

6.01FV ENROLMENT AND ORIENTATION POLICY (FREE KINDER)

QUALITY AREA 6 | VERSION 1.25



PURPOSE

This policy provides a clear set of guidelines for:

- enrolling a child at a LEVNT Funded Kindergarten (Victoria) Services.
- the orientation of new families and children into LEVNT Funded Kindergarten (Victoria) Services.
- ensuring compliance with Victorian and national legislation, including disability discrimination, anti-discrimination, human rights laws, No Jab No Play and the Department of Education (DE) Kindergarten Funding Guide.
- ensuring access to participation, especially for vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
- ensuring early entry applicants (this includes children younger than three years and children younger than four years old on 30 April in the year they will attend kindergarten) are given equitable access to enrolment.
- adhering to DE's priority of access requirements for both three and four-year-old children.

POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

In order to fulfil our mission, LEVNT ECS Service operate to educate children in a Christian environment by providing inspiring education opportunities that enable them to reach their full potential. The foundation of Lutheran Education is the gospel of Jesus Christ which informs all learning and teaching, all human relationships and all activities of LEVNT EC Services.

Therefore, LEVNT EC Services are committed to:

- ensuring families are aware of the Christian ethos of the LEVNT EC Service.
- families feeling respected, safe and supported during the enrolment process.
- ensuring families who may experience barriers to accessing kindergarten are proactively engaged.
- being flexible and catering for unique family circumstances and needs.
- being transparent in the enrolment process and allocation of places through consistent communication and information sharing.
- ensuring the registration, allocation and enrolment process is simple to understand, follow and implement.
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to all information provided for enrolment.
- promoting fair and equitable access to kindergarten programs, including those who face barriers to participation.
- enrolling Early Start Kindergarten eligible children into full 15 hours of kindergarten program.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, early childhood teachers, educators, staff, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of LEVNT EC Services, including offsite excursions and activities.

BACKGROUND

The *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* require approved services to have a policy and procedures in place in relation to enrolment and orientation (*Regulation 168(2) (k)*).

All eligible Victorian children (refer to Definitions) will have access to two years of Free Kinder before commencing school. Where demand is higher than availability, approved providers must adhere to their eligibility and DE's Priority of Access criteria (refer to Definitions and Attachment 1) in order to allocate the available places. The criteria used to determine the allocation of places takes account of the requirements set out in DE's Kindergarten Funding Guide (refer to Sources), the service's philosophy, values and beliefs, and the provisions of the Equal Opportunity Act 2010. The Victorian Government requires funded organisations to ensure that their policies and procedures promote equal opportunity for all children. Services participating in a central registration and enrolment scheme are required to comply with the registration and/or enrolment procedures of that scheme.

The Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme (CRES), co-designed by DE provides access to families to register for and secure a place for their children in kindergarten. It is a collaborative model that brings together councils, service providers, MCH staff, support services and other stakeholders to support children and their families. Currently more than half of all local councils across Victoria operate a form of central enrolment or central registration scheme. These schemes provide a single point of entry for families, simplifying the kindergarten enrolment process and improving equity of access.

Immunisations are an effective means of reducing the risk of vaccine preventable diseases. Early childhood education and care services which are regulated under the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* and *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* have legislative responsibilities under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* to only offer a confirmed place in their programs to children with an Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) Immunisation History Statement.

DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms refer to the Definitions file of each LEVNT EC policy folder.

Access to Early Learning (AEL): is an early intervention program for a child who is at least three years old on April 30th in the year of enrolment. It aims to provide intensive support to eligible families with multiple and complex needs, assisting them to access universal kindergarten programs.

Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) Immunisation History Statement: The AIR is a national register administered by Medicare that records all vaccinations given in Australia, including to children. In the case of medical contraindication, an authorised medical practitioner completes and signs a Medical Exemption Form and supplies it to the AIR (previous forms of documentation, for example a letter from a GP or local council, are no longer acceptable).

Authorised nominee: (In relation to this policy) is a person who has been given written authority by the parents/guardians of a child to collect that child from the education and care service. These details will be on the child's enrolment form.

Children/families experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage (in relation to this policy): children are vulnerable if the capacity of parents and family to effectively care, protect and provide for their long-term development and wellbeing is limited. Some factors which may contribute to a child experiencing vulnerability include: a child with a disability; living in a family with a low income, or one which is experiencing problems with housing, domestic violence, substance abuse, or mental health; known to child protection; in statutory out-of-home care; Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, having a culturally and linguistically diverse background; having a young or sole parent, or a parent with a disability (adapted from the Kindergarten Funding Guide)

Children with additional needs: Children whose development or physical condition requires specialist support or children who may need additional support due to language, refugee or asylum seeker experience, complex trauma, cultural or economic circumstances (refer to Inclusion and Equity Policy) (refer to Children/families experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage Definition).

Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme (CRES): CRES provides a single point for families to apply for multiple kindergarten services within a local government area, helping them secure a place that meets their needs and enabling funded kindergartens to work collaboratively with other services to engage vulnerable and disadvantaged families.

Early Start Kindergarten (ESK): Early Start Kindergarten provides eligible children with 15 hours of free or low-cost kindergarten each week led by a qualified Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registered teacher. ESK is available to children who are at least three years old by 30 April in the year they are enrolled to attend the program and are:

- from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or
- known to child protection.

These children can also access free or low-cost year-before-school kindergarten through the ESK Extension Grant regardless of whether they have accessed ESK in the previous year.

Eligible child: as defined by the Victorian DE Kindergarten Funding Guide:

- a child who is at least four years old on 30 April in the year of attendance; enrolled for at least 15 hours per week or 600 hours per year in a Four-Year-Old Kindergarten; and not enrolled at a funded kindergarten program at another service.
- a child who is at least three years old on 30 April in the year of attendance and is enrolled in a funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten for a minimum of 5 hours per week.
- any child that is enrolled in an early childhood and education and care service must have an AIR Immunisation History Statement that indicates that the child is fully vaccinated for their age or who qualifies for the 16-weeks support period.

Kindergarten application (waitlist) fee: a payment to cover administrative costs associated with the processing of a child's enrolment application for a place in a program at the service, if applicable. This is a non-refundable fee and does not guarantee enrolment in our funded kindergarten programs.

Kindergarten application: The process of families providing initial information about their child (usually via an Application Form) to confirm their intention to enrol in kindergarten, administered by the kindergarten service. This includes collection of basic contact information, kindergarten preferences and any other details that may inform prioritised allocation in kindergarten.

The process of families and carers giving initial information about their child to confirm their intention to enrol in kindergarten, administered by the service provider. This includes collection of basic contact information, kindergarten preferences and any other details that may inform prioritised allocation in kindergarten.

Kindergarten enrolment deposit: A charge to secure a place that has been offered in a program at the service. This should not act as a barrier to enrolling for any families. Services must ensure that families understand that the enrolment deposit will only be refunded if the child commences in the service (*refer to Free Kindergarten Fees Policy*). LEVNT EC Services will not be charging Kindergarten enrolment deposits while the Free Kindergarten initiative exists.

Kindergarten registration fee: a payment to cover administrative costs associated with the processing of a child's confirmed enrolment for a place in a program at the service, if applicable. This is a non-refundable fee.

Enrolment record: the collection of documents which contains information on each child as required under the National Regulations (*Regulations 160, 161, 162*) including but not limited to parent details; emergency contacts; authorised nominee; transportation authorisations, details of any court orders; and health information including immunisation status. Enrolment records are stored securely in the service due to their confidential nature. This can be stored digitally or physically. The record must be kept securely until the end of three years after the child's last attendance.

Support period: allows specific categories of children of families experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage to enrol and attend the service without an AIR Immunisation History Statement or when the statement is assessed as not being up to date. Services complete the support period eligibility form with families during enrolment and keep a copy with the child's enrolment record. The 16-week support period starts on the first day of the child's attendance at the service. During the support period, the service is required to take reasonable steps to obtain the AIR Immunisation History Statement and to encourage families to access immunisation services.

Free Kinder: A Victorian Government Best Start, Best Life initiative providing Free Kinder programs for four-year-old and three-year-old children in funded services, that have opted into the initiative.

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 15-hour program to 3-year old children enrolled at a sessional service
- offsetting the funded kindergarten program component of parent fees for 3 and 4-year-old children enrolled at a long day care service/Integrated Kindergarten program.

Local Government Area (LGA): a geographic area governed by a local council or shire.

Pre Prep: From 2026 across the state, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from a refugee or asylum seeker background, and children who have had contact with Child Protection services can access up to 25 hours of Pre-Prep a week, increasing to up to 30 hours a week from 2028. Children from this priority cohort can be enrolled in more than 1 group at a single service (including 4-year-old, mixed age, and 3-year-old groups). In addition, any child who was supported by the Access to Early Learning program as a 3-year-old is eligible for these same hours of Pre-Prep as a 4-year-old from 2026.

Priority of access: in instances where more eligible children apply for a place at a service than there are places available, the service must allocate spaces using the criteria outlined in the DE Kindergarten Funding Guide (*refer to Attachment 1 and Sources*).

School Readiness Funding: funding provided by DE for programs and supports that builds the capacity of kindergarten services, educators and families to support children's learning and development outcomes.

Additional year of funded kindergarten: Eligibility for a second year of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten is determined by the child's early childhood teacher, if the child is observed as having developmental delays in at least 2 VEYLDF Learning and Development Outcomes and there is evidence to suggest the child will achieve better outcomes at kindergarten than if they go to school. From 2026, across Victoria, children who meet the eligibility requirements due to their learning or developmental needs can access an additional year of either, three-year-Old Kindergarten; or Pre-Prep (or Four-Year-Old Kindergarten for children not eligible for Pre-Prep), but not both.

Types of Kindergarten Delivery: within kindergarten funding guidelines, services can offer *sessional* or *integrated* (within a long day care program) sessions for families.

Sessional kindergarten offers only 15 hours per child. Children attend on set days between the set hours. Programs are not CCS eligible.

Integrated kindergarten programs offer a funded kindergarten program within a long day care program. Children attend up to 10+ hours per day and receive a funded kindergarten program within these hours. Families who are eligible are able to claim CCS to assist with daily fees.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Approved Provider, persons with management and control, nominated supervisor and/or persons in day-to-day charge are responsible for meeting legislated requirements of the ECEC sector which are indicated with LR.

	Approved Provider and/or persons with management and control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teachers, educators and all other staff	Parents, guardians and carers	Contractors, volunteers and those on student placement
Ensuring that copies of the Enrolment and Orientation Policy and procedures are readily accessible to nominated supervisors, coordinators, educators, staff, volunteers and families, and available for inspection	LR	✓			
Applying the Priority of Access criteria to funded programs at LEVNT EC Services, as described in Department of Education's (DE) <i>The Kindergarten Funding Guide (refer to Attachment 1)</i>	LR	✓	✓		
Working with local council, other local kindergarten services, key stakeholders and the local ECIB to ensure all eligible children have access to a kindergarten place	✓	✓			
Providing a free kindergarten program (or, in a Long Daycare setting, offsetting fees with the Free Kinder offset payment) to children who turn four years of age by 30 April in the year they will be attending, that is delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher, and offering at least: 15 hours per week for 40 weeks of the year, or 600 hours per year *subject to change each year (see Kindergarten Funding Guide for most up to date figures)	LR				
Ensuring children eligible for Pre-Prep (refer to Definitions) are enrolled for a minimum of 16 hours per week for 40 weeks of the year (or 640 hours per year)	LR	✓			
Providing a free kindergarten program to children who turn three years of age by 30 April in the year they will be attending, that is delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher and offering 15 hours per week, or 600 hours per year	LR				
Providing communication to families explaining their access to one year of three-year-old and one year of four-year-old funded kindergarten program	LR	✓			
Ensuring families sign DE's one funded kindergarten place form in Term 4 and confirm in writing in Term 1. Service providers must use the form provided on the department's template and must not adapt the content into service's own templates	LR	✓			
Ensuring that attendance data collection is implemented as per the Arrival requirements	LR	✓			
Communicating to families the days and times the service will operate, planned closures (including public holidays and child free days), details of any planned alternative sessions, and unplanned teacher absences or emergency situations.	LR				
Communicating and providing advice to families regarding the best time to commence kindergarten for children born between January and April	✓	✓	✓		

	Approved Provider and/or persons with management and control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teachers, educators and all other staff	Parents, guardians and carers	Contractors, volunteers and those on student placement
Ensuring the following is displayed: - 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.	LR	✓			
Communicating to parents: - 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.	LR	✓			
Supporting inclusion and access through specific funding stream (for eligible families): - Early Start Kindergarten - Early Start Kindergarten extension grants - Access to Early Learning - Additional year of funded kindergarten (one year of either three or four-year-old)	LR	✓	✓		
Supporting families whose children may be eligible for early entry to kindergarten or late entry to kindergarten and school exemption	✓	✓	✓		
Providing communication to families explaining that they can only access one funded kindergarten program per child, per year	LR	✓			
Considering any barriers to access that may exist, developing procedures that ensure all eligible families are aware of, and are able to access a kindergarten program	LR	✓	✓		
Working with the families to obtain an alternate form of identification if a birth certificate or other official documentation is not available. 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.	LR	✓			
Complying with the Inclusion and Equity Policy	LR	LR	✓	✓	✓
Ensuring the collection of accurate, consistent and timely kindergarten data, to monitor and proactively manage capacity, utilisation of services and to meet School Readiness Funding requirements	LR	LR			

	Approved Provider and/or persons with management and control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teachers, educators and all other staff	Parents, guardians and carers	Contractors, volunteers and those on student placement
Ensuring families have access to: • Parent Handbook • Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing Policy and/or Statement of Commitment to Child Safety Fees Policy • Privacy Statement • Code of Conduct Policy • Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisations Policy • Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy • Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy	LR	✓	✓		
Appointing a person to be responsible for the enrolment process and the day-to-day implementation of this policy	LR				
Responding to enrolment enquiries on a day-to-day basis and referring people to the person responsible for the enrolment process as required	✓	✓	✓		
Where applicable, considering access and inclusion for vulnerable children in the allocation of places at the service	LR	✓			
Where applicable, providing families with consistent and transparent communication on waitlist management processes	LR	✓			
Complying with the service's <i>Privacy and Confidentiality Policy</i> in relation to the collection and management of a child's enrolment information	LR	LR	LR	✓	✓
Providing opportunities for interested families to attend the service during operational hours to observe the program and become familiar with the service and its Christian ethos prior to their child commencing in the program (except where this may pose a risk to the safety of children or staff, or conflict with any duty of the Approved Provider, nominated supervisor, early childhood teachers or educators under the National Law: Section 167)	LR	✓	✓		
Ensuring the Christian ethos of the service is explained to parents prior to, and upon enrolment	LR	✓	✓		
Seeking information from parents about any specific health care need, allergy or medical condition, including whether a medical practitioner has been consulted in relation to a specific health care need, allergy or relevant medical condition	LR	✓	✓	✓	
Ensuring that medical management and communication plan has been provided and that the risk minimisation plan has been developed and both documents are kept in the child's enrolment records	LR	✓	✓	✓	
Providing any required authorisations, such as for the approved provider, nominated supervisor or an educator to seek medical treatment for the child from a registered medical practitioner, hospital or ambulance service and, if required, transportation by an ambulance service				✓	
Assessing the child's immunisation documentation as defined by the Immunisation Enrolment Toolkit (refer to <i>Sources</i>) for early childhood education and care services prior to enrolment to determine if the child's vaccination status complies with requirements or whether the child is eligible for the 16-week support period	LR	✓	✓		
Ensuring that only children whose AIR Immunisation History Statements have been assessed as being acceptable or who are eligible for the support period have confirmed places in the program	LR	✓	✓		

	Approved Provider and/or persons with management and control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teachers, educators and all other staff	Parents, guardians and carers	Contractors, volunteers and those on student placement
Advising parents/guardians who do not have an AIR Immunisation History Statement and who are not eligible for the support period that their children are not able to attend the service and referring them to immunisation services	LR	✓	✓		
Taking reasonable steps to obtain an up-to-date AIR Immunisation History Statement from a parent/guardian of a child enrolled under a support period within 16 weeks from when the child begins attending (Note: the child can continue to attend the service if acceptable immunisation documentation is not obtained)	LR	✓	✓		
Completing the enrolment record prior to their child's commencement at the service and providing AIR Immunisation History Statement of their child's immunisation status				✓	
Where a child is eligible for the 16 weeks support period, ensuring that the child's immunisations are updated in line with the schedule and providing an up-to-date AIR Immunisation History Statement to the service				✓	
Taking reasonable steps to obtain an up-to-date AIR Immunisation History Statement from all parents/guardians after enrolment, timing reminders to comply with the maximum seven-month interval (<i>Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 107, Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 Section 143E</i>)	LR	✓	✓		
Ensuring all authorised nominees have been completed on the enrolment record (<i>Regulations 160 and 161</i>) as well as authorisations from parents relating to medical treatment, regular outings, health information and transportation	LR	✓		✓	
Ensuring that the enrolment record both digital and/or hard copy complies with the requirements of <i>Regulations 160, 161, 162</i> and that it effectively meets the management requirements of the service	LR	✓	✓		
Ensuring that enrolment record is kept up to date if family circumstances change, and that services are made aware if they become eligible for additional funding as a result of changed circumstances	LR	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensuring that enrolment records are stored in a safe and secure place, and kept for three years after the last date on which the child was educated and cared for by the service (<i>Regulation 183 (1a) (2d)</i>)	LR	✓	✓		
Discussing the individual child's needs with parents/guardians and developing an orientation program to assist them to settle into the service. The service should take into consideration barriers parents/guardians may have in disclosing sensitive information including communication and information barriers and the development of trusting relationships	LR	✓	✓		
Reviewing the orientation processes for new families and children to ensure the objectives of this policy are met	LR	✓	✓	✓	
Ensuring that parents/guardians of a child attending the service can enter the service premises at any time whilst the child is being educated and cared for (<i>Regulation 157</i>), except where this may pose a risk to the safety of children or staff, or conflict with any duty of the Approved Provider, nominated supervisor, early childhood teachers or educators under the <i>National Law: Section 167</i>	LR	LR	✓	✓	✓
Taking reasonable steps to contact non-attending families prior to the cancellation of their enrolment	✓	✓	✓		
Reviewing enrolment applications to identify children with additional needs (refer to <i>Definitions</i> and the <i>Inclusion and Equity Policy</i>)	✓	✓	✓		

	Contractors, volunteers and those on student placement	Parents, guardians and carers	Early childhood teachers, educators and all other staff	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Approved Provider and/or persons with management and control
Encouraging parents/guardians to: - stay with their child as long as required during the settling in period - make contact with educators at the service, when required		✓	✓	✓	✓
Assisting parents/guardians to develop and maintain a routine for saying goodbye to their child		✓	✓	✓	✓
Sharing information with parents/guardians concerning their child's progress with regard to settling into the service		✓	✓	✓	✓
Discussing support services for children with parents/guardians, where required such as Pre School Field Officer, Early Intervention Programs, and Maternal Health Services		✓	✓	✓	✓
Developing strategies to assist new families to: - feel welcomed into the service become familiar with service policies and procedures - share information about their family beliefs, values and culture and feel culturally safe - share their understanding of their child's strengths, interests, abilities and needs - value the voice of the child, ensuring they have opportunity to articulate their individual interests and needs - discuss the values and expectations they hold in relation to their child's learning - provide comfort and reassurance to children who are showing signs of distress when separating		✓	✓	✓	✓
Reading and complying with this <i>Enrolment and Orientation Policy</i>		✓	LR	LR	LR
Updating information by notifying the service of any changes as they occur, for example, if the child or family becomes known to Child Protection		✓			
Notifying the relevant LEVNT EC Service, in writing, if they wish to cancel their enrolment		✓			

SPECIFIC PROCEDURES

SERVICE OFFERINGS

All LEVNT Early Childhood services cater to the community they serve. Each year, services consider the kindergarten program that will be offered in direct response to the families on their waiting list.

Farmhouse Kinder, Tarneit is a *sessional* kindergarten service offering wrap around care for working families. All children are allocated two funded days per week, with the option of Additional Days or After Kinder Care programs at additional cost (with fees eligible for CCS subsidy).

Good Shepherd Early Childhood Services, Hamilton offers both *sessional* and *integrated* funded kindergarten programs. Families can choose the type of delivery that best suits the needs of their family.

St John's Lutheran Kindergarten, Newtown offers *sessional* kindergarten programs within the site of Geelong Lutheran College: St John's Campus. Families can be flexible around pick up and drop off times to suit the needs of their child and fit within the routine of their family.

St Paul's Lutheran Kindergarten, Grovedale offers *sessional* kindergarten programs for 3- and 4-year-old children. The After Kinder Care programs offer additional care options for working families to enable them to access sessional kinder programs.

GENERAL APPLICATION PROCEDURES

LEVNT EC Services recommend families arrange a tour of the service prior to applying to the service waitlist, though this is not a requirement of application. Tours give families a chance to see how the service operates day-to-day, briefly meet with educators and discussion any questions or concerns they may have with the Service Leader, Assistant Service Leader or Administration Assistant.

An Application (Waitlist) Form is available from each service's website.

Upon lodging an application form, payment of a non-refundable Application Fee is due. Information about the Application Fee and payment details can be found on the Application Form. Children who are included in the DE Priority of Access (*refer to Attachment 1 and Sources*) are not expected to pay the Application Fee.

GENERAL ENROLMENT PROCEDURES

Upon receiving an offer of enrolment, families are required to return a completed enrolment form and enrolment administration fee (as applicable) by the date outline of their letter of offer. Letters of offer and subsequent enrolment steps are delivered via email. Following the due date, the LEVNT EC Service will continue to move through their waiting list to make further offers of enrolment until all positions are filled and/or the waiting list is exhausted. LEVNT EC Services cannot hold places open without correspondence from the associated family, unless required by DE.

Upon enrolment, LEVNT EC Services will conduct a Parent Information Night for families. The purpose of information nights is to provide general information about the service that will assist children and their families to settle into the service. Information Nights' give further opportunity for families to ask any questions they might have.

GENERAL ORIENTATION PROCEDURES

The time required for orientation and settling in will vary for each child and their family, therefore it is important to be flexible and individualise orientation for each family. LEVNT EC Services will:

- Offer families the opportunity to visit the service at different times during the day/session. This allows the child and their family to become familiar with the various routines of the service.
- Provide reassurance to the family that they may stay with their child for as long as they choose during orientation and once the child commences.
- Provide the family with suggestions for developing and maintaining a routine for saying goodbye to their child.
- Reassure the family:
 - they can leave their child initially for a shorter day, gradually increasing the length of time
 - they may call and speak to their child's early childhood teacher or educator(s) at an agreed time
 - the early childhood teacher/educators will keep them informed on how their child is settling in
 - they will be informed about any changes or circumstances which may affect them or their child.
- Further considerations may include but are not limited to:
 - send an email during the day to update the family on their child including a photo of the child (if the child has settled in). **Note:** For children in out-of-home care, the educator may need to seek permission from Child Protection before taking and distributing photos of the child
 - asking the family how they have settled in and if they have any questions or concerns.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness.
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy.
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice.
- revise the policy and procedures as part of a policy review cycle, or as required.
- notify all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk.

AUTHORISATION & REVIEW

This policy was adopted by Lutheran Education VIC, NSW, TAS (Approved Provider) on 26 June 2025.

REVIEW DATE June 2026 or earlier as required.

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT 1: Eligibility and Priority of Access Criteria

The Approved Provider must notify all families of the priority of access (PoA) 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 Department of Education (DE) criteria listed below.
- work with other local kindergarten services and the regional office to ensure all eligible children have access to a kindergarten place.

These criteria must be used by the Approved Provider when prioritising enrolments. Guidance is available from the Department's regional offices if required.

All information relating to PoA criteria should be respectfully collected from families upon enrolment, recorded in the child's confidential enrolment record and entered into the Department of Education funding portal, Arrival, where applicable.

LEVNT EC Services will give priority of enrolment to:

High priority children	Criteria and processes for verifying need(s)
Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in Out-of-Home Care	The child is: • 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: • 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	As part of the enrolment process, service providers must respectfully ask families 'is your child Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?' and record this information in Arrival
Asylum seeker and refugee children	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 Referred as a refugee or asylum seeker by a CALD outreach worker.
From 2026 across the state, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from a refugee or asylum seeker background, and children who have had contact with Child Protection services can access to up to 25 hours of Pre-Prep a week, increasing to up to 30 hours a week from 2028. Children from this priority cohort can be enrolled in more than 1 group at a single service (including 4-year-old, mixed age, and 3-year-old groups). In addition, any child who was supported by the Access to Early Learning program as a 3-year-old is eligible for these same hours of Pre-Prep as a 4-year-old from 2026.	

Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy	A child or parent holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veteran's Affairs Card, or The child is identified on their birth certificate as one of a set of triplets, quadruplets or more.
High priority children	Process that could be used to verify need(s)
Children with additional needs, defined as children who: - 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	The child: - 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: - the National Disability Insurance Scheme - Early Childhood Intervention Services - Kindergarten 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.

Examples to consider for second priority
- children who turn four years of age by 30 April in the year they will attend kindergarten; or - children who turn three years of age* by 30 April in the year they will attend kindergarten - children turning six years of age at kindergarten who have been granted an exemption from school-entry age requirements by the regional office of DE - children who have a sibling that has previously attended the same kindergarten as their first preference - home address falls within the same suburb as the kindergarten - family lives, works, studies or attends child care in [LGA]
Examples to consider for third priority
- service for transient families e.g. RAAF, seasonal workers and tourism workers - date of application - local community zoning - full fee paying families

Note: DE's PoA guidelines are to ensure that kindergarten programs are available to those children who stand to benefit the most from attending early education. In mixed age groups, PoA guideline will equally prioritise three and four-year-old children that are considered high priority. Where programs for three- and four-year old children are provided separately, the PoA criteria will be applied separately for each age cohort.

* Early Start Kindergarten and Three-Year-Old Kindergarten
During the roll-out of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten, Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) will continue to provide 15 hours a week of funded kindergarten for all eligible children up until 2029, when three-year-old children across the state will have access to 15 hours It is important to continue to enrol eligible children in ESK, even if a Three-Year-Old Kindergarten is available at the service. 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. The Kindergarten Funding Guide 2023 states 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) This guarantees that children experiencing vulnerability will continue to be enrolled in the full 15 hours of kindergarten in all service settings, including long day care. It also ensures that service providers can continue to receive all funding entitlements. Service providers are expected to continue to provide the full 15 hours funded through Early Start Kindergarten, even in instances where three-year-old groups are being offered fewer than 15 hours. ESK is available to children who turn three years of age by 30 April in the year of enrolment and who: - are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

- have had contact with Child Protection
- have a refugee or asylum seeker background*

*Children/families without a current refugee visa or ImmiCard who have a recent refugee experience may be eligible by exception for Early Start Kindergarten, for more information contact your local Department of Education and office.

Refer to the Department of Education's website for up-to-date information: www.education.vic.gov.au

Locally agreed criteria for children not identified as high priority

Service providers may apply one or more locally agreed criteria to prioritise children and determine the order in which offers are made, such as residential proximity or a demonstrable link to the service.

LEVNT EC Services apply the following criteria to prioritise children (after the DE Priority of Access above):

- current children transitioning to kindergarten programs at the same LEVNT EC service
- siblings/children of current and/or past students of the same LEVNT EC Service

This criterion must be documented and communicated with families and kindergarten places should be allocated in accordance with anti-discrimination and human rights laws.

ATTACHMENT 2: Early Start Kindergarten and Three-Year-Old Kindergarten

During the roll-out of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten, Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) will continue to provide 15 hours a week of funded kindergarten for all eligible children up until 2029, when three-year-old children across the state will have access to 15 hours.

It is important to continue to enrol eligible children in ESK, even if funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten is available at the service.

This guarantees that children experiencing vulnerability will continue to be enrolled in the full 15 hours of kindergarten in all service settings, including long day care. It also ensures that service providers can continue to receive all funding entitlements.

Service providers are expected to continue to provide the full 15 hours funded through Early Start Kindergarten, even in instances where three-year-old groups are being offered fewer than 15 hours.

ESK is available to children who turn three years of age by 30 April in the year of enrolment and who:

- are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- are known to Child Protection
- have a refugee or asylum seeker background*

*Children/families without a current refugee visa or ImmiCard who have a recent refugee experience may be eligible by exception for Early Start Kindergarten, for more information contact your local Department of Education and Training office.

Refer to the Department of Education website for up-to-date information: www.education.vic.gov.au

REFERENCES

LEGISLATION & STANDARDS

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulations 160, 161, 162, 168, 170, 171, 177, 181, 183
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic)
- Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 (Vic)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)

SOURCES

- Australian Childhood Immunisation Register: www.servicesaustralia.gov.au
- Australian Government Department of Health, National Immunisation Program Schedule: www.health.gov.au
- Department of Health, Immunisation enrolment toolkit for early childhood education and care service: www2.health.vic.gov.au
- Department of Education, Arrival: Information for sessional services: <https://www.vic.gov.au/arrival-information-sessional-kindergarten#more-information>
- Department of Education: [Stating age calculator](#)
- Department of Education: [Early Childhood Language Services](#)
- Department of Education: [Supporting CALD families to engage in kindergarten](#)
- Department of Education: [Information about kindergarten in your language](#)
- Department of Education, Resources for funded kindergartens: www.vic.gov.au/resources-funded-kindergartens
- Free Kinder funding requirements for long day care providers: www.vic.gov.au
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: www.acecqa.gov.au
- Guide to the National Quality Standard: www.acecqa.gov.au
- The Kindergarten Funding Guide (Victorian Department of Education): www.education.vic.gov.au
- Going to kindergarten if your child is 6 years old: www.vic.gov.au

RELATED POLICIES

- Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisations
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Compliments and Complaints
- Dealing with Infectious Disease
- Dealing With Medical Conditions
- Delivery and Collection of Children
- Fees
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness
- Inclusion and Equity
- Privacy and Confidentiality