

Voluntary Prekindergarten Program Requirements

Fiscal Year 2026 Voluntary Prekindergarten Statement of Assurances

Verification of Information and Agreement to Comply with Assurances

Voluntary prekindergarten program requirements are established in [Minnesota Statute 2024, section 142D.08](#) to ensure a high-quality early learning experience for eligible four-year-old children. The purpose of a voluntary prekindergarten program is to support children and their families and prepare them for success in kindergarten and beyond.

Program Eligibility: Use voluntary prekindergarten dollars for eligible children. An eligible child means a child who:

1. Is four years of age as of September 1 in the calendar year in which the school year commences and meet one of the following criteria:
 - Qualifies for free or reduced-priced meals.
 - Qualifies using state general financial eligibility requirements listed in [Minnesota Statute 2024, section 142E.10, subd 1, paragraph \(a\), clause 2](#) in current calendar year.
 - Is an American Indian.
 - Is an English language learner as defined by section [Minnesota Statute 2024, section 124D.59, subd. 2](#).
 - Has experienced [homelessness](#) in the last 24 months.
 - Is identified through health and developmental screening with a potential risk factor that may influence learning under sections [Minnesota Statute 2024, section 142D.09 to 142D.093](#)
 - Is in foster care, kinship care, including children receiving Northstar kinship care assistance under [Minnesota Statute 2024, section 142A.60 to 142A.612](#), or is in need of child protection services.
 - Has a parent who is a migrant or seasonal agricultural laborer under [Minnesota Statute 2024, section 181.85](#)
 - Has a parent who is incarcerated.
 - Is defined as at-risk by the school district.
- A school district or charter school must adopt a sliding-fee schedule based upon family income and must waive a fee for a participant unable to pay.
- A child with an individualized education program may not be excluded from participation in a program under this section if all other eligibility requirements are satisfied and the individualized education program team determines that with reasonable accommodations the child can fully participate and make progress toward their goals and objectives.
2. Must complete a health and developmental screening within 90 days of program enrollment under [Minnesota Statutes 2024, sections 142D.09 to 142D.093](#), and provide documentation of required immunizations under [Minnesota Statutes 2024, 121A.15](#).

Program Requirements:

1. Provide instruction through play-based learning to foster children's social and emotional development, cognitive development, physical and motor development, and language and literacy skills, including the native language and literacy skills of English learners, to the extent practicable.
2. Assess each child's progress toward the state's early learning standards when the child enters and again before the child leaves the program using a commissioner-approved formative, developmentally appropriate assessment and report results and demographic data to the department in a form and manner prescribed by the commissioner View the list of [KEP Approved Assessment Tools](#).
3. Provide comprehensive program content aligned with the state early learning standards, including the implementation of curriculum, assessment, and intentional instructional strategies that support transition to kindergarten through grade 3 academic standards. View the Parent Aware list of [aligned curricula](#).
4. Provide instructional content and activities that are of sufficient length and intensity to address learning needs including offering a program with at least 350 hours of instruction per school year for a prekindergarten student.
5. Provide voluntary prekindergarten instructional staff salaries comparable to the salaries of local kindergarten through grade 12 instructional staff.
6. Coordinate appropriate kindergarten transition with families, prekindergarten programs offered by Head Start, licensed center and licensed family child care, community-based organizations, and school district kindergarten programs.
7. Involve parents in program decision-making and transition planning by implementing parent engagement strategies that include culturally and linguistically responsive activities in prekindergarten through third grade that are aligned with early childhood family education under [Minnesota Statute 2024, section 142D.10](#)
8. Coordinate with relevant community-based services, including health and social service agencies, to ensure children have access to comprehensive services.
9. Coordinate with all relevant school district programs and services including early childhood special education and programs that serve homeless students and English learners.
10. Ensure staff-to-child ratios of one-to-ten (1:10) and a maximum group size of 20 children.
11. Provide high-quality coordinated professional development, training, and coaching for staff in school districts and in prekindergarten programs offered by Head Start, licensed center and licensed family child care providers, and community-based organizations that is informed by a measure of adult-child interactions and enables teachers to be highly knowledgeable in early childhood curriculum content, assessment, native and English language development programs, and instruction.
12. Implement strategies that support the alignment of professional development, instruction, assessments, and prekindergarten through grade 3 curricula.
 - A voluntary prekindergarten program must have teachers knowledgeable in early childhood curriculum content, assessment, native and English language programs, and instruction according to [Minnesota Statute 2024, section 122A.61](#) requiring teachers be licensed by September 1, 2028.
13. Adhere to Minnesota Statute, 2024 section [124D.8957](#) Prekindergarten through Grade 12 Parental Rights.
14. Maintain current program and student information in applicable reporting systems, including: MARSS, STARS, UFARS, MN Common Course Catalog, etc. Documentation that supports the voluntary prekindergarten student data reported in MARSS, e.g., school calendar, attendance, EL status, economic indicator, etc., will be kept on file and available for audit for at least three years after the close of the fiscal year.
15. **Mixed Delivery Program Plan:** If contracting with a charter school, Head Start program, licensed center and licensed family child care, or a community-based organization to provide eligible children with mixed

delivery sites, all mixed delivery sites must be within the school district’s boundaries. Mixed delivery partners must provide developmentally appropriate services that meet the program requirements listed in this document. A plan for mixed delivery must be available upon request by the start of the program and a signed contract must be on file with both parties defining roles and responsibilities related to voluntary prekindergarten operation.

16. Must record expenditures attributable to voluntary prekindergarten pupils according to guidelines prepared by the commissioner of Education under [Minnesota Statute 2024, section 127A.17](#).

Verification of Information and Agreement to Comply with Parent Aware Auto-Rating Assurances

- Sites and programs included in the district/charter school Parent Aware automatic rating must maintain documents showing compliance with all voluntary prekindergarten standards and/or school readiness standards. For sites that are not VPK and meeting School Readiness standards, lead teachers must have on file their age-appropriate license, or 10 hours of training in the Knowledge and Competency Framework Developmentally Appropriate Learning Experiences, and All Lead Teachers – both licensed and non-licensed– must complete 10 hours of Parent Aware approved assessment training within the last five years.

Signature on this document verifies that all the information provided in the voluntary prekindergarten and Parent Aware Auto-Rating Application is accurate. Signature also indicates that the school district and/or charter, as well as mixed delivery sites, will administer and provide a voluntary prekindergarten program according to all of the preceding statements of assurance and comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws, ordinances, rules and regulations, including [Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 142D.08](#).

Signature – Voluntary Prekindergarten Program Coordinator

Date

Signature – District Superintendent or Charter Director

Date

School District or Charter School Name

School District Number

If establishing a mixed delivery site, signature of partner is required and Parent Aware Auto-Rating assurance also applies. (Note: A separate document is required for each mixed delivery site.)

Signature – Mixed Delivery Site Partner

Date

Mixed Delivery Partner Site Name

Type of Mixed Delivery Site (E.g., Head Start, Child Care Center, or Family Child Care)