KINDERGARTEN INCLUSION SUPPORT PROGRAM: SPECIALISED EQUIPMENT program

Guidelines, information and LOAN REQUEST application kit



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# Introduction

These guidelines have been developed for Victorian Government funded kindergarten service staff, parents, guardians, carers and the child’s therapist to explain the purpose of the Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS) – Specialised Equipment Program (SEP) to support children with a significant disability to participate in an inclusive kindergarten program and guide them through the loan request application process.

It is important to read and consider all the information contained in this kit. The kit includes:

* Objective of KIS SEP
* Focus and scope of support
* Eligibility criteria
* Loan request application requirements
* Steps in the loan request application process
* Details of where to send the completed loan request application.

# Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS) Specialised Equipment Program (SEP**)**

Objective of KIS SEP

The Department of Education is introducing a program of a new element of the KIS program, called the KIS Specialised Equipment Program (SEP). The objective of KIS SEP is to enable greater inclusion of children with significant disabilities to participate in a Victorian Government funded kindergarten program, alongside their typically developing peers, so that all children can access, participate and achieve positive learning outcomes as defined in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF).

Specialised equipment under KIS SEP is available for loan at no cost to approved Victorian Government funded kindergarten programs to support children with significant disabilities and will operate within the KIS SEP Guidelines.

Kindergarten services can submit a loan request application to the administering organisation at any point during the kindergarten year. The request is subject to approval in line with the KIS SEP Guidelines and the suitability and availability of the equipment requested.

KIS SEP will operate during the 2021 and 2022 kindergarten years.

Existing KIS Program

The KIS program recognises that an inclusive kindergarten program fosters the development of a sense of belonging and respects individuality and diversity, in order to promote learning, development and well-being in a child's early years.

Other parts of the KIS program include:

* Kindergarten inclusion support for children with a disability and with high, ongoing support needs
* Kindergarten inclusion support for children with complex medical needs.

Kindergarten program

A kindergarten program aims to advance each child’s learning and to optimise the development of key skills.

Kindergarten programs are designed to engage each child in effective learning, thereby promoting communication, learning and thinking, positive relationships and identity.

A kindergarten program provides a supportive environment in which early childhood educators work to support children’s learning and development and to achieve the outcomes identified in the VEYLDF.

Participation in a kindergarten program also helps to identify children who may need extra support for their development and offers links to targeted support services. This helps to ensure that children receive this assistance as early as possible. Kindergarten programs also provide an opportunity for families to develop links with their communities and other supports.

A range of options are available for families and service providers to enhance the inclusion of children with significant disabilities in funded kindergarten programs. Inclusion fosters a sense of belonging and accepts and respects individuality and diversity. Inclusive programs encourage and allow all children genuine opportunities to access and participate in kindergarten programs.

Creating an inclusive kindergarten program

Organisations receiving kindergarten program funding are required to have in place policies and procedures that promote inclusive practice and equality of opportunity for all children. This includes ensuring their enrolment, access and inclusion policies:

* Promote fair and equitable access to kindergarten programs
* Support all eligible children to access a kindergarten program, including those who face barriers to participation
* Do not inadvertently present barriers to participation.
* Comply with Victorian and Commonwealth legislation including the:
	+ *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Commonwealth)
	+ *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Victoria)
	+ *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Victoria)
	+ *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006*.

Kindergarten programs are guided by State and national frameworks and standards which promote high quality, inclusive education and care for all children. These include:

* The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework
* The Early Years Learning Framework
* The National Quality Framework
* Disability Standards for Education.

The practice principles for learning and development identified in the VEYLDF underpin service delivery provided by all early childhood professionals. The principles guide early childhood professionals to work together with children and families to achieve best outcomes for every child. The practice principles are:

* Reflective practice
* Partnerships with families
* High expectation for every child
* Respectful relationships and responsive engagement
* Equity and diversity
* Assessment for learning and development
* Integrated teaching and learning approaches
* Partnerships with professionals.

# Focus of support

The focus of KIS SEP is to:

* Provide specialised equipment for loan at no cost to Victorian Government funded kindergarten services to include children with significant disabilities so that all children can access, participate and achieve positive learning outcomes
* Respond to the child’s abilities and strengths, as well as their needs, by supporting the kindergarten program to enhance their learning and development
* Assist kindergarten programs to implement inclusive and equitable practice under the National Quality Framework and the Disability Standards for Education 2005 and in line with the VEYLDF.

In scope equipment

Specialised equipment available from KIS SEP may include (but is not limited to):

* Standing frames to allow a child with high physical needs to participate in activities in a kindergarten program
* Change tables, toilet seats or steps, potty chairs, mobile stools, hoists, slings, harnesses and seating or posture aids.

Out of scope equipment

Specialised equipment **not** available from KIS SEP includes (but is not limited to):

* Some equipment provided under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
* Therapeutic equipment (for example, hearing aids and therapist tables)
* Equipment that the kindergarten service would reasonably be expected to supply as part of the provision of a quality early learning environment
* Equipment that the parent/guardian/carer would reasonably be expected to supply for their child (for example, wheelchairs, walking frames and body suits)
* Equipment for which there are hygiene issues (for example, padded cots).
* Specialist inclusion toys such as switch and sensory toys
* Communication cards or charts, and Auslan dictionaries to enable the child and educators to communicate effectively.

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# Alignment with the National Disability Insurance Scheme

The NDIS funds a range of supports and services for eligible participants, which may include education, social participation, independence, living arrangements and health and wellbeing.

The types of supports that the NDIS may fund for an individual child include:

* Therapeutic supports for all areas of developmental need
* Help by skilled personnel in aids or equipment assessment, set up and training
* Mobility equipment.

The NDIS funds specialised equipment for use at home and in the community for children eligible for the scheme. However, this does not extend to education and care settings. The early childhood education and care sector continues to be responsible for meeting the education and care needs of children with a development delay or disability, including through:

* Reasonable adjustment
* Inclusion supports that enable children to participate in early childhood education and care settings
* Building the capacity of early childhood education and care services to provide inclusive education and care to all children, including those with high needs subject to reasonable adjustment.

KIS SEP ROLES

Kindergarten services (authorised person) will be responsible for completing and submitting a KIS SEP loan request application in partnership with the child’s therapist (occupational therapist/ physiotherapist) and parent/guardian/carer.

Yooralla (the administering organisation) has been appointed to manage and administer KIS SEP, assess loan request applications and advise of the assessment outcome.

The administering organisation will also be responsible for organising the loan and delivery of the specialised equipment to/from the kindergarten service.

Early Years Inclusion and Intervention unit, Early Learning Division, Department of Education will be responsible for appeals of decisions regarding eligibility.

# Eligibility criteria

All Victorian Government funded Victorian kindergarten services that support a child with a significant disability are eligible to submit a loan request application.

The child must be holding a Victorian Government funded place and attending either:

* Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program
* Four-Year-Old Kindergarten program
* Second year of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten program
* Early Start Kindergarten.

The kindergarten service is seeking specialised equipment to provide for the access and participation of a child that has a disability as defined by the Disability Act 2006.

KIS SEP requests are subject to approval in line with the KIS SEP Guidelines and the suitability and availability of the equipment requested.

Definition of Disability

For the purpose of the KIS program, disability is defined in accordance with the Disability Act 2006. A person with a relevant qualification must assess the child as having a disability as defined in the Disability Act 2006. Examples of a person with relevant qualifications include a paediatrician, specialist medical practitioner or registered psychologist.

Disability in relation to a person means

* 1. A sensory, physical or neurological impairment or acquired brain injury or any combination thereof, which
		1. is, or is likely to be, permanent, and
		2. causes a substantially reduced capacity in at least one of the areas of self-care, self- management, mobility or communication, and
		3. requires significant ongoing or long-term episodic support, and
		4. is not related to ageing
	2. An intellectual disability; or
	3. A developmental delay.

# The loan request application process

A KIS SEP loan request application can be made to the administering organisation at any point during the kindergarten year.

The loan request application process is outlined below:

* The authorised person of a kindergarten service completes the loan request application with a recommendation from the child’s therapist
* The loan request application must be signed by the authorised person, Early Years Management (EYM) (if applicable), parent/guardian/carer and the child’s therapist
* The authorised person submits the loan request application along with relevant supporting documentation to the administering organisation
* The administering organisation’s allied health professional will liaise with the child’s therapist on receipt of the loan request application
* The administering organisation will assess all applications and respond to all requests within a two-week period
* If further information is required, the authorised person will be contacted and requested to provide further information
* If the loan request application is approved the authorised person must sign the loan agreement form which sets out the terms and conditions associated with borrowing the specialised equipment.
* The specialised equipment item will be sent by courier to the kindergarten service.
* If more than one child with a significant disability is attending a funded kindergarten group, a separate loan request application must be submitted for each child.

# Privacy

The Department is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information by complying with the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*, the *Health Records Act 2001* and other relevant legislation.

The Privacy Declaration by parent/guardian/carer that forms part of the loan request application requires only one signature and can be signed by any of the following people:

* A person with parental responsibility for ‘major long-term issues’ as defined by the Family Law Act 1975 (Commonwealth)
* An officer delegated to exercise the powers and functions of the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services under sections175(1)(b).(2) & (3) of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Victoria)
* A carer authorised under a Department of Health and Human Services Instrument of Authorisation to make decisions about ‘major long-term issues’ as defined by the *Family Law Act 1975* (Commonwealth).

If none of the above people are available, an informal carer may sign this form. An informal carer is a relative or other responsible adult with whom the child lives and who has day to day care of the child. Informal carers should sign an ‘Informal Carer Statutory Declaration’ to confirm their status. This is available at

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/spag/safety/informalcarerstatdec.pdf>

The completed KIS SEP loan request application will be placed on file by the administering organisation who are responsible for managing the KIS SEP and by the authorised person lodging the loan request application (refer to the Privacy Notice in the loan request application).

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# Completing the KIS SEP loan request application

Kindergarten service details

This section seeks information pertaining to the kindergarten program that the child with a significant disability is attending. Please indicate:

* Name of the kindergarten service
* Service approval number: The service approval number is a unique number given to an approved education and care service. If you do not know the Service Approval Number, you can find it by searching for the service name in the ACECQA National Register: <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/national-registers>. The Service Approval Number begins with SE- followed by digits (e.g. SE-00001234)
* Provider approval number: The provider approval number is a unique number given to an approved provider of an education and care service or services.  If you do not know the Provider Approval Number, you can find it by searching for the provider name in the ACECQA National Register: <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/national-registers>.The Provider Approval Number begins with PR- followed by digits (e.g. PR-00001234)
* Address/suburb/postcode
* Name of the authorised person
* Position
* Phone
* Mobile
* Email
* Service setting
* Program type
* Delivery address (if different to the above)

Early Years Management (EYM) details

* Is the kindergarten managed by an EYM?
* Name of authorised officer
* Organisation
* Phone
* Email

Child’s details

This section seeks information about the child. Please indicate:

* Child’s first name and surname
* Child’s date of birth
* Child’s gender
* Disability diagnosis (**attach confirmation of disability**)
* Is the kindergarten service supported through the KIS Program?

Therapist’s details

This section seeks information about the child’s therapist. Please indicate:

* Therapist’s name
* Organisation
* Physiotherapist/occupational therapist
* Phone
* Email

Specialised equipment requested

This section seeks information about the specialised equipment that is being requested. Please indicate:

* The specialised equipment requested
* The specifications of equipment (e.g. model, size, accessories required).

Background information

This section seeks background information relevant to the child. Please indicate:

* The child’s abilities and functional status
* How the equipment applied for assists in supporting the inclusion of the child with a significant disability into the kindergarten program?
* How the specialised equipment fits into the kindergarten environment and what procedures the kindergarten service has developed to store and maintain the equipment?

Therapist prescribing specialised equipment

This section seeks details of the child’s therapist prescribing the specialised equipment to be used by the child. Please indicate:

* Name of therapist
* Signature
* Date.

Kindergarten Service Authorisation

This section seeks information about the authorised person. Please indicate:

* The name of the authorised person
* The authorised person must sign and date the loan request application.

Early Years Management (EYM) Authorisation

This section seeks information about the EYM authorising officer (if applicable). Please indicate:

* The name of the EYM authorising officer
* The EYM authorising officer must sign and date the loan request application.

Parent/guardian/carer consent for specialised equipment for use by their child

This section seeks parent/guardian/carer consent for specialised equipment for use by their child. Please indicate:

* The name of the parent/guardian/carer
* The parent/guardian/carer must sign and date the loan request application
* Please note that a loan request application will not be considered if it is not signed by the parent/ guardian/carer.

Parent/Guardian/Carer consent

This section must be signed by the parent/guardian/carer. Please indicate:

* Title and name of the parent/guardian/carer
* This must be signed and dated.

Checklist for the authorised person

Before submitting the loan request application, please ensure the following:

* All sections of the loan request application have been completed
* The loan request application has been authorised and signed by the authorised person and EYM where applicable
* The therapist prescribing the specialised equipment to be used by the child has signed the form
* The parent/guardian/carer has signed the consent for specialised equipment for use by their child
* The parent/guardian/carer has signed the privacy declaration
* A copy of the loan request application has been kept for the kindergarten service’s records
* A copy of the loan request application form has also been provided to the parent/guardian/carer.
* If additional attachments are provided, all copies are initialed by the parent/guardian/carer and noted on the loan request application.

When the above have been completed, submit the completed loan request application form to the authorising organisation.

# Submitting a loan request application

The loan request application is completed by the authorised person in consultation with the parent/guardian/carer, and with the assistance of child’s therapist. The information provided is confidential (*refer to the Privacy Notice in the loan request application*). The loan request application is signed by the authorised person, EYM (if applicable), the child’s therapist as well as the parent/guardian/carer of the child.

The completed loan request application and other supporting documentation should be submitted to the administering organisation by email.

# Where to send the loan request application

The completed loan request application and any supporting documentation are to be submitted by email to the administering organisation at the following email address KISSpecialistEquipment@yooralla.com.au

# How the loan request application is considered

The administering organisation will determine the eligibility of the loan request application and the specialised equipment requested in line with the KIS SEP Guidelines.

Loan request applications can be made to the administering organisation at any point during the kindergarten year.

Upon assessment of the loan request application, the administering organisation will notify the kindergarten service of the outcome of the loan request application within two weeks of a loan request application being lodged. Where a loan request application is lodged in late December or at the beginning of the New Year the notification timeline may require some adjustment to accommodate the Christmas/New Year holiday period.

The authorised person is responsible for advising the parent/guardian/carer and the child’s therapist of the outcome of the loan request application.

The administering organisation is required to declare any direct involvement with an applicant and will ensure that any conflict of interest is addressed to ensure that the loan request application is considered objectively.

# How equipment is allocated

The administering organisation will advise the authorised person of the outcome of the loan request application (e.g. eligible or ineligible) within two weeks of receipt of the loan request application.

The allied health professional of the administering organisation will liaise with the child’s therapist regarding the specialised equipment and the specifications of the equipment being sought.

If the loan application request is deemed eligible, the administering organisation will advise the authorised person, who in turn informs the parent/guardian/carer and the child’s therapist of the outcome of the application. The item will be sent by courier to the kindergarten service within one calendar month from notification of outcome, pending availability of the equipment and upon the return of the signed loan agreement.

If the loan request application is deemed ineligible, the kindergarten service may request an appeal of the decision.

# PRESCRIBING THERAPIST RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of the prescribing therapist to support the set up and fitting of the equipment. The prescribing therapist will also be responsible for on-site training of staff in the correct use of the equipment provided.

# Appeal process

The kindergarten service may request an appeal of decisions regarding eligibility.

Appeals will be conducted only based on new or additional relevant information, which may not have been available or provided at the time of the loan request application.

All requests for appeals are to be in writing to the Manager, Early Years Inclusion and Intervention at the Department of Education at: Kindergarten.Inclusion.Support@education.vic.gov.au

with **‘APPEAL KIS SEP LOAN REQUEST’** in the subject of the email.

All requests must be accompanied by relevant new or additional information and signed by the parent/guardian/carer and the authorised person.

The Early Years Inclusion and Intervention Manager will then liaise with the administering organisation who made original assessment to progress the appeal. Notification of outcomes of appeals will occur within a two-week period of an appeal being received by DET.

# Equipment maintenance

The kindergarten service is to ensure that the equipment is used for its intended purposes and fit for use.

The kindergarten service is expected to maintain the equipment in good condition.

If the equipment appears to be broken, it is the responsibility of the kindergarten service to inform the administering organisation.

A representative of the administering organisation will contact the kindergarten service to discuss maintenance requirements.

# Return of specialised equipment

Once the child has outgrown the equipment or leaves the kindergarten service, the kindergarten service is required to inform the administering organisation and arrange for the return of the equipment.

The kindergarten service must ensure the equipment has been cleaned prior to collection.

The administering organisation will arrange collection of the equipment at a time suitable for the kindergarten service.

# Transfers

When a child transfers to another funded kindergarten program, the original kindergarten program is required to advise:

* The new kindergarten program that the child has received KIS SEP
* The administering organisation that the child has transferred to another funded kindergarten program so that arrangements can be made for the delivery of the specialised equipment to the new kindergarten program.

# Appendix A: Administering Organisation contact details

Name: Yooralla

Phone number: 5990 9672

Email: KISSpecialistEquipment@yooralla.com.au

# Appendix B: Glossary

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Administering organisation | This is a non-government organisation that administers the Specialised Equipment Program. |
| Authorised person | An authorised person is the early childhood educator or Early Years Manager. |
| Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Victoria) | The Act provides an overarching legislative framework designed to encourage and support a shared commitment towards children in Victoria |
| Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth) | The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person, in many areas of public life, including employment, education, getting or using services, renting or buying a house or unit, and accessing public places, because of their disability. |
| Disability Standards for Education 2005 | The Disability Standards for Education 2005 clarify the obligations of education and training providers and seek to ensure that students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as students without disability. |
| Early Start Kindergarten | The Early Start Kindergarten initiative provides targeted funding for vulnerable three-year-old children to access a kindergarten program free of charge.From 2013 the grant will be available for up to 15 hours per week. Early Start Kindergarten is available for three- year old Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and three-year-old children known to Child Protection (including three-year-old children referred from Child Protection to Child FIRST).This funding is available in all licensed children’s services where the funded kindergarten program is being taught by a degree qualified early childhood teacher (including childcare services and stand-alone kindergartens). |
| Early Years Management  | Early Years Management organisations (formerly known as Kindergarten Cluster Management organisations) provide leadership and management to funded community-based kindergarten services, and other complementary early years services. They have expertise in operating high-quality early childhood education and care services. |
| Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Victoria) | The Equal Opportunity Act 2010 aims to make public life free from discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation. The law provides avenues for people to resolve complaints, and outlines the Commission’s role in helping government, business and the community to identify and eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation. |
| Funded Kindergarten Program | The Victorian Government provides contributory funding for all eligible children to access a kindergarten program in the year before school entry (two years before Grade One).Funded kindergarten programs are provided by a range of organisations, including local government, community based organisations, independent and government schools, and private child care providers, with programs offered in a variety of settings, such as long day care centres, stand-alone community-based settings and schools.Children attending a kindergarten program receive a developmentally appropriate program, planned and delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher. A funded kindergarten program complies with the requirements of the Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria. |
| Health Records Act 2001 | The Health Records Act 2001 protects the privacy of individuals' health information. It regulates the collection and handling of health information. |
| Kindergarten Inclusion Support Program | The Kindergarten Inclusion Support Program builds the capacity of funded kindergartens to support the access and participation of children with a disability and high support needs and/or with complex medical needs. |
| National Quality Framework | The National Quality Framework aims to raise quality and drive continuous improvement and consistency in education and care services. The Framework helps providers improve their services in areas that impact on a child’s development and empower families to make informed choices about which service is best for their child. |
| National Disability Insurance Scheme | The [National Disability Insurance Scheme](http://www.ndis.gov.au/) supports people with a permanent and significant disability that affects their ability to take part in everyday activities. |
| Occupational therapist | The occupational therapist is a therapist providing early childhood and early intervention supports to the child that the application is being submitted for. |
| Physiotherapist | The physiotherapist is a therapist providing early childhood and early intervention supports to the child that the application is being submitted for. |
| Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 | The Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 protects personal information held by Victorian government organisations. |
| Provider Approval Number | The provider approval number is a unique number given to an approved provider of an education and care service or services.  If you do not know the Provider Approval Number, you can find it by searching for the provider name in the ACECQA National Register: <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/national-registers>  The Provider Approval Number begins with PR- followed by digits (e.g. PR-00001234) |
| Service Approval Number | The service approval number is a unique number given to an approved education and care service. If you do not know the Service Approval Number, you can find it by searching for the service name in the ACECQA National Register: <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/national-registers> The Service Approval Number begins with SE- followed by digits (e.g. SE-00001234) |
| The National Quality Framework | The National Quality Framework (NQF) provides a national approach to regulation, assessment and quality improvement for early childhood education and care and outside school hours care services across Australia. |
| Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006 | The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 is a Victorian law that sets out the protected rights of all people in Victoria as well as the corresponding obligations on the Victorian Government. The Charter requires all public authorities, such as Victorian Government and local government departments and agencies, and people or organisations delivering services on behalf of the Victorian Government to give proper consideration to human rights before making a decision and act compatibly with human rights.  |
| Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework | The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework is designed to advance all children’s learning and development from birth to eight years of age.The Victorian Framework provides early childhood professionals with a common language for describing outcomes for children and describes practice principles to guide early childhood professionals to work together, with children and with families to achieve the best outcomes for every child. |