

Early Start Kindergarten



Why is kindergarten important?

At kindergarten, children learn key skills, including creative thinking, social and emotional skills, and early literacy and language skills. Research shows that two years of kindergarten are better than one, helping prepare children for success at school and for life.

What is Early Start Kindergarten?

Early Start Kindergarten provides up to 15 hours of free or low cost kindergarten per week to eligible three-year-old children where programs are offered by a qualified teacher.

The Victorian Government is rolling out funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten – from five hours a week. During the roll-out, Early Start Kindergarten will continue to provide 15 hours a week of funded kindergarten.

Applications for Early Start Kindergarten funding are made by the service on your behalf and the grant is paid directly to the service.

Is my child eligible?

To be eligible, your child must be three by 30 April in the year they start kindergarten and meet one of the following criteria:

- be from a refugee or asylum seeker background
- identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- your family has had contact with Child Protection.





How do I enrol my child?

You can enrol your child by contacting a kindergarten service near you or your local council and asking to access Early Start Kindergarten. Alternatively, any professional who supports you, including your Child FIRST or Child Protection worker, maternal and child health nurse, bicultural worker or supported playgroup facilitator, can do this on your behalf. Your Early Childhood Implementation Branch, a Koorie Engagement Support Officer (KESO) or Early Childhood Learning Adviser in your nearest Department of Education and Training office can also help you apply.

Should my child go to four-year-old kindergarten as well?

Yes. A kindergarten program in the year before school will build on the strengths your child will develop through Early Start Kindergarten when they are three.

Children who are eligible for, or have accessed, Early Start Kindergarten are also eligible for free or low cost four-year-old kindergarten for 15 hours per week in any funded kindergarten program.

Try to enrol your child for four-year-old kindergarten as early as possible to make sure your child gets a place as spots at your preferred kindergarten are not guaranteed.

Where can I find more about Early Start Kindergarten?

For more information about Early Start Kindergarten, visit education.vic.gov.au and search for Early Start Kindergarten, or contact your regional Department of Education and Training office.

Regional office contacts

Regional Office	Location
North-eastern Victoria 1300 333 231	Benalla Wodonga Wangaratta Seymour Shepparton Glen Waverley
North-western Victoria 1300 338 691	Bendigo Mildura Swan Hill Coburg Greensborough
South-eastern Victoria 1300 338 738	Moe Leongatha Warragul Sale Cheltenham Frankston Dandenong
South-western Victoria 1300 333 232	Ararat Ballarat Geelong Horsham Warrnambool Footscray Keilor

Published by Department of Education and Training
Melbourne April 2021 (Revised)

© State of Victoria