

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



Tuesday, 8 February 2022

RAPID ANTIGEN TESTS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILIES

The Victorian Government is taking extra steps to protect young children and their families and minimise transmission in vital early childhood education and care settings, with free at-home rapid antigen tests to support Victoria's youngest learners.

As supply of rapid tests increases across Australia, Premier Daniel Andrews today announced the expansion of the Government's voluntary education surveillance testing program, with free rapid antigen tests to be available to all children aged 3 to 5 attending early childhood education services.

More than 1.6 million rapid antigen tests will be delivered to early childhood settings in the coming weeks for families to conduct voluntary twice-weekly testing. Sessional kindergartens will receive their deliveries over the next two weeks, followed by other early childhood services like long day care, family day care and occasional care.

This investment will help thousands more Victorian families keep their children safe and slow the spread of the virus, increasing access to rapid tests without the barriers of cost or global supply issues.

As with school settings, the program will be voluntary, but highly recommended – testing will not be a requirement to attend early childhood settings, but families will be provided with medical guidance on how to easily administer the nasal tests to young children and get a result within 15 to 30 minutes.

The expansion of the early childhood testing program adds to 943,000 rapid antigen tests already being delivered to all staff working in early childhood settings – helping services stop the spread of coronavirus before it enters the service.

The surveillance testing comes on top of a full suite of measures the Government has delivered to reduce the risk of coronavirus transmission in early childhood settings – including mandating three doses of the vaccine to all staff, a stronger focus on conducting outdoor programs, external drop off and pick up and contactless check in.

The Government has also invested \$7.5 million in early childhood services to improve ventilation, alongside a further \$7.4 million in grants to support kindergarten services to implement the best COVIDSafe measures for their individual settings, keeping children and staff safer in the classroom.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"We're supporting Victorian families to keep their kids safe and at school."

"With supply of rapid antigen tests increasing, we're not wasting a moment getting them to families in early childhood settings - giving families more peace of mind and keeping our crucial early education centres open."

Quote attributable to Minister for Early Childhood Ingrid Stitt

"We've done the work to make sure early childhood education and care services are as safe as they can be – protecting our youngest Victorians and the incredible staff who care for and educate them every single day."