

ATTACHMENT 1. ELIGIBILITY AND PRIORITY OF ACCESS CRITERIA

FOR A FUNDED KINDERGARTEN THREE OR FOUR-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

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 and Training (DET) criteria listed below
- work with other local kindergarten services and the regional DET office to ensure all eligible children have access to a kindergarten place.

This criteria must be used by the approved provider when prioritising enrolments. Guidance is available from the Department’s regional offices if required.

Service providers should build flexibility into their enrolment processes that consider the circumstances of families from priority groups.

If participating in a central registration and enrolment scheme, the CRES provider will allocate places in accordance with DET’s PoA criteria, and other local criteria if applicable

Services must first apply the DET’s PoA criteria, and following this may apply locally developed criteria, as per examples below.

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 Kindergarten Information Management (KIM) system, where applicable.

DET’s Priority of Access criteria	Process that could be used to verify 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"> <input type="checkbox"/> This information can be obtained from the child’s carer/family as part of the enrolment process and/or received from a referral source which may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Child Protection o Child and family services (family services referral and support team, Child FIRST/integrated family services/Services Connect case worker) o Maternal and Child Health nurse, or o Out-of-Home Care provider
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> As part of the enrolment process, service providers must respectfully ask families ‘is your child Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?’
Asylum seeker and refugee children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> As part of the enrolment process, service providers should respectfully ask whether the family/child holds a visa or ImmiCard identifying the child and/or parents as a refugee or asylum seeker <input type="checkbox"/>
Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A child or parent holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veteran’s Affairs Card, or <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple birth children (triplets, quadruplets). <input type="checkbox"/> Asylum seeker and/or refugee children
Children with additional needs, defined as children who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> require additional assistance in order to fully participate in the kindergarten program <input type="checkbox"/> require a combination of services which are individually planned 	<p>The child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> is assessed as having delays in two or more areas and is declared eligible for a second funded year of 4-year-old kindergarten, or <input type="checkbox"/> holds a Child Disability Health Care Card, or <input type="checkbox"/> has previously been approved for Kindergarten Inclusion Support Package, or referred by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o the National Disability Insurance Scheme o Early Childhood Intervention Service o Preschool Field Officer, or o Maternal and Child Health nurse

<input type="checkbox"/> have an identified specific disability or developmental delay <input type="checkbox"/>	
--	--

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 DET
- 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

Note: DET’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) (*refer to Definitions*) 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 and Training website for up-to-date information: www.education.vic.gov.au