

Priority of Access: Kindergarten

1. Purpose

This Priority of Access Policy ensures that sessional kindergarten services managed by ECMS are allocated fairly and equitably, providing priority to children who are most in need and maximising the benefits of early childhood education. It is in accordance with the Priority of Access position issued by the Victorian Government.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all sessional kindergarten programs operating under the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET) guidelines.

3. Policy Statement

Sessional kindergarten services are a critical component of early childhood education. Priority will be given to manage demand and ensure equitable access based on specific criteria outlined below. This policy aims to provide a clear framework for allocating kindergarten places and ensuring that the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children receive the support they need.

4. Priority Criteria

4.1 High Priority:

- **Children at Risk:** Children identified as being at risk of significant harm or neglect, including those in out-of-home care or those with a history of abuse.
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children:** As part of the enrolment process, service providers must respectfully ask families, 'Is your child Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander?' and record this information in KIM.
- **Asylum seekers and refugee children:** An appropriate visa identifies the child and/or parents as refugees or asylum seekers.
- **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 multiple birth children, triplets or quadruplets.
- **Children with Additional Needs:**

Children who are assessed as having delays in two or more areas and is declared eligible for a second funded year of kindergarten. Holds a Child Disability Health Care Card has previously been approved for Kindergarten Inclusion Support Package or referred by the National Disability Insurance Scheme, Early Childhood Intervention Service, Preschool Field Officer, or Maternal and Child Health nurse.

4.2 Criteria for children not identified as high-priority

Children residing in the local area who do not fall into the categories above but who would benefit from early childhood education services.

5. Application and Enrolment Process

5.1 Application:

- All families must submit an application form for sessional kindergarten places. The form will collect information required to assess priority, including details about the child's background and any additional needs.

5.2 Enrolment:

- Applications will be reviewed based on the priority criteria outlined above. Families will be notified of their child's enrolment status and any required next steps.

This Priority of Access Policy is designed to ensure a transparent and equitable process for managing sessional kindergarten enrolments so that all children have the opportunity to benefit from early childhood education.

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