

Updates for Early Years providers 20 March 2020

This information has been compiled by Helen Schiele, Principal Consultant.

Funded kindergarten providers

As previously advised, the Department of Education and Training (the Department) will continue to provide all existing streams of kindergarten funding. If services have to close due to coronavirus, service providers will still receive their regular kindergarten funding.

Under the agreement between the Department and kindergarten services, this funding can only be used for the purposes for which the funding is given – i.e. for kindergarten program costs. Kindergarten program costs include staffing and other general operating expenses.

Reminder to complete annual confirmation

Services are advised to complete their annual confirmation through the Kindergarten Information Management (KIM) system as soon as possible ahead of any possible impacts from COVID-19, such as working remotely at times. If a child is enrolled in the kindergarten program but not attending because of parent concerns about COVID-19, they should still be included in annual confirmation.

Meeting educator to child ratios and qualification requirements

In the current circumstances, services should take all reasonable steps to meet the ratios and training and qualification requirements.

Services must ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of all children being educated and cared for by the service.

This includes:

- providing adequate supervision
- taking adequate precautions to protect all children from harm or hazards likely to cause injury
- conducting a risk assessment to inform decision making
- designing and delivering an educational program that meets the needs of each child and addresses current circumstances.
- The role of an early childhood teacher may be filled by an educator actively working towards or holding a diploma level qualification, in extenuating circumstances related to COVID-19.
- Where services are unable to meet the requirements of the educator to child ratios (not the qualification requirements) they must notify the regulatory authority.
- Notifications for National Quality Framework services should be made via the National Quality Agenda IT System
- Notifications for children's services should be made by email at licensed.childrens.services@edumail.vic.gov.au

Mixed age educator to child ratios

In calculating educator to child ratios, services are reminded ratio requirements are determined by the age and number of children being educated and cared for by the service at any one time.

The [educator to child ratio](#) calculator can help you calculate mixed age ratios.

Assessment and rating (AR) visits

The department has decided in the light of COVID-19 to postpone assessment and rating visits scheduled for the remainder of this week and any visits scheduled in the week starting Monday 23 March 2020. Further advice will be provided regarding future A/R visits.

Assessment and rating review processes and reports

The process for sending out reports to services and for services to lodge reviews will continue where possible. Where possible, the Department will continue to progress the completion of assessment and rating reports currently in progress. If this is not possible, the Department will extend all process timelines accordingly.

Supplies

If services require families to providing food and other items for their children, it is important to note that there is no legal restriction on families noting sensible precautions to address allergies. When children are bringing their own food, the service needs to ensure that a risk assessment is in place to protect children diagnosed with medical conditions such as anaphylaxis.

More information

For further COVID-19 advice for early childhood education services, visit the Department's [coronavirus advice web page](#).

List of websites and links

Early Childhood COVID-19

National Level

<https://www.dese.gov.au/news/coronavirus-covid-19>

citing current information and facts sheets to be shared with your community

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/coronavirus-covid-19-resources>

<http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/media/eca-covid-19-response/>

State Level

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/department/Pages/coronavirus.aspx>

<https://education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/Pages/coronavirus-home-learning.aspx>