

For parents and caregivers: How to enroll a child or youth in school in the United States

All children or youth in the United States have the right to a free public education, regardless of their immigration status. It is important to be informed about the enrollment process and know what to expect when enrolling a child or youth in school. After the child or youth arrives at your home, begin the school enrollment process immediately to avoid further disruptions to their education, as the process can take time.

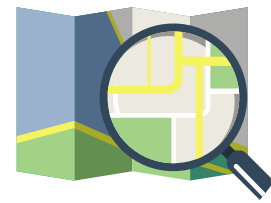


How to Start the Enrollment Process

In the U.S., public schools in a particular area (generally a city or county) are grouped into “school districts.” In some places, parents/caregivers simply go to the assigned school to enroll the child or youth, while in other areas they need to enroll the child or youth in the school district first.

1. Find your local public school or school district

You can search online, ask your neighbors, or speak with a caseworker if you have one. Most school or district websites explain how to enroll a child or youth and what documents you’ll need. To locate your local school district, click [here](#).



2. Contact the school or school district

Visit their website or call to ask about the enrollment process. You may need to schedule an appointment, and in many areas, some of the enrollment steps can be completed online.



3. Consider other school options if needed

If you’re not satisfied with your assigned public school, talk to neighbors or your caseworker to learn about other local school options, such as charter schools or private schools. Click [here](#) to learn more about the different types of schools.



Important Questions to Ask When Enrolling Your Child or Youth in School

- What programs does the school offer for students learning English (ELL)?
- What kind of academic support and learning opportunities are available for students?
- What is the evaluation process for students with disabilities or special needs?
- Are there extracurricular programs like sports, clubs, or tutoring?
- What free or reduced-cost school meal programs are available?
- Is transportation provided?

The information on this handout is based on the [USAHello.org](#), [USCRI](#), [GreatSchools.org](#), [Understood.org](#), [SchoolHouseConnection.org](#).

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Documents Needed for School Enrollment

Proof of residence: Lease agreement, utility bill, employer's letter, or an affidavit if sharing housing

Proof of child's or youth's age: Birth certificate, passport, baptismal certificate, or signed affidavit

Adult's identification and proof of relationship or custody: If you are not the parent/legal guardian, it can help to show the Power of Attorney or documents from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), like the Verification of Release

Medical records: Vaccination record and details about health conditions or medications

Academic records: Documents from previous schools or from the ORR shelter (helpful, but not required for school enrollment)

The McKinney-Vento Act

The McKinney-Vento Act is a federal law that helps youth enroll in school who are experiencing housing concerns and may be missing certain documents.

If you have trouble enrolling your child or youth in school, ask for help from your caseworker, the school principal, or contact the district's McKinney Vento liaison.

For more details on school information visit this page: [School Information](#)



Schools cannot deny enrollment based on immigration status or lack of immigration documents. School officials may not ask about you, or your child's or youth's immigration status. However, they may ask for the child's or youth's place of birth, as this information can be used to determine eligibility for additional programs for immigrant students.

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