

# Youth Access Initiative



This Guidebook has been prepared to help the relevant young people, their communities and other organisations who work with them, to understand the range of training options available under Skills First. It contains information on:

- [The Youth Access Initiative](#)
- [Youth Access Initiative eligibility](#)
- [Skills First](#)
- [Available subsidised training](#)
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- [Accessing the Youth Access Initiative student tuition fee waiver](#)

## The Youth Access Initiative

Young people on child protection orders, youth justice orders and residents of Victorian Education First Youth Foyers represent some of the most marginalised young people in our community, often presenting with complex needs and multiple barriers to entering education and training.

Central to breaking the link between disadvantage and poor educational/training outcomes, is ensuring that learners are supported to stay in education/ training, access better opportunities and reach their full potential.

The Youth Access Initiative addresses the key aspects of improving awareness of access to and engagement with vocational education and training opportunities for these young people by providing greater access via tuition fee waivers.

The Youth Access Initiative works with Skills First funding which includes supports for disadvantaged learners to engage with and succeed in their education and training. The Youth Access Initiative contributes to this priority by further reducing the costs of subsidised training by providing a waiver on student tuition fees for eligible young people.

## Youth Access Initiative eligibility

To be eligible for the Youth Access Initiative, you must be:

- eligible for Skills First Government subsidised training which includes being an Australian citizen, an Australian permanent resident, or a New Zealand citizen (more information can be found at [Check your eligibility for Skills First funding](#)); and
- aged 24 years or under; and
- have been or are currently on a Child Protection Order or a Youth Justice Order (but are not currently in custody); or
- are a resident of an Education First Youth Foyer (for a list of relevant orders and foyer information refer to guidelines); or
- a young person who is or has been supported by the Refugee Minor Program; or
- a young person who has participated or is participating in the Children's Court Youth Diversion Service.

## Skills First

Skills First is the Victorian Government's commitment to a high-quality training and TAFE system that leads learners to real jobs. Subject to meeting Skills First eligibility criteria, individuals can enrol in subsidised accredited vocational education and training (VET), in courses that meet the skills needs of Victoria, and maximise their prospects of valuable work. More information about Skills First can be found at [Skills First](#).

A key priority for Skills First is to support disadvantaged learners to engage with and succeed in their education and training. The Youth Access Initiative contributes to this priority by further reducing the costs of subsidised training by providing a waiver on student tuition fees for eligible young people.

The Skills First online eligibility indicator provides a useful initial tool for checking whether someone might be eligible, and can be found at [Check your eligibility for Skills First funding](#).

## Available subsidised training

A wide range of subsidised vocational education and training is available under Skills First. Refer to the [Victorian Skills Gateway](#) for available courses.

The list of available courses is regularly reviewed, and courses added as required by industry needs and to support jobs growth. This allows the training market to keep up with the changing needs of the economy.

## Organisations providing subsidised training

Funded courses and skill sets can only be delivered under the Youth Access Initiative by Victorian TAFEs and select Learn Local Organisations who are also registered training organisations.

Skills First training providers have been selected for their capacity to deliver quality government subsidised training. Local providers can be found at:

- [Find my local TAFE](#)
- [Search Learn Local Organisations](#).

## Accessing subsidised training and student tuition fee waivers

Before eligible young people contact their chosen training provider, they will need to have a completed Youth Access Initiative Referral Form (available upon request from the TAFE and Training Line or a Skills and Jobs Centre; details below). The form is either completed by a Referral Agency, or the applicant can 'self-refer' by completing their section of the form and gaining the endorsement of an Authorised Officer. *Appendix 2* provides details of organisations that are considered a Referral Agency, and who is considered an Authorised Officers for the purpose of the Youth Access Initiative.

The form should be submitted one of the Skills First training providers offering the Youth Access Initiative student tuition fee waiver, who will discuss with the applicant their interests and options. Skills First training providers are well equipped to help young people work out what training might suit them best, and importantly, will use this opportunity to check if the young person meets the threshold eligibility criteria for government subsidised training. Contact might be either in person, over the phone, or online depending on the training provider and the young person's circumstances.

For further advice, contact the TAFE and Training Line or your local TAFE:

- [TAFE and Training Line](#) on **13 18 23** or [tafe.courseline@djsir.vic.gov.au](mailto:tafe.courseline@djsir.vic.gov.au)

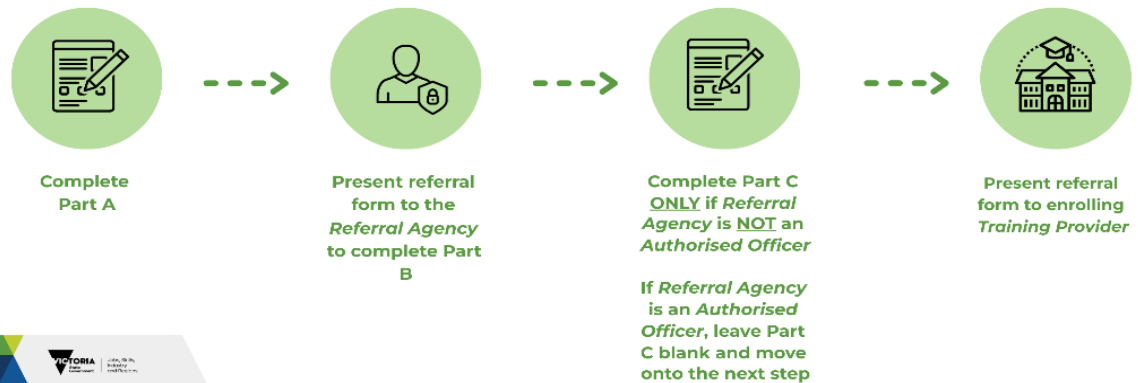
## For Self-Referral

Refer to **page 8** of the Guidebook for **Authorised Officer** and **Training Provider** definitions



## For Referral through Agency

Refer to **page 8** of the Guidebook for **Referral Agency**, **Authorised Officer** and **Training Provider** definitions



## YOUTH JUSTICE ORDERS

Youth Justice Orders are imposed under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* that requires the Court to make rehabilitation a priority.

**Community Sentences** are when the court hands down a non-custodial sentence such as a dismissal, an undertaking or a good behaviour bond, or one of the following orders:

**Youth residential centre order** are sentences of youth detention for young people in a youth residential centre. This sentence can only be given to a child aged under 15 at the time of sentencing. For more information, visit [Youth Justice Centre Order and Youth Residential Centre Order](#).

**Youth justice centre order** are sentences of youth detention for young people in a youth justice centre. This sentence can only be given to a child or young person aged 15 to 20 at the time of sentencing. For more information, visit [Youth Justice Centre Order and Youth Residential Centre Order](#).

**Youth control order** is served in the community under strict conditions. It is the most intensive sentencing order that a child can serve in the community in Victoria. For more information, visit [Youth Control Order](#).

**Youth attendance order** is an alternative to detention for children aged 15 years or over at the time of sentencing, where the young person attends the youth justice unit of the Department of Justice and Community Safety for a maximum of 12 months. For more information, visit [Youth Attendance Order](#).

**Probation order** is the least intensive supervision order available under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic). The child must be supervised by a Youth Justice worker, and not commit any crime. For more information, visit [Probation Order](#).

**Youth supervision order** is a higher level of supervision than a probation order. Under this sentence, the child must follow the instructions of a Youth Justice worker, and not reoffend. For more information, visit [Youth Supervision Order](#).


**Detention (custodial) sentences** – serious youth offences are defined as a Category A or B and are normally heard in higher courts and depending on the offence, sentences may be served in adult detention.

## CHILD PROTECTION ORDERS

Child Protection Orders are enforced through the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*, and incorporate a number of arrangements as detailed below.

**Temporary assessment order** - Child protection practitioners from the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department) have applied to the Children's Court for a temporary assessment order to allow them to investigate a report that the child is at risk of harm.

**Interim accommodation order** - A protection application has been issued and the Court has decided an interim order is needed to keep the child safe until it determines the application.



This order is about where the child must live until the next court date. It will usually include conditions.

**Family preservation order** - The Court has decided that a child is in need of protection and can safely stay in their parents' care while the protective concerns are being addressed. The child will live with one or both parents with no change to parental responsibility for the child. The department has to supervise the child. The objective is to help the family make changes needed to keep the child safe at home so the family can stay together permanently. This order will usually include conditions.

**Family reunification order** - The Court has decided that a child is in need of protection and cannot safely stay in their parents' care while the protective concerns are being addressed. This order grants parental responsibility for the child to the Secretary of the department with the limitation that parents' agreement is needed about major long-term issues. It will usually include conditions. The child will stay in out of home care and the objective is for the child to be reunified with their parent/s once this has happened, and within 12 months, or up to 24 months where permanent reunification is likely by then.

**Care by Secretary order** - The Court has decided that family reunification will not be achieved in a timely way for the child, or the child has been in out of home care for 24 months and still cannot safely return to their parents' care. Under this order, the Secretary of DFFH has parental responsibility for the child, to the exclusion of all others, for two years. This means that the department is responsible for the child's care and wellbeing and for all decisions concerning them. Usually, the objective is to find a permanent or long-term carer for the child, preferably with extended family, or if not, with another family as soon as possible. In exceptional circumstances, the objective may still be family reunification.

**Long-term care order** - The Court has decided the child is in need of long-term care and there is a suitable carer available to raise the child. Under this order the Secretary of the department, has parental responsibility for the child, to the exclusion of all others, until the child's 18th birthday. This means the department is responsible for supporting the child's carer to look after the child until they grow up, and for all decisions concerning the child.

**Permanent care order** - The Court has found proposed permanent carers suitable to have parental responsibility for the child to the exclusion of all others, including the Secretary of the department. Under this order the carers are the permanent care parents of the child, and have all the duties, powers, responsibilities and authority that parents have in relation to the child until the child's 18th birthday. The order will usually include conditions.

**Undertaking** - The Court has decided that a child is in need of protection and that future risks can be sufficiently managed by the parent and child with community support. The undertaking may include conditions. The department does not stay involved when an undertaking is made.

## EDUCATION FIRST YOUTH FOYERS

Education First Youth Foyers are integrated learning and accommodation centres that develop the skills of young people at risk of homelessness. Currently, the Education First Youth Foyers are:

**Broadmeadows** - Education First Youth Foyer at Kangan Institute (TAFE)



**Lilydale** - Education First Youth Foyer at Box Hill Institute of TAFE

**Glen Waverley** - Education First Youth Foyer at Holmesglen Institute of TAFE

**Shepparton** - Education First Youth Foyer at Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE

**Warrnambool** - Education First Youth Foyer at South-West TAFE

**Ballarat** - Education First Youth Foyer at Karrung

New Education First Youth Foyers will soon be available in Wodonga (due for completion mid 2025) and Wangaratta (in development stages).

Current Foyer locations and referrals can be found at [Foyer Locations and Referrals](#).

## REFUGEE MINOR PROGRAM

The Refugee Minor Program (RMP) is run by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing's Community Operations and Practice Leadership (COPL) division alongside Child Protection. The Refugee Minor Program (RMP) provides support to children who are refugees, under 18 years of age and are in Victoria without their birth parents. They are known as 'Unaccompanied Humanitarian (or Refugee) Minors' (UHM's). The children of the RMP may have been orphaned or their parents are missing and unable to be located. They have come to Australia on humanitarian entry provisions and are living with family, friends, community members or are under the guardianship of the State.

RMP works to support care arrangements to prevent placement breakdown for young people aged between 0-18 with provisional support provided for young people aged 18-21. This work is done through early intervention and proactive measures to assist families providing care. It is facilitated through intensive case management, specialist education and training advice (ETA) as well as leaving care support. Children and young people referred to the Refugee Minor Program hold Refugee/ Humanitarian Visa types – subclasses 200,201,202 or 204. These visa types are all permanent visa categories.

## CHILDREN'S COURT YOUTH DIVERSION SERVICE

The Children's Court Youth Diversion service (CCYD) provides an opportunity for a young people appearing before the criminal division of the Children's Court to:

- accept responsibility for their behaviour
- understand the harm caused by their actions
- complete a diversion plan, involving activities intended to promote desistance from further offending
- have the charge/s discharged, on successful completion of the diversion plan
- avoid the stigma associated with a criminal record, and its impact on future life opportunities.

The CCYD targets young people with limited or no criminal history who would otherwise be sentenced to an outcome not requiring supervision from youth justice. Eligibility is informed by consultation with the young person, their family or carer, legal representative and Victoria Police prosecutors.

The young person's history and circumstances of their offending are considered in determining whether diversion is appropriate. There are no automatic exclusions regarding the nature or type of offence eligible for diversion, apart from offences that carry a mandatory penalty.



### Referral agency

A Referral Agency is any organisation based in Victoria that currently receives funding from or is contracted by the Victorian Government or the Commonwealth Government to provide services to children, young people and/or families can act as a Referral Agency for the Youth Access Initiative and support the eligible young person in completing the Referral Form and enrolling in a suitable course. All Referral Agencies are required to retain a **COPY** of the Referral Form for audit purposes.

### Authorised Officers

Authorised Officers can sign off on the eligibility of a young person for the Youth Access Initiative. These include:

- Department of Family, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) authorised staff
- Child Protection Post-Care (manager/case manager)
- Education First Youth Foyer authorised staff
- Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) authorised staff
- Youth Justice case managers
- Parkville College authorised transition staff
- Children's Court Youth Diversion Service Coordinators
- Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) authorised staff.

Non-Authorised Officers, those outside the above organisations and positions will need to refer the young person to an Authorised Officer.

### Training providers

Skills First contracted training providers approved to offer a tuition fee waiver under the Youth Access Initiative (being only TAFE and Dual Sector Universities and Learn Local Organisations who are also Registered Training Organisations), must **NOT** charge eligible Youth Access Initiative participants any tuition fees for government subsidised accredited training.

Relevant training providers are required to retain the **ORIGINAL** of the Referral Form for audit purposes and return a copy to the Referral Agency (where relevant), and to the enrolling student. The training provider will receive a contribution from the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions for the tuition fee-waiver under the Youth Access Initiative.

The training provider must report all training delivered to the eligible young person under the Youth Access Initiative in accordance with the reporting requirements outlined in the **Victorian VET Student Statistical Collection Guidelines**, including using the Fee Exemption/Concession Type Identifier.