*SKILLS FIRST* YOUTH ACCESS INITIATIVE: GUIDEBOOK

**HELPING BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN DISADVANTAGE AND EDUCATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN VICTORIA**

This Guidebook has been prepared to help relevant young people and the community and other organisations who work with them, to understand the range of training options available under *Skills First*, how to access them, and how to access the Youth Access Initiative student tuition fee waiver - including how to complete and have authorised the designated Youth Access Initiative Referral Form.

### What is the *Skills First* Youth Access Initiative?

*Skills First* is the Victorian Government’s commitment to a high-quality training and TAFE system that leads learners to real jobs. Subject to meeting *Skills First* eligibility criteria, individuals can enrol in subsidised accredited vocational education and training (VET), in courses that meet the skills needs of Victoria, and maximise individuals’ prospects of valuable work. More information about *Skills First* can be found at:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/training/providers/funding/Pages/skillsfirst.aspx>

A key priority for *Skills First* is to support disadvantaged learners to engage with and succeed in their education and training. The *Skills First* Youth Access Initiative contributes to this priority by further reducing the costs of subsidised training by providing a waiver on student tuition fees for certain eligible young people.

### Who is the *Skills First* Youth Access Initiative for?

The *Skills First* Youth Access Initiative is for young people in Victoria who:

* meet eligibility criteria applying to government subsidised training under *Skills First*; and
* are aged 24 years or under; and
* have been or are currently on a Child Protection Order or a Youth Justice Order (but are not currently in custody); or
* are a resident of an Education First Youth Foyer.

Appendix 1 provides a detailed list of relevant orders and foyer details.

While only individual *Skills First* contracted training providers can confirm eligibility for government subsidised training, the *Skills First* online eligibility indicator provides a useful initial tool for checking whether someone might be eligible, and can be found at:

<https://www.skills.vic.gov.au/s/how-to-check-your-eligibility>

### What training is available?

A wide range of subsidised vocational education and training choices are available under *Skills First*. These include training in:

* Certificates (I – IV);
* Diploma or Advanced Diploma courses;
* the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE); and
* the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL).

### Which organisations provide subsidised training?

*Skills First* training providers have been selected for their capacity to deliver quality government subsidised training.

A list of *Skills First* training providers that are able to offer both subsidised training and the *Skills First* Youth Access Initiative student tuition fee waiver can be found at: <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/Skills-First-Youth-Access-Initiative.aspx?Redirect=5>

These include Victoria’s thirteen TAFE institutes, several dual sector universities, and nearly 100 Learn Local providers. Only those *Skills First* training providers on this list can offer the Youth Access Initiative student tuition fee waiver.

Specific details of the range of subsidised training opportunities available at each of these training providers can be found at:

<https://www.skills.vic.gov.au/s/>

### ****How do young people access subsidised training and the student tuition fee waiver?****

Before eligible young people make contact with their chosen training provider, they will need to have a completed Youth Access Initiative Referral Form.

The Youth Access Initiative Referral Form is available at:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/pathways/SkillsFirstYouthAccessInitiativeReferralForm.docx>

The form must be used by a Referral Agency to refer a young person to training or alternately, young people can ‘self-refer’ by completing their section of the form and gaining the endorsement of an Authorised Officer.

*Appendix 2* provides details of organisations that are considered a Referral Agency, and what roles are considered to be Authorised Officers for the purpose of the Youth Access Initiative.

Once the Referral Form is complete, interested young people should be supported or encouraged to make contact with one of the *Skills First* training providers able to offer the Youth Access Initiative student tuition fee waiver, to discuss their interests and options.

*Skills First* training providers are well equipped to help young people work out what training might suit them best, and importantly, will use this opportunity to check if the young person meets the threshold eligibility criteria for government subsidised training.

Contact might be either in person, over the phone, or online depending on the training provider and the young person’s circumstances.

Need further advice? Email the *Skills First* team: skillsfirst.enquiry@education.vic.gov.au

**APPENDIX 1**

**YOUTH JUSTICE ORDERS**

Youth Justice Orders are imposed under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* that requires the Court to make rehabilitation a priority.

**Community Sentences –** this is when the court hands down a non-custodial sentence such as a dismissal, an undertaking or a good behaviour bond, or one of the following orders:

**Youth control order –** this is for children aged 10 to 18. This sentence is served in the community and has strict conditions. Conditions could be going to school or work, getting health treatment or counselling, staying at home at night, not using social media, or not being allowed to go to certain places. A youth control order can last up to 12 months. During the first half of the order, the child must come back to court at least once a month so the court can check the child’s progress. During the last half of the order, the court will decide how often the child must come back to court for this purpose. If the child does not follow the conditions, they will go into detention, unless there are special reasons.

**Probation order** – the child must be supervised by a Youth Justice worker, and not commit any crime. Probation can include special conditions, such as going to counselling or attending a day program.

**Youth supervision order** – this is like a probation order, but it has more supervision. Under this sentence, the child must follow the instructions of a Youth Justice worker, and not do any crime. Like probation, this sentence can include special conditions.

**Youth attendance order** – this is only for young people aged 15 to 20 as an alternative to a youth justice centre order (detention). Under a youth attendance order, the child or young person will be supervised by a Youth Justice worker and must follow strict reporting and attendance conditions. This sentence can also include conditions such as education, counselling, treatment, or unpaid community work. The child or young person must not do any crime during the sentence. If the child or young person does not follow the conditions, they may have to go into detention.

**Detention (custodial) Sentences** – serious youth offences are defined as a Category A or B for and are referred to the adult court and sentences are served in adult detention. Other more common youth detention sentences include:

**Youth residential centre order** – this is detention (being locked up) in a youth residential centre. This sentence can only be given to a child aged under 15 at the time of sentencing. While in a youth residential centre, the child must go to education classes. The child or young person might also do programs (like anger management courses) to improve their behaviour.

**Youth justice centre order** – this is detention (being locked up) in a youth justice centre. This sentence can only be given to a child or young person aged 15 to 20 at the time of sentencing. While in a youth justice centre, the child must go to education classes. The child or young person might also have to do programs (like anger management courses) to improve their behaviour.

**CHILD PROTECTION ORDERS**

Child Protection Orders are enforced through the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005,* and incorporate a number of arrangements as detailed below.

**Temporary assessment order -** Child protection practitioners from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) have applied to the Children’s Court for a temporary assessment order to allow them to investigate a report that the child is at risk of harm.

**Interim accommodation order -** A protection application has been issued and the Court has decided an interim order is needed to keep the child safe until it determines the application. This order is about where the child must live until the next court date. It will usually include conditions.

**Family preservation order** - The Court has decided that a child is in need of protection and can safely stay in their parents’ care while the protective concerns are being addressed. The child will live with one or both parents with no change to parental responsibility for the child. The DHHS has to supervise the child. The objective is to help the family to make changes needed to keep the child safe at home so the family can stay together permanently. This order will usually include conditions.

**Family reunification order** -The Court has decided that a child is in need of protection and cannot safely stay in their parents’ care while the protective concerns are being addressed. This order grants parental responsibility for the child to the Secretary of the DHHS with the limitation that parents’ agreement is needed about major long-term issues. It will usually include conditions. The child will stay in out of home care and the objective is for the child to be reunified with their parent/s once this has happened, and within 12 months, or up to 24 months where permanent reunification is likely by then.

**Care by Secretary order** - The Court has decided that family reunification will not be achieved in a timely way for the child, or the child has been in out of home care for 24 months and still cannot safely return to their parents’ care. Under this order, the Secretary of DHHS has parental responsibility for the child, to the exclusion of all others, for two years. This means that DHHS is responsible for the child’s care and wellbeing and for all decisions concerning them. Usually, the objective is to find a permanent or long-term carer for the child, preferably with extended family, or if not, with another family as soon as possible. In exceptional circumstances, the objective may still be family reunification.

**Long-term care order** - The Court has decided the child is in need of long-term care and there is a suitable carer available to raise the child. Under this order the Secretary of the DHHS, has parental responsibility for the child, to the exclusion of all others, until the child’s 18th birthday. This means DHHS is responsible for supporting the child’s carer to look after the child until they grow up, and for all decisions concerning the child.

**Permanent care order -** The Court has found proposed permanent carers suitable to have parental responsibility for the child to the exclusion of all others, including the Secretary of DHHS. Under this order the carers are the permanent care parents of the child, and have all the duties, powers, responsibilities and authority that parents have in relation to the child until the child’s 18th birthday. The order will usually include conditions.

**Undertaking -** The Court has decided that a child is in need of protection and that future risks can be sufficiently managed by the parent and child with community support. The undertaking may include conditions. The DHHS does not stay involved when an undertaking is made.

**PARTICIPATING EDUCATION FIRST YOUTH FOYERS**

**Broadmeadows** - Education First Youth Foyer at Kangan Institute (TAFE)

**Lilydale** - Education First Youth Foyer at Box Hill Institute of TAFE

**Glen Waverley** - Education First Youth Foyer at Holmesglen Institute of TAFE

**Shepparton** - Education First Youth Foyer at Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE

**Warrnambool** - Education First Youth Foyer at South-West TAFE

**APPENDIX 2**

**Referral Agency**

Any organisation based in Victoria that currently receives funding from or is contracted by the Victorian Government or the Commonwealth Government to provide services to children, young people and/or families can act as a Referral Agency for the *Skills First* Youth Access Initiative and support the eligible young person in completing the Referral Form and enrolling in a suitable course. All Referral Agencies are required to retain a **COPY** of this Referral Form for audit purposes.

**Authorised Officers**

Authorised Officers can sign off on the eligibility of a young person for the *Skills First* Youth Access Initiative. These include Post-Care Support staff, Education First Youth Foyer authorised staff, Youth Justice case managers, central DJCS authorised staff, and Parkville College authorised transition staff, and authorised Department of Education and Training managers.

**Training Providers**

*Skills First* contracted Training Providers approved to offer a tuition fee waiver under the Youth Access Initiative (being only TAFE and Dual Sector Universities and Learn Local providers), must **NOT** charge eligible Youth Access Initiative young people any tuition fees for government subsidised accredited training.

Relevant training providers are required to retain the **ORIGINAL** of this Referral Form for audit purposes and return a copy to the Referral Agency (where relevant), and to the enrolling student. The Training Provider will receive a contribution from DET for the tuition fee-waiver under the *Skills First* Youth Access Initiative.

The Training Provider must report all training delivered to the eligible young person under the *Skills First* Youth Access Initiative in accordance with the reporting requirements outlined in the **Victorian VET Student Statistical Collection Guidelines,** including using the Fee Exemption/Concession Type Identifier

***SKILLS FIRST* YOUTH ACCESS INITIATIVE**

**Help & Advice**

www.education.vic.gov.au

Call 131 823