

RI Pre-K Frequently Asked Questions

Question: How was the program in my community chosen?

Answer: Programs were identified through a competitive process that evaluates the organization's readiness to provide a high-quality prekindergarten program.

Question: Does my child qualify to attend a state funded RI Pre-K program?

Answer: To be eligible, a child must be 4 years of age by September 1st of the current year and reside in the community where the prekindergarten program is located. Children may only attend RI Pre-K programs that are within the city/town in which they reside.

Question: Is there transportation available?

Answer: No, transportation is not provided by RI Pre-K programs. However, transportation may be available at individual organizations or arranged with school programs.

Question: How are children selected to participate in RI Pre-K?

Answer:

1. The state holds a lottery for each RI Pre-K program and randomly selects children from the applications that have been submitted.
2. To enter their child into the lottery
 - a. Parents or legal guardians can (1) apply online (2) pick up an application at one of the RI Pre-K sites or (3) download an application from the RIDE website. Applications are available in English and Spanish.
 - b. Parents or legal guardians must fill out the entire application. Applications must be completed online or directly to a participating RI Pre-K program. The Department of Education does not accept student applications for RI Pre-K.
 - c. There is a deadline for completing online or delivering the application to the programs which is noted on the application.
 - d. Parents or legal guardians may only apply once per child.

Question: How will I know if my child is chosen to attend an RI Pre-K classroom?

Answer: After the lottery has been run, the RI Pre-K program will send each applicant an email notification (selected or not selected) using the email address entered on the lottery application. The RI Department of Education does not notify families.

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Question: Can anyone apply?

Answer: Yes, the RI Pre-K lottery is open to all residents in which the RI Pre-K programs are located. Again, the child must be 4 years of age by September 1st of the current year AND reside in the community where the RI Pre-K program is located.

Question: If my family income does not impact my child's eligibility to enter the RI Pre-K lottery, why do I need to provide income documentation verifying my income prior to enrollment?

Answer: Income verification is necessary to ensure that income requirements for the RI Pre-K are met, and that classrooms reflect the income distribution of the community where they are located. Income information entered on the application will be verified once the child has been selected by the lottery. If the information is found to be inaccurate, this may affect eligibility.

Question: Is there a waitlist if my child doesn't get in? Will I be notified if my child doesn't get in?

Answer: There is a waiting list for the RI Pre-K programs. Each RI Pre-K site maintains a list of names for children who have been placed on their waitlist. If a selected child does not attend a program, it is possible that your child will be chosen for a seat, should one become available. The RI Pre-K program will contact families/guardians based on seat availability and selection order. As enrollment is dynamic, it will be difficult for programs to let families know where their child is on the waitlist.

Question: Can I apply more than once?

Answer: No, children may only be entered into the RI Pre-K lottery one time. If multiple programs exist in your city, you may select a maximum of 3 programs and rank those programs as your first, second and third preferences. If selected during the lottery, enrollment will be offered for only one site. If your child is not selected, they will be placed on the waitlist of the first choice only, not all 3 locations.

Question: When does the RI Pre-K program begin and end?

Answer: The state requires that the school year begins no later than immediately following Labor Day. Programs have the choice of beginning earlier. The RI Pre-K program then sets its own school calendar and runs a full day (6 hour) program for 180 days.

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Question: How long is the program day? Is there before-/after-care? Do I have to pay before and after care?

Answer: The RI Pre-K program is a 6-hour day. The RI Pre-K funding does not include or pay for before or after care. However, if a family requires that service, all RI Pre-K programs support families in accessing before/after care, and many accept state childcare assistance funds or work in cooperation with a licensed program that does. Families should contact programs to learn more about the services offered.

Question: Is preference given to families who previously participated in RI Pre-K?

Answer: No. Enrollment is determined solely through selection in the state lottery process.

Question: If I have twins, do I need to fill out two applications?

Answer: No. For families with multiples, there is the option to add an eligible child within a single application. As a result, only one application per family is required, and children will be selected together.

Question: My child has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Can they apply to the RI Pre-K?

Answer: RI Pre-K is a general education classroom intended to support the learning and developmental needs of all children. If your child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), you should contact the district office of special education where you live to discuss your child's placement and services.

Question: My child's primary language is not English. Can they attend RI Pre-K if selected?

Answer: Yes. RI Pre-K supports the learning and development of all children, including children whose primary language is not English.