



**Pre-Prep  
School Readiness & Social Thinking**

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# INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

## INTRODUCTION

Parents know their children best and want the best for their children. This document provides a general overview of supports and services available to address the needs of children with additional needs attending Leap Ahead Learning.

The information provided is not intended to comprehensively cover all possible services and supports; instead it focuses on areas that have become prevalent through access to and referral by the Leap Ahead Learning community.

This document may be subject to change at any time and without notice. It is designed for electronic transmission and use; coloured text indicating linked information activated by clicking on highlighted word/s.

All information within the document is publicly available at the time of publication.

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Leap Ahead Learning Administration Officer

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## Early Childhood Education Foundation

Assistance can be sought from the Foundation to cover kindergarten fees charged to parents, where there is a demonstrated financial hardship for the family. An application in the prescribed form must be made on behalf of the family by the service where the child is enrolled to attend the funded kindergarten program. Refer to [Early Childhood Education Foundation Information Sheet](#).

## Early Intervention and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

The [Early Childhood Early Intervention \(ECEI\) Approach](#) is how the NDIS is working with Early Childhood Providers to deliver early childhood intervention for children aged 0-6 years who have developmental delay or disabilities.

Families are able to self-refer to their local Early Childhood Partner [The Brotherhood of St Laurence](#).

### Contact:

Phone: 1300 BSL ECEI (1300 275 323)

Email: [ECEI.access@bsl.org.au](mailto:ECEI.access@bsl.org.au)

Office: 293 High Street, Preston

### Useful information and websites:

[Early Childhood Early Intervention - How the NDIS can help your child](#)

[Supporting families and carers](#)

[Supports National Disability Insurance Scheme will fund in relation to early childhood](#)

[The Inclusion Hub Guiding You Through the NDIS](#)

## Early Start Kindergarten

Children who have accessed Early Start Kindergarten are also eligible for free or low cost four-year-old kindergarten.

For more information, see brochures:

- [What is Early Start Kindergarten?](#)
- [Early Start Kindergarten for all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children](#)

## Enhanced Transition from Kindergarten to School

The Department of Education and Training has an enhanced process that supports the transition to government schools for children with disabilities. It is the responsibility of schools to prepare and submit applications for support of students through the [Program for Students with Disabilities](#). In most instances, parent/guardian/carer(s) of children with disabilities entering Prep will approach schools from mid-year (June), the year prior, seeking to commence an enrolment and application process. To facilitate transition and early notification of outcomes, schools may submit applications from October. The Department also has an enhanced process that supports the transition to school for children with a disability or developmental delay. For more information see [Transition to School](#) on the Department's website.

Support for students with disability in the Catholic school system is funded by the Victorian and Commonwealth governments, administered by the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV), and managed at a regional level by the diocese for your child's school. For more information, including application dates, application checklists, eligibility criteria and services, talk to your school principal or Education Support Coordinator, visit the [CECV website](#), or contact your local diocese office (Melbourne, Ballarat, Sandhurst or Sale) – contacts are available on the CECV website.

Independent schools are also able to apply for funding so that they can engage specialists to provide State Support Services (Speech Therapy and Visiting Teacher Services). Information is available on the [Independent Schools Victoria website](#).

## General Practitioner (GP)

A General Practitioner can prepare a number of plans for claiming a maximum number of rebated health services per calendar year:

- [Mental Health Care Plan](#)
- GP Management Plan (GPMP); and
- Team Care Arrangements (TCAs).

If you have both a [GPMP and TCAs](#) prepared for you by your GP, you may be eligible for Medicare rebates for certain allied health services.

For inquiries about eligibility, claiming, fees and rebates, speak to your General Practitioner or contact Department of Human Services (Medicare) patient inquiries 132 011.

There are both public and private services that can provide for children's medical and therapeutic needs. A list of local services can be provided by Leap Ahead Learning.

Community Health Services also provide universal access to services as well as targeted services for eligible population groups:

[healthAbility](#) (previously Nillumbik Health) p. 9430 9100

[Banyule Community Health](#) p. 9433 5111

[Plenty Valley Community Health](#) p. 9409 8787

## Kindergarten fee subsidy

Your child may be eligible for free or low-cost kindergarten in the year before school through the [kindergarten fee subsidy](#) or the [Early Start Kindergarten extension grant](#).

The kindergarten fee subsidy allows children to access kindergarten for free or at low cost. The subsidy is available:

- if your child identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- if your child is identified on their birth certificate as being a multiple birth child (triplets or more), or
- if your child holds or has a parent or guardian who holds an eligible concession card.

Your child is eligible for the Early Start Kindergarten extension grant if they are not eligible for the kindergarten fee subsidy and they:

- previously accessed an Early Start Kindergarten grant
- participated in an Access to Early Learning program in the previous year, or

- identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Talk to the staff at Leap Ahead Learning about your child's eligibility, and show them your concession card, visa, birth certificate or other relevant document. Leap Ahead Learning will apply for the kindergarten fee subsidy on your behalf. The payment will be made directly to Leap Ahead Learning and will allow your child to attend up to 15 hours a week for free or at low-cost.

## Parent information and support

There are a range of websites that provide evidence-based information and education which families might find helpful. Some of these include:

[Raising Children Network](#)

[The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne](#)

[Better Health Channel](#)

[Amaze](#)

[Sue Larkey](#)

[ParentZone](#) is a Parenting Resource Service provided by Anglicare Victoria. Its services include a variety of parenting programs offered at no cost and a quarterly newsletter containing information about groups and events, family supports and professional development.

## Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS)

The KIS Program builds the capacity of funded kindergartens to support the access and participation of children with a disability and high support needs and/or with complex medical needs. This can include specialist training and consultancy for early childhood educators, minor building modifications and additional staffing support.

Leap Ahead Learning will determine whether or not an application for KIS is required and will generally lodge applications by Term 3 in the year prior to the child's scheduled enrolment at Leap Ahead Learning. A child must meet the KIS eligibility criteria and be at least four years on 30 April of the year in which the child is enrolled to attend or be eligible for Early Start Kindergarten funding.

The management of KIS is auspiced by non-government organisations. Lentara Uniting Care p. 9351 3600 is the auspice organisation of KIS in the local government areas of Banyule, Darebin, Hume, Moreland, Nillumbik, Whittlesea and Yarra. Guidelines, information and application kits are available on the [Department of Education and Training's website](#).

## Pre-School Field Officers (PSFO)

The [PSFO program](#) supports the inclusion of children with additional needs in Victorian government funded kindergarten programs. If you have concerns regarding your child's development speak with Leap Ahead Learning about a referral to the PSFO program. Alternatively, your child's Educator may approach you to discuss a referral to the PSFO program. Parental consent is mandatory for any PSFO referral and there is no cost to the Kindergarten program or families.

Please note that children who have commenced receiving support through Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS), or the National Disability Insurance Scheme Early Childhood Intervention Approach, are not eligible for PSFO support. In these cases, Leap Ahead Learning will seek inclusion support from this provider, not the PSFO. Lentara Uniting Care manages the PSFO program on behalf of the Department of Education and Training within the City of Banyule.

## School Exemption Process for Children Attending Their First Year of Kindergarten

During the kindergarten year, Leap Ahead Learning will work with you to plan together for your child's transition to school. In exceptional circumstances, [a second year of funded kindergarten](#) may be considered.

Your child is eligible for a second year of kindergarten if your child's Educator has assessed that your child has developmental delays in at least two key areas of development and will achieve better outcomes at kindergarten rather than going to school.

If your child will turn six before or during their first funded year of kindergarten, you may apply for an exemption from school in certain circumstances. Leap Ahead Learning will help you complete and submit an [Exemption from school due to attendance in a kindergarten program form](#) and submit it to the Area Executive Director of the relevant Department of Education and Training regional office by 1 November in the year before your child turns six.

## State and Commonwealth Financial and other Assistance

The Australian Government, Department of Human Services provides payments to people who provide daily care to someone with a severe disability or medical condition. These include:

- A [Carer Allowance and / or a Health Care Card](#) for the child. Which of these you receive depends on the child's care needs. The [Kindergarten Fee Subsidy](#) will be applied to eligible Health Care Card holders.
- A [Carer Payment](#). Provides financial support to people who are unable to work in substantial paid employment because they provide full time daily care to someone with severe disability or medical condition.

For inquiries about financial assistance for carers visit the [Australian Government, Department of Human Services website](#) or call 132 717.

The Victorian Government Carer Card Program offers a wide range of discounts and benefits for the carers of people with a disability. For more information visit <http://carercard.vic.gov.au> or call 1800 901 958. The Victorian Government also offers a number of concessions to low income and concession card holders. For more information visit <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/financial-support/concessions> or call 1300 650 172.



***Always photocopy information you submit to and receive from services regarding your child. If possible, always scan and save documents in a secure and organised directory on your personal computer.***