Supplement to the Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria update 2010–12

Supplement to section 4: Programs for three year olds

Supplement date: November 2010 (effective 2011)

Changes

This policy has been updated to reflect the policy alignment of Early Start Kindergarten initiatives for three year old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children known to Child Protection.


4.2 Child based funding and how to apply

Early Start Kindergarten

Early Start Kindergarten eligibility criteria

As at January 2011, a child eligible for Early Start kindergarten is any child aged three by 30 April of the year she or he is attending kindergarten, who is:

• Identified by a parent, carer or legal guardian as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

or

• A child known to Child Protection (where abuse has been substantiated) or a child referred by Child Protection to Child FIRST.

As at January 2011, a service is eligible to receive Early Start Kindergarten funding for three year olds if:

• The kindergarten program is planned and delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher;

• The program is delivered within a licensed children’s service holding a standard licence; and

• The service provides eligible children with up to 10.75 hours per week of kindergarten free of charge or at minimal cost; and

• The service will enter into a service agreement with the Department, if it has not already done so.

Applying for funding

Organisations can claim annual Early Start kindergarten funding at any time during the year. To apply for funding services complete Form SF15 – Application for Early Start kindergarten funding form and send it to the region in which the kindergarten is located.

From January 2011, services who enrol eligible children into kindergarten programs providing 10.75 hours per week of kindergarten free of charge or at minimal cost will receive:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grant Type</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Per annum per child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard Early Start grant</td>
<td>$2,896</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Early Start grant</td>
<td>$3,374</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small rural Early Start grant</td>
<td>$4,564</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The kindergarten program will ideally be a minimum of 10 hours and 45 minutes (10.75 hours); however, in some areas of low supply there is provision for services to offer a shorter program.

For programs of less than 10.75 hours per week, the department will pay a grant equivalent to the fee charged by the service for the hours the child is enrolled, capped at an amount equivalent to the standard grant for a 10.75 hour program. The policy requires that services do not set a fee for eligible families that is higher than for other families.
Kindergarten services that operate in long day care centres, independent schools and alternative services such as Montessori and Steiner programs are required to offer a free program or reduce the cost of the kindergarten program by the amount of the funding grant.

The funding is paid to enable eligible three year old children to access a kindergarten program free of charge or at a reduced cost.

Withdrawal from the program and vacant funded places

Should a child withdraw from the kindergarten program, services are required to complete a withdrawal form (Form SF16 – Notification of withdrawal from Early Start kindergarten funding form) and submit it to the regional office within one week following the child’s withdrawal. A vacant funded place should be kept available for another eligible three year old child until the end of the current term. Per capita payments will not be recouped by the Department.

Support and advice

Requirements for services to have access and inclusion policies

Funded organisations are required to ensure that they have in place policies and procedures that promote equality of opportunity for all eligible children. This will include policies assisting enrolment, access and inclusion that are clear, fair and comply with the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005, the Equal Opportunity Act 1995, the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006. Further information is provided in Section 5: Service provision requirements.

Inclusion support

Three year old children eligible for Early Start kindergarten funding are entitled to the same supports as children eligible to attend a funded kindergarten program for children in the year before school, including the Preschool Field Officer Program, Kindergarten Inclusion Support Packages program, Koorie Engagement Support Officers (KESO) — Early Childhood Development, and access to language services. For more information see the Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria 2010–12, Section 6: Service provision support.

Koorie Engagement Support Officer – (KESO)

KESO’s coordinate and facilitate education engagement programs and targeted strategies for Koorie children, young people and families across the age spectrum of 0-18. In the early childhood space KESOs work closely with local communities and funded kindergarten programs to increase the kindergarten participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. They link children and families in local communities with kindergarten programs and play an important role in advising mainstream kindergartens on the delivery of culturally appropriate programs. KESOs provide guidance to families, kindergartens and schools about accessing community based services and programs, as well as liaising with other government departments and community organisations to promote collaborative education and community partnerships. In addition to promoting participation in kindergarten, KESO’s facilitate transitions and a positive start to school. KESOs can be contacted through the Koorie Education Coordinator (KEC) at each of the DEECD regional offices.

Multifunctional Aboriginal Children’s Services (MACS)

MACS wishing to take full advantage of this initiative should consult their local KESO, to discuss ways in which this initiative can be best accessed to ensure maximum benefit to children, families and services.
Related information

Privacy


To comply with the applicable privacy legislation, services should have a privacy policy and information collection statement. Services can access a template privacy policy and template information collection statement from the Department's website. If a service already has its own privacy policy and information collection statement, or is developing a new one, it should ensure that it is consistent with the template policy and statement.

Guidelines for the handling of personal information to assist services to comply with their obligations under applicable privacy legislation are also available on the website. For templates go to http://www.education.vic.gov.au/ecsmanagement/careankinder/earlystart/resources.htm