

Kindergarten Central Enrolment System Policy and Procedure

Purpose

This policy will outline for all users, the criteria for placement in funded early childhood programs participating in the Central Enrolment System (CES), the process in allocating kindergarten places and the responsibilities of those involved with the CES, including service staff, committees and families.

This policy will be regularly updated and reviewed in line with the Department of Education and Training (DET) kindergarten policy and reform changes.

Values

The CES is committed to:

- Promoting the opportunity for all eligible children to have access to a funded 3 and 4 year old kindergarten programs,
- Involving community in the review of the CES policy,
- Providing clear application processes for families, enabling them to make informed choices about services that meet their needs,
- Complying with relevant legislation (as listed under the “Legislation” section of this policy),
- Maintaining confidentiality, and
- Utilising statistics gathered by the CES to shape future service delivery and development, and advocacy with Local, State and Federal Governments.

Scope

This policy applies to participating services, volunteer parent committees, LMPA Board, management, referral agencies, staff and parents/guardians of children enrolled at a centre that is a part of the CES in the regions of Bendigo and Swan Hill.

Legislation

The following documents form the basis of the CES policy:

- Education and Care Services National Law
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth)
- Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Victoria)
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 (Commonwealth)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Commonwealth)
- Victorian Information Privacy Act 2000
- Victorian *Kindergarten Policy, Procedures and Funding Criteria (VKP) update 2016*
- No Job No Play (amendment to the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008)

Definitions

Sessional Kindergarten: Is a kindergarten program delivered by a bachelor qualified Early Childhood Teacher for a set number of hours on allocated day/s during the week, where the child is in a consistent group for the whole year. Session times can vary in length and spread across the week.

Integrated Kindergarten: The integrated long day care program can offer a full day of education and care, including a kindergarten program. The kindergarten component is delivered by a bachelor qualified Early Childhood Teacher.

Board of Management: LMPA's Board of Management has overall responsibility of the CES system

Management: LMPA's Management have day to day management responsibility of the CES system

DET: Department of Education and Training

Central Enrolments Officer/s: the person/s employed by LMPA to operate the CES

Eligible child: Refer to *DET's Victorian Kindergarten Policy, Procedures and Funding Criteria (VKP) update 2016*, a child that meets the eligibility criteria to access a funded 3 or 4 year old kindergarten place

Enrolment form: A form, which collects details regarding individual children. This form is to be completed prior to a child being offered a kindergarten place and can be accessed via the LMPA website

Fees: A payment for a place within a program at a centre referred to as term fee or an enrolment application fee to enrol your child into a centre

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy: Funding paid directly to a Service Provider to reduce kindergarten fees for a child who individually holds or has a parent/guardian who holds one of the following:

- Commonwealth Health Care Card **or** Pensioner Concession Card,
- Department of Veterans Affairs White or Gold Card,
- Temporary Protection/ Humanitarian Visas 447, 451, 785, or 786,
- Refugee/ Special Humanitarian Visa 200 to 217,
- Asylum seeker Bridging Visa A – F, and/or
- Multiple birth children triplets and above.

4 Year Old Kindergarten: Kindergarten (formerly known as preschool) is a universal early childhood program, funded by the State Government for children in the year prior to commencing primary school.

3 Year Old Kindergarten: Is a universal early childhood program, funded by the State Government, for children in the year prior to commencing 4 year old kindergarten. 3 year old kindergarten will be funded in the Bendigo and Swan Hill regions as of 2022 for 5 hours per week. This will be scaled up to 15 hours per week by 2029.

Early Start Kindergarten (ESK): ESK gives eligible children access to kindergarten for two years prior to starting at Primary School. To be eligible, the child must be three years of age by April 30th in the year they start attending and identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, refugee and asylum seeker background or are identified as vulnerable and known to Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH), Child protection or Child FIRST/Orange Door.

Second year of Funded Kindergarten: A second year of funded kindergarten may be considered when a child is showing delays in at least two key learning and development areas. A process needs to be undertaken that requires final approval by DET.

Vacancy: A place in a program that becomes vacant as a result of a child leaving the centre or is available because all places are not filled.

Procedure

The LMPA Board are responsible for: the overall service and to approve any changes to this policy after appropriate community consultation.

The Management team are responsible for: enacting the policy and responding to any queries that arise in relation to any aspect of the policy and ensuring the CES complies with relevant legislation, policy and procedure.

Early Education staff are responsible for: distributing application forms to prospective parents and referring families to the Central Enrolments Officer as required and adhering to agreed protocols as per the CES Policy. Assisting families in completing the application form when needed. Communicating with the Central Enrolments Officer in a timely manner regarding any changes/concerns including specific needs of families and children.

CES Staff is responsible for: the day-to-day implementation of this policy, all administration of the CES system, reporting to services, assisting families in completing the application form when needed and LMPA Management regarding the status of enrolments and providing secure storage of documentation, as per Victorian Privacy Legislation.

Parent/guardians are responsible for: Completing the application form and providing all required document i.e. Child's proof of age, ACIR immunisation history record or catch up schedule, current Concession / Veterans Affairs card or Visa. Ensuring all information provided is true and accurate at the time of submission, that CES staff are notified of any changes to status, preferences, contact details or other information as soon as possible. A new application is submitted for each child for each year of attendance e.g. 3 and 4 year old kindergarten, ESK, and Second year of 4 year old kindergarten, if applicable. (An application needs to be completed to ensure all details are correct) and that the Application form and Letter of Offer are submitted within the required timeframes.

4 Year Old Funded Kindergarten Information (year before school)

Eligibility:

The following children are eligible for attendance in the **funded 4 year old kindergarten** program: Children who are four years of age by the 30th April in the year of attendance and have not attended the year prior unless eligible and approved for a second year of kindergarten by their regional office of the Department of Education and Training (DET).

Children turning six years of age in their year at kindergarten who have been granted an exemption from school entry age requirements by their regional office of the Department of Education and Training (DET).

Children who are eligible under the Early Start Program (ESK) or have submitted a written request for early entrance to primary school to their regional office of the Department of Education and Training (DET).

3 Year Old Funded Kindergarten Information

Eligibility:

The following children are eligible for attendance in the **funded 3 year old kindergarten** program: Children who are three years of age by the 30th April in the year of attendance and have not attended in the year before.

Children must be three years of age prior to commencing in the 3 year old kindergarten program. Please note under the National Quality Framework's (NQF) educator to child ratio 11:1 for children three year of age being used in most funded 3 Year Old and 4 Year Old Kindergarten programs, families with children turning three years of age between February and April 30th in the year of attendance can submit an application and they will be offered a place. However, the child will be unable to commence in the program until they have had their third birthday.

General Enrolment Procedure Application for a funded 3 and 4 Year Old Kindergarten Places

Enrolment applications will be available after March each year and due back by June 15th in the year prior to attendance for first round of allocations.

Enrolment application forms are available online at www.lmpa.org.au, a hardcopy can be picked up from the LMPA office or from your local kindergarten.

A separate enrolment application must be completed for each child for each year of attendance, along with the required documents;

- Copy of the child's proof of birth i.e. Birth Certificate, Passport or ACIR Immunisation History Statement,
- Current Australian Immunisation Record (ACIR), Immunisation Catch up Schedule or Medical Contraindicator statement. Conscientious Objection forms and Homeopathic treatment are no longer accepted under the new No Jab No Play Legislation, and
- The prescribed non-refundable application fee OR a copy of a current Health Care Card/Pension Card, Department of Veterans Affairs Gold or White Card

Completed enrolment application forms are to be forwarded to LMPA Central Enrolments Officer by one of the following methods;

- In person/Mail: C/- LMPA 53 Wills Street, Bendigo
- E-mail: enrolments@lmpa.org.au

(If sending via mail it is recommended that Registered or Express Post is used).

Applications received after the closing date for the first round of allocations will be allocated in subsequent rounds as per the CES timeline.

Incomplete application forms

All sections of the application form must be completed. Incomplete applications will not be processed until all information has been received.

Offer of funded 3 and 4 Year Old Kindergarten places

Letters of Offer will be sent to families as per in the CES timeline and are requested to confirm acceptance or rejection in writing within 10 days. If a family is unable to return their Letter of Offer within the 10 days they should contact CES as soon as possible.

Where a family has been offered a place and not responded through three separate allocations, the application will be withheld from further allocations until the family contact CES.

Waiting list letters will be sent to families who did not receive a placement and will be included in future allocation rounds.

Kindergartens will be provided with a detailed list of all confirmed enrolments after each round of allocations is completed and Letters of Offer have been returned. This will be updated as necessary.

After an offer is accepted

When a kindergarten offer is accepted, your information will be forwarded onto the relevant kindergarten/Early Years Manager. Kindergartens will contact families directly about orientation, session days and times, fees and finalising enrolment into kindergarten.

Allocation criteria

The priority of access criteria used are in line with Victorian Government requirements regarding how 3 Year Old and 4 Year Old kindergarten places must be allocated to children. Please note each priority area is sorted eldest to youngest. It works to ensure that:

- A transparent, equitable and approved process is followed
- The maximum number of children receive a kindergarten place
- Children who are eligible for priority places are allocated a place in their kindergarten of choice

We have a strong commitment to ensuring that, wherever possible, all children are allocated a place in a kindergarten service. We cannot, however, guarantee a kindergarten placement to every child.

Children who are younger than the eligible age, but whose parents/guardians have submitted a written request for their child to attend school the following year to their regional office of the DET must provide a copy of the written request must be attached with the application.

Applications are processed in line with the priority access guidelines below:

(Disclaimer: Priority access is based on current Legislation. These priorities are current at time of printing.)

High Priority Children – Priority 1 Criteria	
Children at risk of abuse or neglect	The child is: Attending a Kindergarten program through Early Start Kindergarten or Access to Early Learning, or is Referred by: - Child Protection - Child and Family Services i.e. Child FIRST/Orange Door or - Out of Home Care provider
Children in Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander families	Families who identify the child as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
Asylum seeker and refugee children	Appropriate visa that identifies the child and/or parents as a refugee or asylum seeker
Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy	Children of parents who hold a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veteran's Affairs Card or Multiple birth children (triplets or more)
Children with additional needs	Holds a Child Disability Health Care Card or Approved for Kindergarten Inclusion Support Package, or referred by; - the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

Having satisfied the above Priority of Access Guidelines, remaining places will be allocated utilising the following LMPA Priority of Access guidelines:

Local priority of access criteria	
Priority 2: Second year	Children who are currently enrolled at kindergarten who have been assessed as eligible for a second year of funded kindergarten or children that have attended three year old kinder programs, and reside in the Bendigo and Swan Hill regions.
Priority 3: Prior connection to service	Children who have had a sibling attend the service within the previous three years. For a child to be considered for sibling priority placement the application MUST be received by June 15 th . This criteria is only used for the first round of allocations. Children who are currently enrolled in a three year old program registering for four year old kindergarten the following year.
Priority 3: Resident Applications (lives in Greater Bendigo or Swan Hill regions)	Children who live within the municipality and meet eligibility requirements as set out by DET. This includes families in process of moving to the municipality.

Priority 5: Non-residents	Kindergarten applications from non-residents will only be allocated positions if vacancies remain after resident applications have been allocated places.
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Complaints, Queries and Concerns

If a family wishes to raise any concern regarding their placement or the enrolment application process, they must lodge this in writing within 7 days with Loddon Mallee Preschool Association by post or email;

- In person/Mail: C/- LMPA 53 Wills Street, Bendigo
- E-mail: enrolments@lmpa.org.au

Review date

This policy will be reviewed annually in consultation with the Early Childhood community via staff, stakeholders and other community avenues.

Evaluation

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes, Management will:
Assess whether a satisfactory resolution has been achieved in relation to issues relating to enrolment procedures. Conduct regular surveys in relation to this policy, or incorporate relevant questions in the general parents/guardians survey and take into account feedback on the policy from the Central Enrolment Officer, Early Childhood staff and other consultation opportunities.