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A resource to assist early childhood education services, local council officers and early childhood support services to talk to parents and carers of children eligible for the additional hours of kindergarten offered through Pre-Prep. This document also provides links to communication materials that can be shared with families.

Communicating with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families

To support conversations with families who speak a language other than English or use Auslan, Victorian funded kindergarten services and eligible early childhood support services can access free on-site, telephone and video interpreters – go to the **'Early Childhood Language Services' webpage** for more information. Funded kindergarten services can also access translation services for written information.

Parents and carers can also access free in-bound telephone interpreting to contact a kindergarten service or early childhood support service in their preferred language. For more information including links to translated instructions – go to **Guide for parents and carers**.

Pre-Prep brochures, in English and other languages, can be ordered on the **Victorian Kindergarten Resources Portal** to give to families. Orders are paid for by the department and printed and delivered to you. These can be ordered by services, local councils, Maternal and Child Health nurses, and any other organisations or entities that support the early childhood sector. The Portal requires a login which can be created using a work or personal email. Also, see the **'Communicating about kindergarten to your community' webpage** for Pre-Prep resources.



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Four-Year-Old Kindergarten in Victoria is gradually transitioning to Pre-Prep.

Pre-Prep is an early learning program for four-year-old children that follows Three-Year-Old Kindergarten. It is in the year before school.

Pre-Prep is the new name for increased hours of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten.

The program for children in the year before school is gradually increasing from 15 to 30 hours each week.

Pre-Prep programs will continue to be play-based and led by qualified early childhood teachers.

Pre-Prep will use the same learning framework as Four-Year-Old Kindergarten – the **Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF)**.

When talking to families about Pre-Prep, you may explain your service's commitment to quality, and what this looks like in your programs. It may be helpful to provide examples, using the 7 quality areas in the **National Quality Framework**, including how children's health and safety is supported and children are protected at your service.



Information to give families



Four-Year-Old Kinder is becoming Pre-Prep



Information about kindergarten in 30 languages



Introduction to Pre-Prep



Case Studies



Four-Year-Old Kinder is becoming Pre-Prep

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More hours offered in the year before school gives more time for children of all backgrounds and abilities to deepen their learning and development.

Australian and international evidence shows that 2 years of quality kindergarten can provide life-long benefits and help set children up for success in school and life.

Two years of quality kindergarten can lead to better development in language, pre-reading, early number concepts, independence, concentration, and social skills.

The additional hours provide more opportunities for children to experience the benefits of play-based learning at a time when their brains are rapidly developing.

Children can further develop their identity, sense of belonging, wellbeing, love for learning and communication skills.

Teachers and educators have more time to build relationships with children and understand how they best learn.

Children who need extra support gain the most from more hours of quality early learning programs in the year before school. More hours give more time for relationships to develop between teachers, children and their families. It also provides greater flexibility for learning to meet the needs of each child.



Information to give families



The evidence behind 2 years and more time in kindergarten



Two years of early childhood education – what the evidence says



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Pre-Prep started in 6 regional areas in 2025 and will gradually become available to more children across Victoria each year.

In 2026 and 2028, children who meet the criteria for priority cohorts will be eligible for Pre-Prep, no matter where they live in Victoria.

By 2036, Pre-Prep will be available to all Victorian children in the year before school.

When a child can start Pre-Prep depends on:

- what local government area you live in, or
- if your child is eligible from 2026 or 2028, anywhere in Victoria, based on the criteria for priority cohorts.

2026 statewide eligibility criteria for priority cohorts

From 2026, between 16 and 25 hours of Pre-Prep will be available to:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- children from a refugee or asylum seeker background
- children who have had contact with Child Protection (this includes children in Out-of-Home-Care and children who have had contact with Child Protection in previous years)

- children who were supported by Early Start Kindergarten or Access to Early Learning in their Three-Year-Old Kindergarten year.

If a child is enrolled through **Early Start Kindergarten** or **Access to Early Learning** for their three-year-old kindergarten year, check the family know their child is eligible for Pre-Prep the following year.

In 2028, children who meet the above eligibility will be eligible to receive up to 30 hours of Pre-Prep.

2028 statewide eligibility criteria for priority cohorts

From 2028, between 16 and 25 hours of Pre-Prep will be available to:

- children who have, or have a parent or guardian who has, a Commonwealth concession card
- children from families with triplets or more.





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Making sure families know their child is eligible

You can use the below prompts to start a respectful conversation with families who may not be aware they can access Pre-Prep from 2026:

- Our service is making sure families know how the four-year-old kinder year works for their child.
- Your child may be able to get more hours of kinder next year. Is it okay if I give you some information about this?
- We can arrange an interpreter to help tell you more about it, including how to enrol.

If you have families or children from a refugee or asylum seeker background in your community, refer to Foundation House's **'Schools in for Refugees' webpage**, which has a range of resources including an information sheet, **Identifying children and families of refugee background in the early years**. You may also seek support from a **CALD Outreach Worker** if available in your local government area.

To support conversations with Koorie families in your community, use the information and videos at **vic.gov.au/koorie-kids-shine**. You can also contact a **Koorie Education Coordinator** for support. If you are a kindergarten service, you may want to let families know how Koorie perspectives are included in the learning curriculum – e.g. through daily Acknowledgement of Country, reading Koorie stories, displaying Aboriginal artwork, and celebrating Aboriginal cultural events such as NAIDOC.

Information to give families



Pre-Prep roll-out schedule



Pre-Prep starting year calculator



Pre-Prep roll-out

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Hours

Pre-Prep programs are between 16–30 hours each week for children in areas that started Pre-Prep in 2025.

- **2025:** Ararat Rural City, Gannawarra Shire, Hindmarsh Shire, Murrindindi Shire, Northern Grampians Shire, Yarriambiack Shire.

Pre-Prep programs are between 16–20 hours each week for children in areas that start Pre-Prep in 2026 and 2027:

- **2026:** Benalla Rural City, Buloke Shire, Corangamite Shire, East Gippsland Shire, Horsham Rural City, Loddon Shire, Mansfield Shire, Mitchell Shire, Pyrenees Shire, Strathbogie Shire, Wangaratta Rural City, Wodonga Rural City
- **2027:** Alpine Shire, Central Goldfields Shire, Colac-Otway Shire, Glenelg Shire, Indigo Shire, Moira Shire, Moorabool Shire, Moyne Shire, South Gippsland Shire, Southern Grampians Shire, Swan Hill Rural City, West Wimmera Shire

Pre-Prep programs are between 16–25 hours each week in 2026 and 2027 for children who meet the Priority Cohort eligibility, wherever they live in Victoria.

Weekly hours will vary from service to service during the roll-out of Pre-Prep. Services should advise families of the number of Pre-Prep hours available to them and any information available about the timetable.

Cost

There is no charge for Pre-Prep at standalone (sessional) kindergartens that have opted into Free Kinder.

If a child is enrolled in Pre-Prep at a long day care service that has opted into Free Kinder, the family will receive an annual fee reduction. The fee reduction increases with the number of hours of Pre-Prep the child is enrolled in.

Families don't need to be permanent residents or Australian citizens to get these savings.

Families can only receive Free Kinder at one kinder service at a time. If a child attends more than one service with a funded kindergarten program, families need to let each service know at which service they wish to access their one funded kindergarten place and receive Free Kinder.

Information to give families



Pre-Prep roll-out schedule



Free Kinder



Advice for families: Free Kinder in sessional services



Advice for families: Free Kinder in long day care



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Program

Pre-Prep programs follow the **Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF)**.

Early childhood teachers design programs for children to reach learning goals in the VEYLDF, which focus on identity, community, wellbeing, learning and communication.

Pre-Prep will be play-based, like all Victorian funded kindergarten programs. Research shows that play is the best way for children to learn and grow in their early years.

More hours of Pre-Prep will also mean more time for teachers and educators to know each child and what they need to feel safe and comfortable to engage in learning. It also provides opportunities to strengthen connections between children and their teachers and educators. There will also be more time to extend children's learning and provide flexibility around the length of activities and rest times. Rest times will be important in allowing children to relax and engage in quiet play and learning activities like looking at books, puzzles or drawing.

Services may use different approaches so they can deliver additional hours, such as offering longer days and mixed age groups. As services will offer different Pre-Prep hours, there will be different timetables from service to service.

The content of Pre-Prep programs should always be guided by the VEYLDF. It may be helpful for services to talk about what this looks like in practice, and how programs are aligned to children achieving the VEYLDF learning and development outcomes at their service. For example, services might discuss how programs support children to learn and develop communication skills. Consider using the Learning Progressions on the **VEYLDF webpage** to support these conversations.

Services will develop strategies for children who need support to adjust to and feel comfortable in programs. This may include using temporary or permanent support and adjustments.

Families are invited to share information about their child and what they need. This can be related to their learning preferences, wellbeing needs or anything that will support them while they are at kinder.

Families with children with additional needs, medical needs, disability or experience of trauma are encouraged to talk to their kindergarten service about how support can best be provided. See 'Inclusion in kindergarten programs' in the 'Further Resources' section for more information.



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Multi-age groups

Children can access Pre-Prep in different groups, such as four-year old, three-year old and multi-age groups.

There will be children aged from 3 to 5 years old in multi-age groups.

Having different ages can improve the social and emotional skills of all children. It can help children feel confident to talk to and play with other children.

Because children learn in different ways and at different paces, services get to know each child and teach them in a way that suits them best.

Teachers can adapt programs and use different strategies, such as small group learning, to make sure children's learning is supported and extended.

Multi-age groups can help teachers focus more on the needs, strengths and interests of children, rather than their age.

Play can be more complex, so children develop a higher level of language and social skills. Older children can develop skills in helping, guiding, and teaching younger children.

Children can learn at a more comfortable pace, focusing on what they can do. The learning environment can also be more cooperative, encouraging children to engage actively, share ideas, and learn from one another.

Multi-age programs can also support children's preparedness for school. A class in the first year of school can be made up of children starting school at 4-, 5- and 6-years-old – which may mean an 18-month age range. Some primary schools also have 'composite classes' or 'multi-age classes', which combine different grade levels in the same class.



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Rotational groups

Rotational groups mean that a child is placed in a small group of children. Their small group will attend on set days and be joined with a mix of other small groups throughout the week.

This means children will always be familiar to others in their small group, providing connectedness and stability

Joining with other groups can provide children with exposure to new ideas and different points of view.

This can support children to appreciate the similarities and differences of others.

There will also be a wider range of children to connect and form friendships with. This provides opportunities to further develop important skills such as sharing, taking turns and cooperating.

Children may have the same teacher for some days, and a different teacher on other days. In these instances, teachers work together to make sure children are well supported each day.

Services can provide support and adjustments where needed to help children feel settled and comfortable with being with different groups of children and teachers. This includes engaging children in activities they enjoy.

To support conversations with families, refer to Diagram 1: How rotational models work.

Diagram 1 - How rotational models work

Timetable			
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			

Legend

 Group 1  Group 2  Group 3  Group 4  Group 5

- A service has 45 children enrolled in Pre-Prep
- The children are divided into 5 small groups of 9.
- Each child attends Pre-Prep over 3 days with their small group.
- Each day their group joins with 2 other groups, totalling 27 children.
- For example, children in Group 1 attend on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. On each of these days they are joined by two different groups.



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Longer days

Longer days can extend children's learning, with slower and longer activities and deeper uninterrupted play. This can provide more opportunities for children to socialise and make friends and develop their independence.

Services will support children, parents and carers to help children get used to longer days. This can include children starting later or finishing earlier in the first weeks or bringing a comfort toy.

There will be time for rest as well as activities. Teachers set up routines, so children know what to expect and when, which helps create stability and security.

Teachers will tailor the program to suit and be responsive to individual children's needs.

Longer days may provide opportunities for additional visits and trips (e.g. road safety, dental health, community visits etc.) and for families to be more involved (e.g. parents and carers can be invited to 'stay and play')

Team teaching

At some services, teachers will work together to plan and deliver Pre-Prep to ensure children are well supported. This also means a great range of skills and knowledge can be available to children.

The diverse and specialist expertise of teaching teams can create rich learning environments in which children are exposed to different perspectives and ideas.

Children can benefit from connecting with different teachers during the week and the different strengths they bring.

Programs with teaching teams can offer more flexibility, for example having indoor and outdoor play spaces available to children at the same time.

If there are multiple teachers, services will often let parents and carers know how information will be relayed to them, and who they can go to with questions.

Information about program models



'Your Guide To' information sheets on multi-age groups, rotational models, team teaching and teaching longer days

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Services work with parents and carers of children with additional needs to develop a program that supports their individual needs and learning goals.

This includes looking at what supports and adjustments are needed for children to feel happy, safe and included to fully participate in the program. In some instances, assistance will be provided through a program called **Kindergarten Inclusion Support**.

Support may also involve services working around any regular appointments children have, for example, with occupational and speech therapists. At some services this may include facilitating appointments onsite.

A service may set up a group to support a child's inclusion in kindergarten. This group will bring together key people, such as therapists and other health professionals as well as family members and the child's kindergarten teacher, to plan for how to best support a child to participate and learn at kinder. This is referred to as a **Program Support Group**.

Pre-School Field Officers can work with services to build the capacity of early childhood teachers to make sure children's needs are met at kinder. They can help services to link families to supports and services.



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Families can contact their local service or council to ask about their registration and enrolment process.

Registration and enrolment are required for Pre-Prep, even where a child is already attending the service in a Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program.

During this conversation, the service or council should advise the family of the **priority of access** policy that applies when they enrol their child. This is especially important where there is likely to be significant demand for kindergarten places at a service which may result in some families missing out.

Services and councils have policies and procedures to protect the privacy of families and children when they register or enrol in kindergarten. Services and councils may support families who have questions about why certain information is collected, and how it is used, noting that services should refer to the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* and *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* on what information is required in a child's enrolment record.

Information to give families



How to enrol in kindergarten



Sending your child to kinder

Where a family declines Pre-Prep

Families with children eligible for Pre-Prep from 2026 and 2028 might be unsure about enrolling in Pre-Prep if Pre-Prep isn't available to all four-year-old children at their service.

Explaining Pre-Prep and the benefit of more hours to families is important for them to make a considered decision.

When talking to families about Pre-Prep and gaining an understanding of their barriers to enrolment, it is important to be sensitive to their needs.

Ultimately, families have choice over the type of program they enrol their child in. Some families will need some time to think about this decision, therefore early conversations around eligibility for Pre-Prep are encouraged.

If a family declines a Pre-Prep place, families can still enrol their child in Four-Year-Old Kindergarten for 15 hours per week. If the family changes their mind on wanting to access Pre-Prep after enrolment has closed, access to a Pre-Prep place will be subject to availability within the service.

Services and local councils should advise their local Early Childhood Improvement Branch (ECIB) in the Department of Education of the number of families who decline Pre-Prep and if applicable, a summary of the reasons that families have declined. This information is to support planning only. No other information is required.

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Best Start, Best Life reforms

- Kindergarten Sector Guide
- Four-Year-Old Kindergarten is becoming Pre-Prep
- Operational policies supporting the Best Start, Best Life reforms

Communicating with families

- Communicating about kindergarten to your community
- Benefits of kinder
- Pre-Prep roll-out video
- Play-based learning and your child

Inclusion in kindergarten programs

- Children with additional needs in early childhood
- Getting started at childcare and kindergarten – Association for Children with Disability
- Toolkit: Inclusion is Everyone's Business

Planning for and implementing Pre-Prep

- Change Management Toolkit

Pre-Prep program modelling

- 'Your Guide To' information sheets on multi-age groups, rotational models, team teaching and teaching longer days
- Delivering Pre-Prep to children from priority cohorts

Supporting CALD families and children

- Supporting CALD families to engage in kindergarten
- Supporting families from refugee backgrounds
- Engaging with multilingual families guide
- Early Childhood Language Services
- CALD Outreach Initiative

Supporting First Nations families and children

- Early childhood education programs supporting Aboriginal children
- Resources to support cultural safety for Koorie children and families
- Best Start

Additional year of funded Three- or Four-Year-Old Kindergarten or Pre-Prep

- Additional year of funded kindergarten or Pre-Prep from 2026
- Does my child need an additional year of kindergarten or Pre-Prep?

Best Start Best Life

vic.gov.au/preprep

