

Enrolment and Orientation Policy [Mandatory]

(QA 6 Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities)

PURPOSE

This policy provides a clear set of guidelines and procedures for:

- the criteria for enrolment and the process to be followed when enrolling a child at an early years service managed by Merri-bek Early Years Management (MEYM)
- the orientation of new families and children into MEYM managed Services
- ensuring compliance with Victorian and National legislation, including disability discrimination, anti-discrimination, human rights laws, No Jab No Play and Department of Education [DE] Kindergarten Funding Guide.
- ensuring access to participation, especially for vulnerable and disadvantaged children
- adhering to DE's priority of access requirements for both three and four-year-old children

POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Merri-bek Early Years Management (MEYM) is committed to:

- equal access for all eligible children
- meeting the needs of the local community
- supporting families to meet the requirements for enrolment through communication and information sharing
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to all information provided for enrolment
- ensuring all families are welcomed and receive an effective orientation into an MEYM service

SCOPE

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, early childhood teachers, persons in day to-day charge, educators, staff, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Merri-bek Early Years Management (MEYM), including during offsite excursions and activities.

RESPONSIBILITIES	Approved provider and persons with management or control/Enrolment Officer	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
R indicates legislation requirement					
Providing a free kindergarten program to children who turn four years of age by 30 April in the year they will attending, that is delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher, and offering at least: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 hours per week for 40 weeks of the year, or • 600 hours per year 	R				
Setting and providing a free kindergarten program to children who turn three years of age by 30 April in the year they will attending, that is delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher and offering a minimum of 5 hours per week and 15 hours per week for children who turn four years of age by 30 April in the year they will be attending	R				
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	R				
Following the Priority of Access criteria to funded programs as described in Department of Education's [DE] <i>The Kindergarten Funding Guide (refer to Attachment 1)</i>	R	√	√		
Communicating and providing advice to families regarding the best time to commence kindergarten for children born between January and April	√	√	√		
Supporting inclusion and access through specific funding stream (for eligible families): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Start Kindergarten (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) • Early Start Kindergarten extension grants (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) • Access to Early Learning (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) • Second year of funded four-year-old kindergarten (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) 	R	√	√		
Supporting families whose children may be eligible for early entry to kindergarten or late entry to kindergarten and school exemption (<i>refer to Attachment 2</i>)	√	√	√		
Providing communication to families explaining how they can only access one funded kindergarten program per child, per year.	R	√			
Receiving written confirmation from families confirming they are attending one funded kindergarten program per child, per year as agreed to upon completion of Enrolment Form	R			√	

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	R				
Working with the families to obtain an alternate form of identification if a birth certificate or other official documentation is not available	R				
Complying with the <i>Inclusion and Equity Policy</i>	R	R	√	√	√
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	R	R			
Ensuring families have access to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent information handbook located at www.meym.org.au • <i>Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing Policy and/or Statement of Commitment to Child Safety</i> www.meym.org.au • <i>Fees Policy</i> www.meym.org.au • Privacy Statement www.meym.org.au • <i>Code of Conduct Policy</i> www.meym.org.au 	R	√	√		
Appointing a person to be responsible for the enrolment process and the day-to-day implementation of this policy (The Enrolment Officer, MEYM) (<i>refer to Attachment 2 and 3</i>)	R				
Referring all enrolment/program/timetable enquiries to The Enrolment Officer at MEYM	√	√	√	√	√
Where applicable; considering access and inclusion for vulnerable children in the allocation of places at the service (<i>refer to Attachment 1 and 2</i>)	R				
Where applicable, providing families with consistent and transparent communication on enrolment processes (<i>refer to Attachment 2</i>)	R				
Complying with the service's <i>Privacy and Confidentiality Policy</i> in relation to the collection and management of a child's enrolment information	R	R	R	√	√
Providing opportunities for interested families to attend the open days to observe the program and become familiar with the service prior to their child commencing in the program – refer families to Book-a-Tour via www.meym.org.au	√	√	√		
Providing parents/guardians with information about the requirements of the law for enrolment, including obtaining the AIR Immunisation History Statement (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) and accessing immunisation services	R	√			
Ensuring parents/guardians are only offered a tentative place until the AIR Immunisation History Statement (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) has been assessed as being acceptable or the child has been assessed as eligible for the grace period	R	√			
Assessing the child's immunisation documentation as defined by the Immunisation Enrolment Toolkit (<i>refer to 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 grace period (<i>refer to Definitions</i>)	R	√	√		

Ensuring that only children whose AIR Immunisation History Statements (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) have been assessed as being acceptable or who are eligible for the grace period have confirmed places in the program	R	√	√		
Advising parents/guardians who do not have an AIR Immunisation History Statement (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) and who are not eligible for the grace period that their children are not able to attend the service and referring them to immunisation services	R	√	√		
Taking reasonable steps to obtain an up-to-date AIR Immunisation History Statement (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) from a parent/guardian of a child enrolled under a grace period within 16 weeks from when the child begins attending.	R	√	√		
Completing the enrolment offer form and enrolment form prior to their child's commencement at the service and providing all associated enrolment documentation including Medical Action Plans, concessions, visa's, court orders, granted/approved second year of 4yo documentation and AIR Immunisation History Statement (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) of their child's immunisation status				√	
Where a child is eligible for the 16 weeks grace period, ensuring that the child's immunisations are updated in line with the schedule and providing an up-to-date AIR Immunisation History Statement (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) to the service				√	
Taking reasonable steps to obtain an up-to-date AIR Immunisation History Statement (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) from all parents/guardians after enrolment, timing reminders to comply with the maximum seven-month interval (Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 107 , Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 Section 143E)	R	√	√		
Ensuring all authorised nominees (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) have been completed on the enrolment record (Regulations 160 and 161)	R	√		√	
Ensuring that the enrolment record (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) both digital and/or hard copy complies with the requirements of Regulations 160, 161, 162 and that it effectively meets the management requirements of the service	R	√	√		
Ensuring that Enrolment Officer is informed if family circumstances change, or child becomes eligible for additional funding as a result of changed circumstances, obtains concession/visa, updated medical action plans, child becomes known to Child Protection or other professional agency, so that enrolment record is updated to reflect. (<i>refer to Definitions</i>)	R	√	√	√	√
Reviewing enrolment applications to identify children with additional needs (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) and the Inclusion and Equity Policy and ensure Enrolment Officer is kept up to date with any change in circumstances.	√	√	√		
Ensuring that enrolment records (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) 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 (Regulation 183 (1a) (2d))	R	√			
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	R	√	√		

communication and information barriers and the development of trusting relationships.					
Reviewing the orientation processes for new families and children to ensure the objectives of this policy are met	R	√	√	√	
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>	R	R	√	√	√
Taking reasonable steps to contact non-attending families prior to the cancellation of their enrolment (<i>refer to attachment 3</i>)	√	√	√		
Encouraging parents/guardians to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 providing comfort and reassurance to children who are showing signs of distress when separating 	√	√	√	√	
Reading and complying with this <i>Enrolment and Orientation Policy</i>	R	R	R	√	√
Reading and complying with MEYM's Privacy and Confidentiality Policy in relation to the collection and management of a child's enrolment information	R	R	R	√	
Notify The Enrolment Officer at MEYM if child's commencement in the program is delayed due to insufficient documentation/overseas/holiday. Places will not be held		√	√	√	
Notify The Enrolment Officer at MEYM in writing giving 14 day's notice of intent to cancel enrolment				√	

PROCEDURES

GENERAL ORIENTATION PROCEDURES

- Families wishing to book a tour at an MEYM service may visit our “Book-a-Tour” via our website www.meym.org.au. The service will be in touch to confirm booking or arrange a mutually convenient time to visit.
- Once enrolled the service will be in touch with an orientation and start date. Orientation schedules for the start of the year can be found on our website www.meym.org.au. If enrolling after the start of the year, once enrolled and all enrolment documentation has been completed, the service will contact you to arrange an orientation and start date.
- Parent/guardian may stay with their child for the first orientation session.
- MEYM services will 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.
- Refer to *Attachment 2* for the general kindergarten registration and enrolment procedures
- Refer to *Attachment 3* for cancellation of enrolment and non-attendance procedures.

BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

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)*).

It is intended by 2022 that all eligible Victorian children (*refer to Definitions*) will have access to two years of kindergarten 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.

MEYM participates in a central registration scheme which is managed by Merri-bek Council. All initial registrations for enrolment must primarily be lodged with Council in order to proceed to be enrolled at any of MEYM’s Early Years services. The scheme provides access to families to register for and secure a place for their children in kindergarten and is a collaborative model that brings together councils, service providers, MCH staff, support services and other stakeholders to support children and their families. It provides 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 (*refer to Definitions*).

LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- 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)

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au

DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy.

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

Approved Kindergarten Provider: MEYM manages kindergartens that offer approved sessional kindergarten sessions. We do not operate any services in receipt of CCS.

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). An up-to-date AIR IHS is required to confirm enrolment at an MEYM service.

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. Two authorised nominees or more (except parents) must be provided. Authorised nominees are to be over 18 years of age.

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): MEYM participates in a central registration scheme with Merri-bek Council. All initial registrations must be made with them in order to be offered an enrolled place at an MEYM managed service. A registration fee may be applicable. The scheme enables equitable access to kindergarten places for all eligible children within a municipality and supports increased access to kindergarten

Deferral: When a child does not attend in the year when they are eligible for a funded kindergarten place or is officially withdrawn from a service prior to the annual confirmation, Department of Education (DE) considers that this child has not accessed a year of funded kindergarten and is therefore eligible for a DE funded kindergarten place in

the following year. Applications for Deferral are to be made in writing to The Enrolment Officer at MEYM at enrolments@meym.org.au.

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.

Early Start Kindergarten extension grants: provides eligible children with 15 hours of free or low-cost kindergarten each week led by a qualified VIT registered teacher. The ESK extension grants are available to children attending kindergarten in the year-before-school and are:

- not eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy
- from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or
- known to child protection.
- A child is not required to access ESK in the previous year to access the ESK extension grant.

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 grace period

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.

Merri-bek Council registration form: A form completed by families providing initial information about their child to confirm their intention to enrol in kindergarten, administered by Merri-bek Council Central Registrations (CRES) (*refer to Definition*) This includes collection of basic contact information, kindergarten service preferences and any other details that may inform prioritised allocation in kindergarten. A council fee is applicable

MEYM Kindergarten Enrolment Offer Form: An MEYM online form completed by families, offering a position at one of our MEYM managed services to which 7 days from date of email are given to respond and provide program preferences for our consideration.

MEYM Kindergarten Enrolment Form: An MEYM online enrolment form which collects contact details and personal and medical information about the child. The information on this form is placed on the child's enrolment record and is kept confidential by the service. The enrolment form is to be completed following acceptance of offer and confirmation of program preferences within 7 days from date of email.

MEYM Kindergarten Registration Fee: From 2023 free kindergarten programs will be available for all three- and four-year-old children at MEYM services, therefore no registration fee will be charged to families. (*Refer to MEYM Free Kindergarten Fees policy*)

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

Priority of access: in instances where more eligible children apply for a place at a service than there are places available, MEYM will 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.

Second year of funded four-year-old kindergarten: second year eligibility may be considered when a child shows delays in key outcomes of learning and development. An assessment is carried out for each child by an early childhood teacher in Term 2 and 3 (the year before the child is to attend school). Families with children who meet the criteria as set out by DE need to complete and sign a Second Year Application Request Form and return this to the Enrolment Officer at MEYM early Term 4. A second-year assessment process must be carried out for each child by an early childhood teacher when a second year is being considered. This process includes the following:

Term Three Plan for Learning and Development in place for the beginning of Term Three

Second Year Discussion with the child's family and other early childhood professionals (if appropriate) by the end of Term Three

Declaration of Eligibility for a second year of kindergarten completed by 30 November

Second Year Statement completed during Term Four.

SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

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 and Human Services, Immunisation enrolment toolkit for early childhood education and care service: www2.health.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

RELATED POLICIES

- Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisations
- Complaints and Grievances Policy
- Dealing with Infectious Disease Policy
- Fees Policy
- Inclusion and Equity Policy
- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

EVALUATION

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

- 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 the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify 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 ([Regulation 172](#)).

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Attachment 1 – Eligibility and priority of access criteria for 3 and 4-year-old funded kindergarten program
- Attachment 2: General kindergarten registration and enrolment procedures
- Attachment 3: Cancellation of enrolment and non-attendance

This policy and its contents were referenced from Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA).

Approving Authority	MEYM Board of Management
Date Approved	March 2023
Date Effective	April 2023
Policy Owner	MEYM
Policy Category	Mandatory Policy
Edition	V2
Review Date	April 2025

ATTACHMENT 1.

ELIGIBILITY AND PRIORITY OF ACCESS CRITERIA FOR A FUNDED KINDERGARTEN THREE OR FOUR-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

In instances where more eligible children apply for a place at a kindergarten service than there are places available, MEYM will:

- prioritise children based on the Department of Education (DE) criteria listed in the table below
- work with CRES and the regional DE office to ensure all eligible children have access to a kindergarten place.

MEYM participates in Merri-bek Council's Central Registration scheme and the scheme will also allocate places in accordance with DE's Priority of Access criteria.

DE's Priority of Access criteria

High priority children	Criteria and processes for verifying need(s)
<p>Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in Out-of-Home Care</p>	<p>The child is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children</p>	<p>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 KIMS</p>
<p>Asylum seeker and refugee children</p>	<p>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</p> <p>Referred as a refugee or asylum seeker by a CALD outreach worker.</p>
<p>Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy</p>	<p>A child or parent holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veteran's Affairs Card, or</p> <p>The child is identified on their birth certificate as one of a set of triplets, quadruplets or more.</p>
<p>Children with additional needs, defined as children who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • require additional assistance in order to fully participate in the kindergarten program • require a combination of services which are individually planned • have an identified specific disability or developmental delay 	<p>The child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the National Disability Insurance Scheme • Early Childhood Intervention Services • Preschool 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.

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 eligible for a second year of 4yo kindergarten
- children who were eligible to attend in the previous year but deferred prior to commencement and annual confirmation
- 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

Third priority

- date of application
- needs of individual children
- needs of group/program
- parental requirements
- local community zoning

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

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

MEYM will enrol eligible children in ESK and 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)

ESK guarantees that children experiencing vulnerability will continue to be enrolled in the full 15 hours of kindergarten in all service settings.

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 The Enrolment Officer at MEYM or 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

ATTACHMENT 2. GENERAL KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION AND ENROLMENT PROCEDURES

KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION PROCESS

Stage	MEYM Role	Family Role	Merri-bek Council Role
1. Initial registration for a kinder place	Provides families with information on how to make initial registration and information on the process	Family to make initial registration for an MEYM kinder place with Merri-bek Council (online or post form) www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au	Receives initial registration, collects family and child information and provides family with information on their registration process and confirm that family has been allocated a place at an MEYM Kindergarten and passes family/child details to The Enrolment Officer at MEYM for formal enrolment process to begin in term 4
2. Formal Confirmation of offer to family of position at MEYM Kinder	MEYM emails families a Confirmation of Offer Form to complete, requesting family to submit program preferences for consideration (programs not guaranteed) within 7 days of receipt of email	Family to complete MEYM Kindergarten Offer Form within 7 days of date of email, providing program preferences and concession card details	
3. Allocation of Program & Enrolment Form	MEYM emails families their allocated program along with an Enrolment Form for family to complete within 7 days of receipt	Family to complete MEYM Enrolment Form within 7 days of date of email, providing Child's birth cert/passport, up to date Immunisation History Statement, Court orders (if applicable) and child's up to date Medical Action Plan (if applicable)	
4. Orientation & Start Dates	Orientation schedules are located on our website www.meym.org.au . For enrolments after the start of the year the kindergarten teacher will contact families to arrange orientation and start date after enrolment documentation has been received		

ENROLMENT DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED BY MEYM

To enrol a child, families will need to provide copies of (if not already done so):

- Proof of identity: child's birth certificate, birth notice or passport.
- Concession cards and immigration visas (where applicable).
- Documents from Family Support Services or a Maternal and Child Health nurse confirming high support needs and/or disability or letter from a doctor for complex medical needs (where applicable).
- Immunisation History Statement (unless experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage, at which point they can take advantage of a 16-week 'grace period'. More information is available at <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/vaccination-children/no-jab-no-play/immunisation-enrolment-toolkit>
- Documents detailing any medical conditions or requirements the child has.
- Up to date Medical Action Plan signed and stamped by a doctor showing date of review.

* Where a birth certificate cannot be produced, other acceptable evidence of a child's full name and date of birth may include:

- statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR)
- passport
- citizenship documents or Australia visa documents or Immicard.

SECOND YEAR OF FUNDED FOUR-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN

- All children in Three-Year-Old Kindergarten will be expected to transition to Four-Year-Old Kindergarten in the following year. A funded second year of kindergarten will only be available for children in the Four-Year-Old Kindergarten program who meet the criteria.
- Families of children who have been determined as eligible for a second year must complete and submit a kindergarten registration form for a second year, signed and dated by the early childhood teacher to The Enrolment Officer at MEYM enrolments@meym.org.au
- A Declaration of Eligibility Form for a second year of kindergarten must be completed and submitted to The Enrolment Officer at MEYM enrolments@meym.org.au

EARLY ENTRY TO KINDERGARTEN

- Early entry to school is approved only when exceptional circumstances apply and is subject to an application process and rigorous eligibility criteria.
- It is the responsibility of the parent, carer or legal guardian to obtain all relevant cognitive assessment/s and/or other reports and evidence to support their child's application, including written advice from a professional confirming the child is at risk of long-term educational disadvantage if early entry to school is not approved.

Should parents, carers or legal guardians decide to request early entry to Four-Year-old Kindergarten for their child, the following requirements must be met:

- the child must be at least 3 years and 6 months on or before 30 April in the year they attend the funded kindergarten program
- parents, carers or legal guardians must make a written request for early entry to school to their local Area Executive Director or directly to the principal of a non-government school dependent on whether the child is intending to attend a government or non-government school
- parents, carers or legal guardians must provide the kindergarten service provider with a written response from the department or the nongovernment school acknowledging the family has requested early entry to school
- the kindergarten service provider must keep a copy of the written response from the department or non-government school with the child's kindergarten enrolment records.

CHILDREN OLDER THAN THE ELIGIBLE PRESCHOOL AGE

- Children who will turn six during the preschool year must apply for an exemption from school and must submit an Exemption from school due to attendance in kindergarten program form to the appropriate departmental regional office by 1 November in the year prior to the child turning 6.

- The Enrolment Officer at MEYM must sight the approved exemption form from relevant education authority and note that it has been sighted on the child's enrolment record. Data on the number of children attending Kindergarten who are six years plus, and confirmation that the exemption was sighted for each child, must be provided as part of funding data collection process.
- Children who will turn 6 while attending their second year of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten can be exempted from school if a Declaration of eligibility for a second year of funded kindergarten has been completed by the child's kindergarten teacher.

FEES

Refer to the *MEYM Free Kindergarten Fees Policy* for more information about fees.

ATTACHMENT 3. CANCELLATION OF ENROLMENT AND NON-ATTENDANCE

CANCELLATION OF ENROLMENT

Families MUST notify Merri-bek Early Years Management (MEYM) Enrolment Officer in writing to enrolments@meym.org.au giving 14 day's notice of their intention to cancel their child's enrolment. Children attending in a 3yo program will not be rolled over into an MEYM 4yo program if the position is cancelled during the year.

NON-ATTENDANCE

Families Traveling Overseas

- Families are required to notify Merri-bek Early Years Management (MEYM) Enrolment Officer prior to a child's absence of 14 days or more, or for extended periods of travel stating the dates that the child will be away from the kindergarten program and the date the child will return to the program.

Non-contactable Families

- The Enrolment Officer or Educator will email family, ensuring a response date is documented in the email/sms.
- If the family have made no attempt to communicate with the service before the response date, a final attempt will be made by email/sms, ensuring a response date is documented in the email/sms.
- If the family has not responded to the final attempt email before the response date, their placement will be cancelled.