

User Guide

Accessing and Applying to Child Care and Early Childhood Education Services in New York City

August 21, 2023

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Purpose and Use of Document | 3 |
| Summary of Child Care and Early Education Options for Families in New York City | 4 |
| Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) | 4 |
| New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) | 5 |
| Early Head Start and Head Start | 5 |
| How to Apply for Child Care and Early Education in New York City | 6 |
| Applying for ACS Low-Income Vouchers | 6 |
| Applying for NYC Public Schools Early Childhood Education Services | 7 |
| Infant and Toddler Extended Day and Year | 7 |
| 3-K and Pre-K Extended Day and Year | 8 |
| 3-K and Pre-K School Day and Year | 9 |
| Applying for Early Head Start and Head Start | 10 |
| New York City Child Care Options Comparison Chart | 11 |

Purpose and Use of Document

New York City is proud to offer affordable and quality child care options for families. Families must know what is available and how to access care.

This guide is intended for use by people working with families in need of child care and early childhood services. The guide can be used to assist any family that needs to connect to care and education, including the "*New, New Yorkers*" arriving in New York City.

The guide explains the different types of care available, the age requirements, eligibility criteria, and how to apply. It is important to note that some of the care options require the child in need of care to have a satisfactory immigration status.

Summary of Child Care and Early Education Options for Families in New York City

New York City offers free and affordable child care through these organizations:

1. [Administration for Children's Services \(ACS\)](#)
2. [New York City Public Schools \(NYCPS\)](#)
3. [Head Start and Early Head Start](#)

Some of the child care options below **require** the child(ren) to have a satisfactory immigration status and must include copies of immigration documents as part of the application¹. All NYC child care providers require children to receive certain vaccinations².

Administration for Children's Services (ACS)

ACS offers [low-income vouchers](#) that can be used to cover the cost of child care at a provider of the family's choice. Vouchers may also be used to pay approved relatives, neighbors, or friends for care. These providers serve:

- Children six weeks to 13 years old (or to 19 years old for children with disabilities).
- Available year-round, and up to 24 hours a day.
- Eligibility is based on the family's income and an approved reason for needing child care (see below for more details).
- Each child in need of child care **must** have a required immigration status to qualify.

¹ **Important for Parents:** Applying for these types of child care will NOT have an impact on any pending immigration applications (resident alien, asylum, citizenship, etc.). Parents will NOT be asked for immigration status for themselves or anyone else in the household other than the child(ren) in need of child care.

For the types of child care that require satisfactory immigration status, each child needing child care, a copy of one of the following is required as proof of immigration status: US Birth Certificate, US Passport Form, Naturalization Certificate, Alien Registration Card including Permanent Resident or Green Card, FS-240 (Report of Birth Abroad of U.S. Citizen), or any other authoritative document demonstrating immigration status.

² Child care programs enrolling children who are homeless or living in temporary housing, including families arriving from another state or country, should allow those children to attend for up to 30 days while their families work to obtain documentation of immunization or if the child has received at least the first dose in the required immunization series.

To help a family find a medical provider or learn more about New York City's vaccination requirements visit nyc.gov/health or call 311. Immunization appointments for children of all ages can be scheduled through NYC H+H by calling 1-844-NYC-4NYC or nyc.gov/hhc, for children ages 4 and older through the Department of Health [here](#), and parents can locate a federally-qualified health center in NYC [here](#).

Early childhood education programs contracted with NYC Public Schools should refer to the [birth-to-five handbook](#) for additional guidance on supporting families in temporary housing in meeting vaccination requirements.

New York City Public Schools (NYCPS)

NYCPS' Birth-Five Programs are offered in a variety of settings including center-based (NYC Early Education Centers or NYCEECs), home-based (Family Child Care or FCCs), and school based (District schools and PreK centers).

1. [Infant and Toddler](#) Extended Day and Year

- Free or low-cost child care for children six weeks to three-years-old (who are not yet age-eligible for 3K).
- Programs run up to 10 hours per day, year-round.
- Eligibility is based on the family's income and an approved reason for needing child care (see below for more details).
- Each child in need of child care **must** have a required immigration status to qualify.

2. [3-K](#) and [Pre-K \(pre-kindergarten\)](#) Extended Day and Year

- Free or low-cost child care is available in the calendar year the child turns three or four years old.
- Programs run up to 10 hours per day, year-round.
- Eligibility is based on the family's income and an approved reason for needing child care (see below for more details).
- Each child in need of child care **must** have a required immigration status to qualify.

3. [3-K](#) and [Pre-K \(pre-kindergarten\)](#) School Day and Year

- Free child care that is available in the calendar year the child turns three or four years old.
- Programs run up to 6 hours and 20 minutes per day, September to June.
- A child/children can enroll **regardless** of their immigration status.

Early Head Start and Head Start

[Early Head Start and Head Start providers](#) offer free learning and social/emotional development services to children ages birth to age five. Additionally, some providers offer services for pregnant parents.

Eligibility criteria for children includes:

- Children from low-income families or
- Children living in temporary housing or
- Children in foster care or
- Children from families receiving public assistance (TANF, SSI, or SNAP)

A child/children can enroll **regardless** of their immigration status.

Some Early Head Start and Head Start providers are affiliated with [NYC Public Schools](#) and these providers only serve children ages 2-5 years old in centers only.

How to Apply for Child Care and Early Education in New York City

Applying for ACS Low-Income Vouchers

Age Eligibility: Six weeks to 13 years, up to 19 years for children with disabilities.

Immigration Status Requirements: The child needing child care **must** have a “qualified” status: U.S. citizen, Lawful Permanent Resident, refugee, asylee, certain type of parole status, and other statuses. During the application process, the parent will be asked to submit documentation verifying satisfactory immigration status.

Eligibility Requirements: A family may qualify for a [voucher](#) if 1) the family's income falls below specific [income criteria](#) and 2) have one of the following reasons for seeking child care (in a two-parent household, both parents will each need a reason for care):

- Works 10 or more hours per week
- Participates in an educational or vocational training provider
- Is looking for work
- Lives in temporary housing. This includes families who may be living in shelter or sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason
- Attends services for domestic violence
- Receiving substance abuse treatment

The applicant will be asked for documents to verify eligibility. Vouchers can be used at a provider of the family’s choice.

How to Apply: Families should apply through [MyCity](#) (NYC.gov/ChildCare). Staff can help the parent complete the application online or the parent can complete the application on their own. The parent will need to create a [MyCity account](#) to apply.

Helpful Tip: To verify the “Lives in Temporary Housing” reason for care: Families in shelter (e.g. DHS Shelters or HERRCs) can upload a copy of their proof of residency letter in MyCity OR complete the Housing Questionnaire in MyCity.

If determined eligible, the family will be mailed or emailed a voucher to bring to the child care provider of their choice; the provider and family must complete and send the voucher back to ACS to complete enrollment.

For more information about vouchers and the different types of child care settings to use a voucher visit nyc.gov/childcarevouchers.

To locate a licensed child care center visit nyc.gov and search “Child Care Connect.” To find a registered home-based child care program in New York City, use [this tool](#).

Applying for NYC Public Schools Early Childhood Education Services

Infant and Toddler Extended Day and Year

Age Eligibility: Between six weeks and three-years-old (who are not yet age-eligible for 3K) - care is available in centers and family child care (home-based) settings.

Immigration Status Requirements: The child needing child care **must** have a “qualified” status: U.S. citizen, Lawful Permanent Resident, refugee, asylee, certain type of parole status, and other statuses. During the application process, the parent will be asked to submit documentation verifying satisfactory immigration status.

Eligibility Requirements: A family may qualify for an [Infant/Toddler Extended Day and Year](#) seat if 1) the family's income falls below specific [income criteria](#) and 2) have one of the following reasons for seeking child care (in a two-parent household, both parents will each need a reason for care):

- Works 10 or more hours per week
- Participates in an educational or vocational training provider
- Is looking for work
- Lives in temporary housing. This includes families who may be living in shelter or sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason
- Attends services for domestic violence
- Receiving substance abuse treatment

The applicant will be asked for documents to verify eligibility.

How to Apply: Families should apply through [MyCity](#) (NYC.gov/ChildCare). Staff working with a family can help the parent complete the application online or the parent can complete the application on their own. The parent can also contact the child care provider directly and receive help applying through [MyCity](#). The parent will need to create a [MyCity account](#) to apply.

Helpful Tip: To verify the “Lives in Temporary Housing” reason for care: Families in shelter (e.g. DHS Shelters or HERRCs) can upload a copy of their proof of residency letter in MyCity OR complete the Housing Questionnaire in MyCity.

When applying, a parent can either include the provider of their choosing if they know it or leave that section blank.

- To find a list of Infant and Toddler providers visit [MySchools.nyc](#) - select 3-K then “More Filters” and choose “EarlyLearn - Infant” or “EarlyLearn - Toddler.” The parent can then select a provider to include on the MyCity application.
- If leaving blank, NYCPs will contact the parent for help finding a provider after submitting the application in MyCity.

If found eligible, the family will be notified through e-mail and mail. The parent should take the notice to the provider to complete the enrollment.

Applying for NYC Public Schools Early Childhood Education Services

3-K and Pre-K Extended Day and Year

Age Eligibility:

- Families can apply to 3-K in the calendar year that the child turns three – care is available in centers and family child care (home-based) settings.
- Families can apply to Pre-K in the calendar year that the child turns four – care is available in centers only.

Immigration Status Requirement: The child needing child care **must** have a “qualified” status: U.S. citizen, Lawful Permanent Resident, refugee, asylee, certain type of parole status, and other statuses. During the application process, the parent will be asked to submit documentation verifying satisfactory immigration status.

Eligibility Requirements: A family may qualify for a [3-K](#) and [Pre-K \(pre-kindergarten\)](#) Extended Day and Year if 1) the family's income falls below specific [income criteria](#) and 2) have one of the following reasons for seeking child care (in a two-parent household, both parents will each need a reason for care):

- Works 10 or more hours per week
- Participates in an educational or vocational training provider
- Is looking for work
- Lives in temporary housing. This includes families who may be living in shelter or sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason
- Attends services for domestic violence
- Receiving substance abuse treatment

The applicant will be asked for documents to verify eligibility.

How to Apply: Families should apply through [MyCity](#) (NYC.gov/ChildCare). Staff working with a family can help the parent complete the application online or the parent can complete the application on their own. The parent can also contact a child care provider directly and receive help applying through [MyCity](#). The parent will need to create a [MyCity account](#) to apply.

Helpful Tip: To verify the “Lives in Temporary Housing” reason for care: Families in shelter (e.g. DHS Shelters or HERRCs) can upload a copy of their proof of residency letter in MyCity OR complete the Housing Questionnaire in MyCity.

When applying, a parent can either include the provider of their choosing if they know it or leave that section blank.

- To find a list of 3-K and Pre-K Extended Day and Year providers visit [MySchools.nyc](#) to browse the NYC schools directory. The parent can then select a provider to include on the MyCity application.
- If leaving blank, NYCPS will contact the parent for help finding a provider after submitting the application in MyCity.

If found eligible, the family will be notified through e-mail and mail. The parent should take the notice to the provider to complete the enrollment.

Applying for NYC Public Schools Early Childhood Education Services

3-K and Pre-K School Day and Year

Age Eligibility:

- Families can apply to 3-K in the calendar year that the child turns three – care is available in centers, family child care (home-based), and school-based settings.
- Families can apply to Pre-K in the calendar year that the child turns four - care is available in centers and school-based settings.

Immigration Status Requirement: None. Immigration status does not matter.

Eligibility Requirements:

There are no additional eligibility requirements. Services are provided at no-cost during the school-day; typically, 8am-3pm.

For more information visit NYCPS [3-K](#) and [Pre-K \(pre-kindergarten\)](#).

Note: School Day and Year programs operate during the public-school year, September to June.

How to Apply: Go to [MySchools.nyc](https://www.myschools.nyc.gov/) to browse the NYC schools directory to find a provider.

If the family is seeking immediate care, contact the provider directly; if the family is interested in a provider for the fall, add the child to the [waitlist in MySchools](#).

Applying for Early Head Start and Head Start

Age Eligibility: Services are available to children ages birth to 5 in centers and homes.

- **Early Head Start** serves birth to two years. Some Early Head Start providers provide services for pregnant parents.
- **Head Start** serves children ages three to five years.

Some Early Head Start and Head Start providers are affiliated with [NYC Public Schools](#) and these providers only serve children ages 2-5 years old in centers only.

Note: Early Head Start and Head Start providers are not allowed to ask applicants or children for proof of immigration status.

Immigration Status Requirement: None. Eligible families with children are welcome to enroll in Head Start and Early Head Start regardless of immigration status.

Eligibility criteria:

- Family income is at your below the [federal poverty line](#) or
- The child in foster care or
- The child is **living in temporary shelter** or
- The family is receiving public assistance (TANF, SSI, or SNAP)

Services are provided at no-cost. The provider will ask for one or more documents to verify eligibility.

How to apply:

Find all of New York City's Early Head Start or Head Start providers by visiting the [Office of Head Start](#) website (<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/center-locator>) and contact a provider directly to apply.

In addition, for Early Head Start and Head Start providers affiliated with NYCPS, families can visit [MySchools.nyc](#) to browse the NYC schools directory and search by Pre-K or 3-K to find Head Start providers serving 3-5 year olds; for Early Head Start providers serving 2-3 year olds, select 3-K then "More Filters" and choose "Early Head Start." Contact the provider directly to apply.

If the family is interested in a NYCPS Early Head Start or Head Start provider for the fall, add the child to the [waitlist in MySchools](#).

New York City Child Care Options Comparison Chart

| | ACS Low Income Vouchers | NYC Public Schools: 3-K and Pre-K School Day and Year | NYC Public Schools: Infant, Toddler, and 3-K and Pre-K Extended Day and Year | Early Head Start and Head Start |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| What age children can enroll? | Six weeks to thirteen years old (up to 19 for children with special needs) | Children turning three (for 3-K) or four (Pre-K) by December 31 st | Children six weeks to five years old | Early Head Start: Birth through three years old. Some providers support pregnant parents. Head Start: three to five years old NYCPS providers serve two to five years |
| What immigration status is needed to attend? | Children must have documentation of satisfactory immigration status | No immigration status required | Children must have documentation of satisfactory immigration status | No immigration status required |
| Where are the providers located? | Center-based ³ , family child care (home based), or an approved family and friend that accepts vouchers. | Center based, family child-care, and school-based (District schools and Pre-K Centers) | Center based, family child-care, and school-based (District schools and Pre-K Centers) | Center based organizations or family child care. NYCPS programs center-based only. |
| When is this provider available? | Full year | Follows the public-school calendar (September – June) | Full year | Full year |
| What are the hours of operation? | Hours vary based on setting and can include non-traditional hours. | School day schedule (8am to 3pm), Monday - Friday | Typical hours are 8am to 6pm, Monday - Friday | Typical hours are 8 hours per day, Monday - Friday |
| How can families apply? | NYC.gov/ChildCare | MySchools.nyc | MySchools.nyc and contact a provider to apply OR apply at nyc.gov/ChildCare | Office of Head Start Or visit MySchools.nyc to find providers affiliated with NYCPS and contact them to apply. |

³ Center-based programs or Home-based providers that are licensed by NYC Department of Health or New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to provide child care must be approved by ACS in order to enroll children with a voucher. Informal providers (friend, relative, or neighbor) must be approved to provide subsidized in-home or family child care in a residence. Informal providers must also register with ACS to enroll children with a voucher. More information about the application and approval process can be found [here](#).