

PRESCHOOL FIELD OFFICER PROGRAM

What is the Preschool Field Officer program?

The Preschool Field Officer program (the program) provides support to Victorian government-funded kindergartens. This support helps early childhood educators to create inclusive environments in kindergartens for children with additional needs. This means children with additional needs can access, learn and take part in kindergarten in a meaningful way.

Preschool Field Officers (PSFOs) work with early childhood educators using a capacity building approach.

What is a capacity building approach?

A capacity building approach supports early childhood educators to gain the knowledge, skills and confidence to plan and deliver inclusive kindergarten programs. This approach helps build their experience to support children with additional needs and their parents, both now and in the future.

Who can use the program?

All kindergarten services funded by the Victorian government can receive support from the program. This includes:

- Four-Year-Old Kindergarten
- Three-Year-Old Kindergarten
- Early Start Kindergarten.

What are additional needs?

We define children with additional needs as children who show concerns in any area of their development. This could include, disabilities, language delays, challenges in being able to relate and connect with their peers, or behaviours related to experiences of trauma:

- language delays
- challenging behaviours
- multiple disabilities
- trauma.

A child with additional needs might already get early childhood intervention support from the [National Disability Insurance Scheme \(NDIS\)](#). In this case, an early childhood educator should consult with families and seek support from the NDIS provider supports first. It is important that early childhood educators work closely with early childhood intervention professionals.

What support do PSFOs provide?

Preschool Field Officers (PSFOs) have qualifications in early childhood education and experience in planning and delivering high quality inclusive kindergarten programs.

PSFOs provide a range of supports to early childhood educators.

These supports include:

- information and resources

- program design and planning
- help to work out a child's additional needs
- coaching
- showing specific strategies they can use
- help to find other services that children and their families can use.

Do PSFOs work with families?

PSFOs don't work directly with children. However, PSFOs may have contact with children and their families, through an early childhood educator. For example, they may observe a child's behaviour in the kindergarten environment. An early childhood educator must get informed consent from a parent, guardian or carer before a PSFO can provide advice about the appropriate support for that child.

If a parent has concerns about their child's development, they should speak with their child's early childhood educator first. The early childhood educator will then contact the PSFO if they need support.

How much does the program cost?

The program is free to all funded kindergartens.

Who provides the program?

The Department of Education funds community service organisations and local councils to provide the program across Victoria. The program uses an outreach model. This allows PSFOs to visit kindergartens and work with teachers directly.

Other supports available to kindergartens

There are a range of other supports available to kindergartens. These include:

- Kindergarten Inclusion Support program
- Early Childhood Intervention professionals through NDIS
- DE Early Childhood Implementation Branches
- Early Years Management organisations
- LOOKOUT Education and Support Centres
- Koorie Engagement Support Officers and Koorie Education Coordinators
- School Readiness Funding (SRF) and SRF Allied Health Support.

How is the program different to School Readiness Funding?

SRF is additional funding to focus on the challenges that all children may face during kindergarten. SRF provides access to a range of programs and supports. These programs and supports build the skills and knowledge of educators and families, to support children's learning and development in key areas. These include:

- communication (language development)
- wellbeing (social emotional)
- access and inclusion.

For more information about SRF go to:

www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/srf.aspx

For more information about the Preschool Field Officer Program, go to:
www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/needs/pages/psfo.aspx