

Kindergarten is a program for all children



Going to kindergarten is an exciting time for children and families

A kindergarten program gives your child an opportunity to mix with children of the same age, learn new things and have some fun.

If your child has a disability, the busy demands of everyday life may already include medical appointments and involving your child in Early Childhood Intervention Services. You may not have had much time to think about kindergarten for your child.

All children with a disability can benefit from participating in a kindergarten program.

Learning new things

A kindergarten program can give your child some new experiences where they can discover and explore the world around them.

Your child will have an opportunity to develop social skills such as learning how to co-operate with others, language skills, gross motor skills developed through physical games and activities, and fine motor skills such as making things in art and craft.

Early Childhood Intervention Services and kindergarten

If your child is involved with an Early Childhood Intervention Service, it probably feels like a safe environment where everyone shares a common understanding of issues particular to families who have a child with a disability.

A kindergarten program is different from early childhood intervention but it also offers a safe and caring environment where your child can take part in a variety of activities with other children.

It is common for children to attend a kindergarten program and continue early childhood intervention at the same time.

This provides an ideal opportunity for the kindergarten teacher and early childhood intervention specialists to communicate with each other, so that the benefits to your child may be maximised by the two programs complementing each other.

Starting age

Your child must be at least four years old by 30 April in the year they start kindergarten.

Kindergarten programs

In Victoria, kindergarten is not compulsory but every child is eligible to attend a four-year-old kindergarten program in the year before they start primary school.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development funds services to provide kindergarten programs in a range of settings including community kindergartens, children's centres, long day care centres and some schools.

Sessional kindergartens

Sessional kindergarten services are often managed by local councils, not-for-profit groups or volunteer parent committees.

Benefits of kindergarten

A kindergarten program will support your child's development by giving them new experiences in an environment where they can:

- explore the world around them and practice new skills
- establish friendships with children of their own age and relationships with other adults
- share and care for materials and equipment that belong to everyone

They usually offer a minimum of 10 hours of a kindergarten program in short sessions over a few days each week.

There are four terms of a kindergarten program each year which are usually 10 weeks long. Kindergarten terms run at the same time as school terms.

Integrated kindergarten in long day care

Many child care services offer State Government funded four-year-old kindergarten programs either in short sessions or as part of an integrated long day care program.

Kindergarten programs in schools

Some independent and government schools run funded kindergarten programs either in short sessions or as part of an early learning program.

“My son loves kindergarten. He had so many new experiences this year. He is part of a group of children who paint together, paste together, chat and giggle together. I’ve been able to stand back and watch him develop new friendships and belong to a group of his peers.”



Kindergarten Fee Subsidy

Most kindergarten services charge a fee in addition to receiving funding from government.

If you or your child has a Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card or a Department of Veterans’ Affairs Gold Card, you are eligible for 10 hours per week of a kindergarten program for free, or a longer program at low cost through the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy.

You are also eligible if you have a Visa 785 (Temporary Protection) or a Visa 786 (Temporary Humanitarian Concern Visa).

Ask the kindergarten teacher for more information about whether you are eligible for the subsidy.

The Kindergarten Fee Subsidy does not apply if your child attends a kindergarten program within a long day care service that is approved for the Commonwealth Child Care Benefit.

School exemption

If your child turns six years of age during the kindergarten year, you must get a school exemption from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

This is done by completing the *Exemption from school due to attendance in kindergarten program* form and sending it to the regional office of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Once a decision is made, the regional office will complete the bottom section of the form and return a copy to you. You must then show this to the kindergarten service.

Support for kindergarten services to include children with a disability

A range of support is available for kindergarten services to include children with a disability in their program.

For more information see the tip sheet on *Overview of support for kindergarten services to include children with a disability*.

For more information

Office for Children and Early Childhood Development
www.office-for-children.vic.gov.au

Early Childhood Intervention Australia (Victorian chapter)
Phone 9509 5584
www.eciavic.org.au

Raising children network
www.raisingchildren.net.au

Kindergarten Parents Victoria
Phone 9489 3500 or
1300 730 119 (rural callers)
www.kpv.org.au

School exemption process
Phone 1800 809 834
www.education.vic.gov.au

Association for Children with a Disability
Phone 9818 2000 or
1800 654 013 (rural callers)
www.acd.org.au

Association for Children with a Disability

This series of Kindergarten Inclusion Tip Sheets was developed by the Association for Children with a Disability in partnership with the Victorian Government’s Office for Children and Early Childhood Development.