



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Joint Interim Guidance Eligibility Determination & Enrollment for North Carolina Preschool Programs June 5, 2020

As a result of COVID-19, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (Title I Preschool and the Head Start State Collaboration Office) and the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education (NC Pre-K) are working together to provide guidance related to preschool programs. The first guidance is about the many questions received related to preschool eligibility determination and enrollment for the 2020-21 school year. Recommendations include continuing to support currently enrolled children and adapting eligibility and enrollment processes.

Continue supporting currently enrolled children and families using a whole child/family perspective. Resources to support families may include:

- Local meal access through [No Kid Hungry NC](#).
- Information about [unemployment](#).
- Appropriate [educational resources](#) (birth – grade 2) for families to support engagement and learning at home. Resources or activities provided to families should focus on the importance of relationships and interactions using everyday life as learning opportunities, routine and not regimen, [reading](#) and [play](#)!
- [Books](#) and other [literacy](#) resources for families.
- Family and [parenting support programs](#) including [home visiting](#) and Child Find.
- [Social-emotional supports](#) for children and families.
- Factual information about [COVID-19](#) provided by the NC Department of Health and Human Services.

Eligibility determination will look different than in past years and it is anticipated that the number of eligible children will far exceed availability of preschool services because of COVID-19. Additional strategies must be considered for taking applications and completing developmental screenings. Title I Preschool utilizes the results of a developmental screening, along with other criteria, to determine eligibility. Head Start and NC Pre-K mainly use income to determine eligibility; in addition, NC Pre-K requires a developmental screening and results may be used to determine eligibility if all income eligible children have been served. Connect with other early childhood partners to share resources and develop a plan for enrollment. Strategies to consider may include:

- Conduct outreach and recruitment activities so families know programs are accepting applications.
- Collect applications through online platforms (i.e., Google Forms, Survey Monkey, etc.). For example, [New Hanover](#) and [Onslow](#) preschool programs have created online surveys.
- Collect supporting documentation by mail, encrypted email, physical drop boxes or other secure methods (i.e., DocuSign Pro, School Office Pro, Adobe Signature, etc.).
- Assist families in completing applications by phone or virtually.
- Delay screenings until it is safe to convene. Consider scheduling individual appointments and/or scheduling small group screenings to occur with 10 or fewer people, when and if it is safe to do so.
- If urgency is an issue, the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, Third Edition (ASQ-3) or Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS) are approved developmental screenings and do not require face to face administration. Consider administering the ASQ-3 or PEDS with the family through an interview process by phone or virtually. Think about how to be intentional in reaching those families who may not have access.

The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus that causes it. Stopping transmission (spread) of the virus through everyday practices is the best way to keep healthy. The NC Department of Public Instruction has provided additional [guidance](#) for schools and districts.

Please continue to work together with your local early learning partners to provide high quality care for young children and their families.

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Program	COVID-19 Eligibility/Enrollment Guidance	Funding Flexibilities
Title I Preschool	No Federal guidance has been provided by the U.S. Department of Education.	While flexibility regarding allowable uses of funds is not an option, flexibility is allowed in changing the currently approved plan to match the current needs of students. Another flexibility to consider is transferability, which is allowable at any time during the current fiscal year. Funds can be transferred out of Title II-A or Title IV-A into Title I-A to provide flexibility in fund usage. ESSER funding may also be used to provide services for young children and their families. Any allowable activities under Title I, including early childhood, are allowable uses of ESSER funds. Recommendations for how LEAs might use ESSER funds to support early childhood include strategies for meeting the social-emotional needs of staff, children and families; ensuring equitable access to learning opportunities for all children and families; and supporting staff as they navigate the reopening of schools.
Office of Head Start (OHS)	<p>Office of Head Start Enrollment Guidance: OHS understands the challenges associated with recruiting eligible children and families at this time. Programs are using technology and other creative methods to reach families and continue recruitment activities while prioritizing the staff and community's health and safety. Identifying eligible families now will support reaching full enrollment when operations resume.</p> <p>If there is adequate documentation on file to verify a child's eligibility and there are services your program can provide to benefit the eligible child and family, programs may enroll children. Programs should provide and document these services until operations resume and the enrollment process can be completed.</p>	<p>The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) has granted fiscal flexibilities related to COVID-19:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grantees can shift up to \$250,000 between budget categories without prior ACF approval. • ACF has issued an Information Memorandum with guidance related to fiscal flexibilities and waivers affecting grant applications, no-cost extensions, allowable costs, extension of certain deadlines, procurement, prior approvals, indirect cost rates, and single audit submissions. • Programs should maintain documentation to address any variations in their normal fiscal practices made to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak.
DHHS/DCDEE NC Pre-K	<p>DCDEE recognizes the trials many NC Pre-K Contracting Agencies may face as they attempt to continue to recruit eligible children for the NC Pre-K program during this challenging time.</p> <p>Many NC Pre-K Contracting Agencies have updated recruitment and application information on agency websites and Facebook pages to inform the public that applications are still being accepted for the next program year. Many are attempting to collect eligibility information to be prepared once in person services resume. DCDEE encourages NC Pre-K Contracting Agencies to utilize their local NC Pre-K Programs to provide additional support with the process.</p> <p>NC Pre-K Contracting Agencies are encouraged to collect as much documentation to verify a child's eligibility through any method available at their disposal to help them maintain some form of recruitment and eligibility until their agencies resume operations and can complete the application and enrollment process thoroughly.</p>	<p>DHHS/Division of Child Development and Early Education has granted fiscal flexibilities related to COVID-19: DCDEE highly recommends NC Pre-K Contracting Agencies maintain documentation to address any variations in typical fiscal practices made to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak for monitoring purposes.</p>