



**COLORADO**  
Department of Early Childhood

# FAMILY HANDBOOK

SCHOOL YEAR  
2025 - 2026

**To See the handbook  
for the current  
school year 2024-25,  
please scroll down  
to slide 30.**

**CO UNIVERSAL  
PRESCHOOL**

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# ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

Welcome to the Colorado Universal Preschool Handbook - a guide for families enrolling children in high-quality preschools! This handbook is designed to assist you in understanding Universal Preschool in Colorado. It covers topics such as choosing a preschool program, navigating enrollment, eligibility criteria, and other relevant inquiries.

A low-angle photograph of four young children reaching up towards a large, colorful beach ball. The children are smiling and appear to be in a park or outdoor setting with trees and a blue sky in the background. The beach ball has vertical stripes in yellow, green, blue, purple, red, and white. A green banner with white text is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

**LET'S GET STARTED!**

# WHY PRESCHOOL?

Research is clear: the window from birth to age five is critical in a child's development. The experiences children have in the first five years of their life lay the foundation for their future.

Preschool plays a key role in supporting child development, and its impacts are immediate. Research shows preschool leads directly to gains in early reading and math, as well as increased social and emotional skills. Providing your child with access to stimulating, fun activities through high-quality preschool is crucial to this development.

Preschool offers lasting advantages that extend beyond early childhood. Research indicates that children who attend preschool are less likely to face academic setbacks or become involved in criminal behavior as they grow older. Moreover, preschool attendees are more inclined to pursue higher education, enjoy improved long-term health outcomes, and achieve higher earnings in adulthood.

Recognizing the importance of early childhood education for children, families, and Colorado businesses both big and small, the Colorado Universal Preschool Program offers up to 15 hours of state funding for preschool services for all children in the year before kindergarten.

The Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) is committed to ensuring all children and all families are healthy, happy, and thriving!



## Preschool Improves:

- math
- early reading
- social and emotional skills





# WHAT IS COLORADO UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL?

Starting in August 2023, Colorado implemented Universal Preschool across the state. This voluntary program aims to ensure that every Colorado child in the year before they are eligible for kindergarten receives up to 15 hours per week of funded preschool for the August - May school year to attend a high-quality preschool of their choice.

One of the main features of Colorado's Universal Preschool Program, is the commitment to family choice. Through an innovative "mixed-delivery" program model, families are empowered to choose the "just-right" preschool setting for their child at a variety of program types.

Whether it's a licensed community-based, school-based, or home-based preschool provider, families can research, select, and be matched to the program that works best for them.

Universal Preschool is a big step in making early education available to all of Colorado's families. It's also a big step in making early education affordable.

So far, families who participated in the program saved an average of \$600 a month, and \$6,000 a year, on preschool costs!



Up to 15 Hours of  
**FREE PRESCHOOL**  
for all Colorado children



# WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Children in Colorado can register for up to 15 hours per week of free, high-quality preschool in their year before kindergarten through Colorado's Universal Preschool Program.

- Families may qualify for more free hours based on a number of qualifying factors, per available funding, described further on page 8 and 9.
- Depending on the provider, families have the option of paying for additional hours if desired.
- School districts will oversee primary registration for state funding 3-year-old programs through their targeted 3-year-old program. If your child is more than one year away from being eligible for kindergarten, please reach out to your provider of choice for potential preschool services.
- Special Education Administrative Units (AUs) and school districts will place preschool aged children eligible for special education according to their Individualized Education Program (IEP) throughout the school year.



**ALL COLORADO CHILDREN**  
in the year before they start kindergarten  
are eligible for up to 15 hours per week!



# WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR ADDITIONAL HOURS?

Dependent upon available funding, additional hours may be available for children who are “in poverty” (defined as household income at or below 100% of the federal poverty guidelines), or for children who are “low income” (defined as at or below 270% of the federal poverty guidelines) and have a “qualifying factor” listed below.

These qualifying factors include:

- Child is identified as homeless and/or unhoused.
- Child is a multilingual, meaning a child who is learning two or more languages at the same time, or a child who is learning a second language while continuing to develop their first language.
- Child is eligible for special education with an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- Child is currently in the custody of a state supervised and county administered foster care home or in non-certified kinship care, meaning a child is being cared for by a relative or kin pursuant to [19-1-103\(102\), C.R.S.](#), who has a significant relationship with the child in circumstances when there is a safety concern by a county department of human or social services and where the relative or kin has not met the foster care certification requirements for a kinship foster care home or has chosen not to pursue that certification process.

Household ‘in poverty’ <100% FPG

OR

Household ‘low income’ <270% FPG



Unhoused

Multilingual

Foster/Kinship Care

Eligible for Special Education with an IEP

# WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR ADDITIONAL HOURS?

## INCOME ELIGIBILITY

Dependent upon available funding, age eligible children may qualify for additional hours if they are in poverty or low income and have at least one qualifying factor. Poverty is defined as the annual household income at or below 100% federal poverty. Low income is defined as the annual household income at or below 270% federal poverty. The low income eligibility qualifications described below.

- Annual household income is defined as:
  - the total combined pre-tax income received by all members of a household within a 12 month period.
  - this includes pre-tax wages, salaries, self-employment earnings, Social Security benefits, pensions, retirement income welfare payments, and income from other sources.
- Household size is defined as:
  - the number of people who occupy a housing unit as their usual place of residence.
  - For example, if you are a household with 2 adults and 1 child, your household size is "3."  
If your household consists of 3 adults and 3 children, please enter "6".

### Low-Income Vs. In Poverty

- To be considered 'low-income,' a child's parent or guardian's gross monthly income must not exceed 270% of the Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG), based on household size as illustrated in the next slide.
- To be considered 'in poverty,' , a child's parent or guardian's gross monthly income must not exceed 100% of the Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG), based on the household size as illustrated in the next slide.



# WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR ADDITIONAL HOURS?

## INCOME ELIGIBILITY

Family Size	A1 (0 to 100)	A2 (100 to 270)	A3 (270+)
2	\$0.00 to \$20,439.96	\$20,439.96 to \$55,187.89	\$55,187.89 or more
3	\$0.00 to \$25,820.04	\$25,820.04 to \$69,714.11	\$69,714.11 or more
4	\$0.00 to \$31,200.00	\$31,200.00 to \$84,240.00	\$84,240.00 or more
5	\$0.00 to \$36,579.96	\$36,579.96 to \$98,765.89	\$98,765.89 or more
6	\$0.00 to \$41,960.04	\$41,960.04 to \$113,292.11	\$113,292.11 or more
7	\$0.00 to \$47,340.00	\$47,340.00 to \$127,818.00	\$127,818.00 or more
8	\$0.00 to \$52,719.96	\$52,719.96 to \$142,343.89	\$142,343.89 or more
9	\$0.00 to \$58,099.92	\$58,099.92 to \$156,869.78	\$156,869.78 or more
10	\$0.00 to \$68,859.84	\$68,859.84 to \$185,921.57	\$185,921.57 or more
11	\$0.00 to \$84,999.72	\$84,999.72 to \$229,499.24	\$229,499.24 or more
12	\$0.00 to \$106,519.56	\$106,519.56 to \$287,602.81	\$287,602.81 or more

Note: These are the 2024 FPG guidelines because of the timing of the federal and state rulemaking process.  
2025 FPG numbers are not finalized until September. Therefore, CDEC rules will follow 2024 rules for the 2025-2026 School Year.

# WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR ADDITIONAL HOURS?

## Family Portal View

The family portal will show you how many hours a child is eligible for based on the questions you submitted in your application. You will be able to see each of the children, the applications you have submitted, and how many hours the child is eligible for.

An example for the test student below shows they are eligible for 15 hours per week. Eligibility shows up after you click on “See why.” If supplemental hours are NOT listed after clicking “See why,” the family is not eligible for supplemental hours.

2025-2026 Colorado Universal Preschool

### Here is your Colorado Universal Preschool Program eligibility report

Families and children with certain qualifying factors may be able to access additional free hours to support preschool tuition. Connect with your local coordinating organization (LCO) to talk about your options. Find your LCO here: <https://cdec.colorado.gov/colorado-universal-preschool/find-my-lco>

These children are eligible:

Henry Test 

See why ▾

#### Up to 15 Free Hours of Preschool Per Week (4-year-old)

In order to qualify for up to 15 free hours of preschool per week for 4-year-olds, the child must qualify for all of the eligibility criteria listed below.

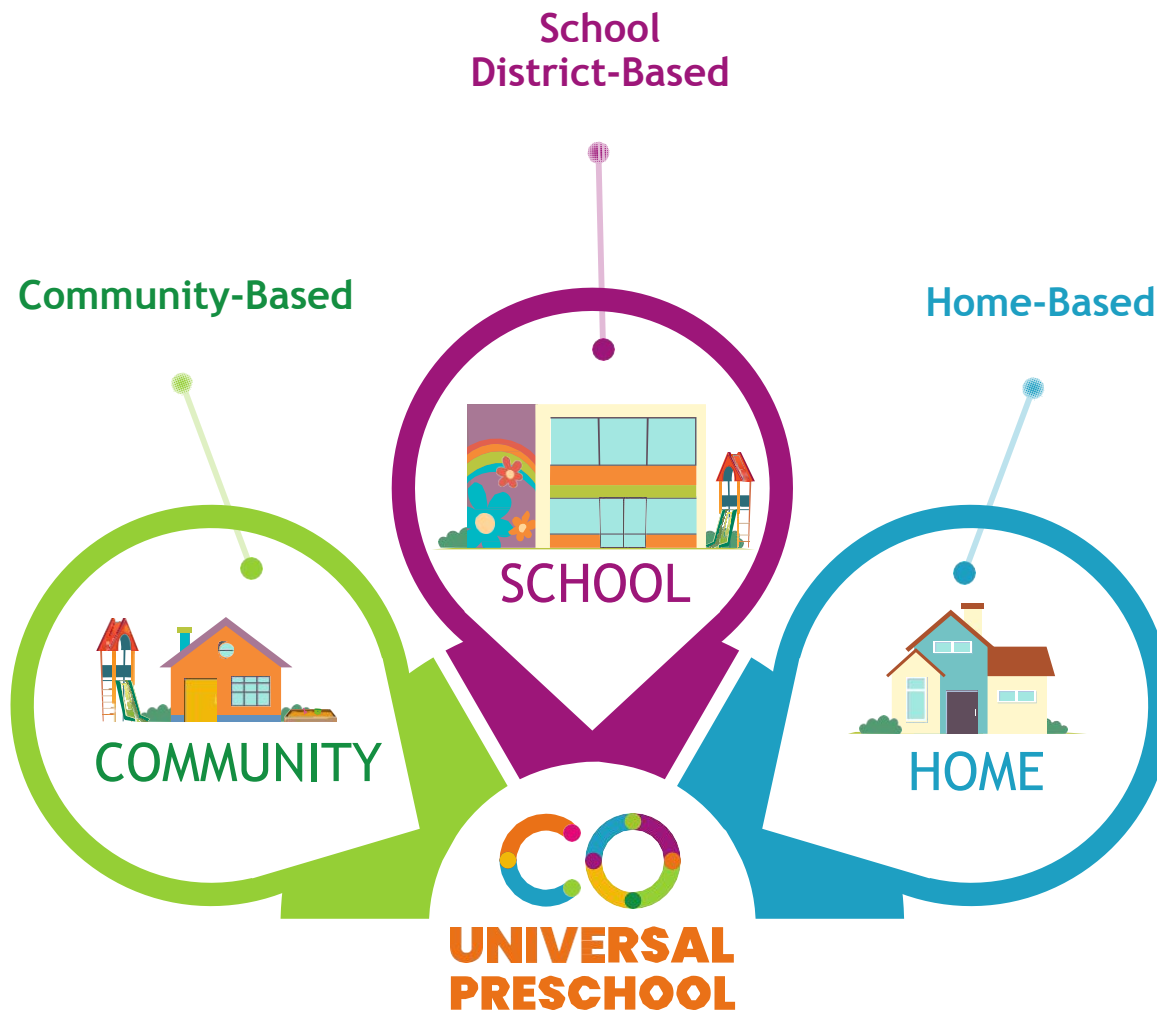
- ✓ Family must live in Colorado.
- ✓ The child must be 4 on October 1, 2025.
- ✓ The child should not be 5 or older on May 1, 2025.



# HOW DO I SELECT A PRESCHOOL?

## PROVIDER TYPES

There are three types of licensed providers participating in the Colorado Universal Preschool program:



Providers offer a variety of early childhood education models that cater to different preferences and needs.

These models include different instructional approaches, specialized support services, language offerings, and more.

Additionally, preschools often provide different hourly attendance options.

For the purposes of Colorado Universal Preschool, these are defined as:

- Part-time (10-15 hrs/wk)
- Half-day (15-30 hrs/wk)
- Full-day (30-40 hrs/wk)
- Extended day (40+ hrs/wk)

# QUALITY RATINGS

Choosing which provider fits your family's needs may feel overwhelming — but there are some tools to help you along the way.

[Colorado Shines](#) is a rating system that helps early learning programs to improve their quality year-round.

The Colorado Shines rating means that the program is licensed, in good standing with the State, meets health and safety standards, and is regularly monitored to evaluate a program's quality against a set of quality indicators.

This illustration shows what Colorado Shines considers in order to rate the quality of a child care and preschool programs.





# QUALITY RATINGS

Once a program receives a rating, Colorado Shines provides support to help the program continue to improve its quality.

All licensed programs in the state of Colorado that serve children birth to five are assigned a rating level. When programs start, they receive a rating level of 1 automatically. Being rated this level does not mean that a program isn't high quality! It only means the state does not have data to determine if the provider meets higher rating levels.

A “things to consider” checklist for searching for child care can be found at [bit.ly/checklistforchildcare](https://bit.ly/checklistforchildcare).

Families can also search a program's licensing history through [ColoradoShines.com](https://ColoradoShines.com). Here, you can see reports of inspection, complaints made against the program, investigations for child abuse/neglect, reported injuries at the program and any actions taken against the license.



Find info about a program at  
**COLORADOSHINES.COM**



# THINGS TO CONSIDER AS YOU SELECT YOUR TOP TEN PRESCHOOLS

Now that you know about Quality Ratings, here are some other considerations when picking preschools to be matched with.



**LOCATION** Think about whether you want a preschool near your home, workplace, or other convenient location where a family member can assist with pick-ups.



**QUALITY RATING** Use the Colorado Shines search feature to research a program's license history.



**UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL STATUS** Free Colorado Universal Preschool is only available through participating providers. Visit [upk.colorado.gov](http://upk.colorado.gov) to confirm whether your pre-selected preschool providers are enrolled in this program so that you can receive this benefit!



**VISIT** Reach out to the preschools on your list to gather more information. See if you can schedule a tour to get a look and feel for your potential preschool program.



**COST** Universal Preschool providers list all costs associated with attending their program on their provider profile. This includes out-of-pocket costs to your family, as well as fees throughout the year. Providers cannot charge you any fees not listed on their profile, and cannot charge you more than families not participating in Universal Preschool. Consider the price option that works best for your family!

After gathering the information above, review your notes and impressions. Select your top ten preschools based on the criteria that align with your priorities. By following these steps, you'll be well-prepared to make an informed decision about the best preschool for your child.

# HOW DO I ENROLL FOR UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL?



**Families looking to continue care with a known provider** can pre-register during the pre-registration window a child who is currently enrolled, who has a sibling currently enrolled, or who has a parent or guardian currently employed with a Universal Preschool Provider. Families can register at [upk.colorado.gov](http://upk.colorado.gov), select their current provider as their first choice, or work with their provider for a direct link. The pre-registration window will match families to their current provider as the first choice in their application if they meet the pre-registration eligibility criteria **AND** they must answer at least one of the continuity of care questions in their family application.

**Families looking for a new preschool provider** can visit [upk.colorado.gov](http://upk.colorado.gov) to browse high-quality, licensed providers, see if they qualify for additional hours, and register to be matched with one of their top 10 providers of choice during the matching rounds of enrollment.

**Families who have yet to register to Colorado Universal Preschool** will be able to work directly with a Universal Preschool Provider to enroll during the direct enrollment period, through the end of the school year, as space allows.

**Families with a child eligible for special education with an Individualized Education Program (IEP)** can register for IEP Direct Placement to align Universal Preschool with their child's IEP through [upk.colorado.gov](http://upk.colorado.gov).

**Families who need to fill out a paper application** can contact their LCO for support. Visit the [bit.ly/FindMyLCO](http://bit.ly/FindMyLCO) of our website to contact your LCO.

 [upk.colorado.gov](http://upk.colorado.gov)





# ENROLLMENT PROCESS: ESTIMATED 25-26 TIMELINE

## ESTIMATED KEY MILESTONES FOR 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR

### Pre-Registration:

- **December 17 - February 3:** Pre-registration application window for families requesting Continuity of Care placements, sibling attending or child of employee.
- **February 3 - 10:** Families must accept pre-registration matches.

### Family Matching:

- **December 17 - February 5:** Registration through [upk.Colorado.gov](https://upk.colorado.gov) opens for families.
- **February 10:** First family-to-provider matching round runs.
- **February 12 - February 21:** Providers review and accept or decline matches.
- **February 24:** Families notified of first round matches. Families must accept or decline by March 3.
- **March 10:** Second matching round runs.
- **March 12 - March 21:** Providers review and accept or decline matches.
- **March 24:** Families notified of second round matches. Families must accept or decline by March 31

### Non-IEP Direct Enrollment:

- **April 1 until the end of the 2025-26 school year:** Direct enrollment for non-IEP families directly through providers.

### Preschool Placement for Children with an Individualized Education Program (IEP):

- **December 2024 through the end of the 2025-26 school year:** When a family with a child with an IEP applies, a member of the student's IEP team or Special Education Administrative Unit (usually a school district) will work with the family to complete enrollment and placement.

# HOW DO I ENROLL FOR UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL?

## WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED WHEN REGISTERING:

### ADDRESS

During this step, you will enter your address or indicate whether your family is experiencing homelessness.

### CHILD NAME AND DATE OF BIRTH

During this step, you will enter the legal name of your child or children and their date of birth.

### NUMBER OF PEOPLE AT HOME

During this step, you will enter the number of people living in your household to determine if your child may qualify for additional hours of free preschool.

### ANNUAL INCOME

During this step, you will indicate your income will help determine if your child may qualify for additional hours of free preschool.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

During this step, you will be asked to provide an email, and an optional phone number to be contacted if there are any questions about your registration.

### RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILD

During this step, you will be asked to identify if you are the child's mother, father, or legal guardian.

### RACE AND ETHNICITY

During this step, you will be asked to indicate the race, ethnicity, and gender identity of your child so the program understands what children they are serving.



Free half-day preschool  
**REGARDLESS OF INCOME**





# HOW DO I ENROLL FOR UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL?

## WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED WHEN REGISTERING:

### SELECT PROVIDERS

- **Search and browse participating providers.** You can select up to your top ten providers and search them by address, name, or through map view. Not seeing results for providers, you may have selected? This may be due to the cut-off dates in your school district. Reach out to your LCO ([bit.ly/FindMyLCO](https://bit.ly/FindMyLCO)) for additional support.
  - **Entering the Universal Preschool Portal through a program link:**  
Some providers will send a “program link” for families to easily register with their program. When families enter the Universal Preschool Portal through a “program link”, the site will show that program as the pre-selected first choice. Families are encouraged to select additional programs.
- **Program Selections:** Families should select between 5 and 10 programs (unless you are submitting an application after the matching periods, at which point we will limit your selections 2 programs in a selected status). These can be from the same provider or across many providers. While 98% of applicants were matched to their first or second choice in the program’s first year, multiple provider selections increase the likelihood of a first round match.



# HOW DO I ENROLL FOR UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL?

## WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED WHEN REGISTERING:

### SELECT PROVIDERS (Continued)

- **Program Ranking:** Families are asked to rank selected programs from 1st choice to 10th choice (or 1st and 2nd choice after matching rounds). Program rank is used in the matching rounds to maximize the number of 1st choice selections for families.
- **Continuity of Care & Pre Registration::** The Colorado Universal Preschool Program aims to create continuity of care between providers and families. When families register within the Pre-Registration process, they are asked to select where the child is currently enrolled, where the child has a sibling enrolled with a provider, or a provider where a child has a parent as an employee. The pre-registration window will match families to their current provider as the first choice in their application if they meet the pre-registration eligibility criteria by answering yes to at least one of the continuity of care questions in the family application.

### FINAL SUBMISSION

- You will be asked to sign a data sharing agreement to allow staff and providers access to the information you provide. You can read that at [bit.ly/UPKDataSharing](https://bit.ly/UPKDataSharing).
- Once complete, you will receive an email confirming your registration was submitted.





# ACCEPTING & DECLINING A MATCH

## ACCEPTING A PRESCHOOL MATCH

Once you are matched with a preschool, you will receive a text or email to either accept or decline your match.

To view a child's match status, log in to your Universal Preschool account at [upk.colorado.gov](https://upk.colorado.gov), click on the child's name and scroll to the bottom of the page to view their match status.

- When you see “MATCHED” status, you can accept your matched program and provider.
- When you see “ACCEPTED” status, reach out to the provider to finalize the child's enrollment.
- When you see “ENROLLED” status, your placement is finalized with the provider.

! **Note that the child's placement is not confirmed until your provider has completed their enrollment process.**

## DECLINING A PRESCHOOL MATCH

If you were matched to one of your preferred provider preferences, but now would like to try and be matched to another, there's a process for that. Before you can do so, login to your Universal Preschool account at [upk.colorado.gov](https://upk.colorado.gov) and click “deny your match.”

! **Note that denying your match will require you to restart the process all over again, and does not guarantee placement at the provider you want most.**



**98% of families  
received their top two  
choices in 2023-24!**



# ACCEPTING & DECLINING A MATCH

+ Add providers

1st choice

Selected

Remove

Universal Preschool Provider 2

2300 Steele St, Denver, 80205

Full Day: 30-40 Hours per week

2nd choice

Decline

Accept

Stout Street Children's Center

721 19th St Unit B65, Denver, 80202

Full-Time: 30-40 Hours per week

Response deadline: July 31, 2024

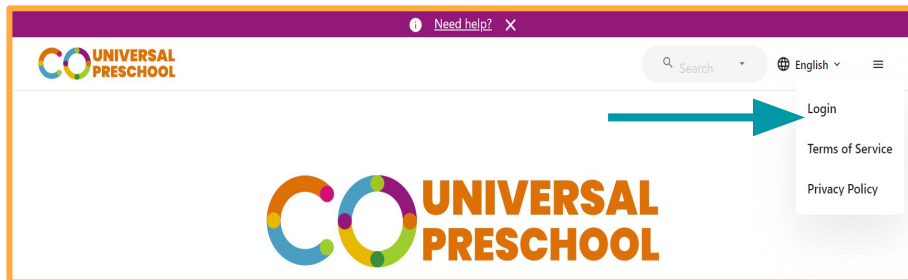
**Accept offered selection:**  
From the application you can accept or decline an offered selection, or easily remove selections in a selected status.

# HOW TO REVIEW YOUR PROVIDER PREFERENCES

**UPDATE**

1. Go to [upk.colorado.gov](https://upk.colorado.gov)
2. Login
3. From the dashboard select the child whose application you want to review update
4. Review your existing Providers and Programs to determine if you want to make any changes

1



2

**Login to your account**

Or, [create an account.](#)

Email or phone \*      Email \*

4

3

**Registration is now open for the 2025-26 school year**

Between December 17 and February 3, families can start their registration process based on the unique needs of the child and families.

**Enrollment Options**

- For families with a known provider to continue care for a child currently enrolled, with a sibling currently enrolled, or with a family member currently employed with a Universal Preschool Provider.
- Families just starting their path to preschool can browse more than 2,000 high-quality, licensed providers, and select their top 10 choices. Matching begins February 3.

**2025-2026 Colorado Universal Preschool | Test Twin**

Submitted March 7, 2025 at 12:17 PM

☒ Eligible

✓ Application submitted at April 10, 2024 at 7:27 PM

1st choice

**Denver Athletic Club Childcare Center**

1325 Glenarm Pl, Denver, 80204

[View profile](#)

🗓 Extended Day: 41+ Hours per week

2nd choice

**Colonnade Children's Center**

1244 Speer Blvd # 170, Denver, 80204

[View profile](#)

# HOW TO UPDATE YOUR PROVIDER PREFERENCES



If you want to make changes, log back into your dashboard (if you hadn't logged out of your previous session, you will need to refresh or log out and back in to ensure the changes take place)

## Test Child

### 2025-2026 Colorado Universal Preschool

✓ Application submitted March 7, 2025 at 12:17 PM

#### Preferences

1st choice

The Awesome School  
Denver, 80220  
Extended Day: 41+ Hours per week

2nd choice

Ash St Preschool  
Denver, 80246  
Full-Time: 30-40 Hours per week

+ Add provider

Selected

⋮

Withdraw choice

Click the 3 dots to withdraw your application from a provider

Click the up/down arrows to reorder your provider preference

You will now notice a button that allows you to add providers



# DIRECT ENROLLMENT OVERVIEW & TIPS

## WHAT IS DIRECT ENROLLMENT

Direct enrollment is the process a Provider and Family engages in to complete the matching process. The benefits of the direct enrollment process:

- Allows a family to work directly with a provider to complete the matching and enrollment process
- Designed to work in real-time so both families and providers can quickly achieve certainty

## IS THE APPLICATION DIFFERENT DURING DIRECT ENROLLMENT?

Good news! As a family, your application experience is virtually unchanged. Two important notes are listed below:

- For those families that submitted an application before August 1, you will notice that you will now be limited to having two providers in a selected status at any one time
- Additionally, we have given families the ability to **withdraw an acceptance** as long as the enrollment process has not been completed

## TIP #1: TALK TO PROVIDERS FIRST

The best way to ensure a seamless process is to make sure you are speaking with providers before you make and submit your selections.

## TIP #2: REVIEW & UPDATE YOUR APPLICATION

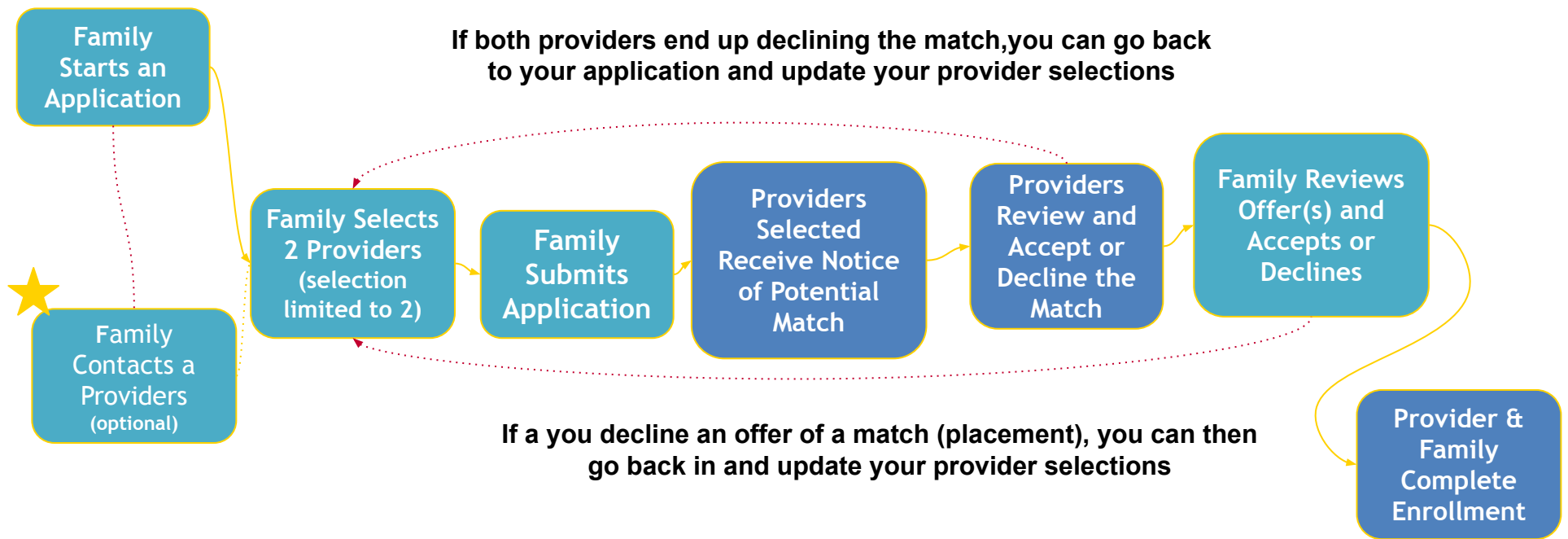
If you haven't completed enrollment with a Provider, make sure you are regularly checking your dashboard to ensure you are completing all necessary steps.

## TIP #3: NEED HELP? CONTACT YOUR LCO

If you are having difficulty finding a provider, please reach out to your Local Coordinating Organization ([bit.ly/FindMyLCO](https://bit.ly/FindMyLCO)) for additional support.

If you are having difficulty with your application, contact our HelpDesk [here](#).

# DIRECT ENROLLMENT PROCESS FLOW



★ Because this entire process could be completed in real-time, we recommend that you connect first with a Provider before initiating the process.



# LOCAL COORDINATING ORGANIZATIONS (LCOs)

## What Do LCOs Do?

- LCOs are your main point of contact for all things Universal Preschool.
- LCOs work to support families and child care providers who want to participate within your community.
- LCO staff members are available to help answer your questions, provide you with additional resources, and more.
  - For children enrolled in special education, LCOs will connect families to the main point of contact at CDEC and/or the Special Education Administrative Unit, in order to align preschool to the student's existing IEP services.
- LCOs can assist you in completing an application for Colorado Universal Preschool, locate a provider in your area, update your registration when things change, and provide a connection to other local early childhood resources in your community.

## How Do I Find My LCO?

- If you don't know who your LCO is, we have a tool on our website that can help!
- Visit the [bit.ly/FindMyLCO](https://bit.ly/FindMyLCO) of our website.
- Click on the blue box that says "Find My LCO."
- Find your county and/or school district on the spreadsheet that pops up.
- Your LCO's name and contact information can be viewed there.





# THANK YOU & STAY IN TOUCH!

We hope this handbook has been a valuable resource as you embark on an exciting journey in Colorado Universal Preschool. Remember, this process is not only about finding a preschool - it's about setting your child up for lifelong success.

If you have questions about the preschool provider's program, curriculum, hours of operation, or general provider information, contact your preschool provider directly.

Your local LCO can answer questions about your Universal Preschool funding, and connect you to other community resources.

Find your LCO by visiting [bit.ly/FindMyLCO](https://bit.ly/FindMyLCO).

## Connect with Colorado Universal Preschool!

✉ Submit Questions to [bit.ly/UPKQuestions](https://bit.ly/UPKQuestions)

☎ 303-866-5223

🌐 [upk.colorado.gov](https://upk.colorado.gov)



[Subscribe](#) to our Colorado Universal Preschool Newsletter!



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



## How do I pre-register with my known provider for continuity of care?

### 4 Steps:

1. Login to [upk.colorado.gov](https://upk.colorado.gov) or create an account if using a unique “provider link”.
2. Complete the first registration questions
3. Find your known provider, or if your provider sends a direct link, ensure they are pre-selected and ranked as your first choice.
4. Affirm that for your 1st selected provider one of the following applies
  - Your child is currently enrolled
  - Your child has a sibling enrolled with the provider.
  - Your child has a parent or guardian employed with the provider.

## Are there additional resources for funding?

Please see the [family support programs website for additional resources](#) for you and your family.

## How do I upload proof of income after I've submitted my application?

Please follow the steps in this [Guide for Families to Upload Income Documents in their Colorado Universal Preschool Application](#)

## Is my child eligible based on their birthday?

- Look up your child’s birthday and school district to see if they are eligible for Colorado Universal Preschool on [this new UPK Age Eligibility Lookup Tool](#). You can also search for your school district based on your county and zip-code.

## Should my 3 year old register for UPK?

- Please use your child’s birthday and school district to verify eligibility dates with [UPK Age Eligibility Lookup Tool](#).
- If you find your child’s birthday is “ineligible”, please reach out to your LCO to find other preschool services that may be available in your school district or by other providers through [bit.ly/FindMyLCO](https://bit.ly/FindMyLCO).
- *Note: This school year, school districts will resume primary registration for state funding 3-year-old programs through their targeted 3-year-old program. If your child is more than one year away from being eligible for kindergarten, please reach out to your provider of choice for potential preschool services.*

## Is my child with an IEP eligible to register for UPK?

- *Preschool aged children with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) are eligible for universal preschool funding and will be placed by their Special Education Administrative Unit (AU) or school district.*





## FREE HALF-DAY PRESCHOOL FOR ALL COLORADO KIDS IN THE YEAR BEFORE KINDERGARTEN

Enroll your child in preschool and help them be kindergarten ready!



**COLORADO**  
Department of Early Childhood





**COLORADO**  
Department of Early Childhood

# FAMILY HANDBOOK

SCHOOL YEAR  
2024 - 2025

**CO** UNIVERSAL  
PRESCHOOL

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# ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

Welcome to the Colorado Universal Preschool Handbook - a guide for families enrolling children in high-quality preschools! This handbook is designed to assist you in understanding Universal Preschool in Colorado. It covers topics such as choosing a preschool program, navigating enrollment, eligibility criteria, and other relevant inquiries.

A low-angle photograph of four young children reaching up towards a large, colorful beach ball. The children are smiling and appear to be in a park or outdoor setting with trees and a blue sky in the background. The beach ball has vertical stripes in yellow, green, blue, purple, red, and white. The children are wearing casual clothing: a pink shirt with heart patterns, a red and white striped shirt, an orange shirt, and a yellow shirt.

**LET'S GET STARTED!**



# WHY PRESCHOOL?

Research is clear: the window from birth to age five is critical in a child's development. The experiences children have in the first five years of their life lay the foundation for their future.

Preschool plays a key role in supporting child development, and its impacts are immediate. Research shows preschool leads directly to gains in early reading and math, as well as increased social and emotional skills. Providing your child with access to stimulating, fun activities through high-quality preschool is crucial to this development.

Preschool offers lasting advantages that extend beyond early childhood. Research indicates that children who attend preschool are less likely to face academic setbacks or become involved in criminal behavior as they grow older. Moreover, preschool attendees are more inclined to pursue higher education, enjoy improved long-term health outcomes, and achieve higher earnings in adulthood.

Recognizing the importance of early childhood education for children, families, and Colorado businesses both big and small, the Colorado Universal Preschool Program offers up to 15 hours of state funding for preschool services for all children in the year before kindergarten.

The Department of Early Childhood is committed to ensuring all children and all families are healthy, happy, and thriving!



## Preschool Improves:

- math
- early reading
- social and emotional skills



# WHAT IS COLORADO UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL?

Starting in August 2023, Colorado implemented Universal Preschool across the state. This voluntary program aims to ensure that every Colorado child in the year before they are eligible for kindergarten receives up to 15 hours of funded preschool each week for the August - May school year to attend a high-quality preschool of their choice.

One of the main features of Colorado's Universal Preschool Program, also known as Universal Pre-K (UPK), is the commitment to family choice. Through an innovative "mixed-delivery" program model, families are empowered to choose the "just-right" preschool setting for their child at a variety of program types.

Whether it's a licensed community-based, school-based, or home-based preschool provider, families can research, select, and be matched to the program that works best for them.

Universal Preschool is a big step in making early education available to all of Colorado's families. It's also a big step in making early education affordable.

Last year, families who participated in the program saved an average of \$600 a month, and \$6,000 a year, on preschool costs!



Up to 15 Hours of  
**FREE PRESCHOOL**  
for all Colorado children



# WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Children in Colorado can register for up to 15 hours per week of free, high-quality preschool in their year before kindergarten through Colorado's Universal Preschool Program, also known as Universal Pre-K (UPK).

- Families may qualify for more free hours based on a number of qualifying factors, per available funding, described further on page 8 and 9 and at [bit.ly/QualifyingFactors](https://bit.ly/QualifyingFactors).
- Depending on the provider, families have the option of paying for additional hours if desired.
- This school year, school districts will resume primary registration for state funding 3-year-old programs through their targeted 3-year-old program. If your child is more than one year away from being eligible for kindergarten, please reach out to your provider of choice for potential preschool services.
- Special Education Administrative Units (AUs) and school districts will place preschool aged children eligible for special education according to their Individualized Education Program (IEP) throughout the school year.



**ALL COLORADO CHILDREN**  
in the year before they start kindergarten  
are eligible for up to 15 hours per week!



# WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR ADDITIONAL HOURS?

Dependent upon available funding, additional hours may be available for children who are “low-income” (defined as household income at or below 270% of the federal poverty guidelines) and have a “qualifying factor” listed below.

These qualifying factors include:

- Child is identified as homeless and/or unhoused.
- Child is a multilingual, meaning a child who is learning two or more languages at the same time, or a child who is learning a second language while continuing to develop their first language.
- Child is eligible for special education with an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- Child is “in poverty,” defined as household income less than 100% of the federal poverty guidelines.
- Child is currently in the custody of a state supervised and county administered foster care home or in non-certified kinship care, meaning a child is being cared for by a relative or kin pursuant to [19-1-103\(102\), C.R.S.](#), who has a significant relationship with the child in circumstances when there is a safety concern by a county department of human or social services and where the relative or kin has not met the foster care certification requirements for a kinship foster care home or has chosen not to pursue that certification process.

To find out more information on qualifying factors, federal poverty guidelines, and more [bit.ly/QualifyingFactors](https://bit.ly/QualifyingFactors).

Household ‘low income’ <270% FPL



Unhoused

Multilingual

Foster/Kinship Care

Household ‘in poverty’ <100% FPL

Eligible for Special Education with an IEP

# WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR ADDITIONAL HOURS?

## INCOME ELIGIBILITY

Dependent upon available funding, age eligible children may qualify for additional hours if they are low income and have at least one qualifying factor. Low income is defined as the annual household income at or below 270% federal poverty. The low income eligibility qualifications described below.

- Annual household income is defined as:
  - the total combined pre-tax income received by all members of a household within a 12 month period.
  - this includes pre-tax wages, salaries, self-employment earnings, Social Security benefits, pensions, retirement income welfare payments, and income from other sources.
- Household size is defined as:
  - the number of people who occupy a housing unit as their usual place of residence.
  - For example, if you are a household with 2 adults and 1 child, your household size is "3."  
If your household consists of 3 adults and 3 children, please enter "6".

### Low-Income Vs. In Poverty

- To be considered 'low-income,' a child's parent or guardian's gross monthly income must not exceed 270% of the Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG), based on household size as illustrated in the table below.
- To be considered 'in poverty,' a child's parent or guardian's gross monthly income must not exceed 100% of the Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG), based on the household size as illustrated in the table below.

<b>FAMILY SIZE</b>	<b>100% FEDERAL POVERTY GUIDELINE (FPG) MONTHLY INCOME</b>	<b>270% FEDERAL POVERTY GUIDELINE (FPG) MONTHLY INCOME</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>\$1,215.00</b>	<b>\$3,280.50</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>\$1,643.33</b>	<b>\$4,437.00</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>\$2,071.67</b>	<b>\$5,593.50</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>\$2,500.00</b>	<b>\$6,750.00</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>\$2,928.33</b>	<b>\$7,906.50</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>\$3,356.67</b>	<b>\$9,063.00</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>\$3,785.00</b>	<b>\$10,219.50</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>\$4,213.33</b>	<b>\$11,376.00</b>
<b>EACH ADDITIONAL PERSON</b>	<b>\$428.33</b>	<b>\$1,156.60</b>

Note: These are the 2023 FPG guidelines because of the timing of the federal and state rulemaking process. 2024 FPG numbers are not finalized until September. Therefore, CDEC rules will follow 2023 rules for the 2024-2025 School Year.

# WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR ADDITIONAL HOURS?


## Family Portal View



An update in the family portal will now let you see how many hours your child is eligible for based on the questions you submitted in your application. You will be able to see each of your children, the applications you have submitted, and how many hours your child is eligible for.

An example for the test student below shows they are eligible for 15 hours per week.

**2024-2025 Colorado Universal Preschool | Heather Test**  
Submitted August 16, 2024 at 5:33 PM

 **Eligible**  
Approved for 15 Hours Per Week

Review

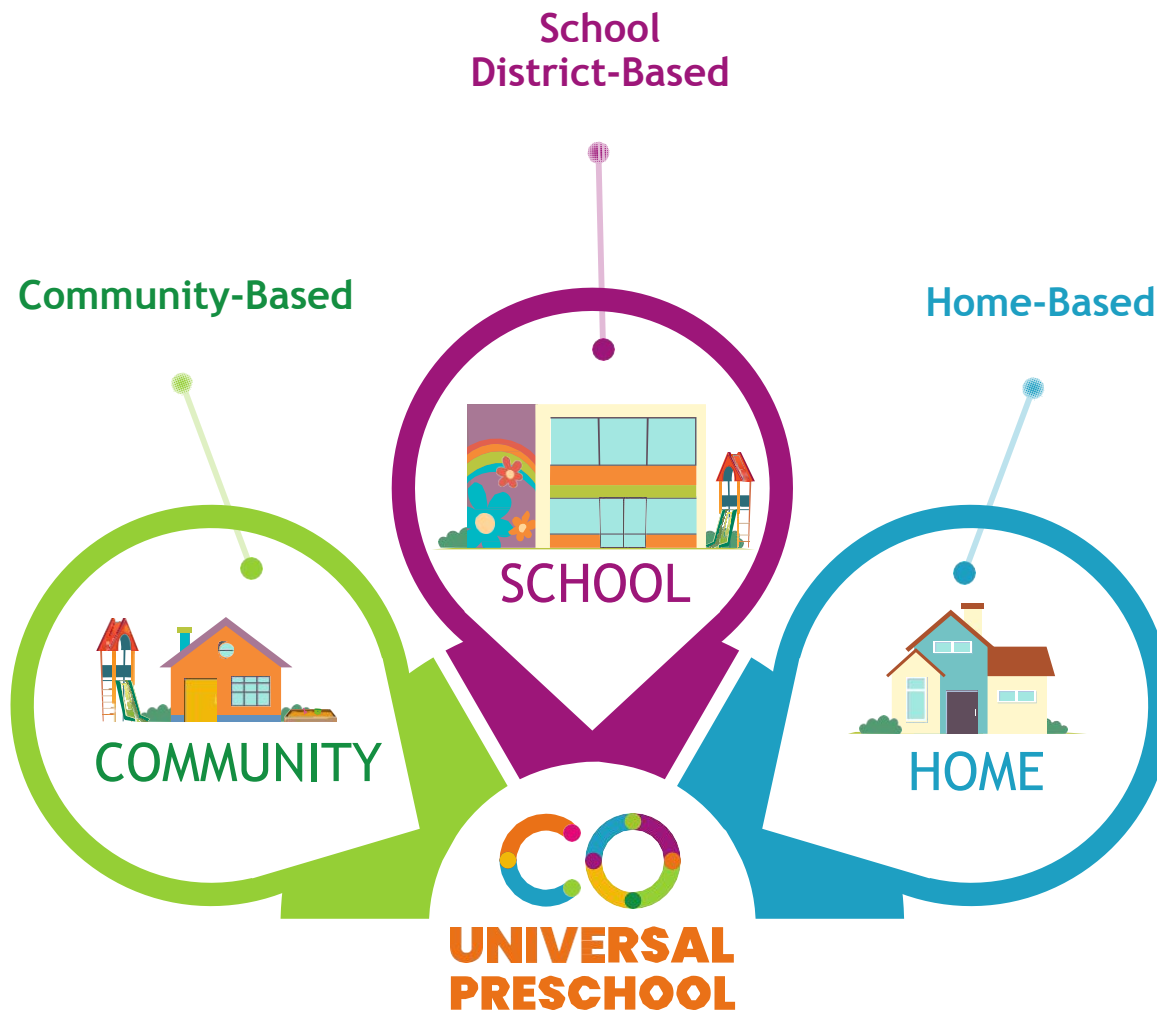




# HOW DO I SELECT A PRESCHOOL?

## PROVIDER TYPES

There are three types of licensed providers participating in the Colorado Universal Preschool program:



Providers offer a variety of early childhood education models that cater to different preferences and needs.

These models include different instructional approaches, specialized support services, language offerings, and more.

Additionally, preschools often provide different hourly attendance options.

For the purposes of Colorado Universal Preschool, these are defined as:

- Part-time (10-15 hrs/wk)
- Half-day (15-30 hrs/wk)
- Full-day (30-40 hrs/wk)
- Extended day (40+ hrs/wk)

# QUALITY RATINGS

Choosing which provider fits your family's needs may feel overwhelming — but there are some tools to help you along the way.

[Colorado Shines](#) is a rating system that helps early learning programs to improve their quality year-round.

The Colorado Shines rating means that the program is licensed, in good standing with the State, meets health and safety standards, and is regularly monitored to evaluate a program's quality against a set of quality indicators.

This illustration shows what Colorado Shines considers in order to rate the quality of a child care and preschool programs.



# QUALITY RATINGS

Once a program receives a rating, Colorado Shines provides support to help the program continue to improve its quality.

All licensed programs in the state of Colorado that serve children birth to five are assigned a rating level. When programs start, they receive a rating level of 1 automatically. Being rated this level does not mean that a program isn't high quality! It only means the state does not have data to determine if the provider meets higher rating levels.

A “things to consider” [checklist for searching for child care](#) can be found at [bit.ly/checklistforchildcare](https://bit.ly/checklistforchildcare).

Families can also search a program's licensing history through [ColoradoShines.com](https://ColoradoShines.com). Here, you can see reports of inspection, complaints made against the program, investigations for child abuse/neglect, reported injuries at the program and any actions taken against the license.



Find info about a program at  
**COLORADOSHINES.COM**





# THINGS TO CONSIDER AS YOU SELECT YOUR TOP TEN PRESCHOOLS

Now that you know about Quality Ratings, here are some other considerations when picking preschools to be matched with.



**LOCATION** Think about whether you want a preschool near your home, workplace, or other convenient location where a family member can assist with pick-ups.



**QUALITY RATING** Use the Colorado Shines search feature to research a program's license history.



**UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL STATUS** Free Colorado Universal Preschool is only available through participating providers. Visit [upk.colorado.gov](https://upk.colorado.gov) to confirm whether your pre-selected preschool providers are enrolled in this program so that you can receive this benefit!



**VISIT** Reach out to the preschools on your list to gather more information. See if you can schedule a tour to get a look and feel for your potential preschool program.



**COST** Universal Preschool providers list all costs associated with attending their program on their provider profile. This includes out-of-pocket costs to your family, as well as fees throughout the year. Providers cannot charge you any fees not listed on their profile, and cannot charge you more than families not participating in Universal Preschool. Consider the price option that works best for your family!

After gathering the information above, review your notes and impressions. Select your top ten preschools based on the criteria that align with your priorities. By following these steps, you'll be well-prepared to make an informed decision about the best preschool for your child.

# HOW DO I ENROLL FOR UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL?

**Families looking to continue care with a known provider** can pre-register a child who is currently enrolled, who has a sibling currently enrolled, or who has a parent or guardian currently employed with a Universal Preschool Provider. Families can register at [upk.colorado.gov](https://upk.colorado.gov), select their current provider as their first choice, or work with their provider for a direct link, from February 29 through March 28, 2024.

**Families looking for a new preschool provider** can visit [upk.colorado.gov](https://upk.colorado.gov) to browse 2,000+ high-quality, licensed providers, see if they qualify for additional hours, and register to be matched with one of their top 10 providers of choice. Registration opens February 29 with family and provider “matching rounds” expected in April and July.

**Families who have yet to register to Colorado Universal Preschool** by the end of July will be able to work directly with a Universal Preschool Provider to enroll, through the end of the school year, as space allows.

**Families with a child eligible for special education with an Individualized Education Program (IEP)** can register for IEP Direct Placement to align Universal Preschool with their child's IEP through [upk.colorado.gov](https://upk.colorado.gov).



[upk.colorado.gov](https://upk.colorado.gov)



# HOW DO I ENROLL FOR UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL?

## WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED WHEN REGISTERING:

### ADDRESS

During this step, you will enter your address or indicate whether your family is experiencing homelessness.

### CHILD NAME AND DATE OF BIRTH

During this step, you will enter the legal name of your child or children and their date of birth.

### NUMBER OF PEOPLE AT HOME

During this step, you will enter the number of people living in your household to determine if your child may qualify for additional hours of free preschool.

### ANNUAL INCOME

During this step, you will indicate your income will help determine if your child may qualify for additional hours of free preschool.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

During this step, you will be asked to provide an email, and an optional phone number to be contacted if there are any questions about your registration.

### RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILD

During this step, you will be asked to identify if you are the child's mother, father, or legal guardian.

### RACE AND ETHNICITY

During this step, you will be asked to indicate the race, ethnicity, and gender identity of your child so the program understands what children they are serving.



Free half-day preschool  
**REGARDLESS OF INCOME**





# HOW DO I ENROLL FOR UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL?

## WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED WHEN REGISTERING:

### SELECT PROVIDERS

- **Search and browse participating providers.** You can select up to your top ten providers and search them by address, name, or through map view. Not seeing results for providers, you may have selected? This may be due to the cut-off dates in your school district. Reach out to your LCO ([bit.ly/FindMyLCO](http://bit.ly/FindMyLCO)) for additional support.
  - **Entering the Universal Preschool Portal through a program link:** Some providers will send a “program link” for families to easily register with their program. When families enter the Universal Preschool Portal through a “program link”, the site will show that program as the pre-selected first choice. Families are encouraged to select additional programs.
- **Program Selections:** Families should select between 5 and 10 programs (unless you are submitting an application after August 1, at which point we will limit your selections 2 programs in a selected status). These can be from the same provider or across many providers. While 98% of applicants were matched to their first or second choice in the program’s first year, multiple provider selections increase the likelihood of a first round match.
- **Program Ranking:** Families are asked to rank selected programs from 1st choice to 10th choice (or 1st and 2nd choice after August 1). Program rank is used in the matching rounds to maximize the number of 1st choice selections for families.
- **Continuity of Care & Pre Registration::** The Colorado Universal Preschool Program aims to create continuity of care between providers and families. When families register within the Pre-Registration process, they are asked to select where the child is currently enrolled, where the child has a sibling enrolled with a provider, or a provider where a child has a parent as an employee.

### FINAL SUBMISSION

- You will be asked to sign a data sharing agreement to allow staff and providers access to the information you provide. You can read that at [bit.ly/UPKDataSharing](http://bit.ly/UPKDataSharing).
- Once complete, you will receive an email confirming your registration was submitted.



## EASY TO REGISTER



# ACCEPTING & DECLINING A MATCH

## ACCEPTING A PRESCHOOL MATCH

Once you are matched with a preschool, you will receive a text or email to either accept or decline your match.

To view your child's match status, log in to your Universal Preschool account at [upk.colorado.gov](https://upk.colorado.gov), click on your child's name and scroll to the bottom of the page to view their match status.

- When you see “MATCHED” status, you can accept your matched program and provider.
- When you see “ACCEPTED” status, reach out to the provider to finalize your child's enrollment.
- When you see “ENROLLED” status, your placement is finalized with the provider.

! **Note that your child's placement is not confirmed until your provider has completed their enrollment process.**

## DECLINING A PRESCHOOL MATCH

If you were matched to one of your preferred provider preferences, but now would like to try and be matched to another, there's a process for that. Before you can do so, login to your Universal Preschool account at [upk.colorado.gov](https://upk.colorado.gov) and click “deny your match.”

! **Note that denying your match will require you to restart the process all over again, and does not guarantee placement at the provider you want most.**

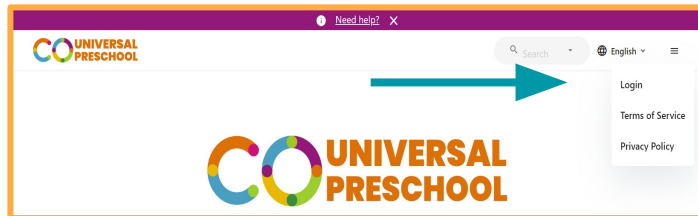


**98% of families  
received their top two  
choices in 2023-24!**

# HOW TO REVIEW YOUR PROVIDER PREFERENCES

1. Go to [upk.colorado.gov](https://upk.colorado.gov)
2. Login
3. From the dashboard select the child whose application you want to review update
4. Review your existing Providers and Programs to determine if you want to make any changes

1



2

## Login to your account

Or, create an account.

Email or phone \*

Email

Email \*

Login

4

3

Matches are now being made on a rolling basis.

To view your student's match, click on their application below and follow the instructions on the page. If you have received a match, you must ACCEPT your match by the deadline provided to secure your seat.



Test Child



Four Test

Submit and view applications

Submit and view applications

✓ Application submitted at April 10, 2024 at 7:27 PM

1st choice

**Denver Athletic Club Childcare Center**

1325 Glenarm Pl, Denver, 80204

[View profile](#)

📅 Extended Day: 41+ Hours per week

2nd choice

**Colonnade Children's Center**

1244 Speer Blvd # 170, Denver, 80204

[View profile](#)



# HOW TO UPDATE YOUR PROVIDER PREFERENCES

If you want to make changes:

1. Log back into your dashboard (if you hadn't logged out of your previous session, you will need to refresh or log out and back in to ensure the changes take place)
  - a. You will now notice a button that allows you to add providers, or
  - b. You can now change the order preference by clicking the arrows next to the Provider name

✓ [Application submitted at April 10, 2024 at 3:39 PM](#)

+ Add providers

## Add providers

Cancel

Save

Search by address   Search by name



Search

**You can select 10 total options**

Search by your address to see results near you.

Cancel

Save

# HOW TO UPDATE YOUR PROVIDER PREFERENCES

1. Log back into your dashboard (if you hadn't logged out of your previous session, you will need to refresh or log out and back in to ensure the changes take place)
  - a. You will now notice a button that allows you to add providers, or
  - b. You can now change the order preference by clicking the arrows next to the Provider name

2024-2025 Colorado Universal Preschool

✓ Application submitted at April 10, 2024 at 3:39 PM

+ Add providers

^ 1st choice v

Selected

Kindercare Learning Centers Llc- S. Kipling

975 S Kipling Pkwy, Lakewood, 80226

[View profile](#)

📅 Extended Day: 41+ Hours per week

^ 2nd choice v

Selected

Todd's Toddlers

1091 South Independence Ct Lakewood, 80226

# DIRECT ENROLLMENT OVERVIEW & TIPS

## WHAT IS DIRECT ENROLLMENT

Direct enrollment is the process a Provider and Family engages in to complete the matching process beginning August 1. The benefits of the direct enrollment process:

- Allows a family to work directly with a provider to complete the matching and enrollment process
- Designed to work in real-time so both families and providers can quickly achieve certainty

## IS ANYTHING CHANGING IN THE APPLICATION?

Good news! As a family, your application experience is virtually unchanged. Two important notes are listed below:

- For those families that submitted an application before August 1, you will notice that you will now be limited to having two providers in a selected status at any one time
- Additionally, we have given families the ability to **withdraw an acceptance** as long as the enrollment process has not been completed

## TIP #1: TALK TO PROVIDERS FIRST

The best way to ensure a seamless process is to make sure you are speaking with providers before you make and submit your selections.

## TIP #2: REVIEW & UPDATE YOUR APPLICATION

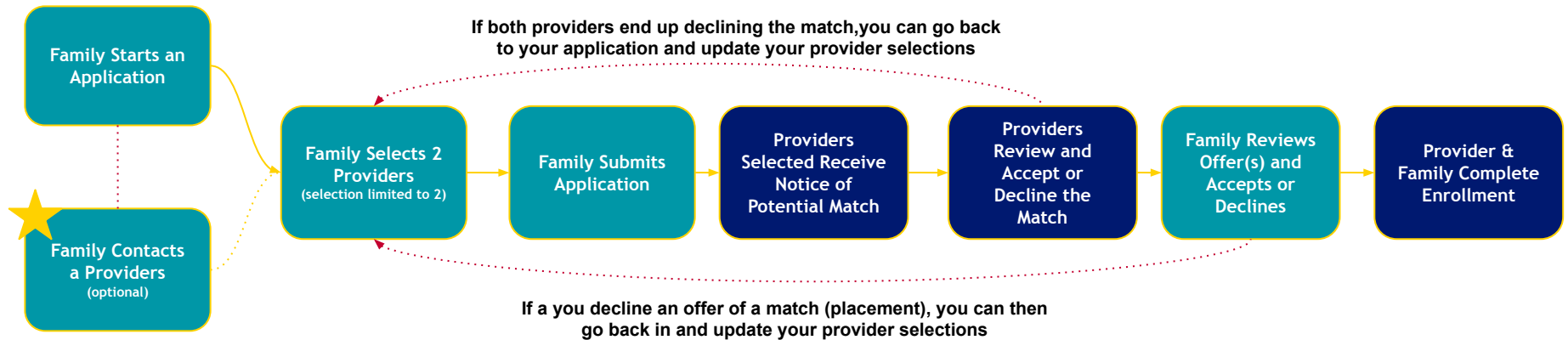
If you haven't completed enrollment with a Provider, make sure you are regularly checking your dashboard to ensure you are completing all necessary steps.

## TIP #3: NEED HELP? CONTACT YOUR LCO

If you are having difficulty finding a provider, please reach out to your Local Coordinating Organization ([bit.ly/FindMyLCO](https://bit.ly/FindMyLCO)) for additional support.



# DIRECT ENROLLMENT PROCESS FLOW



★ Because this entire process could be completed in real-time, we recommend that you connect first with a Provider before initiating the process.



# DIRECT ENROLLMENT: POTENTIAL ACTIONS

The screenshot shows the Universal Preschool website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the logo, a 'Need help?' link, a search bar, and language options. Below the navigation bar, there's a blue banner with instructions on how to accept or decline a match. The main content area lists two providers: 'Universal Preschool Provider 2' and 'Stout Street Children's Center'. Each provider entry has a '1st choice' or '2nd choice' dropdown menu. To the right of the provider list, there's a box containing buttons for 'Selected', 'Remove', 'Decline', and 'Accept'. An orange arrow points from the 'Accept' button to the text below the screenshot.

CO UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL

Need help?

Search

English

Accepting or Declining Your Match

If you are happy with your match, simply click **ACCEPT**. Once you do this, the status will change to Accepted and all other selections will change to Withdrawn. The provider will be notified of your decision and will reach out to you directly, outside of the BridgeCare platform, to begin the enrollment process.

If you do not want to proceed with your match, you have two options.

1. If you no longer want to be matched with the program now or in the future, click **DECLINE**. Once you do this, the status will change to Withdrawn and will not be considered for future matching rounds. The student will be run through the matching process again in round two for a chance to get a seat in one of the other selected programs, except any with status Declined or Withdrawn. Once you decline a match, you cannot be matched with that program again.

2. If you would like to take a chance on a placement at a higher-ranked program but maintain your ability to be re-matched with the current program, **DO NOT** accept or decline your match. Your application will automatically be re-entered through the matching algorithm in the second round. If you choose this option, you will lose your currently-matched seat and are not guaranteed to be matched with the same program again.

Please note: once you decline a match, you cannot be matched with that program again.

For more detailed instructions, click here for [UPK Colorado Match Review Instructions](#).

**IMPORTANT: Note for 3 Year Olds**

Three year old programs are limited by eligibility and district capacity. For example, only three year olds with qualifying factors are funded and this program is managed by school districts. The next steps in your child's enrollment will come from the matched school district, including verification of access to funds as well as location options. You **MUST ACCEPT** the match for the school district to initiate the eligibility review and receive a possible placement. Also, feel free to reach out to your participating district on their unique next steps.

+ Add providers

1st choice

Universal Preschool Provider 2  
2300 Steele St, Denver, 80205

Full Day: 30-40 Hours per week

2nd choice

Stout Street Children's Center  
721 19th St Unit B65, Denver, 80202

Full-Time: 30-40 Hours per week

Response deadline: July 31, 2024

Selected Remove

Decline Accept

## Accept offered selection:

From the application you can accept or decline an offered selection, or easily remove selections in a selected status.

# DIRECT ENROLLMENT: POTENTIAL ACTIONS

UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL

Need help?

Search English

Back to dashboard

**DD Donald Duck**  
August 27, 2020

ROUND 4 MATCHES HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED - If you have received a match, you must ACCEPT your match by 5:00 p.m on August 2 to secure your seat. Scroll to the bottom of this page to view your matches.

2023-2024 UPK Colorado

Start 2023-2024 UPK Colorado

2024-2025 Colorado Universal Preschool

Application submitted at July 18, 2024 at 9:02 AM

+ Add providers

1st choice

Universal Preschool Provider 2  
2300 Steele St, Denver, 80205  
Full Day: 30-40 Hours per week

Selected Remove

2nd choice

Stout Street Children's Center  
721 19th St Unit B65, Denver, 80202  
Full-Time: 30-40 Hours per week

Placed

## Add Providers:

If you are not yet matched, you can log in and add providers. Reminder, you can have only 2 programs in a *selected* status



# DIRECT ENROLLMENT: POTENTIAL ACTIONS

**CO UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL**

Need help? [×](#)

Search [English](#) [🌐](#)

### Accepting or Declining Your Match

If you are happy with your match, simply click **ACCEPT**. Once you do this, the status will change to Accepted and all other selections will change to Withdrawn. The provider will be notified of your decision and will reach out to you directly, outside of the BridgeCare platform, to begin the enrollment process.

If you do not want to proceed with your match, you have two options.

1. If you no longer want to be matched with the program now or in the future, click **DECLINE**. Once you do this, the status will change to Withdrawn and will not be considered for future matching rounds. The student will be run through the matching process again in round two for a chance to get a seat in one of the other selected programs, except any with status Declined or Withdrawn. Once you decline a match, you cannot be matched with that program again.
2. If you would like to take a chance on a placement at a higher-ranked program but maintain your ability to be re-matched with the current program, **DO NOT** accept or decline your match. Your application will automatically be re-entered through the matching algorithm in the second round. If you choose this option, you will lose your currently-matched seat and are not guaranteed to be matched with the same program again.

Please note: once you decline a match, you cannot be matched with that program again.

For more detailed instructions, click [here](#) for UPK Colorado Match Review Instructions.

#### IMPORTANT: Note for 3 Year Olds

Three year old programs are limited by eligibility and district capacity. For example, only three year olds with qualifying factors are funded and this program is managed by school districts. The next steps in your child's enrollment will come from the matched school district, including verification of access to funds as well as location options. You **MUST ACCEPT** the match for the school district to initiate the eligibility review and receive a possible placement. Also, feel free to reach out to your participating district on their unique next steps.

[+ Add providers](#)

1st choice	Selected	Remove
Universal Preschool Provider 2 2300 Steele St. Denver, 80205		
Full Day: 30-40 Hours per week		
2nd choice	Placed	Withdraw choice
Stout Street Children's Center 721 19th St Unit B65, Denver, 80202		
Full-Time: 30-40 Hours per week		

## Withdraw Placement:

If you are not yet enrolled, you can withdraw a selection and then select a different program by selecting the three dots next to the enrollment status.

# LOCAL COORDINATING ORGANIZATIONS (LCOs)

## LOCAL COORDINATING ORGANIZATIONS (LCOs)

### What Do LCOs Do?

- LCOs are your main point of contact for all things Universal Preschool.
- LCOs work to support families and child care providers who want to participate within your community.
- LCO staff members available to help answer your questions, provide you with additional resources, and more.
  - For children enrolled in special education, LCOs will connect families to the main point of contact at CDEC and/or the Special Education Administrative Unit, in order to align preschool to the student's existing IEP services.
- LCOs can assist you in completing an application for Colorado Universal Preschool, locate a provider in your area, update your registration when things change, and provide a connection to other local early childhood resources in your community.

### How Do I Find My LCO?

- If you don't know who your LCO is, we have a tool on our website that can help!
- Visit the [bit.ly/FindMyLCO](https://bit.ly/FindMyLCO) of our website.
- Click on the blue box that says "Find My LCO."
- Find your county and/or school district on the spreadsheet that pops up.
- Your LCO's name and contact information can be viewed there.



# THANK YOU & STAY IN TOUCH!

We hope this handbook has been a valuable resource as you embark on an exciting journey in Colorado Universal Preschool. Remember, this process is not only about finding a preschool - it's about setting your child up for lifelong success.

If you have questions about the preschool provider's program, curriculum, hours of operation, or general provider information, contact your preschool provider directly.

Your local LCO can answer questions about your Universal Preschool funding, and connect you to other community resources.

Find your LCO by visiting [bit.ly/FindMyLCO](https://bit.ly/FindMyLCO).

## Connect with Colorado Universal Preschool!

✉ Submit Questions to [bit.ly/UPKQuestions](https://bit.ly/UPKQuestions)

☎ 303-866-5223

🌐 [upk.colorado.gov](https://upk.colorado.gov)



[Subscribe](#) to our Colorado Universal Preschool Newsletter!





# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## How do I pre-register with my known provider for continuity of care?

### 4 Steps:

1. Login to [upk.colorado.gov](https://upk.colorado.gov) or create an account if using a unique “provider link”.
2. Complete the first registration questions
3. Find your known provider, or if your provider sends a direct link, ensure they are pre-selected and ranked as your first choice.
4. Affirm that for your 1st selected provider one of the following applies
  - Your child is currently enrolled
  - Your child has a sibling enrolled with the provider.
  - Your child has a parent or guardian employed with the provider.



[Watch This Short How To Video](#)

## Are there additional resources for funding?

Please see the [family support programs website for additional resources](#) for you and your family.

## Is my child eligible based on their birthday?

- Look up your child’s birthday and school district to see if they are eligible for Colorado Universal Preschool on [this new UPK Age Eligibility Lookup Tool](#). You can also search for your school district based on your county and zip-code.

## Should my 3 year old register for UPK?

- Not this year. Please use your child’s birthday and school district to see if verify eligibility dates with [UPK Age Eligibility Lookup Tool](#).
- If you find your child’s birthday is “ineligible”, please reach out to your LCO to find other preschool services that may be available in your school district or by other providers through [bit.ly/FindMyLCO](https://bit.ly/FindMyLCO).
- *Note: Preschool aged children with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) are eligible for universal preschool funding and will be placed by their Special Education Administrative Unit (AU) or school district.*

## Is my child with an IEP eligible to register for Universal Preschool?

- Preschool aged children with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) are eligible for universal preschool funding and will be placed by their Special Education Administrative Unit (AU) or school district.

# WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT GENERAL ENROLLMENT TIMELINES

## GENERAL APPLICATION ENROLLMENT DATES

All families can apply to Colorado Universal Preschool starting February 29, 2024. The general application will be open to all families, whether they qualify for the pre-registration enrollment, or are new to Colorado Universal Preschool. A few key timeline notes below:

- Families who have completed and submitted an application by April 20, 2024 will be eligible for this initial round of matching
- A second round of matching is scheduled for July 2024 for any families not registered by April 20, 2024 or for families who were not successfully matched during the initial round



# WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PRE-REGISTRATION AND GENERAL ENROLLMENT TIMELINES

## PRE-REGISTRATION AND INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (IEP) TIMELINES

### Enrollment Phase: Pre Registration

Pre-Registration is a new, focused effort to provide continuity of care for families with children already enrolled, children with siblings already enrolled, or children of an employee at a participating universal preschool provider.

As a reminder, from February 29 to March 28, 2024 only those families that meet the continuity of care, employee, or sibling priority criteria outlined in our pre-registration enrollment guidelines will be matched to providers.

Below is further detail about next steps and timelines related to the pre-registration process:

- **April 3: Continuity of Care Match announcement.** Families who have completed and submitted an application and identified themselves as pursuing continuity of care, will receive a notification of their matches on April 3, 2024.
- **April 20: Family deadline for first standard matching round.** If a family is not successfully matched during the initial pre-registration period may still be eligible for matching during the April matching round noted above, if they have other providers identified in their registration.

### Enrollment Phase: Individualized Educational Programs (IEP)

- Matching for students with IEPs is occurring on a rolling basis, beginning the third week in March 2024. As part of this process, Students are matched to programs based on the placement made by their AU (Administrative Unit). Please reach out to your AU for placement updates.





## FREE HALF-DAY PRESCHOOL FOR ALL COLORADO KIDS IN THE YEAR BEFORE KINDERGARTEN

Enroll your child in preschool and help them be kindergarten ready!



**COLORADO**  
Department of Early Childhood