

KINDERGARTEN FUNDING GUIDE



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FOREWORD

Victoria is proudly the Education State, and this starts with the early years.

The Best Start, Best Life reform will help all Victorian children dream even bigger through increased access to quality early childhood education and care and record investment to deliver education programs to children, no matter where they live.

Research consistently shows that 2 years of kindergarten are better than one, which is why the Victorian Government is funding an extra year of kindergarten before school. This commitment is further endorsed by record funding for infrastructure, including both upgrades and new builds, and workforce attraction and retention supports.

Participation in quality early childhood education programs in line with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) can significantly increase positive educational and life outcomes for children, especially those from more disadvantaged circumstances.

Access and participation are critical, as is supporting our workforce of qualified early childhood teachers and educators and Victorian families, to understand and engage in their children's learning.

In 2022, Victoria was the first state or territory to deliver funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten programs, offering children between 5 and 15 hours per week across the state.

This nation-leading reform continues as we work together to deliver the Best Start, Best Life initiatives, including:

- from 2023, free kindergarten programs for 3 and 4-year-old children at participating services
- a new year of universal 'Pre-Prep' for 4-year-olds, rolling out over the decade from 2025
- 50 new Victorian Government-owned childcare centres, to improve access to education and care for children. The first of these centres will be delivered in 2025.

The Department of Education (the department) provides a range of funding with the aim of improving service delivery, identifying vulnerability, and promoting the participation of all children.

Evidence suggests that highly vulnerable children such as those in out-of-home care may be missing out on high-quality early education, despite standing to gain the most from participation.

Kindergarten services provide an important role in identifying children and families that may be vulnerable and delivering programs that meet their needs.

Ensuring inclusion of vulnerable children remains a key objective, which is why the department:

- supports kindergarten services for educationally disadvantaged children through the Australian first School Readiness Funding program
- provides interpreters to kindergartens for free to help service providers communicate with families
- boosts kinder participation for children from diverse backgrounds through outreach support
- supports children across Victoria to learn aboriginal and multicultural languages
- is building inclusive kindergarten services through the successful Building Blocks Inclusion grants program, which provides grants to upgrade buildings and playgrounds and buy equipment
- champions early interventions and support for vulnerable children, including funding to continue the Early Childhood LOOKOUT and Access to Early Learning (AEL) programs.



The department assists organisations to enhance program delivery through various mechanisms, such as supporting services to comply with the National Quality Framework (NQF), provision of professional development for teachers and educators and strengthening partnerships with local government and the community.

Together with the Victorian Koorie community, the department developed *Marrung; Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026*. *Marrung* ensures that the doors to all learning and development services, from early childhood onwards are wide open for Koorie families, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from other parts of Australia who live in Victoria.

Local government – as a key provider and major owner of kindergarten facilities – plays a central role in improving quality, provision, and access at the local level. Across Victoria, local government has led on a range of initiatives such as:

- development of Municipal Early Years Plans (MEYPs) which provide strategic direction for education, health and care programs
- provision of central enrolment schemes to support equitable access for eligible children within a municipality

- collaboration in the *Supporting Children and Families in the Early Years: A Compact* between the department and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, the Department of Health and local government (represented by the Municipal Association of Victoria) 2017–2027
- partnership in the Early Childhood Agreement for Children in out-of-home care
- partnership in developing a Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan (KISP) for each of the 79 Local Government Areas (LGAs) to inform future investment decisions in kindergarten infrastructure.

The objective of this guide is to inform kindergarten service providers about the range of funding that is available, how to apply and the obligations and accountability in receiving funding.

Ensuring service providers receive appropriate assistance is fundamental to improving Victoria's kindergarten services, enhancing children's access and participation in high-quality education and furthering the advancement of our community in the Education State.

ABOUT THE GUIDE

The Kindergarten Funding Guide (the guide) is designed to assist service providers that receive kindergarten funding from the Department of Education (the department) to deliver 3 and 4-year-old kindergarten programs.

Information contained in the guide may change over time to reflect new or changed policy and funding requirements. Service providers will be advised of any changes that occur and the most up-to-date information about kindergarten funding, eligibility and compliance can be found in the guide on the department's website.

Department support for service providers

The department's Early Childhood Improvement Branches provide a dedicated team of supports for early childhood services across Victoria. Early Childhood Improvement Branches can provide support to services regarding the delivery of 2 years of funded kindergarten for all Victorian children, programs and supports for vulnerable children, School Readiness Funding, and professional learning and networks for funded kindergartens and early education settings.



1 CORE FUNDING AND POLICY REQUIREMENTS





CORE FUNDING AND POLICY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for kindergarten funding, service providers must:

- be an approved service provider operating an approved education and care service as regulated by the National Quality Framework (NQF) or the Children's Services Act 1996
- comply with organisational and operational requirements
- comply with funding and policy requirements.

ORGANISATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Service providers must meet the criteria outlined in the table below to deliver a funded kindergarten program in Victoria:

Table 1: Organisational requirements

Requirement	Where to find more information
The service provider must have an Australian Business Number (ABN).	The Australian Government's Business website
The education and care service from which the kindergarten program is offered must be located in Victoria.	
Must comply with all NQF regulatory requirements.	Early Childhood regulation and quality assessment.
The kindergarten program must be delivered in an early education and care service operating under the <i>Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010</i> (National Law) and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (National Regulations) or as a Victorian Children's Service.	
Service providers must have a business plan and budget showing ongoing financial viability.	
Must sign and comply with the department's service agreement and operate in accordance with the specified standards and guidelines.	Service Agreement Requirements.
Must declare to the department any previous legal or financial misconduct.	See information below – Declaration of financial or legal status.
Must operate in accordance with Child Safe Standards (CSS).	See information below. Child Safety
Must comply with the Victorian funding requirements for services to children.	See information below regarding insurance and legal entity status compliance requirements.
Must be incorporated separate legal entities that can be sued in their own right in child abuse proceedings.	See information below regarding insurance and legal entity status compliance requirements.

Declaration of financial or legal misconduct

Organisations applying for kindergarten funding must declare if they are:

- insolvent, in administration or in liquidation
- the subject of an investigation by a State, Territory or Australian Government regulator.

The organisation or its directors or office bearers who have been directors or office bearers of another organisation must declare if it or they have previously:

- been found not to meet eligibility criteria after the submission of an application for funding
- had a Victorian Government funding agreement terminated
- had Victorian Government funding and services suspended or ceased or substantially varied
- persistently breached (without remedy) funding agreements with the Victorian Government
- not repaid monies owing to the Victorian Government
- received an adverse finding by a State, Territory or Australian Government regulator.

Requirement to operate in accordance with Child Safe Standards

All early childhood services are required to comply with Child Safe Standards. The Standards are designed to ensure that organisations that work with children take steps to create a culture of child safety and protect children from all forms of abuse.

To create and maintain a child safe organisation, an early childhood service must have in place:

- strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements
- a child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety
- a code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
- screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel

- processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
- strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
- strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

In complying with the child safe standards, the early childhood service must include the following principles as part of each standard:

- promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- promoting the cultural safety of children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) diverse backgrounds
- promoting the safety of children with disability.

Complying with the Standards is mandatory. Both the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) and the Victorian Regulatory Authority have powers to address compliance by early childhood services. The guide to Creating a Child Safe Organisation available on the Commission's website can help service providers implement the Standards.

[Access more information about the Child Safe Standards on the department's website.](#)

[Access more information about the Child Safe Standard's on the Commission for Children and Young People's website.](#)



Victorian funding requirements for services to children

The Victorian funding requirements for services to children (Funding Guideline) have been introduced to implement recommendations made by the *Betrayal of Trust Report* in 2013 and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

From 1 July 2019, non-government organisations funded by the Victorian Government to deliver services to children are required to be:

- incorporated separate legal entities that can be sued in their own right in child abuse proceedings
- appropriately insured against child abuse.

‘Services to children’ means services provided by a non-government organisation that is responsible for the supervision of, or has authority over, a child. This includes the provision of care, education, services or activities for children. It does not include one-off activities, nor incidental or ad hoc contact with children.

The Funding Guideline applies to new or varied funding agreements entered into after 1 July 2019 between the Victorian Government and non-government organisations who receive funding to provide services to children.

Compliance – incorporation

Organisations must be an incorporated separate legal entity (i.e. an corporation or incorporated association) to be eligible for kindergarten funding.

An organisation not yet incorporated may be eligible for funding provided the department is satisfied that the organisation is actively working towards incorporation and will incorporate within 12 months of the commencement of the new service agreement.

[Access information about how a not-for-profit organisation can become an incorporated association on the Consumer Affairs Victoria website.](#)

Compliance – insurance

Organisations must hold ‘appropriate’ insurance.

Appropriate insurance in terms of the Funding Guideline is insurance coverage that:

- indemnifies for liability as a result of child abuse/molestation
- indemnifies the funded organisation for third party personal/bodily injury including shock, and/or mental anguish, and does not contain exclusions or limitations in coverage for child abuse/molestation
- includes liability for abuse perpetrated by persons associated with the funded organisation, including an office holder, employee, volunteers, agent, contractor or another child
- is held on a “claims made” or “occurrence” basis
- specifies a minimum insured amount of \$5m per claim, or in the case of coverage provided on the basis of a monetary aggregated claims amount, \$10m per annum.

Note: Organisations that are insured through the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA) are compliant with the Funding Guideline insurance requirements. Provision of a current Certificate of Currency will be adequate to meet the department’s requirements.

Organisations not insured by VMIA will need to speak to their current insurance provider to determine if the terms of their insurance comply with the Funding Guideline insurance requirements and provide insurance against liability for child sexual abuse. If a current insurance provider does not provide the appropriate cover, service providers may need to make enquiries with other insurance providers.

Organisations should be prepared to provide evidence of insurance to the department.



GOVERNANCE AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

This section outlines business practice and principles, including governance and financial operations.

Service providers must demonstrate their capability to manage sustainable services by:

- ensuring the service is viable, sustainable, and responsive to community need
- complying with the terms and conditions of their service agreement and use kindergarten funding only for the provision of kindergarten services
- reporting their financial position to the department each year – Financial accountability reporting (FAR) requirements are set out in the service agreement, which includes the annual Service Agreement Compliance Certification (SACC)
- acquitting School Readiness Funding (SRF) in accordance with the department's guidelines
- operating in accordance with good governance principles and practice
- reporting alleged misappropriation of funds to Victoria Police and provide a serious incident report to the department
- keeping budgets (while there is no requirement to submit annual budgets, the department may request to examine a budget or budgets)
- maintaining accounts relating to staff entitlements
- complying with the requirements of the Portable Long Service Benefits Scheme from 1 January 2020 if included in the Scheme.

Good governance practices

Service providers are expected to operate in accordance with good governance principles. This includes:

- monitoring and assessing whether the service is performing effectively, efficiently, and ethically in the best interests of all stakeholders (including children, parents, carers or legal guardians and staff) and in accordance with the law, regulations, probity, accountability and openness
- developing a leadership-led vision, plans, policies and strategies focused on improving outcomes and performance, and building strong and productive partnerships between all stakeholders
- meeting the governance standards under National Quality Standard, Quality Area 7 'Governance and Leadership' for NQF approved services, specifically:
 - effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community
 - governance supports the operation of a quality service.

Services operating under the NQF are also required to have in place and follow policies and procedures in relation to governance and management of the service, including confidentiality of records (regulation 168 (2)(l)).

Governance of private sector organisations is also subject to corporate law requirements.

The department funds the Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) to support eligible service providers with matters relating to governance, management and delivery of sustainable, high quality kindergarten services.

[Access more information about ELAA's free support services on ELAA's website](#) or contact ELAA on membersolutions@elaa.org.au or (03) 9489 3500.

Good financial practices

Services should be able to demonstrate good financial management policies, procedures and practices. This includes policies about fees, financial delegations, fundraising, purchasing, budgeting and requirements for provisions and reserves.

Funding responsibilities

Service providers are expected to operate in accordance with good governance principles. This includes assessing whether the service is performing effectively, efficiently, and ethically in the best interests of all stakeholders (including children, parents, carers or legal guardians and staff), and in accordance with the law, regulations, probity, accountability and openness.

All funded organisations receiving kindergarten funding are required to sign and comply with a service agreement. A service agreement is a document that sets out how much funding the department agrees to make available and the services that the funded organisation is to deliver with this funding. It also sets out the terms and conditions that apply to the use of this funding.

Funding must be used to provide the services specified in the schedules to the Agreement and for no other purpose.

The Agreement requires service providers to complete an annual Service Agreement Compliance Certification (SACC) to certify that funding received from the department was used on the services specified in the service agreement. Submitting an incorrect SACC (failing to correctly indicate how funds were spent) constitutes a breach of the Agreement.

Service providers must report their financial position to the department each year. The Financial Accountability Reporting (FAR) requirements are set out in the service agreement.

[Access more information about FAR and SACC requirements on the department's website.](#)

To monitor service agreement compliance, organisations will be required to meet with their Early Childhood Improvement Branch (ECIB) and complete the Funded Organisation Performance Monitoring Framework (FOPMF), a series of

questions relating to governance, service delivery and financial management.

Unspent funds on cessation of service

Service providers must contact their local ECIB before ceasing a funded kindergarten program and provide at least 30 days' notice to prevent overpayment occurring.

If an overpayment occurs, the department will recoup all overpaid funds from the service provider.

Record keeping and auditing

Service providers must ensure all payments made using kindergarten funding are consistent with the guidelines and properly authorised, including payments made to subcontractors.

As part of regular service monitoring and auditing processes, the department may request evidence of expenditure of kindergarten funding.

Information about service quality and compliance matters may be sought from a range of sources, including the Victorian Regulatory Authority's Quality Assessment and Regulation Division (QARD) for education and care and children's services operating in Victoria.

As part of monitoring the funding and service agreement, the department may seek information about the quality and compliance of a service from the regulatory authority where required.

Keeping budgets

Annual budgets serve as an important tool for service providers to monitor their financial performance.

When budgeting, service providers should consider all anticipated expenditure and costs. This includes expenditure such as staffing, maintenance costs and excursions.



The department funds ELAA to provide advice to kindergarten service providers on preparing budgets.

[Access more information on the ELAA website.](#)

Maintaining accounts

Service providers are required to:

- maintain staff records to ascertain employee entitlements
- keep a separate provision account for long service leave entitlements for employees who are not covered by the Portable Long Service Benefits Scheme and for entitlements accrued prior to 1 January 2020 for employees who are covered by the Portable Long Service Benefits Scheme, if applicable
- keep a separate provision account for employee sick leave entitlements
- budget for and deposit into the provisions account on an annual basis
- comply with the requirements of the Portable Long Service Benefits Scheme if included in the Scheme.

Portable Long Service Benefits Scheme

The Portable Long Service Benefits Scheme commenced on 1 January 2020. Early childhood service providers included in the Scheme are required to register their business and their eligible employees with the Portable Long Service Authority Victoria (the Authority). Employers will need to provide a quarterly return to the Authority and to pay a levy into the portability scheme.

Service providers remain responsible for provisions accrued before 1 January 2020 to ensure future long service leave claims by employees can be met.

Access more information about the Portable Long Service Benefits Scheme on the Authority's website.

Approved uses of kindergarten funding

Service providers in receipt of state kindergarten funding may expend funding on the following items:

- employing staff members to directly deliver the funded kindergarten program

- increasing the quality of the kindergarten program
- improving access and participation in the kindergarten program
- employing staff and contractors to support the delivery of the program (e.g. service coordinator, administrative staff)
- kindergarten staff professional development
- resources and equipment used for the funded kindergarten program
- directly reducing parent fees
- excursions and incursions related to the funded kindergarten program
- extra support for educationally disadvantaged children
- parental engagement
- transition in and out of kindergarten
- specialist programs (e.g. music, science, languages)
- service utilities
- indoor or outdoor minor capital works that directly support the delivery of the kindergarten programs
- saving a reasonable cash reserve for future funded kindergarten programs.

Disapproved uses of kindergarten funding

Funding may not be used:

- to fund other programs delivered at the service
- to directly fund places that do not attract kindergarten per capita funding
- for donations to MPs or political parties
- for any asset purchased with the funding as any security for any loan, credit, payment or other interest without the department's written consent
- for organisation profit and shares.

Note that kindergarten funding is on top of any long day care subsidies received from the Commonwealth Government in respect of funded kindergarten children. It must not be used to displace or replace this funding but must rather be used in addition to this funding in respect of the kindergarten program/s in the service.

Note that some funding streams (e.g. SRF) have a formal acquittal process. In these cases, funding must be used in line with the agreed terms of that funding type.

Monitoring and recovery of funding

The department will undertake monitoring of the use of its kindergarten funding, including an appropriate audit program as required. This will include whether providers are claiming for the right number of kindergarten children enrolled in their service, whether a teacher-led kindergarten program is being provided for the funded number of hours, whether Priority of Access requirements are being applied and whether funding provided is being used for the specified purposes.

If in the reasonable opinion of the department the service provider:

- does not comply with their service agreement
- has claimed for children not enrolled or who have left the service
- has used, spent or committed all or part of the funding other than in accordance with the service agreement,

The department can then:

- request full financial reports and/or undertake an audit
- require the service provider to repay that part of the funding within 30 days, or such other time period as agreed
- renegotiate the delivery of services by the service provider
- suspend funding as per the terms of the service agreement or
- terminate the Agreement and recover the funds paid.

A service provider is in breach of the terms of funding if any funding from the department is:

- used for services not included in the schedules to the Agreement
- used, spent or committed other than in accordance with the Agreement
- used for organisation profit or shares
- unused or uncommitted after the services in the schedules are provided and not used for delivery of future kindergarten services.

Misappropriation of funds

In addition to the department's requirements, there are statutory obligations for corporations and incorporated associations, particularly in terms of financial management and accountability.

If a service provider believes funds have been misappropriated, it has a duty to act on this suspicion by:

- notifying the department
- reporting to Victoria Police for investigation
- organising an audit of relevant financial records relieving the person suspected of the misappropriation of any financial responsibilities until resolution.

Unspent and uncommitted funding

Any funding that is unspent and uncommitted after the delivery of the services (including any reasonable amount that is retained by the service provider to support future program delivery) should be passed on to parents, carers or legal guardians through reduced fees for future services.



MANAGING THE SERVICE

This section provides detail on kindergarten program service management, including written fees policy, payroll, insurance, emergency management, information technology (IT) programs and linking with local government.

Service providers must:

- have a comprehensive written fees policy
- community-based not-for-profit organisations must use the department's contracted payroll service or certify use of an equivalent service
- ensure comparable insurance coverage for service providers not covered under the VMIA Community Service Organisations (CSO) Education Program, including appropriate insurance against child abuse in accordance with the Victorian funding requirements for services to children
- Maintain an up-to-date Emergency Management Plan (EMP)
- Report emergency service closures to the relevant regional contacts via the [department's website](#).

Written fees policy

Services are required under Regulation 168(2) (n) of the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 to have a comprehensive written fees policy. The content of this policy must be communicated to families.

Services participating in Free Kinder must comply with all the terms and conditions on fees charged.

The fees policy must provide information about:

- the total annual fee amount, including any applicable fees for e.g. excursions and any additional hours
- payment options and procedures (for example, payment plans for low-income families)
- action that will be taken if fees are not paid (refer to maintaining engagement of families and children, on page 24)
- any refundable levies (if applicable)
- plans for fundraising (if applicable)
- how parents, carers or legal guardians will be notified of any fee changes throughout the year
- any deposits required to secure a place on a waiting list or to accept an offered place (note that deposits should not act as a barrier to enrolment of vulnerable children, refer to maintaining engagement of families and children, on page 24)
- how the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS) and Early Start Kindergarten grants are applied and how eligible families access subsidies
- exempting children from priority groups (see page 32) from enrolment fees
- operating hours including term dates, planned closures and additional hours to account for closures.

When calculating annual fees, service providers should set an amount that balances the capacity of parents, carers or legal guardians to pay, the provision of a high-quality service and the overall financial viability of the service.



Payroll

The department funds a free payroll service for the following services:

- community-based, not-for-profit incorporated associations
- co-operatives operating through a committee of management
- Early Years Management (EYM) organisations that are not a local government.

The payroll service covers early childhood staff and/or ancillary staff who work at a service or who provide administrative, management or professional support from a central office/location.

The payroll contractor provides the following support services:

- calculation and processing of staff salaries and other entitlements
- processing of taxation, superannuation and other contributions as required
- electronic lodgment of employer declaration forms
- pay slips and payment summaries
- fortnightly reports of salary expenditure for management bodies
- telephone and email advisory service
- training for committees of management
- advice regarding pay and entitlements.

This payroll service is currently provided by Automatic Data Processing (ADP). For more information contact the ADP Kindergarten Support Team on 1300 763 652 or by email: payline_vic@au.adp.com

Community-based, not-for-profit organisations that do not use the department's contracted service must certify in the Kindergarten Information Management System (KIMS) that they use an equivalent payroll service.

Insurance

Community Service Organisation Education Program insurance

Community Service Organisation (CSO) Education Program insurance may be available to community service organisations that receive direct funding from the department.

The CSO Education Program is managed by VMIA and provides insurance coverage for:

- public and products liability
- professional indemnity
- directors' and officers' liability
- entity fidelity
- volunteers' personal accident (injury).

Insured service providers may also be covered for other community service activities provided by the service provider, such as kindergarten or activity groups for 3-year-old children or occasional care.

In relation to kindergarten services that are part of an EYM organisation:

- parent advisory committees that are part of a funded EYM organisation are eligible for CSO Education Program insurance where they are incorporated entities in their own right and support the operation of kindergarten. In these cases, the incorporated parent advisory committee will receive insurance documentation from the VMIA in their name.
- Where a parent advisory committee is not incorporated, they are insured and noted under the EYM organisations CSO Education Program insurance policy.

The following service providers are not covered by the CSO Education Program and are required to make their own insurance arrangements:

- schools
- local government authorities
- church organisations
- tertiary education institutions
- private for-profit organisations
- hospitals
- organisations with head offices in a state other than Victoria
- unfunded organisations that may share premises with funded service providers.

In cases where funding is transacted through a service agreement with a local government authority, church organisation or tertiary education institution, if the parent advisory group of the institution is incorporated separately to the kindergarten program, CSO insurance is provided to the parent advisory group of the kindergarten subject to continued incorporation. No coverage applies to parent advisory groups that deregister their incorporation status.

The CSO Education Program meets the requirements for appropriate insurance against child abuse under the Victorian Funding Guideline for Services to Children. Funded service providers not eligible for the CSO Education Program must ensure they obtain appropriate insurance cover to meet the funding guidelines. See page 89 for further information.

[Access information about the CSO Education Program on the VMIA website.](#)

Community-based organisations delivering a funded kindergarten program on a school site should contact their departmental regional office for further information if required.



Emergency management

All services are required to:

- have an EMP in place
- develop plans in consultation with the appropriate departmental regional office, local community and emergency services, and other relevant stakeholders
- regularly review plans and update them to reflect the needs of the local community.

Services listed on the department's Bushfire At-Risk Register or located in an area identified as at risk of grassfire must submit an EMP to their departmental regional office annually by 30 September each year.

[Access more information about bushfires and grassfires on the department's website.](#)

Service closure in response to an emergency

In the event of an emergency, it may be necessary for a service to close for safety purposes. In this event, the service provider must report to the appropriate local ECIB:

- how many children have been affected
- how long the service may be closed
- any damage that has been sustained
- when the service will resume after closure.

The service provider should have a closure policy which should be clearly communicated to parents, carers or legal guardians at the beginning of the kindergarten year. The closure policy should contain:

- identification of risks that might lead to closure, including local environment risks e.g. floods, bushfires or heatwaves
- the regulatory obligations of the service provider
- a communication plan and strategies for disseminating information about closure due to imminent risk.

Mandatory Code Red closure

Some kindergarten services have been identified as being at high fire risk or located in an area identified as at risk of grassfire and must close on days declared a Code Red Fire Danger Rating Day. Services have been advised of their inclusion on the Bushfire At-Risk Register.

Service providers in receipt of funding will experience no financial disadvantage regarding kindergarten funding for mandatory closures. Where services sustain repeated closures, they should contact the appropriate departmental regional office to discuss their individual financial circumstances and any related viability issues.

Voluntary closures

It is recommended that service providers develop policies about voluntary closures.

The voluntary closure policy should be based on local research and discussion with the local ECIB (and council where the service is operated from a council owned building), and include the following points:

- criteria for voluntary closure – what the local triggers are and how the decision will be made
- impact of closure on the capacity to deliver the required hours of service (for example, make-up days)
- financial implications (fees, funding and Child Care Subsidy (CCS) if applicable).

Generally, such closures will not impact on kindergarten funding from the department.

[Access more information about emergency management on the department's website.](#)

Kindergarten IT program

The department funds the State Library of Victoria to provide IT support to funded kindergarten services to help them meet their data collection and reporting requirements and to support the delivery of high-quality kindergarten programs.

The State Library provides the following range of supports to EYM organisations and community-based kindergarten services:

- internet connectivity
- email addresses per kindergarten
- kindergarten.vic.gov.au domain name renewal and hosting
- help desk support for general computer and software enquiries
- free community web hosting.

Should there be a change in the provider of this service, service providers will be advised of the change and provided with new contact information.

[Access more information about support offered and how to join the program.](#)

Linking with local government

Services should work with local government to ensure alignment with MEYP and to participate in central registration and enrolment processes and local early years networks where possible.

Services should contact a relevant local government officer to discuss how their kindergarten service will meet community needs and how it may impact on existing services in the area.

[Services can find their council at the Municipal Association of Victoria website.](#)



MANAGING THE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

This section provides detail on kindergarten program delivery requirements, including the provision and management of program hours.

Provision of funded kindergarten hours

Service providers receiving kindergarten funding from the department must provide a program delivered by a Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registered qualified early childhood teacher for 15 hours per week (or 600 hours per year) for 4-year-olds and between 5 and 15 hours per week for 3-year-olds.

Four-Year-Old Kindergarten

Children must be enrolled for a minimum 15 hours per week or 600 hours per year to be eligible for Four-Year-Old Kindergarten programs.

A child enrolled for less than 15 hours per week or 600 hours per year is not eligible for kindergarten per capita or Free Kinder funding and must not be entered on KIMS.

In a long day care program, children must be enrolled in 15 hours per week (or 600 hours per year) of a kindergarten program planned and delivered by a VIT registered qualified early childhood teacher, to meet the requirements for kindergarten funding. For example, if the kindergarten program is delivered for 3 x 5 hour sessions over 3 days but the child is only enrolled for 2 days, this would not equate to a 15 hour kindergarten program and therefore the child would not attract kindergarten funding.

The program hours can be delivered flexibly across days and weeks of the year. For example:

- 6 hours per day x 2 days per week x 50 weeks per year = 600 hours
- 7.5 hours per day x 2 days per week x 40 weeks per year = 600 hours
- 5 hours per day x 3 days per week x 40 weeks per year = 600 hours

Services are encouraged to implement program delivery models to ensure that access is not a barrier for families accessing 15 hours per week. Services requiring further advice can contact their local ECIB.

Three-Year-Old Kindergarten

From 2023, flexible hours will be introduced state-wide for Three-Year-Old Kindergarten. This will allow providers to determine how many hours (between 5 and 15 per week, 200 – 600 hours per year) of funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten they offer, within set parameters. Services will be funded pro-rata for the program hours delivered.

Early Start Kindergarten

Early Start Kindergarten provides up to 15 hours of kindergarten per week for 3-year-olds and are paid on a pro rata basis if accessing fewer than 15 hours. While there are no minimum number of hours required for enrolments accessing ESK (above the minimum 5 funded hours), service providers are required to ensure ESK enrolments have access to the full 15 hours per week of funded kindergarten.

Staggering the start for children at the beginning of the year

It is acknowledged that children have individual needs and some parents, after discussion with the early childhood teacher, may choose not to have their child attend the kindergarten program for a full 15 hours at the start of Term one. However, these children must be enrolled for the full 15 hours to attract kindergarten funding.

The practice of staggering the start for individual children at the beginning of the year (in consultation with parents) is acceptable and does not affect kindergarten funding for services.

Managing the delivery of program hours

Service providers should employ a service model with the intent to deliver the full program hours per week across the year.

There may be times when it is not possible to deliver the full program offering in a given week due to:

- public holidays
- child-free days
- teacher absences due to a range of factors, such as illness or professional development activities
- emergency situations.

Where possible service providers are encouraged to develop solutions to minimise the amount of disruption to normal service delivery, including:

- appointing relief staff to ensure sessions can continue and the service does not need to close. For guidance on how services can manage teacher absences when an emergency or relief teacher is required, see page 48
- scheduling closures evenly across the days of the week so that the same group of children is not always missing out on program hours
- offering alternative sessions or activities.

Service providers are required to communicate to families at the beginning of the year about the days and times the service will operate, and must identify any planned closures, including public holidays and child-free days, as well as details of any planned make-up arrangements or alternative activities.

Service providers should avoid, when possible, cancelling sessions or changing session times during the year if the closure has not been planned and communicated to families at the beginning of the year.

Service providers should manage disruptions in program delivery to ensure that staff, family and children's needs are considered. Whenever a disruption to the regularly scheduled delivery of the weekly program hours occurs and a qualified replacement teacher is not delivering the funded program, the service provider must inform the department as outlined on page 48.



MAINTAINING ENGAGEMENT WITH FAMILIES

This section covers strategies for improving access to kindergarten services, particularly for children who face barriers to participation.



Creating a welcoming and culturally inclusive environment

In accordance with the VEYLDF, service providers should create a welcoming and culturally inclusive environment, and

- ensure that the service is a welcoming and culturally safe environment for families approaching for the first time
- encourage families to participate in and contribute to children's learning and development experiences
- understand, value and respect the interests, abilities and culture of every child and their family
- support families and children experiencing vulnerability to establish consistent attendance
- improve access and support for children experiencing vulnerability or trauma
- support children with additional needs and encourage their ongoing participation
- ensure that children with disability can access education on the same basis as children without disability
- undertake training and make use of resources for supporting children with additional needs
- support the cultural inclusion and consistent attendance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children
- support the cultural inclusion and consistent attendance of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- support the inclusion and consistent attendance of children in out-of-home care and those known to Child Protection.

Translation services can be used to communicate with families who speak a language other than English, see page 92.

Eliminating barriers

Service providers should aim to welcome and support parents, carers or legal guardians upon their very first interaction and should ensure reception, enrolment and induction procedures do not stigmatise, overwhelm or make enrolment onerous for families.

Service providers should ensure support is readily available to assist in completing required enrolment processes and accessing all available financial supports for families experiencing vulnerability, including those with low literacy, lack of access to electronic devices, or mistrust due to trauma.

Maintaining access for children displaying challenging behaviours

A service provider should not temporarily or permanently exclude a child because of challenging behaviour. If such a situation does arise, services should always seek support from the department for managing the situation.

Supporting families and children experiencing vulnerability to establish consistent attendance

Service providers should work to:

- ensure ongoing engagement that is sensitive to a family's circumstances, which may include trauma or mental health challenges
- ensure educators are equipped to deliver a program that is inclusive of the individual abilities of all children, including employing trauma-informed practice where appropriate
- ensure every child experiences success in their learning and development.

Improving access for children experiencing vulnerability

Service providers may find it challenging to engage families experiencing vulnerability. Australian research confirms that the families most in need are those least likely to access programs, with the very factors that make them vulnerable often acting as barriers to their seeking and obtaining help and support.

The Centre for Community Child Health advises services engaging vulnerable families to:

“The way in which services engage and work with families is critical: professionals need to respond to family priorities, build on family strengths and establish partnerships that involve shared decision making, thereby giving families greater control over their lives.

Every service needs to build its capacity to reach and engage vulnerable families as it is highly unlikely a service will have no vulnerable children and parents among its potential clients. This includes helping staff to build their capacity to engage families as well as minimising the practical or structural barriers to parents that prevent them from easily accessing services.”¹

Service providers should support teachers to make use of training opportunities including the [Information Sharing Schemes](#)¹ capability building and available resources to increase their understanding of vulnerable children's needs.

1. Centre For Community Child Health, 2010, Policy Brief No 18 2010: Engaging Marginalised And Vulnerable Families, Page 4.

MANAGING QUALITY

Ongoing improvement to kindergarten service delivery is a Victorian Government priority. The National Quality Framework (NQF) and the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) drive quality and consistency across education and care services. This section outlines the measures in place to ensure high quality and safe kindergarten programs.

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework

Providers of funded kindergarten programs are required to use the VEYLDF to develop and implement educational programs in Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten. Early childhood professionals should use, and engage deeply with, the VEYLDF Practice Principles and the Learning and Development Outcomes, with a strong focus on ethics, children's rights, and supporting children's transitions.

As it is the approved learning and development framework for Victoria, early childhood professionals are expected to seek its guidance when planning and delivering educational programs.



Transition Learning and Development Statement

A Transition Learning and Development Statement (Transition Statement) is required for every child transitioning into school in the following year. The Transition Statement is a tool for families and educators to share information about a child's learning and development.

Transition Statements are important for all children and can be particularly crucial for children who have experienced vulnerability or trauma, including children in out-of-home care.

Transition Statements are designed to assist schools, particularly foundation teachers, to:

- build relationships with the child and family
- identify the child's capabilities and interests
- understand how the child can best be supported as they transition into school
- plan for individual children's learning in a way that responds to their strengths, abilities and interests.

Transition Statements are completed online via the Insight Assessment Platform (IAP). In Term 4, services must provide each family with a completed Transition Statement for their child (with the early childhood educator section completed). Unless parents, carers or legal guardians opt out of sharing the Transition Statement, the service should then submit the statement via the IAP to the nominated school and, if appropriate, the Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) program. In addition to the Transition Learning and Development Statement Funding, the new Information Sharing Schemes can be used by early childhood education services, OSHC services and schools to share information with each other to promote the wellbeing and safety of children or to assess or manage family violence risk.

Some non-government schools do not currently use the IAP. For children transitioning to these schools, 2 copies of a completed Transition Statement should be given to the family in Term 4.

Service providers are required to report on the completion of Transition Statements from the previous year through the annual kindergarten data collection.

The department provides a range of resources and guidance to assist service providers to complete Transition Statements, including:

- a telephone helpdesk for IT issues in Term 3 and Term 4
- user guide and videos to support teachers to access and complete statements online
- professional learning to support professionals new to writing Transition Statements
- the Transition: A Positive Start to School Resource Kit
- information about starting school.

Access information about [Transition Learning and Development Statements on the department's website](#).

National Quality Framework

Providers of funded kindergartens are required to adhere to each aspect of the National Quality Framework (NQF) including:

- operating at an educator child ratio of 1:11 or less for children aged 36 months and older
- working towards achieving an 'Exceeding' rating in all seven quality areas defined in the National Quality Standard of the NQF.

As a requirement of kindergarten funding, the kindergarten program must be delivered in an early education and care service operating under the National Law and National Regulations or as a Victorian Children's Service. The National Law and National Regulations must also be met where services operate a bush kinder.

[Access information about bush kinders on the department's website](#).

The Victorian Regulatory Authority and the department may exchange information to ensure that funded services continue to meet regulatory requirements.

Regulatory requirements are not detailed here; service providers should access other resources to ensure they comply with regulatory requirements.

[Access information about the NQF on the ACECQA website](#).

[Access information about the VEYLDF on the department's website](#).



Services rated as 'Significant Improvement Required'

The risk of services closing due to poor quality ratings against the National Quality Standard will impact the availability of kindergarten places for children. Provision has therefore been made for continued funding for service providers operating funded kindergarten programs in services that have been assessed by the Victorian Regulatory Authority against the National Quality Standard and have received a rating of 'Significant Improvement Required' in any quality area.

In cases where a service is temporarily unable to meet minimum standards, the service provider may apply for continued funding for a period to give them the opportunity to develop a Quality Improvement Plan and seek reassessment of the service's quality rating. Please contact your local ECIB if your service has received a rating of 'Significant Improvement Required'.

Child Safe Standards

All early childhood services are required to comply with Child Safe Standards. These are designed to ensure that organisations that work with children take steps to create a culture of child safety and protect children from all forms of abuse.

To create and maintain a child safe organisation, an early childhood service must have in place:

- strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements
- a child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety

- a code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
- screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
- processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
- strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
- strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

In complying with the Standards, the early childhood service must adhere to the following principles as part of each standard:

- promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- promoting the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promoting the safety of children with disability.

Complying with the Standards is mandatory. Both the Commission for Children and Young People (the Commission) and the Victorian Regulatory Authority have powers to address compliance by early childhood services. The guide to Creating a Child Safe Organisation available on the Commission's website can help you implement the Standards.

[Access more information about the Child Safe Standards on the department's website.](#)

[Access more information about the Child Safe Standard's on the Commission for Children and Young People's website.](#)

Reportable Conduct Scheme

All early childhood services, including early childhood centres and kindergartens, are required to comply with the Reportable Conduct Scheme. The Reportable Conduct Scheme seeks to improve organisations' responses to allegations of child abuse by their workers and volunteers.

The Scheme provides a central point of oversight by the Commission for how organisations manage allegations of reportable conduct by their workers or volunteers towards children.

Key obligations for organisations subject to the Scheme include requiring the head of an organisation to:

- notify the Commission of a reportable allegation made against a worker or volunteer within 3 business days of becoming aware of the allegation. This is in addition to other reporting requirements, including to the Victorian Regulatory Authority. The head should also notify police if the conduct is potentially criminal. It is a criminal offence for the head of an organisation to fail to notify the Commission of a reportable allegation.
- ensure the allegation is investigated as soon as practicable after they become aware of it (and after police have provided clearance to do so). There is guidance on the Commission's website to help you conduct an appropriate investigation, including making sure you afford procedural fairness to your workers and volunteers and that you support children and young people to take part.

- prepare and provide an investigation report to the Commission at the conclusion of an investigation. The investigation report should set out the findings, reasons for the findings and recommendations made at the conclusion of the investigation. The findings and reasons for those findings must be provided to the Commission as soon as practicable.

Reportable conduct means a sexual offence, sexual misconduct or physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child. It also includes any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to, or significant neglect of, a child.

The Commission may share findings with VIT and the Department of Justice and Community Safety for the purpose of a reassessment of a person's suitability to hold a Working with Children Check.

The head of organisation is the chief executive officer or principal officer. There is guidance on the Commission's website to help organisations identify their head of organisation, comply with reporting requirements and conduct an appropriate investigation.

[Access more information about the Reportable Conduct Scheme on the department's website.](#)

[Access more information about the Reportable Conduct Scheme on the Commission for Children and Young People's website.](#)



Information sharing and family violence reforms

Three inter-related reforms have been introduced in Victoria to reduce family violence and promote child wellbeing or safety, these are:

- the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS)
- the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS)
- the Family violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework.

Centre-based education and care services are prescribed under the reforms.

This means that centre-based education and care services:

- are authorised to share information under the Information Sharing Schemes
- are required to respond to requests for information from other prescribed centres, schools, organisations and services under the Schemes
- must identify roles within their organisation that are authorised to share information under the Schemes.

[Access more information about PROTECT on the department's website.](#)

As noted above, centre-based education and care services are prescribed under the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework (MARAM). MARAM is the policy framework describing best practice for family violence risk assessment and management. Each organisation is required by law to align relevant policies, procedures, practice guidance and tools with the 4 pillars of MARAM. This alignment will occur over time.

[Access more information on MARAM practice guides and resources.](#)

Early childhood regulation and quality assessment

The department is the regulatory authority for education and care and children's services operating in Victoria. This includes kindergartens, long day care, family day care, outside school hours

care, occasional care, early childhood intervention, sports and leisure, and limited hours services.

The Quality Assessment and Regulation Division (Victorian Regulatory Authority) is established by the National Law and National Regulations. Additionally, the Victorian Regulatory Authority's role as the regulator of children's services is set out in the Children's Services Act 1996 (Children's Services Act).

The Victorian Regulatory Authority regulates providers of education and care services to ensure they protect children's safety, health and wellbeing. Under the National Law, the Victorian Regulatory Authority also drives continuous improvement in education and care services so that children receive quality education and care to support their health, learning and development.

The Victorian Regulatory Authority advises and supports education and care services, and anyone with an obligation under the National Quality Framework (NQF) to comply with the requirements of the NQF.

The functions and powers of the regulatory authority are delegated to the Victorian Regulatory Authority to administer and enforce the regulations.

[Access more information and resources about early childhood regulation and quality assessment on the department's website.](#)

[Access the Guide to the National Quality Framework \(NQF\) on the ACECQA website.](#)

Education and care services can also receive tailored support and advice from the Victorian Regulatory Authority:

- by calling [1300 307 415](tel:1300307415)
- by emailing licensed.childrens.services@education.vic.gov.au
- by contacting authorised officers from their nearest regional office
- through a visit by authorised officers including for assessment and rating.

MANAGING ENROLMENTS

This section outlines how service providers can support equal access and supporting inclusion for all eligible children through registration and enrolment procedures and policies.

Clear and transparent kindergarten enrolment process

Services must ensure their registration and enrolment policies:

- promote fair and equitable access to kindergarten programs
- adhere to the department's priority of access requirements
- support all eligible children to access a kindergarten program including those who face barriers to participation
- avoid barriers to participation, especially for vulnerable and disadvantaged children
- support eligible children to enrol under the 16-week immunisation grace period (see No Jab, No Play) on page 44
- enable working with the child's family or carer to obtain an alternate form of identification if a birth certificate or other official documentation is not available (see Required information for annual confirmation on page. 56)
- avoid imposing financial barriers to families seeking access; providers are strongly encouraged to exempt eligible children from registration fees and waive any refundable deposit or other charges required upon confirming acceptance/waiting list entry.

To achieve these objectives, registration and enrolment policies must:

- comply with Victorian and national legislation, including disability discrimination, anti-discrimination and human rights laws²
- be developed on the basis of local need, determined through consultation with the local community and key stakeholders such as local government

- support children who are experiencing disadvantage
- outline how waiting lists will be prioritised
- optimise available places and spaces (i.e. increase group size to full capacity, employ an additional assistant or use a rotational model)
- be effectively communicated to families and the local community.

Central Registration and Enrolment Schemes

Services and organisations operating a Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme (CRES) must ensure their registration and enrolment policies adhere to the department's priority of access requirements (page 32). All kindergarten services are encouraged to participate in CRES and should contact their local council to discuss joining a scheme, where available. [Access a list of local council contact details.](#)

[Access more information on kindergarten central registration and enrolment on the department's website.](#)

Prioritising access to kindergarten places

When prioritising enrolments, service providers need to be mindful of the barriers that prevent many vulnerable families from early enrolment in kindergarten programs. Service providers must have a priority of access policy in place to assist children at risk of disadvantage to access a kindergarten program.

Service providers are required to notify all families of the priority of access policy that applies when they enrol their child. In instances where more eligible children apply for a place at a kindergarten service than there are places available, services must:

- prioritise children based on the priority of access criteria (below)
- work with other local kindergarten services and the local ECIB to ensure all eligible children have access to a kindergarten place.

² Services may elect to seek independent legal advice if concerned about the compliance of their policies.

The priority of access criteria must be used by service providers and CRES providers prior to applying locally agreed criteria when prioritising enrolments. In long day care services, the department's priority of access criteria must be applied to all funded kindergarten places.

For further information, see locally agreed criteria for children not identified as high priority on page 33.

Service providers may also seek guidance from their local ECIB if required.

Priority of access criteria

Table 2: priority of access criteria

High priority children	Criteria and processes for verifying need(s)
Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in out-of-home care	<p>The child is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eligible for ESK or AEL, and/or • family, carer or legal guardian identifies the child as known to Child Protection or in out-of-home care, and/or • referred by one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection • Child and family services (family services referral and support team, Child FIRST/integrated family services/Services Connect case worker) • Maternal and Child Health nurse • out-of-home care provider.
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children	<p>As part of the enrolment process, service providers must respectfully ask families 'do you identify your child as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?' and record this information in KIMS.</p>
Asylum seeker and refugee children	<p>Child or family holds a visa or supporting documentation and information, including an ImmiCard, identifying the child and/or parents, carers or legal guardians as a refugee or asylum seeker, and/or</p> <p>Referred as a refugee or asylum seeker by a CALD outreach worker.</p>
Children that meet the eligibility criteria for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy	<p>A child or parent holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veteran's Affairs Card, and/or</p> <p>The child is identified on their birth certificate as one of a set of triplets, quadruplets or more.</p>

High priority children	Process that could be used to verify need(s)
<p>Children with additional needs, defined as children who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • with an identified specific disability or developmental delay • who require additional assistance to fully participate in the kindergarten program • who require a combination of services which are individually planned 	<p>The child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • holds a Child Disability Health Care Card, and/or • has previously been approved for Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS) program, and/or • has been referred by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the National Disability Insurance Scheme • Early Childhood Intervention Services • Preschool Field Officer • Maternal and Child Health nurse, or • is assessed as having delays in 2 or more areas and is declared eligible for a second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten.

Locally agreed criteria for children not identified as high priority

Following the application of priority of access criteria, CRES and service providers may apply one or more locally agreed criteria to prioritise children and determine the order in which enrolment offers are made, such as residential proximity or a demonstrable link to the service. These criteria must be documented and communicated with families, and kindergarten places should be allocated in accordance with anti-discrimination and human rights laws. Locally agreed criteria may only be applied after the priority of access criteria listed above for high priority children have been applied.

Flexible processes

Service providers should build flexibility into their enrolment processes. This should consider the circumstances of families from high priority groups, for example exempting high priority children from registration fees. Where a service reserves places for late enrolments, the service should consider high priority children when determining how these places are filled.

Long day care services delivering an integrated kindergarten program should consider offering families flexible hours to reduce the fee burden and ensure the program is accessible, particularly for children that are vulnerable or disadvantaged.

To improve access for families that don't require a full day of long day care, services may consider various session offerings. For example:

- providing 5 or 7.5 hour days rather than requiring the purchase of a full day of care.
- offering shorter sessions of care to decrease out of pocket costs for families accessing the CCS, and to minimise the need for parents, carers or legal guardians to purchase additional hours of care in order to access their kindergarten program.
- offering a sessional program in a long day care service to support access for children experiencing disadvantage and vulnerability. Where a sessional program is offered, the children accessing this program may also attract additional subsidies (for example KFS, if the service is not participating in Free Kinder and the child is not receiving CCS for this component of their care).

The department recommends that services survey families about their preferred program model to best meet community needs.

Enrolling children without a birth certificate in a funded kindergarten program

The department recognises that some parents, carers or legal guardians will seek to enrol a child who does not have a birth certificate at the time of enrolment in a kindergarten program. These will typically be children experiencing vulnerability and instability. The absence of a birth certificate should not be a barrier to enrolling a child in a funded kindergarten program and should not delay the child's commencement and attendance.

Where a birth certificate cannot be produced, other acceptable evidence of a child's full name and date of birth includes:

- statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR)
- Medicare card
- letter from the doctor or midwife who attended the birth
- doctor's note attesting to a child's age
- passport
- citizenship documents or Australia visa documents or Immicard.

In instances where foster carers don't have immediate access to the birth certificate or alternative documentation, carers can use a copy of the court order relating to the child, or can request a letter from Child Protection as alternative identification evidence. Services willing to use such documents as evidence should state this in their enrolment policy.

One funded kindergarten place

Service providers are required to inform parents, carers or legal guardians their child can only access a funded kindergarten program at one service at any one time and confirm the funding arrangements with the parents, carers or legal guardians at the time of enrolment.

Each child must have a signed acceptance letter from the parent/guardian confirming the child is accessing funding from only one service. This letter should be signed and returned to the service before the child's details are entered in KIMS.

The department requires services to keep copies of the signed letters on the child's enrolment record for auditing purposes. [Access a template confirmation letter and resources for funded kindergartens on the department's website.](#)

If a child is enrolled at 2 services, the parent, carer or legal guardian must nominate which service will receive kindergarten funding for the child.

If the department identifies that a child is accessing per capita funding from 2 services, funding will be retained by the service nominated by the parent/guardian and recouped from the second service. The child record must be removed from KIMS by the second service.



Kindergarten starting age

Every child's development is unique, and services should work with families to consider the best time for a child to start kindergarten.

Families of children born between 1 January and 30 April have a choice about whether their child will commence school in the year they turn five or the following year, and therefore which year their child will start kindergarten.

All children learn and develop in different ways. Some children may benefit from starting kindergarten and school at a younger age, while other children may benefit from starting later.

Families should be encouraged to talk to the service's kindergarten teachers and other early childhood professionals to help inform their decision.

Table 3: Kindergarten and school starting ages

Children born 1 May – 31 December: must enrol at school in the year they turn 6

Year child turns	3	4	5	6
		3-Year-Old Kindergarten	4-Year-Old Kindergarten	First year of school

Children born 1 January – 30 April: can enrol at school either in the year they turn 5 or 6

Year child turns	3	4	5	6
	3-Year-Old Kindergarten*	4-Year-Old Kindergarten	First year of school	Second year of school
OR		3-Year-Old Kindergarten	4-Year-Old Kindergarten	First year of school

* Where the service is unable to meet the educator to child ratio for children who are 2 years of age, children may not be able to attend a kindergarten program until they turn 3.

At the time of enrolment, service providers should therefore:

- encourage families to carefully consider the best time for their child to start kindergarten, as all children learn and develop in different ways
- encourage families to consult with relevant early childhood professionals, such as a Maternal and Child Health nurse, family doctor or allied health professional, or a foundation teacher or principal at the family's school of choice, for guidance
- provide families with advice and reassurance about how the kindergarten program will support their child's learning and development

- advise families that children are expected to complete a full year of kindergarten in the year they enrol and begin attending.

Services can direct parents, carers or legal guardians to [When to start kindergarten on the department's website](#) for further information about the benefits of kindergarten, choosing a kindergarten and how to enrol.



Minimum starting age

In line with the school starting age in Victoria (which stipulates that children born between January and April can start school at 4 years of age), some children will be 2-years-old when their 3-Year-Old Kindergarten year starts.

Under the NQF, the minimum educator to child ratio for children under 3 is 1:4. For children 3-years-old the ratio is 1:11. For services that can cover the required ratios for children under 3-years-old these children will be able to attend 3-year-old Kindergarten.

For others, they will be able to attend once they turn 3-years-old. The department will fund these children for the full duration of their enrolment, even before they are able to attend.

In circumstances where children are not given access to the program from the beginning of the kindergarten year because they are not yet 3-years-old, fees cannot be charged by a service for the period for which the child cannot attend. Where an enrolment deposit is charged by a service, this should be netted off the fees that apply once the child starts attending. Where the service is accessing Free Kinder funding any deposit should be refunded.

Every child's development is unique, and services should work with families to consider the best time for a child to start kindergarten. Families should be encouraged to talk to the service's kindergarten teachers and other early childhood professionals such as Maternal and Child Health nurses to help inform their decision.

Communication with families

This section summarises key information to be displayed at kindergarten services, and methods to communicate information effectively.

Services should provide information and resources to families about the kindergarten programs offered at the service, eligibility and age requirements to access a funded kindergarten place, and assistance available to support participation and attendance. This includes informing parents, carers or legal guardians that children can only access a funded kindergarten program at service at a time.

Service providers must provide all families with each of the following when a child enrolls in and attends a funded kindergarten program:

- written confirmation their child is accessing a funded kindergarten program
- a list of the days and times the funded kindergarten program will operate, including planned closures for activities such as staff development and training
- long day care services providing an integrated kindergarten program must provide families with details of out-of-pocket expenses relating to the non-funded part of the program they are accessing
- information about additional support available to enhance the learning and development needs of all children including fee subsidies and grants
- information about why personal information is collected from families and how it is stored
- information about the service's emergency management plan
- information about how families can be involved and contribute to the kindergarten program
- encourage parents to begin the process of enrolling in school in a timely manner (primary schools may begin accepting enrolments as early as May of the year before a child is due to start school).

Service providers must also provide the following, depending on their participation in Free Kinder:

- sessional services that are participating in Free Kinder must ensure that families are advised there is no cost to 15 hours kindergarten and where applicable any hours offered above 15 hours are optional

- long day care services that are participating in Free Kinder must inform families when Free Kinder fee offsets will commence and the frequency at which they will be applied.
- services that are not participating in Free Kinder must have a fees policy, with an explanation of what it means and what families are required to pay.

Service providers should support families to understand the information provided, for example to families who speak languages other than English, have low levels of literacy or who may have limited or no access to electronic devices.

A Transition Learning and Development Statement (Transition Statement) is required for every child transitioning into school in the following year. The Transition Statement is a tool for families and educators to share information about a child's learning and development. It is a particularly important support for children experiencing vulnerability. Refer to Transition Learning and Development Statement on page 27 for further information.

Displaying information and communicating effectively

This section summarises key information to be displayed at kindergarten services, and methods to communicate information effectively. Service providers must display:

- the current Kindergarten Program Certificate
- information promoting ESK
- information promoting the KFS in services not participating in Free Kinder
- operating times and name(s) of the qualified teachers delivering the program.

Service providers must communicate to parents:

- session times, planned closures and child free days. This should be advised to families at program commencement
- that kindergarten funding will be claimed for their child, and it is only available at one service at any one time
- fees where applicable
- if the service is participating in Free Kinder and what that means for parent fees (i.e. for sessional services that there will be no cost for 15 hours of kindergarten, and for long day care services

when the Free Kinder fee offsets will commence and frequency at which they will be applied)

- waiting lists
- access and inclusion policies
- availability of ESK and KFS where applicable
- details of the annual kindergarten parent opinion survey to parents, carers or legal guardians
- that the service will prepare a Transition Statement for all children to help them transition to school.

Second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten

During the year before school, the early childhood teacher and the child's parents, carers or legal guardians will work together to plan for the child's transition to school. In exceptional circumstances where a child is observed to display delays in key outcome areas of learning and development, a second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten may be considered in the best interest of the child:

- the kindergarten program is deemed to be the most appropriate learning program and environment for that individual child
- the child will achieve better outcomes at kindergarten than if they go to school.

[Access more information on the assessment process and communicating with parents, carers and legal guardians on the department's website.](#)

All children in Three-Year-Old Kindergarten will be expected to transition to Four-Year-Old Kindergarten in the following year. A funded second year of kindergarten will only be available for children in the Four-Year-Old Kindergarten program who meet the above criteria.

If a child will turn 6 before or while they are in their first or second year of funded kindergarten, parents, carers or legal guardians must get an exemption from starting school.

[Access information for parents, carers and legal guardians about applying for an exemption on the department's website.](#)



Eligibility

Eligibility for a second year of kindergarten is determined by the child's early childhood teacher. Assessment should be based on:

- ongoing observation over the time they have spent with the child
- any formal diagnostic or screening assessments undertaken
- assessment for learning tools such as Early Abilities Based Learning and Education Support (ABLES) (search [early ABLES](#) on the department's website)
- consultation with the child's parents, carers or legal guardians and an understanding of the home learning environment.

A full second year assessment process must be carried out for each individual child for whom a second year is being considered.

The assessment must include the completion of the:

- Term 3 learning and development plan
- second year discussion between kindergarten staff and the child's parents, carers or legal guardians.

Children who participated in ESK or AEL prior to attending funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten may be eligible for a second year, provided a full second year assessment is carried out during their Four-Year-Old Kindergarten year.

[Access more information on second year of funded Kindergarten.](#)

The early childhood teacher should declare the child eligible if:

- the child is observed as having developmental delays in at least 2 VEYLDF Learning and Development Outcomes ([Access more information on VEYLDF](#)) and
- there is evidence to suggest the child will achieve better outcomes if, by attending a second year of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten, will strengthen the learning and development of skills in these areas and better facilitate transition to school the following year.

How to apply

The early childhood teacher must complete the following for a child that is assessed as eligible for a second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten:

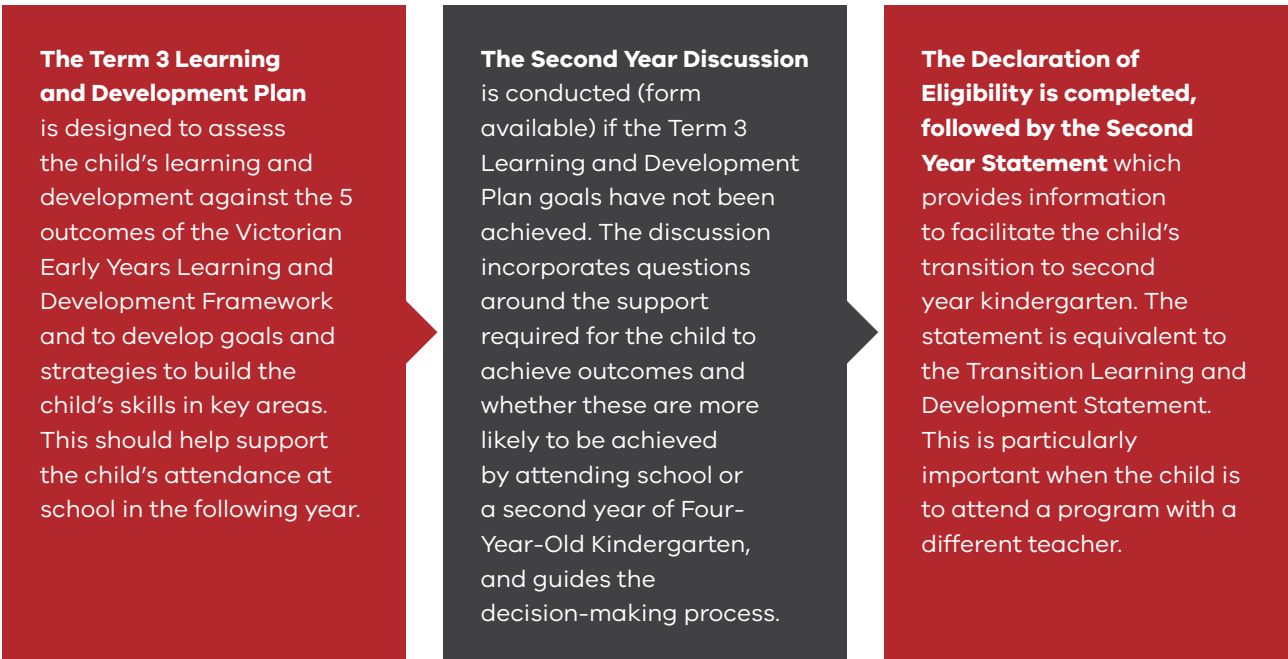
- Declaration of Eligibility for a second year of funded kindergarten (submitted via the child's record in KIMS in the year prior to the second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten)
- Second Year Statement as the child transitions into a second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten (to be retained with the child's enrolment record). [Access the template on the department's website for the template.](#)

The Declaration of Eligibility advises the department that a child is eligible for a second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten. The child's parent, carer or legal guardian should be provided with a printed copy of the declaration which can be used when the child is re-enrolling at a service as evidence that they are eligible for a funded kindergarten place.

A parent, carer or legal guardian of a child applying for a second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten must also apply for an exemption from school if the child is turning 6 at any point during the year in which they would complete their second year of kindergarten. Refer to page 42 for more information.

The process for applying for a second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten is outlined in Figure 1 and involves the child's teacher communicating with the parents, carers or legal guardians parents/carers throughout.

Figure 1: High level process: applying for a second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten



Children that are enrolled in a second year of kindergarten without a Declaration of Eligibility are not eligible for kindergarten funding. Services should therefore ensure a Declaration of Eligibility is completed and provide a copy to the family before the child is enrolled in another year of funded kindergarten and entered in KIMS. The department may request evidence of the child's assessment of eligibility as part of its regular service monitoring and auditing processes.

If an ineligible child is identified and is in receipt of per capita funding, the child record must be removed from KIMS. Any overpayments to the

service will be recouped by the department. The child may continue to attend the kindergarten program, but kindergarten funding should not be used to offset the cost of accessing the program.

Timelines and tasks

The following table provides an indicative timeline to guide early childhood teachers in determining if a child is eligible for a second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten and identifies the processes and documents that need to be completed.



Table 4: Key timelines and tasks: applying for a second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten

Timeline	Task
During Term one and Term 2	As part of the regular assessment processes, identify children with an observed delay in learning and development who may benefit from a second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten, using the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework outcomes.
End of Term 2	In collaboration with the child's parent, carer or legal guardian, develop a Term 3 Plan for Learning and Development that identifies strategies addressing the developmental outcome areas where a delay is identified. Implement the plan during Term 3.
Towards the end of Term 3	<p>Review the Term 3 Plan for Learning and Development:</p> <p>Discuss the child's level of learning and development with the parent, carer or legal guardian parent/carers and use the Second Year Discussion questions to guide the conversation. Teachers and parents, carers or legal guardians should carefully consider the implications of children attending foundation in the year they turn seven when their grade peers may be turning 5 or 6.</p> <p>Evaluate the Term 3 Plan for Learning and Development:</p> <p>If the planning and discussion processes detailed above have been completed, and the parents, carers or legal guardians agree that a second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten will be the most appropriate environment to support the child's learning and development delay, and better outcomes will be achieved at kindergarten than if they go to school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complete and submit a Declaration of Eligibility For a Second Year of Funded Kindergarten via KIMS from the end of Term 3. The declaration can be submitted in KIMS up to 30 November in the child's first year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten (note, Declarations made after this date may make it difficult for re-enrolment since available places may already be allocated to new enrolments. Services should contact their local ECIB) • provide a printed copy of the Declaration of Eligibility to parents, carers or legal guardians • ensure the child is re-enrolled for funded kindergarten in the following year • retain (on the child's enrolment record) the Term 3 Plan for Learning and Development, Second Year Discussion, and a copy of the Declaration of Eligibility.
Term 4 and beyond	<p>Complete the Second Year Statement for children as they transition into a second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten.</p> <p>NB – if KISP documentation has been completed and stored in the child's enrolment record, this can be referred to, to avoid duplication of work.</p> <p>If the parent, carer or legal guardian subsequently decides to send the child to school, transfer the information from the Second Year Statement to the Transition Learning and Development Statement.</p>

To support planning for the child and to assist decision-making, it is recommended the following professionals contribute information and advice about the child's level of learning and development where appropriate:

- Preschool Field Officer (PSFO)
- Early Childhood Intervention professional
- the child's Maternal and Child Health nurse
- family doctor
- school principal.

A Preschool Field Officer works with early childhood educators to enhance their capacity and confidence in providing an inclusive kindergarten program that is responsive to the needs of all children. PSFOs do not deliver direct interventions with children, but rather support, guide and coach early childhood educators to provide high quality programs that support the inclusion of children with additional needs. PSFOs can assist early childhood teachers to plan for the decision-making process, support strategies and discussions with parents, carers or legal guardians where a second year of kindergarten is being considered.

Families should be encouraged to talk to their local primary school about the resources and supports available to children enrolled at school to inform their decision making.

Free telephone, video and on-site interpreters are available for eligible early childhood services. All interpreters are qualified and accredited where National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) accreditation is available.

Access tip sheets to support work with interpreters and families from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and refugee backgrounds.

Exemption from school

A child who turns 6 while attending a funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten program is exempt from the requirement to enrol in and attend school if that child is eligible for a funded place in the kindergarten program.

Child turning 6 in their first year of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten

A child who turns 6 years old while attending their first year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten can be granted per capita funding if an exemption from school has been granted. To be eligible for per capita funding a letter is required from a relevant professional confirming the child meets one or more of the following criteria:

- the family has moved from interstate or overseas where the school entry age criteria is different to that applied in Victoria
- the child's early education has been delayed due to chronic illness, disability or development delay
- the child is a refugee/asylum seeker who has suffered trauma and would benefit significantly from a year of kindergarten before enrolling in school
- the child has not been able to access kindergarten previously due to transient family circumstances.

Parents, carers or legal guardians are required to notify their local ECIB that their child is seeking an exemption from school by submitting an [Exemption from school due to attendance in kindergarten program form](#) to the appropriate departmental regional office by 1 November in the year prior to the child turning 6.

In this instance, service providers must:

- sight the approved exemption form
- note that it has been sighted on the child's enrolment record for later reporting through the annual confirmation process.

Access information about the process of exempting a child from school to attend a funded kindergarten program.



Child turning 6 during second year of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten

Children who will turn 6 while attending their second year of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten can be granted per capita funding and exempted from school if a Declaration of eligibility for a second year of funded kindergarten has been completed by the child's kindergarten teacher. See Second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten on page 38 for more information.

Early entry to kindergarten

Early entry to Four-Year-Old Kindergarten may be appropriate for some gifted children where families are seeking an early entry to school for their child i.e. the child will not be 5 years of age before 30 April in the year of school commencement. Early entry to school is approved only when exceptional circumstances apply, and is subject to an application process and rigorous eligibility criteria. It is important to note that most children who enrol early in 4-Year-Old Kindergarten are not approved for early entry into school because they did not meet the eligibility criteria.

The decision regarding early entry should be discussed with parents, carers or legal guardians and consider the following:

- children are not guaranteed early school entry as a result of being enrolled to attend kindergarten early
- to start school early the child must possess suitable academic ability as evidenced by a formal cognitive assessment, and be considered at risk of long-term educational disadvantage if early entry to school is not approved
- applications for early entry to school are usually not determined until Term 4 in the year prior to the requested year of school enrolment
- children are eligible for only one year of funded kindergarten, so careful consideration should be made as to which year families enrol their child in kindergarten.

The department's preferred evidence of suitable academic ability is a report from a psychologist confirming that the child has been assessed as ≥ 130 Full Scale IQ (2 standard deviations, or more above the mean), preferably using the Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence, Fourth Edition, Australian and New Zealand (WPPSI-IV A&NZ), including the 10 sub-tests required to

calculate the Full Scale score and Primary Index Scales, conducted after the child has attained the age of 4 years.

The department may also consider other evidence of suitable academic ability that:

- is provided by an authoritative independent source(s) – for example, a child psychologist registered with the Psychology Board of Australia, with experience in educational and developmental psychology addressing areas including cognition, fine motor skills, language, numeracy, and so on
- clearly demonstrates that the child has suitable academic ability to attend school.

It is the responsibility of the parent, carer or legal guardian to obtain all relevant cognitive assessment/s and/or other reports and evidence to support their child's application, including written advice from a professional confirming the child is at risk of long-term educational disadvantage if early entry to school is not approved.

Should parents, carers or legal guardians decide to request early entry to Four-Year-old Kindergarten for their child, the following requirements must be met:

- the child must be at least 3 years and 6 months on or before 30 April in the year they attend the funded kindergarten program
- parents, carers or legal guardians must make a written request for early entry to school to their local Area Executive Director or directly to the principal of a non-government school dependent on whether the child is intending to attend a government or non-government school
- parents, carers or legal guardians must provide the kindergarten service provider with a written response from the department or the non-government school acknowledging the family has requested early entry to school
- the kindergarten service provider must keep a copy of the written response from the department or non-government school with the child's kindergarten enrolment records.

No Jab, No Play

The 'No Jab, No Play' legislation aims to reduce the risk of vaccine-preventable diseases through increased immunisation rates in the community.

Under the legislation, before enrolling a child, early childhood education and care services must first obtain evidence that the child is up to date with all vaccinations that are due for their age, or that they are able to receive.

On 28 February 2018, the 'No Jab, No Play' legislation was amended so that an Immunisation History Statement from the AIR is the only form of documentation accepted for the purpose of enrolling in an early childhood education and care service. Previous forms of documentation, for example a letter from a GP or local council, are no longer accepted.

To have an enrolment confirmed for a child, a parent, carer or legal guardian must provide the service with a current Immunisation History Statement from the AIR that shows that the child is up to date with all vaccinations that are due for their age, or that they are able to receive.

The Immunisation History Statement lists the vaccines the child has received and, if applicable, which vaccines are due in the future and when. Medical exemption may also be listed, where applicable. Parents, carers or legal guardians can print a copy of their child's Immunisation History Statement from their myGov account or:

- call the AIR on phone 1800 653 809
- visit a Medicare or Centrelink office.

Families who do not hold a Medicare card must call the AIR to request an Immunisation History Statement.

Service providers:

- should make a concerted effort to ensure that immunisation status/documentation does not act as a barrier to prevent vulnerable children from accessing kindergarten. Documentation should be requested in a sensitive manner and families and any relevant professionals supporting the family should be offered timely support and assistance to understand and comply with requirements
- may give eligible children experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage a 16-week grace period to produce proof of up-to-date immunisation

- should provide information and assistance to families about the immunisation process
- must keep immunisation documentation with the child's enrolment record in accordance with the applicable regulations.

Having an application accepted or being registered on a waiting list for a place at an early childhood service is not a confirmed enrolment. Confirmation of enrolment can be given by the service, no more than 2 months prior to the child first attending, only once the parent, carer or legal guardian has provided an Immunisation History Statement from the AIR to the service that shows that the child:

- is up to date with their immunisations (specifically, that no vaccines are overdue 2 months prior to the first day of attending), or
- has commenced a recognised catch-up schedule and that the next due vaccine/s on the catch-up schedule are not overdue 2 months prior to the first day of attending), or
- has a medical condition that prevents them from being fully immunised for their age, or
- is eligible to enrol under the 16-week grace period while the service works with the family to obtain the necessary immunisations/documentation.

A service may therefore find it preferable for administrative practices and for the convenience of parents, carers or legal guardians to obtain and process Immunisation History Statements as far in advance as possible prior to the first day of kindergarten.

[Access information, including an immunisation enrolment toolkit and frequently asked questions to assist kindergarten service providers with their responsibilities and record management.](#)

For more information about assessing whether a child's immunisations are up to date see 'Documentation for enrolment' at [No Jab, No Play on the Health Victoria website.](#)

Access the key dates work form for immunisation and enrolment to assist services to assess whether a child's enrolment can be confirmed can be found under 'templates and resources' at [No Jab, No Play on the Health Victoria website.](#)

Services are required to take reasonable steps to obtain up-to-date Immunisation History Statements from parents, carers and legal guardians at prescribed intervals in order to

verify that a child attending a service is age appropriately immunised.

Access more information about keeping immunisations records at [No Jab, No Play on the Health Victoria website.](#)



MANAGING TEACHERS AND EDUCATORS

Early Childhood Teacher qualifications

This section provides details on the requirements for teaching qualifications, standards and workforce practices.

Service providers must:

- recruit, manage, appraise and develop staff in accordance with relevant industrial agreements
- support teachers to practice in accordance with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST)
- ensure that all early childhood teachers including graduate teachers are registered with the VIT
- ensure that provisionally registered early childhood teachers are supported by a trained VIT registered teacher-mentor to achieve Proficient Teacher level and full registration within the 2-year timeframe (grant funding assistance is available)
- support registered teachers to complete professional development each year to maintain their VIT registration
- ensure that registered early childhood teachers and educators understand their obligations around reporting child abuse
- notify the relevant ECIB of teacher absence in instances where another registered early childhood teacher is not available to deliver the program
- notify the relevant ECIB of a change in teacher and update this in KIMS
- notify the relevant ECIB where a teacher is not immediately replaced to discuss funding arrangements.

The following table provides information about which qualifications count as meeting the early childhood teacher requirements for the National Regulations and kindergarten funding.

Table 5: Early childhood teacher requirements for kindergarten funding

Qualification	Meets the early childhood teacher requirements of kindergarten funding
Person holds an approved early childhood teacher qualification or qualification assessed by ACECQA as equivalent to an early childhood teacher qualification AND is a VIT registered early childhood teacher	YES
Person holds a primary teaching qualification AND holds an approved diploma level or higher early childhood education and care qualification AND is a VIT registered early childhood teacher.	YES

Qualification	Meets the early childhood teacher requirements of kindergarten funding
<p>Person holds a primary teaching qualification</p> <p>AND</p> <p>is actively working towards an early childhood diploma or early childhood teacher qualification</p> <p>AND</p> <p>is VIT registered.</p>	<p>YES; for up to 60 days in a 12-month period to replace an early childhood teacher who is absent from the service.</p> <p>For a period exceeding 60 days in a 12 month period, a temporary staffing waiver from the National Regulatory Authority is required to meet the early childhood teacher requirements under National Law.</p> <p>May be eligible for Funding by Exception (FBE) in areas that are hard to staff.</p>
<p>Person holds a primary teaching qualification only</p> <p>OR</p> <p>an approved diploma level qualification only.</p>	<p>YES; for up to 60 days in a 12-month period to replace an early childhood teacher who is absent from the service.</p>
<p>Person is taken to hold an early childhood teacher qualification under Regulation 241 but is unable to register as an early childhood teacher with VIT.</p>	<p>Service Exemption and Temporary Approval from the department is required to work as an early childhood teacher in a funded kindergarten program. See: Persons holding an early childhood teacher qualification who are unable to register with VIT on page 49</p>
<p>From 1 January 2022, a person who holds all of the following will be recognised as equivalent to an early childhood teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a primary or secondary teaching qualification <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teacher registration in Australia <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an ACECQA approved certificate III level (or higher) early childhood education and care qualification. <p>After the end of 2023, this transitional measure is scheduled to cease, however individuals who have obtained this combination of qualifications before the end of 2023 will continue to be recognised under this provision.</p>	<p>YES</p>
<p>Recruitment or engagement of a diploma qualified educator who does not hold a teaching qualification</p> <p>AND</p> <p>is actively working towards an approved early childhood teaching qualification and is more than 50 per cent complete.</p>	<p>May be eligible for FBE in areas that are hard to staff.</p>

Qualification	Meets the early childhood teacher requirements of kindergarten funding
<p>Recruitment or engagement of person holds a primary teaching qualification</p> <p>AND</p> <p>is actively working towards an approved early childhood teaching qualification and is more than 50 per cent complete.</p>	<p>May be eligible for FBE.</p>
<p>Recruitment or engagement of person holds a primary teacher with an early childhood diploma</p> <p>AND</p> <p>is a VIT registered primary teacher</p> <p>AND</p> <p>obtained this combination of qualifications before 31 December 2021.</p>	<p>Yes, this is recognised as equivalent to an early childhood teacher.</p>

[Access more information on the VIT website](#) or contact a service's ECIB for further advice on qualifications.



Change or replacement of teacher

When there is a change or replacement of a teacher, service providers should check the service continues to meet both regulatory and kindergarten funding requirements.

[Access information about ensuring a service meets minimum staffing arrangements in the guide to the NQF \(section 4\) on the ACECQA website.](#)

If the service is no longer eligible for kindergarten funding, and if an overpayment occurs, the department will recoup funds.

Emergency or relief teachers

At certain times, service providers may find it necessary to employ an emergency or relief teacher to deliver the kindergarten program, for example, when the teacher is ill.

If, on a program delivery day, the service provider is unable to find an early childhood teacher or a primary teacher to relieve on that day, it must:

- notify the local ECIB as to whether it has cancelled the session or engaged a diploma qualified educator to take the session
- if a diploma qualified educator is engaged, post a sign to indicate that a teacher will not be running the session and it will not operate as a kindergarten program for that day
- consider any relevant regulatory requirements, particularly when primary teachers are engaged, and contact the Victorian Regulatory Authority to ensure continued compliance with the National Law and National Regulations.

Temporary replacement — operating without a VIT registered early childhood teacher

Interim funding

If an early childhood teacher is absent from the service because of illness or leave for a period of up to, but not exceeding, 60 days in a 12-month period, the service provider can continue to receive kindergarten funding if the teacher is replaced by:

- a primary teacher
- an educator who holds an early childhood diploma.

Interim funding cannot be applied when an early childhood teacher leaves the service permanently.

In these instances, the service provider must notify their local ECIB immediately to inform them of the arrangements. Additionally, service providers should contact the Quality Regulations and Assessment Authority to ensure continued compliance with the National Law and National Regulations.

If the interim funding application is approved for continued funding:

- notify all families of the arrangement within 3 business days that the funded kindergarten program will be delivered by the replacement teacher, not a VIT registered early childhood teacher, and detail the length of time this arrangement will be in place and what support the upskiller will receive during this time
- remain compliant with regulatory requirements during the time the kindergarten program is not being delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher (services should check with the Quality Assessment and Regulation Division to confirm they are compliant)
- notify their local ECIB of any changes.

Funding in exceptional circumstances — Funding by Exception

If a qualified teacher is absent for longer than 60 days in a 12-month period or permanently leaves a service and is not immediately replaced, service providers may be able to receive continued funding where:

- the service provider is actively working to recruit a new VIT registered qualified early childhood teacher
- the service is located in a hard to staff area
- the service provider has an approved staffing waiver from the Quality Assessment and Regulation Division to meet the early childhood teacher requirements under National Law if required, and
- the kindergarten program will be planned and delivered by:
 - a primary teacher who is actively working towards an early childhood diploma or early childhood teacher qualification and has completed at least 50 per cent of their studies towards the qualification
 - an educator with an early childhood diploma who is actively working towards an early childhood teacher qualification on the list published by ACECQA and has completed at least 50 per cent of their studies towards the qualification

In the above situation, service providers must:

- contact their local ECIB as soon as possible to apply for a short-term Funding By Exception (FBE) while they continue to recruit. To be eligible for an FBE the service must:
 - meet or exceed all staffing requirements under the NQF
 - be delivering a funded kindergarten program
 - satisfy the department that they have made reasonable attempts to employ or engage an early childhood teacher
 - ensure all ESK and AEL funded children are placed in the kindergarten program delivered by a degree-qualified early childhood teacher for 15 hours a week
 - have adequate supports in place to support the replacement and supporting teacher to deliver the kindergarten program, including mentoring and time release.

If the FBE is approved for continued funding:

- notify all families of the arrangement within 3 business days that the funded kindergarten program will be delivered by the upskiller, not a VIT registered early childhood teacher, and include the length of time this arrangement will be in place and the support the upskiller will receive during this time

- remove the previous teacher from KIMS and add the replacement primary teacher or educator's details
- remain compliant with regulatory requirements during the time the kindergarten program is not being delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher (services should check with the Quality Assessment and Regulation Division to confirm they are compliant)
- notify your local ECIB of any changes.

Upon request, services will be required to disclose their FBE arrangement to VIT. It is at the discretion of VIT as to what evidence is requested from providers to satisfy reporting requirements. Providers are required to maintain and record their FBE arrangements.

Transitional Funding for Three-Year-Old Kindergarten only

Activity Group Leaders

To support the roll-out of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten, transitional arrangements are available so providers can retain an educator employed under the Activity Group Leader (AGL) classification under the Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement 2016 (VECTEA) or the Early Education Employees Agreement 2016 (EEEA) (or equivalent agreement as recognised by the department), by the service provider prior to November 2020.

This arrangement is in place until the end of 2023 and no new applications are being accepted.

Transitional funding for services with an upskiller completing their qualification in 2023

A transitional arrangement has been put in place to provide services with the option of allowing an upskiller that is completing their qualification in 2023 to lead a funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program.

The transitional funding arrangements do not require services to advertise or make attempts to recruit a qualified early childhood teacher.

To apply for transitional funding service providers should contact their local ECIB.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for this transitional arrangement, the upskiller must:

- be a primary teacher or early childhood diploma qualified educator who is studying an approved early childhood teaching qualification and will complete the qualification by the end of 2023
- have been employed by the provider prior to June 2022
- be delivering the Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program at the service.

To be eligible for this transitional arrangement, the service must:

- be delivering a funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program in 2023
- meet or exceed all the NQF requirements and have no existing Quality Assessment and Regulation Division (QARD) compliance issues
- have a degree-qualified early childhood teacher at the service who supports the planning and delivery of the kindergarten program being delivered under transitional funding arrangements, and agrees to be part of the transitional arrangement
- provide evidence of the individual's enrolment in an approved initial teacher education course and evidence of the individual's expected graduation date
- ensure any ESK and AEL funded children are placed in a kindergarten program delivered by a degree-qualified early childhood teacher for 15 hours a week. This may mean placing them in the Four-Year-Old Kindergarten program
- have adequate supports in place to support the upskiller and the supporting teacher to deliver the kindergarten program, including mentoring and study time release and arrangements to support kindergarten program delivery while the upskiller undertakes placements
- demonstrate how any surplus of funding due to the difference in salary costs for employing an upskiller, rather than a teacher, will be used to support the upskiller and/or the supporting teacher (e.g. time release for study or mentoring, or professional development)
- ensure that the teacher providing support to the upskiller consents to being part of the arrangement.

If the transitional funding application is approved for continued funding:

- notify all families of the arrangement within 3 business days that the funded kindergarten program will be delivered by the upskiller, not a VIT registered early childhood teacher, and include the length of time this arrangement will be in place and the support the upskiller will receive during this time
- remain compliant with regulatory requirements during the time the kindergarten program is not being delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher (services should check with the Quality Assessment and Regulation Division to confirm they are compliant)
- notify your local ECIB of any changes
- disclose their FBE arrangement to VIT, if requested. It is at the discretion of VIT as to what evidence is requested from providers to satisfy reporting requirements. Providers are required to maintain and record their FBE arrangements.

Lunch breaks

To meet National Regulations and to be eligible for funding, early childhood teachers on lunch breaks must be replaced by:

- another early childhood teacher, or
- a person who meets the approved diploma level education and care qualification requirements.

If it is not possible for the service to replace the early childhood teacher with one of the above, the service must submit an application for a Lunch Break Waiver to QARD for consideration to maintain their eligibility for funding. The application must be submitted through the National Quality Agenda IT System (NQAITS).

With an approved Lunch Break Waiver, a service can replace an early childhood teacher on lunch break with a Certificate III educator but the early childhood teacher must remain on the premises. The service must also maintain the minimum educator to child ratios.

The approved provider must undertake a review of staffing arrangements to ensure that the educator to child ratios will be maintained in accordance with regulation 126(1)(a).

The approved provider must ensure the Victorian Regulatory Authority (QARD) is advised within 14 days if the waiver is no longer required.



Teachers can take a lunch break during kindergarten program hours without this affecting kindergarten funding. This time is considered part of the 600 hours for funding purposes.

If you have any questions about your individual circumstances regarding meeting National Law requirements, please call the QARD Hotline on [1300 307 415](tel:1300307415).

Victorian Institute of Teaching registration

Early childhood teachers including graduate early childhood teachers must be registered with VIT. Service providers must support registered early childhood teachers to complete professional development each year to maintain their VIT registration.

Some teachers who completed their early childhood teaching qualification a number of years ago are no longer recognised as holding an early childhood teaching qualification under the current regulations and therefore cannot register with VIT.

[Access more information about VIT registration on the VIT website.](#)

From 1 September 2019 there has been greater alignment between the VIT registration scheme and the Working with Children Check scheme.

Early childhood teachers who engage in volunteer or other paid work with children outside their teaching in a licensed early childhood service or education and care service will need to register their details with Working with Children Check Victoria through [Service Victoria](#).





Early childhood teacher professional standards

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) apply to early childhood teachers. All service providers in receipt of kindergarten funding are required to incorporate the use of the APST into the teacher's performance and development process.

Provisionally registered early childhood teachers must be supported by a trained VIT registered teacher-mentor to achieve Proficient Teacher level under the APST to achieve full registration within 2 years after registering as a provisionally registered teacher.

[Access more information about the APST on the VIT website.](#)

Early childhood services can apply for once-off funding of \$2,872 (excluding GST) for each provisionally registered teacher employed to support them to move to full registration.

Funding can be used in a range of ways and may include:

- paid time release, travel or accommodation expenses for both the provisionally registered

teacher and their mentor to work with each other

- employ a casual relief teacher to backfill either the provisionally registered teacher or the mentor
- enable a provisionally registered teacher to undertake professional learning to support them to become proficient.

[Apply and access more information about funding to support provisionally registered early childhood teachers on the department's website.](#)

The Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics should also guide teachers' practice.

Professional practice

The department provides a range of free supports for the Victorian early childhood workforce.

[Access more information about training and support for early childhood professionals on the department's website.](#)

DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING

This section outlines the requirements for funded providers to provide reports and data to the department, the type of data collected, and how this data is submitted.

Kindergarten Information Management System

Service providers that receive kindergarten funding must submit information to the department through KIMS.

Information provided by service providers in KIMS is submitted and recorded in accordance with the department's Information Privacy Policy.

Data provided by service providers through KIMS is used to:

- calculate funding entitlements
- assist with local government and area-based partnership planning
- compile information about programs and facilities, which is shared with other levels of government for the purpose of planning
- meet State and Commonwealth reporting requirements
- plan new policies, programs, and resources to support service delivery.

De-identified data may be provided to research partners of the department for linkage to other data sets for research and evaluation purposes.

Service providers access KIMS through eduPass and must register for an eduPass account. Each service provider has one person designated as an Organisation Administrator (OA) who is responsible granting access to other users to access KIMS.

Providing accurate and current information

Service providers are accountable for the information they provide and must ensure data entered on KIMS is current and accurate at all times. Service providers are required to provide the following:

- early childhood teachers (professional development hours, contact hours and number of children taught must be updated each year and qualifications updated when required)
- other educators (professional development hours must be updated each year and qualifications updated when required)
- program details – hours and/or groups
- identifying details and characteristics of the children enrolled in the funded kindergarten program
- other information as requested by the department.

Data should be updated immediately when service delivery or child enrolment changes occur.

[Access KIMS training and support on the department's website.](#)



Reporting requirements

Service providers must:

- Comply with the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 and the Health Records Act 2001 and be guided by the department's Information Privacy Policy.

When handling personal information, providers should:

- collect only the information that is needed for the specified purpose
- ensure the person knows why the information is being collected and how it will be used
- use and disclose information only for the purpose for which it is collected, unless otherwise required or authorised by law
- store information securely, protecting it from unauthorised access
- retain information for the required period
- provide the person with access to their own information and the right to seek its correction, unless giving the individual access to the information would increase a risk to the safety of any person.

Update KIMS when there has been a change at a service that may affect funding, including:

- store children's enrolment records, including second year documentation and Transition Learning and Development statements, in a secure location that is not accessible to individuals other than authorised staff of the service provider and the department. The child's parents, and representatives of the department are entitled to access this information at any time, upon request.
- inform parents, carers or legal guardians that their child's personal or health information will not be shared without their consent, unless it can be shared under law. Services must be sensitive regarding the collection and sharing of information from families so that privacy concerns do not act as a barrier to their participation in a kindergarten program.

Data collection requirements

Service providers are required to:

- complete 2 mandatory online data collections each year (see below) within the required timeframes set out by the department. Funding may be withheld or ceased if information is not submitted.
- undertake termly mandatory online data collections for all ESK enrolments (see below)
- ensure service, teacher and enrolment information is up to date in KIMS at all times as these affect funding entitlements.

Annual confirmation

The annual confirmation process opens in KIMS in January of each year and must be completed within the required timeline set by the department. During annual confirmation, service providers must complete and submit:

- 'child level' data relating to children enrolled in the funded kindergarten program
- service provider, service and teacher information
- program information
- the number of Transition Statements completed and forwarded to schools for children enrolled in the previous year
- information about the children for whom Transition Statements were not completed
- total number of staff with early childhood teaching qualifications and their qualification level
- other information as requested by the department.



Information required for annual confirmation

Service providers are required to collect information from parents, carers or legal guardians at the time of enrolment, which should be kept with the child's enrolment record and used when completing the annual confirmation data collection process.

Service providers are required to:

- record the accurate name, address and date of birth of each child. This may include:
 - birth certificate
 - passport
 - travel document for non-Australian born children
 - Immicard.

Where the child does not have a birth certificate, please refer to page 34 for alternative options.

- enrol the child using the name stated on the identification document. This should not be changed without the consent of both parents or by direction of a court order.
- record information about the child, including:
 - the date the child commenced the funded kindergarten program
 - if the child is a 3 or 4-year-old enrolment
 - the child's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status
 - if the child is known to Child Protection
 - if the child is living in out-of-home care
 - the child's country of birth
 - the child's immunisation status
 - the main language spoken at home (if not English)
 - if the child or family has had a refugee or asylum seeker experience
 - if the child is attending a second year of funded kindergarten
 - if the child needs a high level of assistance with core activities as a result of ongoing disability or health condition
 - if the family have requested early entry to school

- if the child has been exempted from attending school.
- for children eligible for the ESK grant, provide information about whether the child's parents, carers or legal guardians have given permission to share information from and with Maternal and Child Health Service
- record information about the child's parents, carers or legal guardians including:
 - education, qualification and occupation
 - country of birth
 - year of arrival in Australia if born overseas.
- record information about the teacher who will plan and deliver the program, including:
 - name, gender and date of birth
 - VIT number and whether the teacher is fully or provisionally registered
 - qualification details including the university, course and year awarded (a copy of the qualifications and if applicable, a letter of equivalency must also be provided)
 - hours of employment and the number of children taught by the teacher in the funded kindergarten program
 - the award or industrial agreement under which the teacher is employed and the level at which they are classified and paid
 - the total number of hours of professional development undertaken by the teacher in the previous year
 - contract type (permanent/temporary/casual).
- record information about the other educators who will deliver the program, including:
 - name, gender and date of birth
 - qualification details
 - hours of employment
 - the award or industrial agreement under which the educator is employed and the level at which they are classified and paid
 - the total number of hours of professional development undertaken by the educator in the previous year
 - contract type (permanent/temporary/casual).

Annual confirmation data can only be submitted once. Service providers must therefore:

- ensure the data is correct before submission, including finalising enrolment numbers and checking child details are correct
- verify that the child is not enrolled in a funded program at another service. Only one service can apply for funding for a child at any one time
- exclude children who cease to attend the funded kindergarten program before the confirmed data collection is completed. Children included in 'annual confirmation' are expected to be enrolled and intending to access at least 600 hours of kindergarten that year
- not include children when it is known a family is intending to cease a child's attendance at a kindergarten program
- record any changes to enrolments following annual confirmation of data in KIMS, such as removing a child's details when they leave the service. Final adjustments must be made in KIMS by 31 October.

Data should be updated immediately when service delivery or child enrolment changes occur.

Annual Kindergarten Census

The Annual Kindergarten Census data collection is open from the first Friday in August until the end of August each year and must be completed within the required timeline set by the department.

During the census, service providers must complete and submit:

- child level information on attendance during the census week
- child level information on fee charged during the census week
- updates to enrolment, teacher or educator records if information has changed.

Early Start Kindergarten attendance tracker

Service providers are required to collect attendance information for children enrolled in Early Start Kindergarten with their service at any point during the year. At the end of each term, services providers complete an Early Start Kindergarten attendance tracker via KIMS providing data on the number of hours the child attended funded kindergarten each week and the reason for any absences. In Term 4, additional data on needs, barriers and supports required to deliver high quality services to the child is collected.

OTHER DATA COLLECTION

Kindergarten parent opinion Survey

The kindergarten parent opinion survey is an annual online survey that seeks feedback from parents, carers or legal guardians of children who are enrolled in a funded kindergarten program.

The department uses the results of the survey to inform state-wide policy and planning for early childhood education. Kindergarten service providers may also use the results for improving service quality and program delivery.

All funded kindergarten providers, including long day care services and independent schools, are asked to provide details of the survey to parents, carers or legal guardians of children enrolled in the kindergarten program and encourage them to participate.

[Access more information about the kindergarten parent opinion survey on the department's website.](#)



2 KINDERGARTEN FUNDING



KINDERGARTEN FUNDING

The information outlined in this section details the different funding types available to service providers operating a funded kindergarten program. All funding types (excluding second year of kindergarten funding) are applicable for both Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten programs.

For services delivering fewer than 15 hours for Three-Year-Old Kindergarten, funding rates are prorated.

[Access information about kindergarten funding rates on the department's website.](#)

Table 6: Kindergarten funding types

Activity code	Funding type	Description	Page
718039: Three-Year-Old 718392: Four-Year-Old	Per capita	Per child funding to contribute to the cost of running the program.	61
718331: Sessional Kindergarten 718334: Integrated Long Day Care	Free Kinder	Per child funding in addition to per capita funding for services that opt-in to Free Kinder.	65
718041: Three-Year-Old 718391: Four-Year-Old	Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS)	Provides up to 15 hours of kindergarten free of charge or at low cost for eligible children. Not available to services accessing Free Kinder.	69
718026: Standard 718061: Early Start Kindergarten	Ratio supplement	Provides a contribution towards the cost of employing an additional educator.	72
718058: Child Protection 718076: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children 718098: Refugee & Asylum Seeker	Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) and ESK extension grant	ESK provides up to 15 hours of kindergarten to eligible 3-year-old children free of charge. ESK extension grant provides up to 15 hours of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten free of charge or at low cost for eligible children. Not available to services accessing Free Kinder.	66 73
718022	Early Childhood Teacher Supplement	Provides additional funding paid to help offset the cost of employing experienced teachers.	75
718060	Pre-purchased Places (PPPs)	Provides a department-funded kindergarten place for children who present outside normal enrolment periods.	77

Activity code	Funding type	Description	Page
718374	Access to Early Learning (AEL) grants	Grants to provide intensive support to vulnerable 3-year-old children from families with complex needs.	79
564004	School Readiness Funding (SRF)	Provides funding to enable access to resources to improve outcomes for children.	80
711207	Transition Learning and Development Statement	Provides a contribution to release early childhood teachers to write Transition Statements.	81
718009	Rural Travel Allowance	Funding to support rural service to attract qualified early childhood teachers.	82
718020	Parental Leave	Provides a reimbursement to service providers that have made a parental leave payment to educators employed to deliver a subsidised kindergarten program.	83
718021	Pre-1994 Long Service Leave	Provides a reimbursement for long service leave accrued by educators prior to 1994.	84



KINDERGARTEN PER CAPITA FUNDING

Kindergarten per capita (per child) funding is the main funding type paid to service providers as a contribution toward the cost of running a kindergarten program.

Funding rates vary depending on the location of the service, the service setting, and the type of industrial award or agreement that teachers and educators are employed under. Service providers are advised about which per capita funding type will apply to their services as part of the service agreement process.

Kindergarten service providers will receive per capita funding for each eligible child who is enrolled and attending a funded kindergarten program.

Children do not have to be Australian citizens or permanent residents in order to be eligible for kindergarten funding.

Child eligibility

To be eligible for Four-Year-Old Kindergarten the child must be:

- at least 4-years-old on 30 April of the year in which they are enrolled to attend the funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten program (unless they have applied for early entry to kindergarten – refer to page 43)
- enrolled for at least 15 hours per week or 600 hours per year
- not be enrolled in a funded kindergarten place at another service.

Children who will turn 6 in their first or second year of kindergarten may be eligible for per capita funding if they meet the requirements for an exemption from school. See Exemption from school on page 42.

To be eligible for Three-Year-Old Kindergarten the child must be:

- at least 3-years-old on 30 April of the year in which they are enrolled to attend the funded kindergarten program (please see page 36 on minimum age of attendance)
- enrolled for between 5 and 15 hours per week
- not be enrolled in a funded kindergarten place at another service.

For information on how funding applies to children that are unable to attend before their third birthday in services that cannot accommodate the required educator to child ratios, please see section 36.



Per capita funding types

Standard per capita funding

A service is eligible for standard per capita funding where:

- the service is located in a metropolitan or regional area where more than one funded kindergarten program operates within the suburb/town as defined by the department
- the service is not operated by an independent school, with the exception of those located in Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) decile one or 2 (see independent school funding below).

Services operating under the 2020 Victorian Early Childhood Teachers' and Educators' Agreement (VECTEA), or the Early Education Employees' Agreement (EEEE), or a department approved equivalent agreement are eligible for the higher standard per capita – Enterprise Agreement (EA) rate.

For an EA to be assessed as equivalent to the VECTEA 2020 or EEEA 2020 for the purpose of the EA per capita rate, it must be an EA that applies to all teachers and educators at a service, not an individual contract. The EA should include:

- teacher and educator salaries that are equivalent or greater to the VECTEA or EEEA
- 10 weeks of annual leave for early childhood teachers (accrued on a pro-rata basis)
- at least one hour per week per service as release from face-to-face teaching/contact time, or an increase in non-teaching/non-contact time for their educational leader and/or nominated supervisor
- no more than 25.5 hours face-to-face contact hours for full-time teachers (pro-rated for part-time teachers)
- no requirement for validation for teachers to progress to Level 3 (Exemplary), as previously required under the VECTEA 2016 and EEEA 2016.

Rural per capita funding

A service is eligible for rural per capita funding where:

- the service is located in a rural area as defined by the department
- the service offers the only kindergarten program in a rural town
- the service is not operated by a non-government school.

Services operating under the VECTEA 2020 or the EEEA, or a department approved equivalent agreement are eligible for the higher rural per capita – EA rate.

All rural classified services with 18 or fewer enrolments receive a minimum per capita funding amount equivalent to 18 enrolments at the rural per capita rate. Services with 19 or more enrolments receive the rural per capita rate for all enrolments up to 45 children, and where applicable, the standard per capita rate for the 46th enrolment and above.

Rural services with 18 or fewer enrolments

A base level of funding is provided to all rural classified kindergarten services with 18 or fewer enrolments to support ongoing financial viability of the service. These services will receive a minimum per capita funding amount equivalent to 18 enrolments at the rural per capita rate.

With the introduction of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten, rural services will receive base funding if their combined 3 and 4-year-old enrolments are below the equivalent of 18 full-time enrolments for 15 hours per week.

The rural funding model assumes that all children are enrolled for 15 hours per week. In services where 3-year-old children receive fewer than 15 hours they will be considered as a partial Full Time Equivalent (FTE) enrolment. For example, if a 3-year-old is enrolled in kindergarten 7.5 hours they will be considered 0.5 of a full enrolment. Examples of how combined 3 and 4-year-old enrolments work with the rural base funding is shown in the table 7.



Table 7: Rural base funding with combined 3 and 4-year-old enrolments

Service offering	Weekly FTE per service	Combined weekly FTE	Per capita funding
5 x 3YO children – 15 hours	3YO = 5 FTE	15 FTE	Funding equivalent to 18 rural enrolments
10 x 4YO children – 15 hours	4YO = 10 FTE		
10 x 3YO children – 6 hours	3YO = 4 FTE	16 FTE	Funding equivalent to 18 rural enrolments
12 x 4YO children – 15 hours	4YO = 12 FTE		
10 x 3YO children – 10 hours	3YO = 6.6 FTE	19.6 FTE	Funding equivalent to 19.6 rural enrolments
13 x 4YO children – 15 hours	4YO = 13 FTE		

Non-government school per-capita funding

A service is eligible for non-government school per capita funding where the kindergarten is run by a Catholic or Independent school not operated by or on behalf of the Victorian Government. Service providers receive the applicable non-government per capita grant rate for each eligible child.

There are 3 different types of non-government school per capita funding rates:

- **Non-government type one per capita grant** is applied where the service provider has previously been classified by the department as a type one non-government school (previously deemed to have an Economic Resource Index rating of between 1 and 4 as determined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in the 2011 Census)
- **Non-government type 2 per capita grant** is applied where the service provider is classified by the department as a type 2 non-government school (previously deemed to have an Economic Resource Index rating of between 5 and 12 as determined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in the 2011 Census)
- **Non-government standard per capita rate** is applied where the non-government school is located in an area ranked as a SEIFA decile 1.



Per capita funding calculation

Per capita funding is calculated and paid to service providers following the completion of annual confirmation for each service. Data collected through annual confirmation creates a baseline enrolment number and minimum per capita funding entitlement for the calendar year.

Kindergarten funding is paid based on the service's previous year's enrolment numbers (known as pre-confirmed enrolment numbers) until the annual confirmation of data is submitted for the service in KIMS.

A service's funding entitlement for the calendar year is based on the annual confirmation of data is compared to the pre-confirmed funding entitlement. There are 3 possible outcomes depending on the result:

- if the revised funding entitlement is more than the pre-confirmed funding amount, a positive adjustment occurs and the extra funding due to the service provider is incorporated into increased monthly payments for the remainder of the calendar year
- if the revised funding entitlement is less than the pre-confirmed funding amount, a negative adjustment occurs and monthly payments are reduced for the remainder of the calendar year
- if the 2 amounts are the same, monthly payments will remain the same.

Funding will be adjusted if any amendments to enrolments are made following annual confirmation.

Adjustments can move funding entitlements up or down depending on new enrolments and withdrawals after confirmation. Funding will generally not be reduced below the minimum baseline funding set by the annual confirmed data.

In cases where there are significant decreases in enrolments without reasonable explanation across the year, the department may reduce child level funding to the service.

For services providing less than 15 hours of kindergarten for 3-year-old children, child level funding will be provided on a prorated basis. For example, if a 3-year-old child is enrolled in a kindergarten program for 7.5 hours per week, they will receive half of the current per capita rate for 15-hour programs.

How funding is paid

Kindergarten per capita funding is paid in advance, in monthly payments, made on the first Tuesday of each month in accordance with the service agreement.

Where enrolments are added after the annual confirmation of data and there is an increase in the funding entitlement (above the baseline amount), the additional per capita funding is calculated from the first day of the month after a child's commencement date at the service.

Where enrolment numbers at the service fluctuate after the annual confirmation of data and the calculated total funding based on enrolments has fallen below the baseline, new enrolments will not attract additional per capita funding until the total funding based on enrolments exceeds the baseline amount.

Key timing considerations

For service providers or services that commence offering a funded kindergarten program between January to March in the calendar year, the annual confirmation of data must be submitted by April.

For service providers or services that commence offering a funded kindergarten program after March in the calendar year, the annual confirmation of data should be submitted as soon as the service provider has access to KIMS, and the number of enrolments and other service details are known.

Kindergarten funding will not be paid until the service provider submits the annual confirmation of data in KIMS for each service offering a funded kindergarten program.



FREE KINDER FUNDING

Free Kinder supports families to access a funded kindergarten program by:

- providing a free 15-hour program to 4-year-old children enrolled at a sessional service
- providing a free 5 to 15-hour program to 3-year-old children enrolled at a sessional service (subject to the length of funded program offered)
- offsetting the funded kindergarten program component of parent fees for 3 and 4-year-old children enrolled at a long day care service.

Child eligibility

All children receiving a funded kindergarten place at a sessional or integrated long day care service that have opted-in to this initiative are eligible to receive Free Kinder funding.

Children who are not eligible for per capita funding will not be able to have Free Kinder funding claimed.

Children can only receive Free Kinder funding once for their Three-Year-Old Kindergarten year and once for their Four-Year-Old Kindergarten year, and this must only be claimed at one service at a time, in line with other kindergarten funding streams.

Children who are eligible for a second year of kindergarten and where applicable an exemption from school has been completed will be able to receive Free Kinder in their additional year.

Service eligibility

All services that offer a funded kindergarten program are eligible to access this funding. Services must opt-in, and specific conditions must be met as part of accepting the Free Kinder funding, specifically:

- offer a free 15-hour kindergarten program for 4-year-old enrolments and a free kindergarten program of between 5 and 15 hours for 3-year-old enrolments
- not charge any compulsory out-of-pocket fees or levies to families, except for cost recovery for one-off excursions (i.e. entry and transport costs) for children not eligible for the Kindergarten Funding Subsidy (KFS)

- refund any parent fees that have already been paid for 2023 (excluding any agreed voluntary donations)
- maximise use of licensed capacity as required to meet demand for 3 and 4-year-old enrolments (in agreement with their local Early Childhood Improvement Branch (ECIB) as necessary, taking into account any practical obstacles to this)
- spend all additional funding in line with acceptable uses of kindergarten funding, including to promote increased participation and/or enhance program quality (see Funding Responsibilities on page 14).

Funded long day care services accessing this funding are required to:

- apply standard fees across the service for all kindergarten age enrolments (3 and 4-year-old) to ensure that children enrolled in a kindergarten program are not charged higher fees in comparison to children that are not attracting kindergarten funding
- directly offset the full Free Kinder payment from the fees of parents with children receiving their funded kindergarten program at the centre (service providers are not required to separately calculate and record the cost of the kindergarten hours separately for integrated programs)
- apply the fee offset regularly (e.g. fortnightly or monthly) and clearly indicate the offset amount (labelled Victorian Government Free Kinder offset) on parent invoice statements
- use any surplus funding on improvement efforts for the funded kindergarten program, such as improving quality and supporting engagement of families for the minority of cases where parents, carers and legal guardians are charged less than the Free Kinder subsidy (\$2,000) in out-of-pocket fees for the duration of the kindergarten year.

Non government type 2

Non-government type-two schools operating sessional kindergarten services that opt-in to Free Kinder will be offered a 'top up' to the standard per capita amount. This will be paid in addition to the Free Kinder payment and will be automatically applied to eligible services.

How funding is paid

Free Kinder payments will be made monthly via KIMS to service providers that are participating in Free Kinder and have accepted the funding terms and conditions.

As per normal kindergarten payments, Free Kinder funding is calculated and paid pro-rata from a service's funding start date. Free Kinder funding is not included in a service's baseline funding entitlement and is calculated on the child's start and end date.

Services should ensure their enrolment data in KIMS is up to date to ensure accurate payments each month.

Services in receipt of Free Kinder funding will not be eligible to receive the KFS, KFS Ratio Supplement and ESK extension grant. All other existing funding streams are unaffected by Free Kinder.

EARLY START KINDERGARTEN

There are 3 types of ESK funding:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ESK
- ESK grant for children from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds
- ESK grant for children known to Child Protection.

In order to receive ESK funding, eligible children must be enrolled in a kindergarten program delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT).

All eligible 3-year-old children should continue to be enrolled in ESK during the ongoing roll-out of 15 hours of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten and in services participating in Free Kinder. This guarantees that ESK eligible children can continue to access 15-hour kindergarten programs and allows the correct calculation of the service's SRF entitlement. In 2023, the ESK rate is inclusive of the Free Kinder subsidy.

Search [kindergarten funding rates](#) on the department's website for the ESK funding rates.

Applications for ESK should be completed with the consent of, and on behalf of, the family/carer and families should be made aware that they can only access the ESK grant for one year, and should be supported to decide which year to enrol based on the expected school starting year of the child.



EARLY START KINDERGARTEN IN LONG DAY CARE SERVICES

ESK grants can be used in combination with the Australian Government's Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and Additional CCS. Receiving the ESK grant will not impact these payments.

If a child accesses ESK in a long day care service, the family/carer may be required to pay fees for additional child care hours outside the kindergarten program. In such cases, service providers:

- should use all available additional funding to reduce fees, including CCS or Additional CCS are encouraged, where possible, to waive fees and provide all hours free of charge to children eligible for ESK
- must inform families that they may be able to access a free 15-hour per week kindergarten program at another service.

Eligibility

Child eligibility

Children must be at least 3-years-old by 30 April in the year in which they access ESK.

A child can only access an ESK grant for 1 year and should be enrolled in Four-Year-Old Kindergarten the following year. If the service and/or family have concerns about the child commencing school after 2 years of kindergarten, the service should complete a second-year assessment to determine if the child is eligible for a second year of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten.

ESK grants can only be accessed at 1 service at a time. However, where there are shared care arrangements, the local ECIB should be contacted for funding advice.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Start Kindergarten

A parent, carer or legal guardian may advise the service provider verbally or the service provider may receive a written referral from a professional such as a Koorie Engagement Support Officer (KESO).

Parents, carers or legal or guardians who identify a child as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander should not be asked to provide verification of this. The child's eligibility should be recorded in the child's confidential enrolment record.

Early Start Kindergarten for children known to Child Protection

Eligible service providers can receive ESK if the child is in out-of-home care or if the child or their family has current or historical involvement with Child Protection, including:

- where a child or their sibling(s) is, or has been, placed on a protection order or has received protection services from Child Protection
- where there have been unsubstantiated notifications to Child Protection about a family
- where Child Protection has been consulted as part of a family's initial intake or referral to another agency such as Orange Door or Child FIRST.

Eligibility can be advised verbally by a parent, carer or legal guardian through written referral from a professional, including from Child Protection, Early Childhood Learning Advisor, Child FIRST, Integrated Family Services or Services Connect and should be recorded the child's confidential enrolment record.

Service providers should contact their local ECIB if unsure whether a child meets the eligibility criteria.

Early Start Kindergarten for children from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds

A child from a refugee or asylum seeker background is eligible for ESK if the child holds or has a parent, carer or legal guardian who holds one of the following:

- Refugee visa (subclass 200)
- In-country Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 201)
- Global Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 202)
- Emergency Rescue visa (subclass 203)
- Woman at Risk visa (subclass 204)
- Humanitarian Stay visa (subclass 449)
- Temporary Protection visa (subclass 785)
- Temporary (Humanitarian Concern) visa (subclass 786)
- Safe Haven Enterprise visa (subclass 790)
- Protection visa (subclass 866)
- A Bridging visa and is in the process of applying for one of the above Refugee or Humanitarian visas
- Current or expired ImmiCard
- An approved exemption from the department.

If a service is unable to ascertain what visa type the family hold, or if a family with a refugee or asylum seeker background does not hold a visa type listed above, they can contact their local ECIB for advice.

Exemption

Exemptions will be considered by the department where a child, their family or guardian does not hold, or is not in the process of applying for a refugee or humanitarian visa but has been impacted by a refugee or asylum seeker experience or an experience similar to a refugee and asylum seeker. This experience could be a recent experience, or an experience which has occurred 20 or more years ago. If an exemption is required, a service should contact their local ECIB.

Service providers should record the visa type in the child's confidential enrolment record if this information is available, or if the family, carer or legal guardian has an approved exemption by the department.



Service provider requirements

Service providers do not need to be in receipt of kindergarten per capita funding in order to receive ESK funding for eligible children. Services must register to use KIMS and complete the kindergarten funding application process and have a service agreement with the department in order to receive this funding.

For ESK funding, service providers should:

- provide up to 15 hours in a kindergarten program free of charge and maximise access to 15 hours of kindergarten (children accessing ESK can be enrolled in a 3-year-old group, a 4-year-old group, a mixed age group or a combination of groups in order to access the full 15 hours per week)
- avoid imposing financial barriers to families seeking access: providers are strongly encouraged to waive any refundable deposit or other charges required upon confirming acceptance/waiting list entry
- support the transition of the child into Four-Year-Old Kindergarten
- complete an ESK attendance tracker each term, via KIMS, for each child who received an ESK grant at any time during the year.
- In cases where the ESK grant exceeds the program fee normally charged, service providers are expected to use surplus funding to:
 - assist the family receiving the grant to reduce fees for additional hours of child care required to access 15 hours of free kindergarten or other costs, if applicable
 - support the inclusion of the child
 - promote the inclusion of other eligible families in the kindergarten program.

In cases where a child in receipt of an ESK grant leaves a service, service providers are expected (if possible) to use the remaining grant to promote re-engagement of the child in the kindergarten program, to promote and support inclusion of other eligible families in the kindergarten program, and to increase the capacity of educators to improve inclusive practices.

How to apply

Applications for ESK grants are made by entering the child details on KIMS, and completing an ESK funding request for the child. Service providers should enter ESK enrolments prior to the end of Term 1 or as soon as the child is enrolled.

[Access more information about completing funding requests and applications on KIMS home page.](#)

How funding is calculated

Service providers are paid the full ESK funding for eligible children who are enrolled to attend a kindergarten program delivered by a VIT registered early childhood teacher for 15 hours per week. If a child is enrolled in fewer than 15 hours per week, a pro rata calculation is made.

If the fee normally charged for the kindergarten program exceeds the pro rata grant amount, the grant will be adjusted to be equivalent to the fee normally charged for the number of hours the child is enrolled, capped at an amount equivalent to the standard grant rate for a 15-hour program.

In instances where the number of hours a child is enrolled to attend increases, the service provider should update KIMS as this may increase the funding amount paid to the service.

If a child leaves the service, the service provider must remove their enrolment from KIMS; in this case, withdrawal of an ESK enrolment does not affect the amount of funding received.

How funding is paid

ESK grants are paid directly to the service provider as an annual one-off payment following submission and approval of a funding request in KIMS.



KINDERGARTEN SUPPLEMENTARY FUNDING

KINDERGARTEN FEE SUBSIDY

The KFS will continue to be available for eligible services that elect not to opt in to Free Kinder. The Free Kinder payment will replace the KFS and the KFS Ratio Supplement for services that participate in Free Kinder.

The KFS is provided to enable eligible children participate in funded Three- and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten for up to 15 hours of kindergarten free of charge or at low cost. This funding is paid in addition to per capita funding to subsidise the cost of parent fees.

In relation to the KFS, service providers are required to:

- promote the KFS to eligible families
- provide eligible children with access to a kindergarten program free of charge for at least 15 hours per week or 600 hours per year in Four-Year-Old Kindergarten and between 200 and 600 hours per year in Three-Year-Old Kindergarten
- charge eligible families no more than the services' average hourly rate for additional hours of service provision above the funded kindergarten hours
- keep fees affordable for all families
- provide inclusive programs with equitable access that does not stigmatise or disadvantage any family.

[Access more information about kindergarten funding rates on the department's website.](#)



Eligibility

Child eligibility

Service providers that have not opted in to Free Kinder can receive the KFS for each child in receipt of a per capita grant in any of the following circumstances:

- the child is identified by a parent, carer or legal guardian as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (note: the parent, carer or legal guardian should not be asked to provide verification of this)
- the child is identified on their birth certificate as being one of triplets, quadruplets or more
- the child individually holds, or has a parent, carer or legal guardian who holds one of the following:
 - a Commonwealth Health Care Card (including Low Income Health Care Card, Foster Child Health Care Card and Ex-Carer Allowance Health Care Card)
 - a Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card
 - a department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card or White Card
 - Refugee visa (subclass 200)
 - In-country Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 201)
 - Emergency Rescue visa (subclass 203)
 - Woman at risk visa (subclass 204)
 - Global Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 202)
 - Temporary Protection visa (subclass 785)
 - Protection visa (subclass 866)
 - Safe Haven Enterprise visa (Subclass 790)
 - Bridging visas (BV) A-E (subclass 010, 020, 030, 050 and 051) only if issued for one of the substantive visas listed above.

If a child or family has a humanitarian or refugee visa which is not in the above list, service providers should refer to the [Commonwealth Department of Home Affairs website](#) and contact their departmental regional office, as the child may be eligible for the KFS.

Services should sight the relevant concession card, visa, travel document or letter of visa status and record the expiry date on the child's enrolment record.

Where a carer identifies that the child is in out-of-home care, delays in obtaining health care cards for children should not provide a barrier to accessing the KFS. The application should proceed with a note made in the child's enrolment records that the health care card has not yet been sighted. Information in the enrolment record should then be updated once the health care card is sighted.

Children known to Child Protection, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children from a refugee or asylum seeker background who are not eligible for the KFS can access a free or low-cost Three-Year-Old Kindergarten through the ESK grant and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten through the ESK extension grant.

While services in receipt of Free Kinder are not eligible for the KFS, they are encouraged to continue to collect this demographic information where possible.

Non-government school service eligibility

Non-government schools that have not opted into Free Kinder will receive the KFS for any eligible families to reduce the fees paid. The fee subsidy must be used to directly discount the fees paid by eligible families. Families choosing to access these services pay the difference between the KFS and the applicable annual service fee.

Services that do not offer a 15-hour program free of charge for children eligible for the KFS should ensure families understand that they may be able to access a 15-hour program free of charge at a different service.

How to apply

Service providers should:

- verify eligible children through the annual confirmation of data in KIMS
- update children's KFS status as necessary throughout the year, through to 31 October.



How funding is calculated

Service providers are paid for the whole term in which an eligible child enrolls and attends, or in which an enrolled child becomes eligible or ineligible. For example, the subsidy will be paid for the whole term if:

- an eligible child enrolls after the beginning of a term
- an enrolled child becomes eligible for a KFS after the beginning of a term
- the relevant card or visa expires during a term
- a child receiving KFS leaves the service throughout the term.

Any adjustments to KFS eligibility should be reflected in the fees charged for the eligible child.

How funding is paid

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy payments are included in the service provider's monthly payments.

Payments for existing funded services are paid as part of pre-confirmed funding and subsequently adjusted following annual confirmation.

Utilising the fee subsidy

Services charging fees less than the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy

Services charging annual fees less than the KFS amount must offer eligible families a kindergarten program free of charge, regardless of whether the

program offers more than the minimum number of hours per week.

In cases where the KFS exceeds the program fee, service providers are expected to use surplus funding to:

- assist families receiving fee subsidies by covering other required costs
- improve the quality of service and increase local participation
- promote the inclusion of other eligible families into the program.

Service providers with a fee subsidy surplus per service of more than \$5,000 per year are required to report how they used these funds in the annual online confirmed data collection.

Services charging fees greater than the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy

With the exception of non-government schools and other alternative services, service providers charging annual fees greater than the KFS are required to provide eligible families with the first 15 hours per week (or 600 hours per year) of the program free of charge and charge no more than the average hourly rate (for that service) for the additional hours.

All service providers offering more than 15 hours per week (or 600 hours per year) are encouraged to consider providing the entire program to eligible children free of charge.

RATIO PAYMENT

Victorian kindergarten services are required to have a minimum educator to child ratio of 1:11 for children from 36 months up to and including kindergarten age. This funding is provided in addition to the per capita grant as a contribution towards the cost of employing an additional educator.

Eligibility

Ratio supplement funding is available to community-based kindergarten service providers, including Early Years Management (EYM) organisations, offering sessional kindergarten programs with groups of 23 and above that don't attract the Commonwealth CCS.

For the purpose of kindergarten funding, a group is defined as children attending a kindergarten session at the same time in a room with a qualified early childhood teacher.

The number of children in each group should not exceed 33 children at any one time. In isolated instances where a group exceeds 33, approval must be sought from the department.

Where Three-Year-Old Kindergarten is delivered for fewer than 15 hours, ratio funding will be prorated.

In the case of rotational programs, smaller subgroups may be brought together to create a larger group as defined above.

Exclusions and exceptions

- non-government schools are not eligible for this type of funding
- services operating with a regulatory staffing waiver are not eligible
- groups attracting the Commonwealth CCS are not eligible.

Payment of ratio supplement funding

Service providers are not required to apply for ratio supplement funding. Funding is automatically paid to eligible services that have groups of 23 or more children entered in KIMS at the time of annual confirmation.

How ratio supplement funding is calculated

Ratio supplement funding is calculated annually based on confirmed enrolment and program data for both funded 3 and 4-year old enrolments. Ratio payments are based on the number of children in each funded kindergarten group and will include the number of 3 and 4-year-old funded enrolments in combined groups.

The ratio supplement is paid for each eligible child enrolled in a group of 23 children or above. For example, a group of 25 children with 3 educators will receive 25 multiplied by the ratio supplement rate.

[Access more information about ratio supplement funding on the department's website.](#)



EARLY START KINDERGARTEN EXTENSION GRANTS

Early Start Kindergarten extension grants for services not participating in Free Kinder are available to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds and children known to Child Protection who are not eligible for the KFS to access a free Four-Year-Old Kindergarten program.

[Access more information about ESK extension grant funding on the department's website.](#)

Eligibility

Service providers can apply for the ESK extension grant for each child who:

- is eligible for and in receipt of a kindergarten per capita grant
- is ineligible for the KFS

and

- is identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or is known to Child Protection

or

- has participated in an AEL program.

Service providers are required to document the date and source of advice of eligibility in the child's enrolment records.

Parents, carers or legal guardians who identify a child as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander should not be asked to provide verification of this.

If a service is unsure if a child known to Child Protection, has a refugee or asylum seeker background, is eligible for the KFS or may be eligible for an ESK extension grant, they should contact their local ECIB.

Service provider requirements

Service providers must be in receipt of kindergarten per capita funding in order to receive ESK extension grants for eligible children.

Services in receipt of Free Kinder are not eligible for ESK extension grants, as both payments aim to reduce the cost to parents by delivering a free 15-hour program.

Service providers are encouraged to waive any payment required upon confirming acceptance/ waiting list entry to minimise financial barriers to participation and must not set fees for eligible families that are higher than for other families.

Service providers are required to provide eligible families with the first 15 hours per week of the program free of charge, even in situations where the fees normally charged are greater than the kindergarten per capita grant plus the ESK extension grant.

ESK extension grants in long day care services

If a child accesses the ESK extension grant in a long day care service, the family, carer or legal guardian may be required to pay fees for additional child care hours outside the kindergarten program. In such cases, service providers should:

- charge no more than the average hourly rate (for that service) for any additional hours provided
- use the ESK extension grant in combination with the Commonwealth CCS or Additional CCS to reduce costs of additional hours of child care required to access 15 hours of kindergarten to parents, carers and legal guardians
- explore all avenues for funding to reduce fees, including Commonwealth Additional CCS (Child Wellbeing) and the Child Safety Net where appropriate
- consider ways of providing the entire program to eligible children free of charge
- if charging for additional hours, inform families that they may be able to access a free 15-hour kindergarten program at another service.

In cases where the ESK extension grant in addition to the per capita grant exceeds the program fee normally charged, service providers are expected to use surplus funding to:

- assist the family receiving the grant to reduce fees for additional hours of child care required to access 15 hours of free kindergarten or other costs, if applicable
- support the inclusion of the child
- promote the inclusion of other eligible families into the kindergarten program.

Non-government school services

Non-government schools not participating in Free Kinder will receive the ESK extension grant for any eligible families to reduce the fees paid. The fee subsidy must be used to directly discount the fees paid by eligible families. Families choosing to access these services pay the difference between the annual ESK extension grant and the applicable annual service fee, where the fee exceeds the extension grant rate.

Services that do not offer a 15-hour program free of charge for children eligible for the ESK extension grant should ensure families understand that they may be able to access a 15-hour program free of charge at a different service.

How to apply

Applications for ESK extension grants are made by completing questions in the child details screen in KIMS, either during annual confirmation of enrolments in kindergarten in the year before school, or when adding enrolments after confirmation is complete.

Service providers should submit applications prior to the end of Term 1 or as soon as they are received.

If a family informs the service provider that a child is eligible after the child has been entered in KIMS, the service provider should update this information and the grant will be paid for the eligible child.

[Access more information about completing funding requests and applications on KIMS home page.](#)

How funding is calculated

The funding amount is equivalent to the KFS annual rate for the calendar year.

How funding is paid

ESK extension grants are paid directly to service providers for each eligible child enrolled at a service, as an annual one-off payment, regardless of the child's enrolment or cease date.

This is paid in addition to the kindergarten per capita grant for eligible children.



EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER SUPPLEMENT

The Early Childhood Teacher Supplement (ECTS) is additional funding paid to eligible kindergarten service providers to help offset the cost of employing more experienced teachers in funded kindergarten programs.

The supplement is paid at a per child rate determined by the salary level of the teacher and the funding category of the service (standard or rural).

[Access more information about ECTS funding rates on the department's website.](#)

Eligibility

Service eligibility

The ECTS is available to services that employ eligible teachers under the VECTEA 2020 or the EEEA 2020 or equivalent (see Teacher eligibility, below). Services must be in receipt of per capita funding and employ eligible teachers.

The ECTS is not available for services operated by non-government schools.

An Agreement is considered equivalent if it offers equivalent salary structure and employment conditions to the VECTEA 2020 and EEEA 2020. The Education Services (Teachers) Award 2010 is not considered equivalent to the VECTEA or the EEEA.

Teacher eligibility

To be eligible for the ECTS, all the following teacher criteria must be met:

- be employed in a service under the VECTEA or the EEEA or in a service with an EA that has been approved by the department as having an equivalent salary structure and employment conditions to the VECTEA 2020 and EEEA 2020
- be a VIT registered early childhood teacher employed to deliver the funded kindergarten program
- work for 3 consecutive months or more in the calendar year for which the ECTS is being sought
- be classified as a Level 2.5 or above as per the VECTEA 2020 or EEEA 2020 (or equivalent).

The following teachers are not eligible for the ECTS:

- those employed at the service for a period of less than 3 consecutive months
- those employed to cover lunch breaks only
- those employed under an agreement or award that is not equivalent to the VECTEA or the EEEA. Services should contact their ECIB for further information.

For an EA to be assessed as equivalent to the VECTEA 2020 or EEEA 2020 for the purpose of ECTS, it should include:

- teacher salaries that are equivalent or greater
- term breaks for early childhood teachers
- at least one hour per week per service as release from face-to-face teaching/contact time, or an increase in non-teaching/non-contact time for their educational leader and/or nominated supervisor
- no more than 25.5 hours face-to-face contact hours
- no requirement for validation for teachers to progress to Level 3 (Exemplary), as previously required under the VECTEA 2016 and EEEA 2016.



How funding is calculated

The department will provide eligible service providers with information about the application process during the kindergarten year based on information entered in KIMS as part of annual confirmation. The department calculates and processes ECTS outside of KIMS. Funding is paid at a per child rate based on the per capita funding type the service receives, the number of enrolments and teacher salary level confirmed at the time of the annual confirmation.

The number of confirmed per capita enrolments (including ESK enrolments) taught by the eligible teacher(s) in a funded kindergarten group

x

The applicable annual ECTS rate per child

Prorated for 3-year-old groups receiving fewer than 15 hours per week

x

The proportion of contact hours delivered by the eligible teacher(s)

Capped at 15 hours per group

x

The proportion of kindergarten terms delivered by the eligible teacher(s)

A pro-rata amount is calculated if the teacher delivered the program for 3 terms or fewer during the year

= Total ECTS funding per group

The maximum ECTS grant per group is equivalent to one teacher delivering the program across the whole year. This means the ECTS amount is capped at 15 hours per week for 4 terms for a group irrespective of the number of teachers delivering that program.

If an eligible teacher works less than 4 terms or delivers fewer than 15 hours, then the payment is proportionally reduced. The ECTS is calculated on number of enrolments confirmed by a kindergarten service provider during the annual confirmation process.

A base funding amount is applied for rural services with 18 or fewer enrolments.

How funding is paid

Once an application is approved by the department, payments are made to the service provider as a one-off payment for the calendar year through to KIMS. Once the funding entitlement has been paid for the year, the department does not adjust for changes in enrolment numbers or a change in the teacher's level.

PRE-PURCHASED PLACES

A Pre-Purchased Place (PPP) is a kindergarten place funded by the department and reserved for vulnerable or disadvantaged children who present outside normal enrolment periods.

For each PPP, the department pays the service provider the full cost of a kindergarten place (per capita plus the Free Kinder subsidy).

PPPs may be helpful if the service:

- is located in an area of need and high demand for kindergarten places
- has vulnerable and disadvantaged families who typically present outside normal enrolment periods
- has current capacity constraints and past experience indicates that there is insufficient capacity to accommodate children who present late.

Service providers who are allocated PPPs are expected to engage with their local communities, including referring agencies, such as Child FIRST, Child Protection, Maternal and Child Health Services and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to raise awareness of the availability of PPPs and place eligible children.

In addition, the department monitors vacant PPPs and regularly circulates a list of these, together with service contact information, to key referral agencies.

Eligibility

Service eligibility

Services may be eligible for PPPs if they:

- receive standard per capita funding
- offer a sessional kindergarten program
- will be able to offer PPPs without the need for a waiver under the NQF

and meet one of the following:

- are located in a Local Government Area (LGA) in SEIFA decile one or 2
- 30 per cent or more children enrolled have characteristics as outlined in the KFS or ESK eligibility criteria
- 10 per cent or more enrolments are Aboriginal and Torres Strait children.

Child eligibility

PPPs are targeted at supporting children who have characteristics that would meet the eligibility for the KFS (in the absence of Free Kinder), ESK or ESK extension funding. Within this eligible cohort, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children known to Child Protection, including those in out-of-home care, children from refugee families and children with additional needs, should be prioritised for PPPs.

While services that are accessing Free Kinder funding are not eligible to receive KFS or ESK extension grants, children who would normally attract these subsidies are still eligible if a service has been allocated a PPP.

Allocation of children to Pre-Purchased Places

If a child who meets the PPP eligibility criteria enrolls at a service that has been allocated PPPs, the service provider must indicate that the child is allocated to a PPP when the enrolment details are entered in KIMS.

- In Term 1, PPPs should be allocated to eligible children, as per above, who present at the service from the beginning of Term 1 onwards. In Term 1 only, providers wishing to allocate a Three-Year-Old Kindergarten enrolment to a PPP in a funded program of less than 15 hours should consult with their local ECIB
- From Term 2, any eligible children who are enrolled at the service will automatically be allocated to a PPP in KIMS
- From Term 3 onwards, any late enrolment enrolled in KIMS (whether eligible and non-eligible children), will automatically be allocated against any vacant PPPs in the service by KIMS.

How to apply

The department offers the PPP allocations to eligible services each year for the following year in areas and services where they are needed most.

How is funding paid

Funding for PPPs is made monthly via KIMS as part of the monthly kindergarten recurrent payment cycle.

ACCESS TO EARLY LEARNING

Access to Early Learning (AEL) is an evidence-based early intervention program that provides intensive support to vulnerable 3-year-old children from families with complex needs. It is available in select locations across Victoria and by referral only. Referrals identify children from families with a minimum of 2 relevant characteristics, which may include being known to Child Protection, intellectual or physical disability of a parent or child, family violence, mental health issues, sexual assault and alcohol and drug abuse. Each AEL program supports approximately 16 children per year.

The AEL grants are only available to children that have been confirmed by an AEL provider as being supported by the program.

In order to receive an AEL grant, eligible children must be enrolled in 15 hours of kindergarten per



week delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher registered with the VIT (see page 79 for further information).

Access to Early Learning grants are paid at the same rate as an ESK grant.

Access more information about [AEL](#) and [ESK](#) funding on the department's website.

Access to Early Learning grants in long day care services

Access to Early Learning grants can be used in combination with the Australian Government's CCS and Additional CCS. Receiving the AEL grant will not impact these payments.

If a child accesses an AEL grant in a long day care service, the family, carer or legal guardian may be required to pay fees for additional childcare hours outside the kindergarten program. In such cases, service providers:

- should use all available additional funding to reduce fees, including CCS or Additional CCS
- are encouraged, where possible, to waive fees and provide all hours free of charge to AEL enrolments.



Eligibility

Child eligibility

Children must be at least 3-years-old by 30 April in the year in which they access the AEL grant.

The AEL Provider determines a child's eligibility for AEL and will inform a service if a child is eligible for an AEL grant.

Service provider requirements

Service providers must meet the general eligibility criteria detailed on page 81.

Service providers do not need to be in receipt of kindergarten per capita grants in order to receive AEL grants for eligible children.

Services must register to use KIMS and complete the kindergarten funding application process and have a service agreement with the department in order to receive payment.

For AEL grants, service providers should:

- provide 15 hours in a kindergarten program free of charge
- avoid imposing financial barriers to families seeking access; providers are strongly encouraged to waive any refundable deposit or other charges required upon confirming acceptance/waiting list entry
- support the transition of the child into Four-Year-Old Kindergarten
- provide data regarding the child's attendance to the AEL Provider upon request.

In cases where the AEL grant exceeds the program fee normally charged, service providers are expected to use surplus funding to:

- assist the family receiving the grant to reduce fees for additional hours of child care required to access 15 hours of free kindergarten or other costs, if applicable

- support the inclusion of the child
- promote the inclusion of ESK eligible families in the kindergarten program.

In cases where a child in receipt of an AEL grant leaves a service, service providers are expected to use the remaining grant to promote re-engagement of the child in the kindergarten program if possible, and to promote and support inclusion of other eligible families in the kindergarten program. Unspent funds can also be used to address barriers to access for vulnerable families and increase the capacity of educators to improve inclusive practices.

How to apply

Applications for AEL are made by entering the child's details on KIMS, taking care to indicate that the child is being supported by an AEL Provider, and completing an AEL funding request. Service providers should enter AEL enrolments prior to the end of Term 1 or as soon as the child is enrolled.

[Access more information about completing funding requests and applications on KIMS home page.](#)

How funding is calculated

The funding amount is equivalent to the ESK annual rate for the calendar year.

As AEL enrolments must be enrolled for 15 hours per week, pro rata grants do not apply unless the child is attending the 15 hours per week across 2 different services.

How funding is paid

Access to Early Learning grants are paid directly to the service provider as an annual one-off payment following submission and approval of a funding request on KIMS.

SCHOOL READINESS FUNDING

School Readiness Funding (SRF) is a permanent part of the kindergarten funding model. The purpose of the funding is to resource kindergartens to address the impacts of educational disadvantage experienced by some children, ensuring all children attending a funded kindergarten program get the best start to their learning.

The funding will be used to support outcomes for children in the priority areas of communication (language development); wellbeing (social and emotional); and access and inclusion. These priority areas are aligned to the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF).

The department has developed a menu of evidence-informed programs and supports (the menu) to help kindergarten services spend the funding on the priority areas. Kindergarten services will be required to spend the majority of their SRF on items selected from the menu. This ensures that the funding is directed towards programs and supports that are known to be effective in improving children's developmental outcomes.

[Access the menu on the department's website.](#)

Kindergarten services in receipt of \$5,000 or less must spend all their SRF on items from the menu.

Kindergarten services in receipt of more than \$5,000 in SRF:

- will receive a portion of their funding as an allocation of allied health support (from a multi-disciplinary team of allied health professionals) pre-purchased by the department
- may also choose to spend up to 25 per cent of their SRF flexibly on programs and supports not on the menu that address one or more of the priority areas, or a local priority that support children's outcomes and address educational disadvantage. Flexible funding cannot be used

for purchasing infrastructure or information technology equipment and must be approved by the department

- may spend up to 5 per cent of their flexible funding on costs related to planning for and implementing SRF. Use of funding for this purpose is capped at \$10,000 per service, must be listed as flexible funding, and must be acquitted at the service-level.

Eligibility

All funded kindergarten services in receipt of kindergarten per capita funding or ESK funding, including long day care services, will receive SRF.

How to apply

Service providers do not need to apply for SRF, however to be eligible, services must be confirmed and funded in KIMS with Student Family Occupation and Education data collected for at least 70 per cent of enrolments.

All service providers whose services meet the above eligibility criteria will be advised of the SRF service-level allocations for the following year in September or October.

There are 2 subsequent SRF funding rounds in December and April to capture:

- any remaining services which were not initially eligible to receive SRF during the primary allocation round
- new services that receive funding to deliver a kindergarten program as part of Annual Confirmation.

SRF allocations calculated during the final funding round in April are prorated at 75 per cent.

Services that become funded after Annual Confirmation (April of each year) will not receive SRF until the following year. This approach will ensure that service providers have time to plan for, receive and spend SRF in the year that it is received.

Service provider requirements

The funding is conditional on service providers:

- submitting sufficient Student Family Occupation and Education data at annual confirmation
- accepting terms and conditions provided by the department
- completing an annual plan for each service and receiving approval from the department. Service providers should work with the department to make any substantial changes to their plan throughout the kindergarten year
- accepting regular engagement with the department to provide progress updates
- completing a mid-year review and end-of-year acquittal of funding for each service.

It is expected that SRF will:

- drive educational outcomes in the 3 priority areas of communication (language development), wellbeing (social and emotional); and access and inclusion
- be spent on the purchasing of items from the menu of evidence-informed programs and supports and, for service receiving more than \$5,000, a portion may be spent flexibly on other items approved by the department
- is for additional purposes to existing funding and there should not be any reduction or substitution of pre-existing effort.

School Readiness Funding cannot be used by kindergarten service providers to address service budget deficits.

How funding is calculated

School Readiness Funding for each service varies based on a service's size and level of need. The level of need of a service is informed by the occupation and education information of parents, carers or legal guardians of children attending a service in previous years as this is known to be a good predictor of educational disadvantage.

Service providers must collect information on the occupation and education of the parents, carers or guardians of children in the service (otherwise known as Student Family Occupation Education data) to enable the department to calculate each service's funding amount. Service providers enter this information into KIMS against each child record as part of the annual confirmation process.

Funding for each service ranges from:

- \$1,000 for kindergartens with low levels of need
- more than \$200,000 for kindergartens with large numbers of children with very high levels of need.

Services with high levels of need that encounter significant variation in enrolments from one year to the next can contact their ECIB to discuss their funding allocation.

How funding is paid

All service-level SRF amounts will be provided in 2 payments over the calendar year to the approved service provider:

- half of the funding will be paid at the beginning of the kindergarten year
- the remainder of the amount is paid in the middle of the kindergarten year.

Acquittal of funding

All SRF must be acquitted by service providers at the service level.

School Readiness Funding must be expended by each service in the calendar year it is paid (i.e. 2022 funding must be spent and acquitted in 2022). Kindergarten services with an underspend amount of more than \$1000 will have this recouped from their SRF allocation the following year.

Where a service provider ceases a service with a funded kindergarten program during the kindergarten year, the department may request an acquittal or evidence of expenditure of SRF. A service provider may be invoiced for unspent funding or have it recouped through KIMS.

FUNDING TO SUPPORT EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS TO WRITE TRANSITION LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STATEMENTS

All funded service providers receive funding as a contribution that will allow them to release early childhood teachers to write Transition Learning and Development Statements. This includes those within long day care services and schools, EYM services and stand-alone kindergarten services.

How to apply

Service providers do not need to apply for Transition Learning and Development Statement contributing funding. Funding is automatically allocated to kindergarten services.

How funding is calculated

The funding each year will be calculated on enrolment data provided through KIMS as part of the annual confirmation process.

How funding is paid

Payments are automatically paid to service providers following the completion of annual confirmation.

All funds must be expended annually by the end of Term 4. For enquiries about this funding please email psts@edumail.vic.gov.au

RURAL TRAVEL ALLOWANCE

A travel allowance is available to assist funded services in rural areas attract qualified early childhood teachers.

[Access information about kindergarten funding rates on the department's website.](#)

Eligibility

Service providers may be eligible to receive a travel allowance if the teacher (including relief teachers):

- delivers a funded kindergarten program at 2 or more services (one of these services can be operated by another service provider), and
- one of the services which the teacher travels to or from is funded at the rural rate. Travel to 2 or more services is not required to occur on the same day.

Where a teacher delivers funded kindergarten programs across services operated by different service providers, only the service provider

subsidising the teacher's travel should apply for the Rural Travel Allowance.

Service providers should:

- ensure teachers make the application from the service funded at the rural rate if they are working at both a rural and non-rural service
- request that teachers, including relief staff, maintain a logbook of travel to verify travel claims. Logbooks should be kept by services as documentary evidence.

How to apply

Service providers should ensure the annual confirmation process has been completed for the staff member's services. Service providers should contact their local ECIB for instructions on how to apply for the Rural Travel Allowance.

How funding is calculated

The travel allowance is calculated:

- on a 'per kilometre per annum' basis (up to a maximum of 20,000 km per year) and is applicable to school terms only
- based on anticipated travel, that is, the number of kilometres from one kindergarten service (base location) to the second or third kindergarten service. If the service provider approves the teacher to travel from home to a service located in another town to deliver the funded program, and that distance is less than that from the base location, then the shortest distance applies.

[Access information about the travel allowance rate per kilometre on the department's website.](#)

How funding is paid

The travel allowance is included in the service provider's monthly payments. This should be passed on to the travelling teacher, where the teacher uses their own vehicle for travel or retained by the service provider to offset the costs of providing a vehicle for the teacher.

PARENTAL LEAVE ALLOWANCE

Parental leave allowance is paid as a reimbursement to eligible service providers that have made a parental leave payment to educators employed to deliver a funded kindergarten program.

Eligibility

Service providers that are required to make a parental leave entitlement payment to educators employed to deliver the funded kindergarten program can apply to the department for reimbursement of the parental leave payment. Services operated by non-government schools are not eligible for the parental leave allowance.

Service providers and educators are advised to examine the full provisions relating to parental leave in their EAs to check that educators are paid the correct amount and eligibility is verified. Service providers will be asked to provide a copy of the relevant agreement or contract which includes a paid parental leave entitlement, at the time of applying for the parental leave reimbursement.

In addition to the reimbursement of parental leave provided by the department, paid parental leave may be available through the Commonwealth Government.

[Access more information about parental leave on the Australian Government website.](#)

How to apply

Service providers must ensure that the teacher details for which they are claiming the parental leave for is up to date in KIMS and that the period of paid parental leave has been completed, as the payment is a reimbursement of payments already made only.

A claim for reimbursement must be made within 3 months of the end date of the leave being taken. Service providers should contact their local ECIB for instructions on how to apply for the parental leave allowance.

How funding is calculated

Service providers can claim reimbursement for the period of the parental leave entitlement in their relevant agreement or contract up to a maximum of 16 weeks primary carer leave and up to 4 weeks secondary carer leave.

Service providers with EAs or employment contracts that offer entitlements less than this will only be reimbursed up to the level of their entitlement. For example, service providers that are signatories to the EEEA 2020 will be reimbursed for their entitlement of up to 14 weeks primary carer leave and up to 2 weeks secondary carer leave, while service providers that are signatories to the VECTEA 2020 will be reimbursed for their entitlement of up to 16 weeks primary carer leave and up to 4 weeks secondary carer leave.

How funding is paid

The reimbursement is paid to the employer (not the educator) and is made as a retrospective one-off payment.





PRE-1994 LONG SERVICE LEAVE

The department holds funds for long service leave and sick leave accrued by educators employed in kindergartens prior to 24 January 1994.

All enquiries regarding leave entitlement balances held for educators who were employed prior to 1994 who have taken long service leave or eligible sick leave should be directed to the department's kindergarten funding enquiry inbox at kindergarten.funding@education.vic.gov.au

Once leave has been taken the department will reimburse eligible leave payments, up to the entitlement it holds. A claim for reimbursement must be made within 3 months of the end date of the leave being taken.

Eligibility

The department will only provide payment for sick leave if the service provider has already paid the equivalent of one full year's sick leave entitlement for that educator in the current calendar year.

How to apply

To make a claim for a long service leave or sick leave reimbursement, email the kindergarten.funding@education.vic.gov.au to request an application form.

How funding is calculated

Reimbursements are paid based on the weeks (long service leave) or hours (sick leave) of leave accrued by educators prior to 1994.

How funding is paid

Payments for long service leave or sick leave entitlements is paid directly to the service provider through KIMS as a one-off payment.

3 ADDITIONAL SUPPORT



ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

SUPPORTS FOR SERVICES

Table 8: Summary of operational support programs and services

Focus area for support	Organisation and support provided	Further information
Children who have experienced trauma	Australian Childhood Foundation (ACF): Provides training on trauma, child abuse and family violence. ACF training can be access via the School Readiness Funding (SRF) Menu.	ACF website School Readiness Funding Menu
	The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing provides resources on child development and trauma.	Children, youth and families - DFFH Service Providers
Inclusion for long day care services in Victoria	Community Child Care Association (CCCA): Provides resources and professional development for teachers and educators. Assists with increasing and improving their ability to include children with additional needs.	CCCA website
Data privacy and handling	The department: Provides an information privacy policy for kindergartens.	Information privacy policy information
	The department: Provides information about Transition Learning and Development Statement privacy and information sharing.	Transition Statement privacy information



Focus area for support	Organisation and support provided	Further information
Free support services to eligible kindergarten service providers	<p>Early Learning Association of Australia (ELAA):</p> <p>Provides free support services to eligible kindergarten service providers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • telephone and email advice • online and face-to-face training • resource materials • targeted intensive support, by referral. <p>Not-for-profit, community-based kindergarten service providers receiving kindergarten funding, including providers of Three-Year-Old-Kindergarten with participants receiving Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) grants, are eligible.</p> <p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • kindergartens managed by a Committee of Management • Early Years Management (EYM) organisations • Parent Advisory Groups, with approval from their EYM organisation • Local government • ELAA members and non-members. 	ELAA website
Grants for Provisionally Registered Teachers (PRTs)	<p>The department:</p> <p>Provides support for PRTs to move to full registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT).</p>	<p>Page 53</p> <p>The department's website</p>
Inclusive practices	<p>The Association for Children with Disability:</p> <p>Provides Going to Kindergarten resource to assist families of children with disability to attend a kindergarten program in Victoria.</p>	Association for Children with Disability website
	<p>The Centre for Community Child Health at the Royal Children's Hospital:</p> <p>Professional development workshops and courses designed to meet the needs of early childhood education professionals.</p> <p>Some of these workshops and courses can be accessed through the SRF menu.</p>	<p>Centre for Community Child Health website</p> <p>School Readiness Funding Menu</p>

Focus area for support	Organisation and support provided	Further information
	<p>FKA Children's Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides resources, advice and information on improving access to kindergarten programs for children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds and children with disability a pool of casual bilingual workers who can assist with the participation of children from CALD backgrounds in kindergarten programs training on inclusive practice for early childhood staff working with CALD backgrounds in kindergarten programs language assessments for children from CALD attending kindergarten programs access to resource sheets FKA Children's Services Cultural Inclusion Support Packages SRF menu items include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> support kindergartens to develop and embed a cultural inclusion strategy to ensure their pedagogy and practice respects multiple ways of being and understanding and children are supported in learning English as an additional language. 	<p>FKA Children's Services website</p>
	<p>Community Child Care Association (CCCA) is the inclusion agency for long day care services in Victoria, assisting with increasing and improving their ability to include children with additional needs.</p>	<p>Community Child Care Victoria (CCCA)</p> <p>https://www.cccinc.org.au/</p>
	<p>Inclusion Development Fund (IDF):</p> <p>Provides funding to assist eligible Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services to address a barrier to inclusion that cannot be resolved by support provided by an Inclusion Agency.</p>	
	<p>The department:</p> <p>LOOKOUT centres located in each region provide additional support to schools and services supporting children in out-of-home care.</p>	<p>Access more information on LOOKOUT</p> <p>Early Childhood Learning Advisors can be contacted via a department regional office.</p>

Focus area for support	Organisation and support provided	Further information
	<p>The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA):</p> <p>Provides authoritative advice, literature reviews and practical guides for the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) Learning and Development Outcomes. Provides advice on learning and development outcomes, assessment for learning and the Insight Assessment Platform.</p>	VCAA website
Scholarship and incentives program	<p>The department:</p> <p>Provides financial support to study and work in early childhood, including upskilling to a teaching qualification</p> <p>Available to people wishing to become early childhood educators, teachers or teach at services delivering Three-Year-Old-Kindergarten.</p>	Scholarship and Incentives Program on the department's website
LanguageLoop	<p>The department:</p> <p>Funds LanguageLoop (formally known as VITS) to provide interpreter services.</p> <p>LanguageLoop provides telephone interpreting and on-site interpreting, both spoken and in sign languages.</p>	<p>(03) 9280 1955</p> <p>or bookings@languageloop.com.au</p>
Community Service Organisation (CSO) Education Program insurance	<p>Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA):</p> <p>Provides CSO Education Program insurance, which may be available to community service organisations that receive direct funding from the department.</p> <p>The CSO Education Program is managed by the VMIA and provides insurance coverage for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • public and products liability • professional indemnity • directors' and officers' liability • entity fidelity • volunteers' personal accident (injury). 	CSO information on the VMIA website

SUPPORTS FOR CHILDREN

Support for children with additional needs

Children with additional needs are a designated cohort in Victoria's kindergarten priority of access criteria, ensuring they have prioritised access to their kindergarten service of choice.

The department provides assistance to support the inclusion of children with additional needs in a funded kindergarten program that is inclusive, engaging, safe and responsive to them as individuals in a number of ways, detailed below.

Preschool Field Officers

The Preschool Field Officer (PSFO) program is designed to provide practical advice and support to Victorian government funded kindergarten services to build their capacity to provide for the access, learning and development, and meaningful participation of children with additional needs.

Support can include:

- information, resources and program strategies
- coaching of the educator and modelling specific strategies
- identification of referral pathways.

[Access information about PSFOs on the department's website](#) or contact the relevant department regional office.

Kindergarten Inclusion Support

The Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS) program enhances a kindergarten program's capacity to respond to the individual abilities, interests and needs of children with disability or developmental delay and high support needs or children with complex medical needs in an inclusive kindergarten environment.

Support can include:

- specialist consultancy
- specialist training for staff
- minor building modifications
- additional staffing support.

[Access information about kindergarten inclusion support on the department's website](#) or contact the relevant department regional office.

Support for children in out-of-home care

Service providers should be aware of the [Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home Care](#) (the Agreement) which was initially launched in 2014 as a partnership between the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department, the Municipal Association of Victoria and ELAA. The refreshed Agreement was released in late 2018 and includes additional partners: the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare; CCCV; Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency; and Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation.

The Agreement includes a role for a local government contact to assist case workers to find suitable early childhood education and care services in the Local Government Area (LGA). Secure information sharing to locate children can be provided to the local government contact on a case-by-case basis.

All funded kindergarten providers are required to follow the department's priority of access guidelines for children at risk of or experiencing abuse or neglect. The Commonwealth Government also requires child care centres to prioritise children who are at risk of or experiencing abuse or neglect. If a child placed in out-of-home care leaves a service and later returns to the area, service providers should do everything to reengage the child in kindergarten.

Service providers need to adhere to the Agreement and in particular:

- set out clear roles and responsibilities in relation to children in out-of-home care that may be attending their service
- adopt flexible approaches to enable engagement
- work collaboratively with carers and other services to support children's ongoing participation
- outline a process for implementation of the Agreement and for monitoring outcomes.

Individual learning plans

Service providers should support educators in their use of the [Individual Learning Plans for Children in Out of Home Care](#) guide (the guide) when developing individual learning plans for children placed in out of home care. The guide includes advice aligned with the VEYLDF and supports the commitments outlined in the Agreement.

[Access information, including the Agreement and the guide on the department's website.](#)

LOOKOUT

LOOKOUT centres supporting children in out-of-home care are located in each of the department's regions. The LOOKOUT centres have Early Childhood Learning Advisors to assist in the identification and enrolment of children in out-of-home care in funded kindergarten programs, building the capacity of ECEC services to support children in out-of-home care and monitoring children in out-of-home care transition to school.

[Access more information about LOOKOUT centres on the Victorian Government website.](#)

Best Start

Best Start is a prevention and early intervention program that aims to improve the health, development, learning and wellbeing of Victorian children, including supporting children to engage and participate in early childhood education. The program focuses on all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children experiencing vulnerability (including CALD children).

[Access information about Best Start on the Victorian Government website.](#)

Support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

The Victorian Government has a strong commitment to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and a priority of the department is to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inclusion and participation in kindergarten programs. This commitment is strengthened by the Marrung; Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026. The department provides ESK funding and the KFS to directly support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to access and participate in a kindergarten program.

Koorie Engagement Support Officers

Koorie Engagement Support Officers (KESOs) are employed by the department to support Koorie families in accessing services and supports to ensure the best start in life for Koorie children, from birth to school completion. KESOs:

- engage with education and family service providers to facilitate a positive learning environment for Koorie learners
- can liaise with stakeholders, including schools, early childhood centres, the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc (VAEAI), the child's family, carer or legal guardian, the wider Koorie community and departments and agencies to lift educational outcomes for Koorie learners
- help facilitate a culturally inclusive learning environment to support Koorie learners to connect and thrive within their educational setting.

KESOs can be linked in at any stage of the education journey whether it is to improve early years' participation, student engagement and wellbeing, retention and achievement or access to higher education.

Koorie Preschool Assistants

Koorie Preschool Assistants (KPSAs) work out of local community-based organisations. They:

- support the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in kindergarten
- encourage community involvement in developing and delivering funded kindergarten programs
- support kindergartens to actively incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture into the curriculum and educators' practice
- work collaboratively with funded services to provide information and support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities that encourages their involvement in ensuring their children participate in kindergarten.

Koorie Kids Shine

Koorie Kids Shine promotes the value of kindergarten to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, carers and legal guardians and community and raises awareness that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are eligible for 15 hours of free kindergarten each week for 2 years before school through the ESK grant and ESK extension grant.

[Access information and resources about Koorie Kids Shine on the department's website.](#)

Support for children from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse background

CALD Outreach Initiative

The Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Outreach Initiative focuses on addressing barriers to kindergarten participation, as well as supporting participation in wider early childhood services and support transition to school. This includes supporting individual CALD families with kindergarten registration and enrolment, providing advice to upskill early childhood education teachers and educators, and increasing awareness about eligibility for ESK for children from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds.

The initiative operates in several council areas across the state. Services should contact their local ECIB for more information.

FKA Children's Services

The department funds FKA Children's Services to provide resources, advice and information on improving access to kindergarten programs for children from CALD backgrounds.

[Access more information about FKA Children's Services.](#)

LanguageLoop

All funded kindergarten services can access free interpreter services through LanguageLoop (formerly VITS). This is particularly valuable when discussing an individual child's learning and development progress with parents, carers and legal guardians and to support the transition to school process.

All interpreters are qualified and accredited, where National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) accreditation is available.

LanguageLoop provides telephone, video and on-site interpreting services. To access telephone interpreting services to talk about kindergarten programs and a child's progress in a variety of languages, go to [LanguageLoop portal](#) or call (03) 9280 1955 (24 hours, 7 days a week).

LanguageLoop is not funded to provide translation of documents.

[Access information about using an interpreter on the department's website.](#)

Foundation House

The department funds Foundation House to deliver the Early Years Program to build the capacity of early childhood services to support the full inclusion of families from refugee backgrounds through the provision of resources, professional learning opportunities and consultancy, and collaborative projects.

[Access more information on the Foundation House website.](#)

Translated information

[Access materials translated into different languages on the department's website.](#)

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority

The VCAA provides advice and practical examples for early childhood professionals of how children and families, with English as an Additional Language (EAL), can be supported to make a successful transition to school.

The [Learning English as an Additional Language in the Early Years \(birth to six years\) Resource Booklet](#) provides comprehensive information to support early childhood professionals in the context of implementing the VEYLDF.

[Access more information about Early Years EAL on the VCAA website.](#)

COMMONWEALTH SUPPORT

Table 9: Commonwealth assistance

Type of funding/ support	What is it?	Further information
CCS	Means-tested payment from the Commonwealth Government to assist parents, carers and legal guardians with their child care fees in long day care services.	Australian Government Department of Education
Additional CCS	Commonwealth Government subsidy paid in addition to CCS to provide extra support for children at risk of serious abuse or neglect; grandparent principal carers on income support; families experiencing temporary financial hardship and parents, carers and legal guardians transitioning to work from income support. All children in court-ordered out-of-home care are determined as being 'at risk' for the purposes of accessing the Additional CCS - Child Wellbeing.	Information about the subsidy on the Australian Government Department of Education's website
Inclusion Support Program	Commonwealth Government program to assist early childhood education and care services to build their capacity and capability to include children with additional needs in mainstream services; providing them with an opportunity to learn and develop alongside their typically developing peers. Please note that this funding can be accessed at the same time as kindergarten per capita funding.	Program information on the department's website
Indigenous Advancement Strategy	Through the Commonwealth Government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS), early childhood services and schools can apply for grants that support the outcomes of the strategy through a competitive open grant process.	Strategy information on the Australian Government National Indigenous Australians Agency website



4 EARLY YEARS MANAGEMENT



EARLY YEARS MANAGEMENT

Early Years Management (EYM) organisations are local government or community-based organisations that provide professional leadership and centralised management of kindergarten services.

The EYM organisation is the funded and approved provider of the kindergartens that it manages and provide service delivery according to regulatory, policy and funding obligations. An EYM organisation is required to:

- assume all the responsibilities of an approved provider as specified in the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (National Law) and the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* (National Regulations)
- establish and review effective governance practices that support professional leadership and management systems
- contribute to policy development, sector planning, policy reform implementation and service design.

An EYM:

- provides kindergarten staff with professional employment arrangements, including professional development and networking opportunities
- increases the sustainability and coordination of early years services, particularly in regional and rural areas
- facilitates the provision of targeted support to vulnerable children and families to improve access and participation in kindergarten programs.

[Access more information about EYM, including policy and operational guidelines, on the department's website.](#)

EARLY YEARS MANAGEMENT OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

EYM funding requirements

Early Years Management organisations are required to demonstrate compliance with baseline service delivery obligations outlined in the EYM Funding Requirements as part of their funding and service agreement with the department. The Funding Requirements are unique to EYMs and build on the legislative, regulatory and contractual obligations, department policies and funding requirements that apply to all funded kindergarten services.

[Access the EYM Funding Requirements on the department's website.](#)

Service Improvement Planning (SIP)

EYM organisations are required to participate in the annual Service Improvement Planning (SIP) process.

Guided by the EYM Improvement Framework, EYM organisations and the department meet regularly to review service delivery and identify areas for organisational improvement. The SIP process draws on the enablers, indicators and data as well as organisational documentation and contextual information to help identify gaps, challenges and strategies for improvement.

Improvement actions are agreed and reviewed at regular meetings with the relevant ECIB.

[Access the EYM Improvement Framework on the department's website.](#)



FUNDING FOR EARLY YEARS MANAGEMENT

Early Years Management funding is additional to the per capita grants that service providers receive for each eligible child attending funded kindergarten programs at their services. Funding is subject to the EYM organisation meeting operational requirements.

Table 10: Early Years Management funding

Grant type	Purpose	Funding
Annual EYM grant	This grant is for the management and coordination of each approved kindergarten service managed by the EYM organisation, that offers a funded kindergarten program.	<p>Annual payment amount is determined by service type (sessional or long day care service) and is subject to indexation. Services that offer both a sessional and a long day program receive the sessional rate.</p> <p>EYM annual grant payments are made for each approved location, paid on a monthly basis in accordance with the service agreement.</p>
Additional Support Loading grant	This grant is provided for each sessional kindergarten service managed by an EYM organisation, located in a rural and/or disadvantaged area, in recognition of the additional support needs of families and staff in these areas.	<p>Annual payment for sessional kindergarten services that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rural classified • located in SEIFA 1 and 2 postcodes. • paid as a lump sum at annual confirmation each year for eligible services.
Start-up grant	This grant is for provided for new kindergarten services transferring to an existing EYM organisation to assist with the cost of service transition and integration.	<p>Annual payment amount is determined by service type (sessional or long day care service). Services that offer both a sessional and a long day program receive the sessional rate.</p> <p>Paid as one-off lump sum payment on commencement of EYM funding, for newly approved services.</p>
Transition grant	<p>In some cases, complex issues related to financial and industrial matters are not clearly understood or declared at the time of a service transferring to an EYM organisation. This grant is available to support the considerable effort and cost for an EYM organisation to resolve these issues.</p> <p>EYM organisations may apply for the grant up to six months after the service has been approved to transition into their organisation.</p> <p>EYM organisations should contact the appropriate departmental regional office to discuss eligibility.</p>	<p>Payment amount is determined by service type (sessional or long day care service) and is subject to indexation. Services that offer both a sessional and a long day program receive the sessional rate.</p> <p>Paid as a one-off lump sum payment.</p>

Grant type	Purpose	Funding
New provider grant	This grant is provided for newly established and approved EYM organisations to support the establishment of strong governance arrangements.	<p>Paid as one-off lump sum payment on commencement of funding.</p> <p>Funding amount is determined on a case by case basis. It comprises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • base funding, determined on basis of organisation type (i.e. established versus newly formed organisation/new to kindergarten provision) • 'per service' funding which differs according to whether the service delivers according to service type (e.g. sessional or long day care) and whether a sessional service is located in a rural and/or disadvantaged area.

How funding is paid

Payments generally commence the month after funding is approved and funding is processed in line with the monthly payment cycle to the EYM organisation.



How to become an Early Years Management organisation

An EYM organisation must:

- be a local government or community-based, not-for-profit organisation
- comprise a minimum of 3 community-based services, provided by incorporated associations run by volunteer Committee of Management, that offer a funded kindergarten program.

Services considering becoming an EYM organisation should contact their local Early Childhood Improvement Branch (ECIB).

Joining an EYM organisation

Committees of Management of services interested in joining an EYM organisation should contact their local ECIB to find out about local EYM organisations operating in their area.

[Access the EYM Operating Guidelines on the department's website.](#)

Adding an additional kindergarten service to an Early Years Management organisation

An EYM organisation can apply to the department to manage additional eligible kindergarten services at any time.

Service Eligibility

The following criteria must be met for a service be added to an approved EYM organisation:

- the service is community-based
- the EYM organisation has discussed becoming the approved provider for the service:
 - with the appropriate departmental regional office
 - with the local council, particularly where the service operates from a council-owned building

- the EYM organisation
 - has identified service expansion into the relevant area in their board/council-approved strategic plan
 - already operates services within the Local Government Area (LGA)
 - has discussed with the local council their intent to operate services within the LGA and how they can be included in the local Municipal Early Years Plan (MEYP)
 - has council approval of their EYM plan.

How to apply

If an EYM organisation wishes to add a new service, the EYM organisation should contact their local ECIB to discuss their intention to add a service.

If the local ECIB supports the application and the EYM organisation wishes to receive the EYM funding for the service, the EYM organisation must add the new service in KIMS. The application will then be assessed prior to advising the EYM organisation of the outcome.

Subject to the funding application being approved, the EYM start date will be the date that a complete application was submitted (that is an application containing all information required to enable a funding decision), or at the department's discretion.

If the EYM funding application is received within the 20 business days of the date the Add a New Service Application was approved by ECIB, the EYM funding start date will align with the kindergarten funding start date.

[Access KIMS quick reference guide for information on how to complete an EYM location application.](#)

[Access the EYM Operating Guidelines on the department's website.](#)



CHANGES TO EARLY YEARS MANAGEMENT SERVICE PROVISION

Suspending, ceasing or divesting a kindergarten service from an Early Years Management organisation

The EYM Funding Requirements stipulate that an EYM provide the department with written notice of potential changes to its kindergarten portfolio that may alter the number of local kindergarten places or services.

If an EYM organisation is considering changes to its kindergarten service portfolio, the EYM should contact their local ECIB at least 18 months before the proposed date of change. This will enable the department to work in partnership with the EYM to explore options and ensure continued service provision where there is local demand. The service

agreement with the department specifies a minimum contractual notice period of 3 months for the closure or divestment of services.

Subject to agreement with the Department for a service to suspend or cease to offer a funded kindergarten program for a period of time, EYMs may continue to receive the EYM annual grant for that location, providing:

- the EYM organisation continues to be the approved provider of the service there is no change of approved provider
- continued funding is in the best interest of the local community
- there is a business plan designed to outline an approach towards supporting the service to become operational in the next 12 months.

Grants may be withdrawn if the service does not recommence within 12 months.

Services considering suspending, ceasing or divesting a service, should contact their local ECIB.

5 LIST OF ACRONYMS



LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acronym	Meaning
ABLES	Abilities Based Learning and Education Support
ABN	Australian Business Number
ACECQA	Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority
ACF	Australian Childhood Foundation
ADP	Automatic Data Processing
AEL	Access to Early Learning
AGL	Activity Group Leader
AIR	Australian Immunisation Register
APST	Australian Professional Standards for Teachers
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CCCA	Community Child Care Association
CCS	Child Care Subsidy
CISS	Child Information Sharing Scheme
CRES	Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme
CSO	Community Service Organisation
EA	Enterprise Agreement
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ECIB	Early Childhood Improvement Branch
ECTS	Early Childhood Teacher Supplement
EEEA	Early Education Employees Agreement

Acronym	Meaning
ELAA	Early Learning Association Australia
EMP	Emergency Management Plan
ESK	Early Start Kindergarten
EYM	Early Years Management
FAR	Financial Accountability Reporting
FBE	Funding By Exception
FOPMF	Funded Organisation Performance Monitoring Framework
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
FVISS	Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme
IAP	Insight Assessment Platform
IAS	Indigenous Advancement Strategy
KESO	Koorie Engagement Support Officer
KFS	Kindergarten Fee Subsidy
KIMS	Kindergarten Information Management System
KIS	Kindergarten Inclusion Support
KISP	Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan
KPSA	Koorie Preschool Assistants
LGA	Local Government Area
MARAM	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management
MEYP	Municipal Early Years Plan
NAATI	National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters

Acronym	Meaning
NQAITS	National Quality Agenda IT System
NQF	National Quality Framework
OSHC	Outside School Hours Care
PPP	Pre-purchased Place
PRT	Provisionally Registered Teacher
PSFO	Preschool Field Officer
QARD	Quality Assessment and Regulation Division
SACC	Service Agreement Compliance Certification
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
SIP	Service Improvement Planning
SRF	School Readiness Funding
VAEAI	Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Limited
VCAA	Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
VECTEA	Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement
VEYLDF	Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework
VIT	Victorian Institute of Teaching
VITS	Victorian Interpreting and Translating Service
VMIA	Victorian Managed Insurance Authority

