

# 2022 FAQ



**OUR CITY**  
*Our Children*  
**OUR FUTURE**

## FINDING PROGRAMS

### Q. What are the similarities and differences between a CPS preschool and a Community-Based Program?

All Chicago Early Learning programs at Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and at Community-Based Programs must: meet state and federal standards, use evidence-based curriculum and assessments, and have highly-qualified teachers and a minimum of two teachers in the classroom.

A Chicago Public Schools preschool site is affiliated with an elementary school run through CPS. A Community-Based Program may be locally owned and operated. Hours may be longer than a traditional school day at a Community-Based Program, often up to 10 hours, but they will vary by location. Most Community-Based Programs also have services for younger children, ages 0–3 years old

### Q. How do I find early learning opportunities for children under 3 years old?

You can apply for early learning programs citywide for children under three years old at [ChicagoEarlyLearning.org](https://chicagoearlylearning.org). In your program search, click the filters and select the program for your child's age. Services for children from birth to three years old are primarily available through Community-Based Programs. [Click here](#) or call (312) 229-1690 to find a location that fits your family's needs.

### Q. How do I find a preschool program for the summer?

Summer hours for our Chicago Early Learning sites may vary. Many Community-Based Programs offer summer hours. Please contact the site of interest directly to learn more about the summer programs and hours offered. You can also filter your program search and select programs that operate year-round.

### Q. What are the characteristics of a high-quality early learning program?

Chicago Early Learning preschool programs all meet rigorous federal, state, and local standards. The Find and Compare Tool helps parents view programs with specific early childhood accreditations and see each program's quality rating. Please review our Programs Page with detailed information about types of programs and identifying characteristics of high-quality early learning.

## Q. Why should my child attend an early learning program?

Here are a few facts to consider when deciding whether or not to apply to an early learning program for your child.

- 90% of a child's brain development occurs by the age of 5.
- The brain triples in size in the first two years of life – which is why a child's learning experiences during that window are so predictive of her success later on.
- Early learning experiences lay the foundations of their minds for the rest of their lives.
- Children who attend quality early learning programs are more likely to enter kindergarten with a solid grasp of language and math and have more positive relationships.

## Q. I don't think my child is ready for a classroom environment. What's the city's plan to catch children up?

Every child is ready to attend an early learning program. Chicago has programs for pregnant moms, infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children.

Preschool teachers meet your child where they are in their educational development — tailoring instruction for your child so they're more than prepared for Kindergarten.

We encourage you to reach out to your top early learning program choices to ask them questions and share your concerns with their staff directly.

# ELIGIBILITY

## Q. What program is my child eligible for?

Children who are four years old on or before September 1, 2022, are eligible for admittance into CPS full-day and half-day programs preschool programs. Children who are three years old on or before September 1, 2022, are eligible for CPS half-day programs. Community-Based Programs have options for pregnant moms, infants, toddlers and preschoolers up to age 4. Additional eligibility criteria may apply to Community-Based Programs offering services throughout the City. CPS has limited space for half-day programming for 3-year-olds.

In addition, families are prioritized according to eligibility and available space. Our highest need families: low-income families, students with disabilities, students in temporary living situations, foster children, etc. will be given priority in placement. Placement is also prioritized for applicants with older siblings at the school and students who live near the CPS school they are applying to.

### **Q. If I don't live in Chicago, can I apply to a preschool program?**

In general, Chicago Early Learning Preschool programs are for Chicago residents. Certain Community-Based Programs may take some children who reside outside the City of Chicago. Contact your preferred Community-Based Program directly for more information. Families applying to a Chicago Public School must be a resident of Chicago.

### **Q. Where can I find early learning programs for my children who are younger than three years old?**

You can now apply for programs for children from birth to 4 years old and prenatal programs on the Chicago Early Learning applications. In your program search, click the filters and select the program for your child's age. Services for children from birth to three years old are available through Community-Based Programs. Click [here](#) or call (312) 229-1690 to find a location that fits your family's needs.

CPS serves primarily children who turn four on or before September 1 of the given school year in full-day programs and has limited space in half-day programming for children who turn three by September 1 and for children with Individualized Education Programs (IEP's).

### **Q. Is a child's immigration status a consideration in the preschool application process?**

No, the preschool application will never ask you or anyone in your family for proof of citizenship.

## **APPLYING TO PROGRAMS**

### **Q. What's the window for the Initial Application Period?**

The Initial Application Period will be open from April 19, 2022, to mid-May 2022.

You don't have to apply during the Initial Application Period, but it will improve your child's chances of securing a seat in competitive early learning programs for Fall 2022.

Please note, that during the Initial Application Period applications are not technically considered on a first-come-first-served basis. You will receive a notification on your child's placement before someone who does not apply during the initial application period, but enrollment is still prioritized based on need during this time too.

### **Q. Why apply during the Initial Application Period?**

Applying during the Initial Application Period improves your child's chances of securing their seat in your family's preferred programs. The Initial Application Period will extend into mid-May. After submitting your child's application during this time, you'll receive your child's placement notice roughly a month after your application is submitted.

### **Q. What is the application process?**

Families with children from birth to 4 and pregnant moms can submit a single application for each child to any Chicago Early Learning Program. Enrolling your child in an early learning program is easy and the application is open year-round. Follow these easy steps for your application:

1. Visit [ChicagoEarlyLearning.org](https://ChicagoEarlyLearning.org), click "Apply", and create an online account for your family
2. Fill in information on your family, such as employment and income, information on your child, and your top choice preschool sites
3. If your child qualifies, you will be contacted with information on how to verify your child's preschool seat

### **Q. Are applications first come first served?**

Applications are not technically first-come-first-served. Enrollment is prioritized based on need. However, applicants who apply earlier will have the best chance at a spot in their top choice program and know of their application status before families who wait until after the Initial Application Period to apply.

### **Q. How do I apply for a Chicago Early Learning program?**

If you are a pregnant mom or have a child from birth to 4 years old, there are program options for you. Visit our How to Apply page where you can find detailed information about the online application process or click the Apply Now button at the top of this page.

### **Q. How can I change something on my submitted preschool application?**

If you wish to alter information on a previously submitted application please call (312) 229-1690 to speak with an Application Specialist directly.

### **Q. To what sites can I apply via [chicagoearlylearning.org](https://chicagoearlylearning.org)?**

At [ChicagoEarlyLearning.org](https://chicagoearlylearning.org), you can apply for a Chicago Early Learning program for children from birth to age 4 and programs for pregnant moms at Community-Based Programs funded by the City of Chicago, and preschool programs at CPS schools. You cannot apply for Montessori programs at Suder or Drummond via the website. To enroll in those programs, contact CPS's Office of Access and Enrollment Office (773) 553-2060.

### **Q. Can I submit more than one application?**

Each child that is seeking to enroll in a new program is allowed only one application that ranks your top-five early learning programs. If you have multiple children that are applying for an early learning program, you must submit one application for each child.

### **Q. Does the application close?**

No – families are welcome to use the online application year-round. However, availability may become increasingly limited and we encourage families to submit applications as early as possible for the most choices in program availability.

### **Q. Does the online preschool application come in multiple languages?**

Yes. You can click the globe in the corner of any page of the application to change the language. The application is available in English, Spanish, Polish, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Urdu, Arabic, Yoruba, and Chinese.

### **Q. Where can I receive support with completing the preschool application and enrollment process?**

Families with questions or needing support completing the application can call (312) 229-1690 for assistance with applications for both CPS schools and Community-Based Early Learning Programs.



Additionally, families can visit a Family Resource Center at select Public Libraries for application and verification support. During the 2022 application period families will be able to apply in person and verify enrollment at the following Family Resource Centers.

Sulzer Regional Library	4455 N Lincoln Ave, Chicago, IL 60625
Woodson Regional Library	9525 S Halsted St, Chicago, IL 60628
Legler Regional Library	115 S Pulaski Rd, Chicago, IL 60624
Little Village Branch	2311 S Kedzie Ave, Chicago, IL 60623
Colman School	4655 S Dearborn St, Chicago, IL 60609

**Q. If I have multiple children that I would like to enroll in preschool, how can I ensure that they are placed in the same site?**

Although we cannot guarantee that siblings will be placed at the same site. We will make every effort to keep siblings of the same age together, but factors such as space, age, and individual needs may prevent us from ensuring placement with siblings.

**Q. My child is two years old, but will be three by September 1st, and is already enrolled in a Community Based Early Learning Program. Do we need to apply for preschool if we want to continue at the same center?**

No—the child will be grandfathered into their site’s 3-year-old program. They may need to provide additional information to the site. Please connect directly with your site.

**Q. What should I do if I want to enroll my child in preschool but the school year has already started?**

If the beginning of the school year has already passed, families are still welcome to use the online application. However, availability may become increasingly limited.

### **Q. What support can families in temporary living situations receive during the preschool application process?**

Families in a temporary living situation who are interested in a CPS preschool can reach out directly to the school to contact the Students in Temporary Living Situations (STLS) Liaison or Clerk. The STLS liaison will be able to assist with providing the appropriate support services based on the family's needs and circumstances.

Preschool students attending Community-Based Early Learning Programs should check with the program to find out what supports are available specific to Students in Temporary Living Situations.

### **Q. Are there home visiting options available for 3-year-olds in the Fall?**

The City of Chicago may not have home-visiting offerings, BUT other programs may offer home-visiting this Fall. To learn more about home visiting options call the Chicago Early Learning Hotline at (312) 229-1690.

Or visit the [Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development website](#).

### **Q. Do returning children have to re-apply for preschool?**

Returning children actively enrolled in CPS by April 12, 2022 will be registered at the same school and do not need to re-enroll or re-verify their information. Those enrolled after April 12 or those who wish to transfer schools need to complete a new application. Children currently enrolled in a Community-Based Program who want to stay in the same program do not need to re-apply.

### **Q. My child was put on the waitlist last school year but they never received a seat. Do I need to reapply for the upcoming school year?**

Yes, you must re-apply for the upcoming school year. Waitlist applications do not carry over to the next school year.

### **Q. Does time matter when applying for my child? Is earlier better?**

We encourage families to get their applications in as early as possible to have the best chance at a spot in your top choice.

Early learning applications are prioritized based on the child's age and family needs. Need indicators to



include: family income, students with disabilities, students in temporary living situations, foster children, children in need of language support, and additional demographic factors. CPS schools will also provide priority points for siblings of students currently enrolled at the school, for students choosing their attendance area school or within 1.5 miles of a site without an attendance boundary.

**Q. I can't log in to my Chicago Early Learning account. The system does not recognize my username.**

Sorry for the technical difficulties. If you are still having trouble logging in, click the "Forgot password" link or "Can't find account" link for additional assistance.

**Q. I am interested in a CPS school. Will my child be given priority for a spot if I live in the neighborhood?**

Yes. Your child will receive priority eligibility consideration for their neighborhood program.

**Q. Can I apply to more than one site?**

Yes, you can rank your top five sites this year. You will only get one offer, however, and you will remain on the waitlist if you did not receive placement at your top selection.

**Q. If I don't get an offer what do I do?**

If you don't get an offer, you should receive a notification that you are "waitlisted" at your desired school or community site. If a spot should open up that you are eligible for, you will be contacted either via email or phone. You don't have to take any action until you are contacted. Applications are automatically processed from the waitlist based on need and availability. If you would like to change your program selections, call (312) 229-1690.

**Q. Where can I go to complete an application if I don't have access to the internet?**

You can complete an application by calling the Chicago Early Learning Hotline at (312) 229-1690 or by visiting one of five Family Resource Centers which are available for application support. You can also go directly to the site you're applying for application support as well.

### Q. Is family income gross or net?

Gross income.

### Q. Which applicants receive priority placement?

Enrollment is prioritized based on need as identified by a family's socioeconomic status, the child's age, and for children attending CPS Pre-K there are a couple of new factors, too.

#### CPS Pre-K Programs

- Socio-economic factors, including children in foster care, temporary living situations (STLS), family income at or below 100% of FPL, and children with IEPs.
- Siblings in grades K-8 at the same school.
- Applying to attend the student's kindergarten attendance area school.
- Proximity within a 1.5-mile radius of the school or CPS Early Learning Center.

#### Community-Based Early Learning Programs

- Ages served vary by program. Check your preferred program for age criteria.
- Lower-income families are ranked above higher-income families.
- Children who are categorically eligible (homeless children, foster children, children from families receiving SSI or TANF) are treated as if they have zero income.

## VERIFYING AND ENROLLING

### Q. What is CCAP?

Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) funding is provided by the state to ensure low-income working parents have access to full-day care. Many Community Based Early Learning Programs have reserved slots for low-income working families who qualify for CCAP. CCAP does not apply to CPS schools. Contact a provider directly to answer more specific questions about eligibility, verification, and any associated co-pays.

## Q. What happens after I submit my application?

Applying during the Initial Application Period improves your child's chances of securing their seat in your family's preferred programs. The Initial Application Period will extend into mid-May. After submitting your child's application during this time, you'll receive your child's placement notice roughly a month after your application is submitted.

### Verify

Once you receive a placement, you'll receive an email that provides instructions for verifying your family's details such as income, and proof of your Chicago address. You'll also need to bring your child's birth certificate. Verifications will take place at your child's school or at one of the 5 Family Resource Centers located across the city at local Chicago Public Libraries.

If you're offered a seat and would like to accept, you will be able to contact the school directly to make an appointment or make an appointment online at [ChicagoEarlyLearning.org](https://ChicagoEarlyLearning.org) on the Family Resource Centers page.

### Enroll

After verifying your child's early learning application, you'll need to visit the program your child will attend in the Fall. At this stage, you will also need to submit proof of a current physical and an immunization record for your child, so you'll need to book your doctor's appointment before enrolling. We also recommend that you call ahead to make an appointment at the early learning program your child will attend to complete their enrollment for the upcoming school year!

## Q. Can I verify even if I don't have an offer?

You will need to wait until you receive an offer before you verify. In the meantime, be sure you have proof of your child's age, your address, and your family's income.

# WAITLIST

## Q. What number am I on the waitlist?

This year our new Chicago Early Learning application will include an indicator of family waitlist status. Eligibility criteria also prioritize children with the highest need for preschool. Families are prioritized according to socioeconomic factors for eligibility and available

space within programs. Our highest need families: low-income families, students with disabilities, students in temporary living situations, foster children, etc. will receive priority placement. Placement, open seats, and waitlists will be continuously reviewed throughout the enrollment window to ensure we are maximizing access for families.

### **Q. How can I get off of a preschool site's waitlist?**

If your child is waitlisted, an offer will be automatically generated once a space that your child qualifies for becomes available. You will be notified by email or phone (if an email was not provided). If you would like to remove your child from the waitlist by changing your school choice or removing the waitlisted school from your application, contact our Family Support Hotline at (312) 229-1690

### **Q. I'm on a waitlist and I want to consider a different site for my child. How do I do that?**

If your child is waitlisted, an offer will be automatically generated once a space that your child qualifies for becomes available. If you would like to change your program choice, contact our Family Support Hotline at (312) 229-1690.

### **Q. Can I verify my documents if I'm on a waitlist?**

You cannot. You will need to wait until you receive an offer before you verify the self-reported information in your application. In the meantime, be sure you have proof of your child's age, your address, and your family's income for when a placement is offered.

### **Q. Why is my child on the waitlist?**

Children are placed on the waitlist for a variety of reasons. Usually, being waitlisted means that there is no current availability at the desired Chicago Early Learning program. Other times, there is no seat available that meets your child's need profile. When space becomes available you will be contacted automatically via email or phone (if no email was provided).

### **Q. How do I remove my child from the waitlist?**

Ranking your top FIVE early learning programs this year should prevent your child from landing on a waitlist altogether. Still, IF your child is waitlisted after applying, call the Chicago Early Learning Hotline for assistance in changing your program choices on your application. To remove your child from the waitlist by changing your school choice or to remove the waitlisted school from your application altogether, contact our Family Support Hotline at (312) 229-1690 or visit a Family Resource Center.

## DIVERSE LEARNERS

### **Q. Can I apply online if my child has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)?**

If your child has an IEP or IFSP and you have been directed by the CPS Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services (ODLSS) to complete the online application, you may apply online. If you were not directed to complete the application, please contact the ODLSS School Assignment hotline at (773) 553-1847 for assistance.

### **Q. What do I do if a student needs an IEP/504 evaluation?**

Please call CPS Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services (ODLSS) at (773) 553-1800

### **Q. What should I do if I suspect my child needs special education services?**

If you suspect that your child may need additional special education services, we encourage you to get a developmental screening to see if further evaluation is needed. Developmental screenings can tell you if your child is having any difficulties with: hearing/vision, speech/language, problem-solving, social skills, fine/gross motor and/or listening/attending.

Please attend a Child Find Team Screening Site to obtain a free developmental screening.

If screening indicates a need for further evaluation then you will be referred to the CPS Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services (ODLSS). Please contact ODLSS at (773) 553-1800 for Child Find Screening locations and dates/times.