# Appendix B | Information for CRES Partners

### About this template

Note: please remove these instruction pages after completing the template

This template is to be used by CRES Providers in *Stage 1: Proactive engagement and awareness*. Refer to section 4.1 of the **CRES Practice Guide** for more information on this step of the CRES process.

### To complete this template:

1. All template content *can* be tailored, but content highlighted in yellow **must** be updated to be relevant to your CRES. Consider your location and context, whether your CRES charges fees and whether you have additional local priority criteria. For example, “[council name]” must be replaced with the name of your council for content to make sense.
2. Change this document to CRES Provider branding

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| Refer to the instructions listed in each section in these purple boxes. Once the text is complete, **delete all instruction boxes.** |

### How to use these materials when completed

1. Remove the first two pages of this document.
2. Attach the materials listed in section 4
3. Distribute to all CRES Partners during Stage 1 of the CRES annual cycle
4. **Do not** include section 1 in packs sent to MCH services or service providers
5. Distribute the whole pack to all other partners
6. Update annually and redistribute updated materials

**INFORMATION FOR CRES PARTNERS**

**Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme (CRES)**

**[CRES provider]**

Date:

Version:

**what is this information pack?**

CRES partners include kindergarten providers, EYMs (Early Years Management), MCH (Maternal and Child Health) services and support services who collaborate to support delivery of a Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme (CRES) in [LGA]. CRES partners are essential to the operation of our CRES, particularly to support vulnerable children to enrol in and attend kindergarten.

[CRES provider] wants to equip you with all the necessary resources to achieve our shared goal of increasing participation in kindergarten in [LGA]. If you require more information on CRES after reading this information pack, please contact [CRES Provider contact details].

This information pack has been prepared for CRES partner organisation staff who are involved in supporting [CRES Provider]’s CRES. This information pack will cover:

1. Background information on Kindergarten in Victoria
2. About the CRES in [LGA]
3. About the CRES process in [LGA]
4. Additional resources available to support families and carers.
5. **background: kindergarten in victoria**

Kindergarten works differently in each state and territory and understanding how kindergarten works in Victoria can help you answer questions posed by families and carers.

Vulnerable families and carers are more likely to experience discomfort or anxiety related to attending kindergarten, for example regarding the safety of their children, cost to attend and understanding the value of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). The information in this section can help ease their anxieties or fears, noting that more specific information for particular groups or individuals may be necessary.

**How does kinder work in Victoria?**

The Victorian Government is investing a total of $14 billion to deliver the Best Start, Best Life reform. This includes the $5 billion investment in the rollout of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten and an additional $9 billion over 10 years, announced in June 2022, to support:

* Free Kinder programs for all three- and four-year-old children at participating services from the start of 2023
* Four-Year-Kindergarten transitioning to ‘Pre-Prep’ over the next decade, becoming a universal, 30-hour-a-week program of play-based learning available to every four-year-old child in Victoria
* the establishment of 50 new government-owned and affordable early learning centres. These centres will be built in locations across Victoria that have the greatest need and will make it easier for families to access education and car.

**Why is kindergarten important for children?**

Kindergarten is important for child development and the Department of Education (DE) strongly recommends all children go to kindergarten.

Evidence shows that quality play-based early learning has a profound positive effect on children’s learning and development. Young children learn about the world through play. It gives children the opportunity to use their imagination and learn and practise important skills, such as problem solving. It also helps their social and emotional development, and wellbeing.

In a kindergarten program, children use play to build their language skills and learn about numbers and patterns. They also learn how to get along with others, share, listen, and manage their emotions. Teachers and educators help children become curious, creative and confident about learning.

Kindergartens provide a strong foundation for a child’s learning and development, setting up children for a smooth entry to school. Children experiencing disadvantage and vulnerability benefit the most from what kindergarten offers.

Kindergarten programs are delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher. They're designed to improve your child’s development in:

* social skills, like how to play with other children in a calm, sharing and rewarding way
* self-awareness and respect for others
* emotional skills, for example understanding their feelings
* language, literacy and numeracy skills, such as reading stories and counting objects
* a joy for learning and group activities, such as talking, drawing and making things together with other children their own age
* ability to make new friends
* exposure to new ideas and concepts.

Kindergarten also gives families:

* opportunities to meet other families and make community connections
* access to support for children with special needs
* access to other community services.

For more information, visit https://www.vic.gov.au/when-start-kindergarten.

**When is a child eligible for kindergarten?**

A child is eligible for Four-Year-Old Kindergarten if they turn four by April 30 of the year they are attending. Eligible children can attend a funded program for up to 15 hours per week (or 600 hours per year).

Similarly, a child is eligible for Three-Year-Old Kindergarten if they turn three by April 30 of the year they are attending. However, the child can only start attending the kindergarten when they are three years old. For example, a child who turns three on April 15 will be able to enrol in the kindergarten the year prior but can only start attending after April 15.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| When your child was born | When they can go to kindergarten | |
| Three-Year-Old Kindergarten | Four-Year-Old Kindergarten |
| Between 1/5/2018 and 30/4/2019 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Between 1/5/2019 and 30/4/2020 | 2023 | 2024 |

**How much does kindergarten cost?**

Free Kinder is available in Three- and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten programs at participating funded sessional and long day care services:

* For three-year-olds, this means from 5 and up to 15 hours per week of a kindergarten program (200 – 600 hours a year)
* For four-year-olds, this means 15 hours per week (600 hours a year).

To see if their preferred kinder has opted in to Free Kinder, families and carers should be directed to the kindergartens they are interested in.

For services not participating in Free Kinder, families can access a free or low-cost program through the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS). This subsidy enables eligible children in funded three- and four-year-old groups to access up to 15 hours of kindergarten. Children are eligible if they are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children, refugees, multiple birth children, or children who hold (or have parents/carers who hold) valid concession cards.

Early Start Kindergarten

Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) allows eligible children to access up to 15 hours of funded kindergarten delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher for free or at low cost, two years prior to commencing school.

A child is eligible for ESK if they are three years old by 30 April in the year they are attending and:

* are from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or
* identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or
* if the family has had contact with child protection.

By identifying eligible children and funding their kindergarten placement through ESK, this ensures that:

* ESK eligible children and families are provided [Priority of Access](https://www.vic.gov.au/priority-access-criteria) to Early childhood education and care (ECEC) services.
* ESK eligible children without up-to-date immunisation information can enrol in ECEC services while they undertake catch-up immunisations or apply for a medical exemption under the relevant grace periods of:
  + 63-days under the Australian Government’s [No Jab No Pay](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/what-are-immunisation-requirements?context=41186)
  + 16-weeks under the Victorian Government’s [No Jab No Play](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/no-jab-no-play).
* Registration fees are waived for any ESK eligible family registering for kindergarten through CRES. It is important to note that many other services not part of CRES may also opt to waive their registration fee for ESK eligible families.
* ESK enrolments are factored into the amount of School Readiness Funding (SRF) that a ECEC service receives.
* Services receive a full year’s funding allocation (for hours enrolled) upon an ESK funding application being approved regardless of when an ESK enrolment starts or leaves the service. This supports planning around the child’s access and inclusion into the kindergarten program.
* In 2023, Long Day Care Services will receive at least $500 in extra funding for supporting an ESK enrolment.

**Can a family or carer delay or defer a child’s start in a funded kindergarten program?**

Children are expected to complete a full year of kindergarten in the year they enrol, or in the case of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten, complete the year after their third birthday. If a child has commenced kindergarten, and the teacher and family or carer decides that enrolment should be deferred to the following year, they must withdraw during the early stages of term 1 to be eligible for DE funding the following year.

Families and carers need to make an informed choice about which year they would like their child to commence school and therefore which year their child will attend a funded kindergarten program. In particular, families and carers with children born between 1 January and 30 April should be advised to think carefully about when they would like their child to attend kindergarten and school.

**How do families and carers need to prepare for kindergarten?**

Each kindergarten service provider has its own enrolment, orientation and preparation activities for children. For specific details, contact the kindergarten directly once the family or carer has accepted a place in kindergarten for the child. Details of documentation required at enrolment stage can be found in the next section.

1. **about the central registration and enrolment scheme in [insert lga]**

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| Choose the appropriate opening sentence for this section and delete the other. [Option 1] is used if the CRES is operated by the council: [Option 2] is used if the CRES operation is contracted to a third party. |

[Option 1] The CRES is a local government-led program operated by [council name] **OR**

[Option 2] The CRES is a local government-led program operated by [CRES Provider] and supported by [council name].

*The CRES is successful when the community has a clear understanding of and access to, quality kindergarten programs so that children are set up to be future learners and positive contributors to society.*

The [insert LGA] CRES follows the same guidelines used across the state to maximise consistency for families and carers, administrative effort for service providers and complexity for support services.

A CRES achieves these outcomes by:

* Centralising the process of kindergarten registration so families and carers have a ‘one-stop-shop’ to begin a child’s journey to kindergarten.
* Equipping MCH and support services staff to inform families and carers about the importance of early childhood education and the process for securing a place in kindergarten.
* Creating simple, consistent and transparent processes to maximise accessibility for all families and carers.
* Promoting proactive engagement with families and carers to ensure children experiencing vulnerability can access kindergarten
* Enhancing the data available to councils so they can better plan infrastructure developments.

In [insert LGA], the CRES process covers NN kindergartens. A full list of kindergartens that participate in the CRES are available at [website].

The CRES is a collaborative model which relies on the co-ordinated work of kindergarten providers, services which support families and carers and the [CRES Provider].

1. **The CRES process**

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| Update this table to reflect the expected role/s of CRES partners as developed in consultation with partners when initially developing the CRES. |

[Council name] undertakes a five-step process to deliver the CRES each year. An overview of the five CRES stages is in the table below.

| Stage | Objective | Family or carer activity | Your role |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Proactive engagement and awareness | Ensures families and carers are aware of the importance of ECEC, the CRES and available assistance to help them engage with the CRES. | Searches for information about ECEC and CRES.  Receives information from a service provider, MCH staff or support service they have contact with. | Communicates information about ECEC and CRES to families and carers  Obtains consent for family and carer contact details to be shared with the [CRES Provider]\*. |
| 2. Registration | Obtains information about children to initiate the process of allocating places. | Completes a registration form. | Supports families and carers to complete registration forms if they find it difficult, or refers them directly to the CRES Provider. |
| 3. Allocation | Equitably allocates kindergarten places and optimise the supply and demand of places. | Receives an update on the progress of their registration. | - |
| 4. Confirmation and communication | Clearly communicates with families and carers to confirm their allocated place and inform service providers of their enrolment list. | Accepts their offer of place or rejects the offer and goes on a waiting list. | Supports families and carers to understand what an offer means and what they need to do next. |
| 5. CRES planning, maintenance and development | Plans for success every year by evaluating and improving the CRES. | Begins to engage with the service provider to start the enrolment process. | Supports families and carers to enrol and begin kindergarten.  Provides feedback to the [CRES Provider] about your experience so they can improve it for the coming year. |

\* If you believe a family or carer will need extra support completing a registration form or are likely to miss the first round registration date, refer them to the [CRES Provider] with the attached referral form. [CRES Provider] will follow up with this family or carer to offer support in getting their children into kindergarten.

**How does registration work?**

The quickest way to complete a registration form is online at [insert link to registration form page]

Families and carers can also complete a paper form and post it to [CRES Provider]. These registration forms are attached to this information pack so you can provide them to families and carers.

Families and carers cannot register directly with service providers that are part of the CRES, they must go through the centralised registration process. Service providers can direct families and carers to register through [CRES Provider] and assist them to complete the registration.

**What do families and carers need to complete registration?**

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| It is strongly recommended that you **do not collect** documents proving the child’s birth date, address, visa status, concession card status or similar at the registration stage. A statement at the end of the registration form that certifies the information provided is true can suffice as a legal declaration.  This will make accessing kindergarten as easy as possible for families and carers, particularly those who are experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage. Gathering documentation can be a barrier for many families and carers attempting or completing the form and establishing contact with the CRES. Once registered, the CRES Provider, kindergarten provider, MCH or support service staff can assist the family or carer to gather documentation for the enrolment stage.  If your CRES does require documentation at this stage and this cannot be changed, keep option 2 below. If not, keep option 1. |

**OPTION 1**

To fill out the registration form, families and carers will need to provide information about themselves and their child. **They will not need to attach any supporting documentation.** They will need a credit card (to pay the registration fee). The fee can also be paid in person at their nearest council office. This fee is waived for all families and carers eligible for Priority of Access allocation.

The registration form asks families and carers for:

* Basic information about the child including name, date of birth, language spoken at home, previous kindergarten attendance and immunisation status.
* Details of any additional support the child might require due to a disability including intellectual, sensory or physical impairment.
* Contact details for the family or carer and any additional adults that should be kept informed throughout the process (e.g. another family member, a case worker or other support service staff member the family or carer trusts).
* Whether the child is identified as fulfilling any of the following criteria:
  + Is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
  + Is from a multiple birth (triplet or greater)
  + Is from a refugee or asylum seeker background
  + Is known to Child Protection
  + Is in Out-Of-Home Care.
  + Holds, or has a family member who holds, a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card, Department of Veteran’s Affairs Gold Card or White Card, or a Refugee or Asylum Seeker Visa.
  + [other local criteria].

**OPTION 2**

To fill out the registration form, families and carers will need:

* Proof of identity: the child’s birth certificate, birth notice or passport
* Proof of residence: a utility bill, rental agreement or rates notice with family name and address (this must be the main residence of the child).
* Subsidy card and immigration visas (where applicable).
* Documents from Family Support Services or a MCH nurse confirming high support needs and/or disability, or letter from a doctor for complex medical needs (where applicable).
* Other proof required to verify the child meets local criteria.
* Credit card (to pay the registration fee). The fee can also be paid in person at their nearest council office. This fee is waived for all families and carers eligible for ESK/KFS/priority allocation.

**What do families and carers need to complete enrolment?**

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| If you gather documentation at the registration stage, use option 2. If not, keep option 1.  See instructions above. |

**OPTION 1**

Families and carers will need to provide copies of:

* Proof of identity: your child's birth certificate, birth notice or passport
* Proof of residence: a utilities bill, rental agreement or rates notice with your family name and address (this must be the main residence of your child).
* 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 [www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/vaccination-children/no-jab-no-play/](about:blank).)
* Documents detailing any medical conditions or requirements the child has.

Kindergartens may also require additional documentation. Service providers should ensure that information regarding any additional documentation is easily accessible for families, carers and support services. Support services should contact, or assist families and carers to contact, kindergartens for this information.

**OPTION 2**

Once a kindergarten place has been accepted, the enrolment process can begin. [CRES provider] will pass on the information provided at the registration stage.

To enrol a child, families and carers will need to provide copies of:

* 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 [www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/vaccination-children/no-jab-no-play/](about:blank)).
* Documents detailing any medical conditions or requirements the child has.
* Additional documentation as required by their kindergarten (contact kindergarten for more details).

Kindergartens may also require additional documentation. Families and carers and services supporting them should contact the child’s allocated kindergarten for details of any additional requirements.

**What are the important dates for enrolling in kindergarten?**

The CRES timeline is in the table below. If families or carers miss the registration close deadline, they can still register although they will be placed into a pool for second-round (or even later rounds) of allocation and are less likely to get their top preference. After second round offers have been confirmed, [CRES provider] will continue to allocate children to kindergarten places where they are available. More places may become available as children move kindergartens or withdraw, or when kindergartens add capacity.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Date | Activity |
| 1 March | Registrations open |
| 30 May | Registrations close\* |
| Beginning of August | First round offers |
| Mid-August | Acceptance of first round offers due |
| Beginning of September | Second round offers |
| Mid-September | Acceptance of second round offers due |
| Weekly or when vacancies become available | Subsequent offers on an individual basis |

\*Registrations will still be accepted after 30 May, but registrations received prior will be allocated first. Children eligible for Priority of Access will be prioritised regardless of when registration is received.

**How are children prioritised for allocation to kindergartens?**

[CRES Provider] allocates kindergarten places fairly and transparently. Children who meet the DE Priority of Access criteria are allocated first to ensure they do not miss out on high-quality early childhood education.

* Are at risk of abuse or neglect
* Are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander;
* Are, or have parents or carers who are, asylum seekers or refugees
* Are eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (hold a valid concession card or are a triplet or quadruplet)
* Have additional developmental needs.

Priority of Access criteria are important for ensuring that vulnerable children can access early childhood education. Highly vulnerable children benefit the most from early childhood education, but evidence shows they are often missing out. These criteria are used state-wide to ensure all children can access the education they need. A complete description of the DE Priority of Access criteria can be found in the DE Kindergarten Funding Guide at [Early childhood service funding and grants | Victorian Government (www.vic.gov.au)](https://www.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-service-funding-and-grants?Redirect=1).

Children who meet local priority criteria are allocated next (these criteria can be found on our website). All remaining children are randomly ordered via a ballot to be allocated to their highest available preference. There is no ‘first in, first served’ rule.

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| If your CRES includes local prioritisation criteria beyond the Department’s Priority of Access Criteria, it is recommended that the weighting for each factor is transparently described to the public. If your CRES does not have local prioritisation criteria, delete the next paragraph and following table. |

[Council name] have made the policy decision to create local criteria that will be factored in when allocating a child’s place. Children with a higher priority weighting will be allocated after all children eligible for the DE Priority of Access Criteria. The table below outlines the relative weighting for each factor [Council name] will consider when allocating a place.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Factor | Relative weighting |
| Local criteria 1 | X |
| Local criteria 2 | X |
| Local criteria 3 | X |

**What happens after the family or carer accepts a place?**

The child’s details will be passed on to the kindergarten (service provider). The kindergarten will then communicate directly with the family or carer about enrolment and orientation processes. Enrolment is handled by the kindergarten. Some families and carers may require additional support throughout this process from MCH staff, service provider staff, or support services.

During enrolment, families and carers will have to provide more detailed information about the child such as immunisation history, dietary requirements, religious background and medical conditions.

1. **Additional resources to support families and carers**

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| Attach all relevant documents for support services and kindergarten providers. The following templates are provided with the CRES Practice Guide and should be tailored to your CRES and then distributed in a pack with this information for CRES partners:   * Appendix A – Promotional material for families and carers * Appendix C – Referral form template * Appendix D – Registration form template |

Included in this pack is a set of additional resources for your use.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Resource | Description | How to use |
| Promotional material for families and carers | Includes text for newsletters, FAQs and fact sheets. Shared with families and carers to inform them about ECE and CRES. | * Share text in your newsletters and other communications. * Keep copies of FAQs and fact sheets at your organisation for sharing with families and carers. |
| Referral form | Completed to refer families and carers contact information to the CRES. | * Keep copies at your organisation for referring families and carers to the CRES. |
| Registration form | Completed in Stage 2 to collect family and carer information and kindergarten preferences. | * Be familiar with the document in preparation for families and carers needing assistance. * Keep copies at your organisation for sharing with families and carers. |

**Who do I contact about the central registration in [lga]?**

[Insert CRES Provider contact details, including a direct contact number and name]