

In July 2018 with the introduction of the new Childcare Subsidy legislation the Australian Government removed mandatory requirements stipulating which children should be prioritised for available childcare places.

Instead, the Australian Government has provided recommendations on which groups of children Service Providers should consider prioritising in relation to providing available places.

The recommendations (not mandatory) for childcare placements are as follows:

Children who are:

- at risk of serious abuse or neglect
- a child of a sole parent, who satisfies, or parents who both satisfy, the activity test through paid employment.
- Any other child

In relation to Kindergarten placements, when demand exceeds availability, the Approved Provider will refer to the Service's Priority of Access Policy in relation to Kindergarten placements.

Service Providers must notify all families of the priority of access policy that applies when they enrol their child.

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

- prioritise children based on the criteria listed below
- work with other local kindergarten services and the regional Department office to ensure all eligible children have access to a kindergarten place.

This criteria must be used by Service Providers when prioritising enrolments. Funding guidance is available from the Department's regional offices if required.

High priority children	Process that could be used to verify need(s)
Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in Out-of-Home Care	<p>The child is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attending a three year old kindergarten program through Early Start Kindergarten or Access to Early Learning, or is • referred by: <p>Child Protection</p> <p>Child and family services (family services referral and support team, Child FIRST/integrated family services/Services Connect case worker)</p> <p>Maternal and Child Health nurse, or</p>

	Out-of-Home Care provider.
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children	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 KIM.
Asylum seeker and refugee children	An appropriate visa identifies the child and/or parents as a refugee or asylum seeker.
Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A child or parent holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veteran's Affairs Card, or • multiple birth children (triplets, quadruplets).
<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"> • is assessed as having delays in two or more areas and is declared eligible for a second funded year of kindergarten • holds a Child Disability Health Care Card • has previously been approved for Kindergarten Inclusion Support Package, or referred by: <p>the National Disability Insurance Scheme Early Childhood Intervention Service Preschool Field Officer, or Maternal and Child Health nurse.</p>

In addition, the Service Provider will prioritise enrolment applications for children for the Kindergarten program who:

- have received funding for a second year of kindergarten
- who were eligible to attend in the previous year but deferred or withdrew from the service prior to the April data collection
- date order of submitted applications with older children offered placement before younger children
- children who have siblings already enrolled at the service
- children who have had previous attendance at the Service for childcare or Early Start Kindergarten

Placements will not commence until the family has confirmed a formal enrolment (CWA) with Services Australia (formerly Centrelink) unless the child is not eligible for a CWA enrolment but is eligible for a Relative Arrangement (RA) 'informal' enrolment with the service. For more information on CWA and RA enrolments refer to the Child Care Subsidy Policy or go to <http://guides.dss.gov.au/family-assistance-guide/4/13/2/20>

References:

Child Care Service Handbook available from www.education.gov.au
Vic Kindergarten Funding Guidelines Priority of Access Criteria Oct 2021