt collection agency. The parent(s)/guardian(s) credit rating may also be affected and listed as a default account with Veda Advantage, the largest credit reference agency in Australia.

Any fees incurred by MASS in collecting outstanding fees (including fees for dishonoured cheques or debt collection services) will be passed on to the parent(s)/guardian(s) concerned.

