

Target audience

This guideline is intended for Alfred Health staff and clients receiving services under Alfred's Commonwealth Home Support Program (**CHSP**) and Transition Care Program (TCP).

Purpose

To provide a unified, transparent, and equitable framework for client contributions and fees across Alfred Health's aged care programs and describe the processes related to financial hardship provisions.

Summary

This guideline outlines the principles, procedures, and governance for determining and managing client fees under CHSP and TCP. It includes hardship provisions, payment processes, and coordination across services.

GUIDELINE

Principles

- *Consistency*: All clients who can afford to contribute to the cost of their care will be required to do so. Client contributions will not exceed the actual cost of service provision. Fees shall not be applied to exempt population groups. All consumers shall be afforded full rights to quality service regardless of the determined fee.
- *Transparency*: This guideline will be publicly available, given to, and explained to all new and existing clients.
- *Hardship*: The guideline will include arrangements for those who are unable to pay the required contribution.
- *Reporting*: Alfred Health will report the dollar amount collected from client contributions.
- *Fairness*: Consideration will be given to clients in receipt of compensation payments and fully funded retirees. Fees for service shall be in accordance with income level, amount of service access, changes in circumstances and ability to pay. Adjusted fee considers factors where clients have higher than expected expenses
- *Sustainability*: Revenue from client contributions will be used to support ongoing service delivery and expand the services we are currently funded to deliver.
- *Review*: Fee arrangements are reviewed 1-2 times per year to ensure cost alignment, consistency and equity.
- *Complaints*: Clients and/or their supporter are encouraged to raise any concerns, as per our Aged Care Services Complaint and Feedback Guideline.

Fees

1. Determining Fees

The process of setting fees should be as simple and unobtrusive as possible, respecting the individual's right to privacy and confidentiality. To ascertain an individual's ability to contribute to the cost of their care, Alfred Health may only request information that is reasonable to request under the circumstances (i.e. the individual is an in-patient of the hospital before entering TCP). In determining an individual's capacity to pay fees, the service provider should consider any exceptional and unavoidable expenses incurred by the individual.

Where an individual enters an episode of care while receiving other forms of funded aged care services, staff should consider the interaction of the new service provider (TCP or CHSP) with these other services in determining the capacity of individuals to pay fees. Coordination between providers is expected to ensure the individual's needs are met and services aren't being duplicated.

Fee arrangements are reviewed 1-2 times per year to ensure cost alignment, consistency and equity.

2. Payment of Fees

Clients' fees are based at a subsidised rate, dependent on client income. All clients are presented with a service agreement which clearly indicates the amount charged to the client based on the type of services they are receiving and their level of income prior to commencement of services.

Clients will be given notice of any changes to their fee schedule.

Payment of fees varies by service. Payments may be received at point of service delivery or invoiced after receipt of services. Clients have the responsibility to pay fees within the outlined timeframes.

Applicability of fees for service shall be determined at the time of referral by a staff member as per Alfred Health Delegations of Authority.

2.1 Income Determination

Income level shall be determined as high, medium or low according to defined categories at the time of referral processing (verbal self-declaration by the client/carer to the Access Officer or relevant staff member). Refusal to declare income level may result in classification as high income.

3. Non-Payment of Fees

If a client is found to be at least 30 days overdue on payment without a prior arrangement, staff will contact the client and/or their registered support person or advocate to discuss the reasons for non-payment.

Depending on the circumstances, a number of fee payment options may be considered. All reasonable attempts to negotiate will be made to arrive at a mutually agreed arrangement. If ability to pay is not an issue, and payment is still not made within a total of 45 days of the original due date, services can be ceased at Alfred Health's discretion.

The client will be informed in writing of our decision and will have their right of appeal explained to them. The financial handling of fees that are to be waived, remain unpaid, or require adjustment is

subject to Alfred Health's Delegations of Authority.

4. Adjustment of Fees – Financial Hardship

Clients, registered supporters, advocates, and Alfred Health staff can request consideration for an adjustment of fees or a review of their fees based on financial hardship. Individuals are required to apply for a fee adjustment and are encouraged to discuss their financial situation with the provider prior to receiving services. Some services may require the client to complete a form outlining their request for fee adjustment. Review and adjustments are considered on a case-by-case basis.

Once fees are confirmed, services will be delivered at the agreed adjusted rate. In accordance with clinical judgement, clients may be referred to or encouraged to access financial counselling services.

5. Fee capping

For clients accessing CHSP services, fee for service shall not exceed the cost of three service events per week regardless of the extent of service provided. Fee capping applies to individual allied health appointments only. Fee for service for a clinically justifiable joint consultation shall be capped at the rate of the primary discipline.

6. Reporting and Governance

Annual reports and reviews will enable fee reconciliation and monitoring of compliance. Financial auditing processes shall occur in accordance with Alfred Health accountabilities.

7. Grievances

Aged Care Services Complaint and Feedback Guideline shall be applied to client fees, including escalation via reporting lines.

Key related documents

Key aligned policy

- Aged Care Service Provision Policy
- Alfred Health Delegations of Authority
- Alfred Health Finance Manual

Key legislation, acts & standards:

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic)
- *Aged Care Act 2024* (C'wealth)

Keywords

Fees, aged care, finance

AGED CARE SERVICES CLIENT CONTRIBUTION AND FINANCIAL HARDSHIP GUIDELINE

Governance

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