



Foundation
House

The Victorian Foundation
for Survivors of Torture Inc.

SUPPORTING TRANSITIONS FROM EARLY YEARS TO SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES FROM REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS DURING COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on the lives of many Victorians, including families from refugee backgrounds with trauma histories. Supporting children's positive transition to school in 2021 will continue to be important.

Schools and early years services are encouraged to practice the following strategies in supporting transition of children from a refugee background, in combination with the [Transition to School Kit](#) and the [Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework](#) for children aged 0 to 8 years.

What can Kindergartens/Early Years services do to support transition?



- **Increase communication and engagement** with families from refugee backgrounds, working closely with bicultural educators and interpreters.
- **Ask families about their transition plans** and offer practical support with enrolment to school and other services.
- **Support families to understand** and quickly respond to communications from the enrolling school.
- **Encourage families to be up-to-date** with their [immunisation schedule](#), Maternal Child and Health 3.5 year appointment and to visit their family doctor for a 4-year-old Healthy Kids Check.
- **Include what is known** about each child's learning including individual impacts of COVID-19, learning from home and home supports in Transition Learning and Development Statements.
- **Identify and maintain regular communications** with Wellbeing, Prep/Foundation and English as Additional Language teams at schools where families have enrolled.
- **Make immediate referrals to support services** for children presenting with developmental concerns even if the child has had low attendance leading to an incomplete assessment.





What can schools do?

- **Prioritise time and resources** for staff to support transition, working collaboratively with Multicultural Education Aides and Family Liaison Officers.
- **Ask families about their connections** with early years services including Kindergarten, Maternal and Child Health, Storytime, Community Hubs and Supported Playgroups during enrolment. Many services transitioned to online platforms during COVID-19, so encourage connection or re-connection, even for the last few weeks of 2020.
- **Regularly communicate** with new families through phone calls, letters, emails, social media, videos, home activity packs, letters to children, social stories, and transition activity calendars.
- **Arrange interpreters for phone calls** to families. All government schools are able to access interpreting and translation services via the Victorian Interpreting and Translating Services (VITS) LanguageLoop.
- **Ask families about the digital devices** that they can access. Offer regular support to enhance each family's skills and confidence in your School's online platforms.
- **Plan a variety of transition activities** for the 2021 cohort of Foundation students and families that build a sense of trust and welcome to the school. Transition activities may need to be adapted to align with coronavirus (COVID-19) health and safety advice.
- **Ensure clear administration practices** for Transition Learning and Development Statements such as central filing systems, online meetings with Kindergarten staff, and Foundation/Prep staff team meetings.
- **Develop individual transition plans** for children and families identified as requiring extra support. This will be particularly relevant for children in families from refugee backgrounds who are recently arrived in Australia and may not have accessed a Kindergarten program. Organise for a Student Support Group (SSG) meeting for students and develop an Individual Education Plan if appropriate.



What can local transition partnerships do?

Local schools, Kindergartens and Early Years services are encouraged to work in partnership to extend transition practices for 2020/2021. Options may include:

- **Consistent clear messaging** for families across sectors. Topics including the criteria for a second year of funded four-year-old Kindergarten and the readiness of schools to support children who have been impacted by COVID-19.
- **Regional online School Readiness information sessions** for groups of parents/carers delivered in common community languages.
- **Meetings between the family, Kindergarten teacher and Prep/Foundation teacher**, supported by interpreters, bicultural educators and/or Multicultural Education Aides. Currently, Foundation teachers can visit kindergartens to meet with teachers, educators and children. Transition visit guidelines are outlined on the [Department of Education and Training website](#).
- **Interpreted or translated resources** for families including videos, live streamed events, storytimes and social stories, distributed in various modes. Invite trusted community leaders and stakeholders to participate.
- **Buddy programs**, for example training Year 5 students in 2020 to be Prep buddies in 2021.
- **Combined staff activities** including training, meetings and reciprocal, online visits/tours (following the DHHS guidelines).
- **Online visits/tours for children and families**, comparing the differences and similarities between services including drop-off routines, outside play areas, and temperature checks.



Resources for families

- **DET, Coronavirus (COVID-19) hotline** is answering questions about COVID-19 and Education. Call 1800 338 663, 8am to 6pm, 7 days a week (excluding public holidays). For an interpreter first call 131 450.
- **DET, 10 tips for starting Prep** is available in English, Arabic, Greek, Hindi, Italian, Punjabi, Chinese, Sinhalese, Turkish, Urdu, and Vietnamese.
- **DPV, Transition Resource Project** provides videos and support information for parents in English, Arabic and Punjabi.
- **Merri Health, Ready Set, Prep** provides poster and video series for parents in English, Hindi, Arabic, Urdu, Pashto, Nepali, and Bangla.



Resources for Kindergartens/Early Years services

- **Victorian Interpreting and Translating Services (VITS) Language Loop** provides interpreting and translation services. All early childhood education and care services funded by DET can [access funded telephone interpreters](#). For more information, visit [School Operations: Interpreting and Translation Services](#)
- **Foundation House's Early Years Program** offers additional support including professional learning and resources about working with interpreters and building partnerships with families from a refugee background.
- **fka Children's Services** provides support and advice for educators and services to maintain strong connections and engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse families.



Resources for schools

- **Victorian Interpreting and Translating Services (VITS) LanguageLoop** provides interpreting and translation services, accessible to all government schools. For more information, visit [School Operations: Interpreting and Translation Services](#).
- **Foundation House Schools Support Program** provides professional learning, advice and resources to teachers and school leadership staff across Victoria.
- **Foundation House School's In For Refugees website** provides high-quality guidance and practical resources to support schools to improve the achievement, engagement and wellbeing outcomes of students from refugee backgrounds.
- **Newly arrived English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners** are able to access an intensive full-time program or targeted support to help them in the initial stages of learning English. EAL learners are also supported to learn English in mainstream schools. For further information, see [For Schools: English as an Additional Language \(EAL\)](#).
- There are a range of programs and resources available to support schools in their work with students from refugee backgrounds. For more information see [Supporting students from refugee backgrounds](#).