



Preschool For All and Providers: Questions and Answers

WHAT IS PRESCHOOL FOR ALL?

Preschool For All is a voluntary, high-quality early learning program designed to give children the social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive skills they need to succeed in school and life. Preschool For All programs will offer preschool education by bachelor's-degreed teachers in settings that accommodate families' scheduling needs. Preschool For All will also support a range of early learning opportunities for at-risk children between birth and age three.

WHAT WILL PRESCHOOL FOR ALL DO?

Build on Illinois' success: Preschool For All builds on and enhances the existing child care, Head Start, and State Prekindergarten in addition to making funds available to a wider array of early childhood programs. Preschool For All promotes an integrated approach to early care and education. Current collaborative models such as Head Start/Child Care and PreK/Child Care Collaborations will be at the core of Preschool For All.

Expand access: For families with 3- and 4-year-olds, Preschool For All makes high-quality, affordable programs available to all on a voluntary basis. New Preschool For All programs will be established where current capacity does not meet the need for services. For families with infants and toddlers, Preschool For All is targeted to children who are at risk and will increase overall funding to serve more families. Parent choice is a key component of Preschool For All, with families deciding on the provider, setting and schedule that works best for them.

Enhance the quality of existing programs: Where possible, current capacity in a geographic area will be used before adding new classrooms. Preschool For All offers existing programs supports and assistance to meet new standards, and assures families that services are of high quality.

HOW WILL PRESCHOOL FOR ALL PROVIDERS BENEFIT?

- Funds to attract & retain well-trained staff
- Funds to equip classrooms and outdoor environments
- Technical assistance, training, and professional development to maintain quality
- Resources for parent education, involvement, and family support
- Consultation services to promote social & emotional development and manage difficult behaviors in the classroom
- The Preschool For All brand that signals high-quality services

WHAT DOES PRESCHOOL FOR ALL LOOK LIKE?

High quality

- At least 3 hours of high-quality preschool education delivered in half-day, school-day and/or full-day settings, depending on parent need. Eligible providers will apply for funding based on the proposed number of hours and days of programming per week they wish to offer. At a minimum,

Preschool For All programs will provide 9 hours of preschool instruction in at least three sessions per week, with a maximum of 15 hours of preschool instruction offered five sessions per week.

- The Illinois Early Learning Standards, which describe what every child needs to know and be able to do and are aligned with both the K-12 Illinois Learning Standards and Head Start Performance Standards, will be achieved through research-based curricula
- Standards to guide programs and recognize the cultural and linguistic needs and interests of each child
- Child-to-staff ratio no higher than 1 to 10 (two staff per 20 children), with a lower ratio for classrooms that include mostly younger children or children with special needs, e.g. language differences, multiple risk factors, and disabilities
- Appropriately equipped and designed indoor and outdoor environments
- Developmental screening, on-going curriculum-embedded assessment by teachers, student progress plans to be shared with parents, and program evaluation

Well-qualified staff:

- Teachers, family resource coordinators and administrators with bachelor's degrees, assistant teachers with associate degrees and all having specialized training in early childhood education
- Professional development resources
- Program quality assurance, including program monitoring, on-site technical assistance and training.

Comprehensive:

- Staff dedicated to providing educational, involvement, and support opportunities for parents, guardians, and other family members and/or caregivers of participating children
- Linkages to and collaboration with community health, social services, and other resources for all children, and more intensive comprehensive services for the highest risk children
- Early childhood consultants to assist preschool staff to address difficult behaviors in the classroom and to partner with parents to promote the social-emotional health and overall development of children
- Planned transitions from home and birth-to-three services and to elementary school

HOW CAN PROGRAMS PARTICIPATE?

A broad range of service providers – non-profit and for-profit child care centers and licensed homes, school district PreK and Early Childhood Special Ed, Head Start, public and private nursery schools, park districts etc. – will apply directly for Preschool For All funds. Providers do not have to meet Preschool For All program standards prior to submitting an application.

Preschool For All funds will be added to existing program budgets to enable these programs to provide preschool education that meets Preschool For All standards. Costs will be calculated on the additional expense of upgrading existing programs to Preschool For All standards. Each program's costs for serving 3- and 4-year-old children will be different, depending on how much a program needs to reach

Preschool For All quality standards. Replacing current funding with Preschool For All funds will be prohibited.

WHAT DOES PRESCHOOL FOR ALL PROVIDE FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS?

Preschool For All Birth to Three programs will provide early, continuous, intensive and comprehensive child development and family support services to help families build a strong foundation for learning in order to prepare children for later school success.

Preschool For All Birth to Three programs will serve children who are determined to be at-risk for school failure because they are affected by language, economic, social and other types of disadvantages. Children from families with incomes less than 50% of the current state median income (current Child Care Assistance Program eligibility) will be eligible. Families who do not meet income guidelines but with multiple risk factors (e.g. limited parental education, language barriers, substance abuse issues, etc.) will also be eligible.

Preschool For All Birth to Three services will build on existing programs and respond to parent need for a diverse array of program models. Preschool For All programs will be eligible for mental health consultation services if desired. Programs will apply for funding to implement research-based models that have demonstrated positive outcomes. Approved models include:

- Baby TALK
- Early Head Start (center-based and combination home and center-based option)
- Healthy Families
- Parents as Teachers
- Enhanced services, such as Doula or others identified by applicants.

HOW CAN BIRTH TO THREE PROGRAMS PARTICIPATE?

Programs with demonstrated competence in serving families with young children can apply for funds to:

- Increase number of families served in existing programs using approved models
- Enhance existing program to one of the approved models
- Provide further enhancement to an already approved program
- Pilot and evaluate innovative program models

Each program's cost will be different, depending on how much a program needs to reach Preschool For All Birth to Three quality standards.

Programs implementing new or enhanced models may receive one-time start-up grants and more intensive technical assistance.

**For more information on Preschool For All,
contact Ireta Gasner at
The Ounce of Prevention Fund, 312/922-3863 or igasner@ounceofprevention.org**

The Ounce of Prevention Fund
122 S. Michigan, Suite 2050, Chicago IL 60603
www.ounceofprevention.org

