

# Early Start Kindergarten

---

## Benefits of Early Start Kindergarten

[Early Start Kindergarten](#) (ESK) continues to provide eligible children 15 hours of free or low-cost kindergarten each week for two years before starting school.

If a child is eligible for ESK, they should be enrolled in ESK, even where free kindergarten and/or 15 hours per week of funded three-year old kindergarten is offered. This ensures that:

- ESK eligible children and families are provided priority of access.
- ESK eligible children without up-to-date immunisation information can enrol 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](#)
  - 16-weeks under the Victorian Government's [No Jab No Play](#).
- Your service can receive additional funding and support. For example, ESK enrolments are factored into the amount of School Readiness Funding (SRF) that your service receives.
- Your service can maximise available funding to support kindergarten placements for children. For example:
  - 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.

Services are encouraged to discuss eligibility for ESK with families and referrers directly, in addition to information provided through enrolment processes.

It should be noted that the Department of Education also collects data specific to ESK enrolments to ensure that there is strong uptake and attendance by priority cohorts of children and families in kindergarten across Victoria. The data is used for planning and monitoring purposes, including identifying areas of need where additional supports maybe required.