

2021-2022  
Pre-K Program  
Eligibility



# Pre-K Program Eligibility

## Definition of “Economically Disadvantaged”

*Children in Louisiana are eligible for public pre-K programs if they live at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, are in foster care, and/or are experiencing homelessness.*

- Children in families with incomes at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level are considered “economically disadvantaged” and are therefore eligible for one of Louisiana’s pre-K programs.
- Children in foster care and children experiencing homelessness are categorically eligible for publicly-funded seats.
- Children with special needs and children whose home language is not English may be eligible to receive services but must still qualify to participate in publicly-funded programs. These children may be able to be served through other funding sources such as Title I, 8(g), and IDEA.

# Pre-K Program Eligibility

## Important Eligibility Reminders

*The only determinants of eligibility for pre-K are income and age.*

- LEAs/sites should not deem a child ineligible for a pre-K seat for reasons other than income and age. This includes medical issues (including toilet training), guardianship, clothing, transportation, religion, ethnicity, cultural practices, and/or language barriers.
- Should an LEA/site consider it necessary to prevent a child from enrolling or consider disenrolling a child for any reason, they must communicate with the child's guardian what service limitations they may face, e.g. due to medical issues or language barriers, explain to the child's guardian what the site's plan is for supporting this child to receive educational services, and, in collaboration with the family, document in writing how the site will best meet the child's needs.

# Pre-K Program Eligibility Overview

Pre-K program serve children who meet certain eligibility criteria.

- ✓ Age
- ✓ Income
- ✓ Applicable Documentation for Immunizations

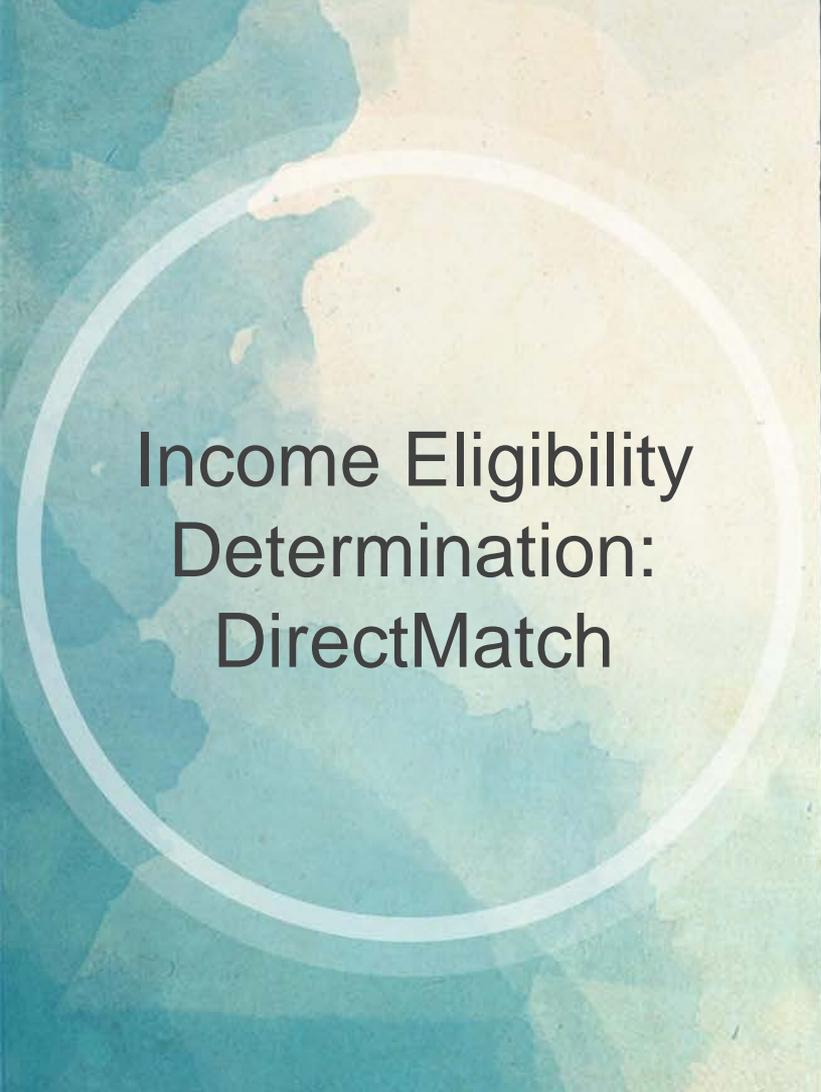
# Pre-K Program Eligibility

## Age Requirement

**Children must be 4-years-old by September 30 of their prekindergarten year.**

Use the child's state-issued or foreign birth certificate, or current passport or visa to:

- Verify date of birth, and
- Verify that the person completing the application is the person listed on the birth certificate; or
- Verify court-issued documentation showing permanent or temporary legal custody, such as
  - Custody Judgments
  - Child Placement Agreement from DCFS
  - Provisional Custody by Mandate
  - Military Power of Attorney
  - Non-Legal Custodian Affidavit



Income Eligibility  
Determination:  
DirectMatch



# Income Eligibility Determination

## DirectMatch Confidentiality

- Information included in eScholar is collected for the purpose of doing state and federal reporting, making data available to educators and other stakeholders, and providing services to students.
- Student data are protected by state and federal laws and must be maintained in a confidential manner at all times. Unauthorized viewing, reproduction/copying, and/or distribution of any student record or information outside the intended and approved use are strictly prohibited.
- Users violating the authorized use of the system and/or data will lose access privileges to the system and/or data. Illegal access or misuse of the information will be reported to the proper authority.

# Income Eligibility Determination

## eScholar DirectMatch

*In 2021-2022, the Department is requiring that Lead Agencies use DirectMatch to determine if a child is eligible for services.*

- When logging into the eScholar Direct Match, users should access the login URL <https://louisianasecureid.escholar.com> and enter login information provide by the LDOE ECE team.
- The Department is reaching out to networks to ensure that they have appropriate access and that it is assigned to the correct users. Each community network is allowed to identify two users.
- Once logged in, users will be able to submit student data in the system to determine if a child is eligible.
- One on one technical assistance is available for DirectMatch users. Please sign up for a time [here](#).

*If you do not currently have credentials to access the DirectMatch system or are unsure of how to log on, please reach out to [Lindsey.Bradford@la.gov](mailto:Lindsey.Bradford@la.gov)*



# Alternatives to DirectMatch

# Alternatives to Direct Match

## Allowable Proof of Income

*During the eligibility determination process, at least one form of income verification documentation must be reviewed if the DirectMatch process is not used.*

Parents must provide ONE of the following:

- Check Stubs
- SNAP/Food Stamps Documentation
- An official letter from your employer stating all of the following:
  - Where parent/guardian is employed
  - Hourly rate of pay
  - The average number of hours parent/guardian works per week.
- Unemployment Benefits – must submit a Monetary Determination letter from the Workforce Commission
- A statement from the Social Security Administration verifying that the child listed on the application is a recipient of SSI benefits, which must be accompanied by two current check stubs.

# Alternatives to Direct Match

## Allowable Documentation

*During the eligibility determination process, at least one form of income verification documentation must be reviewed if and when the DirectMatch process is not used.*

Parents must provide ONE of the following:

- Current foster care placement agreement from DCFS
- Families in a temporary living arrangement due to loss of housing or economic hardship (homeless) should be substantiated using the LEA-defined procedures for verifying homeless status.
- Tax documentation is allowable only if no other form of income verification documentation exists.
- Statement of No Income
- Declaration of Employment Form

# Alternatives to Direct Match

## Allowable Documentation

- Collect two (2) consecutive check stubs for the current year (within 2 months from the date they are completing the application) for each parent or caregiver in the home.
- Income verification is ONLY based on the REGULAR or BASE PAY rate.
- Eligibility is based on gross HOUSEHOLD income. Therefore, if there are 2 or more adults contributing to the financial needs of the family, all of them must provide proof of income.

# Alternatives to Direct Match

## Income Limits

What does 200% of the Federal Poverty Level look like?

<b>Federal Income Limits: 200% FPL</b> <i>(Effective January 2021 for 2021-2022 Enrollment)</i>		
<b>Family Size</b>	<b>Gross Annual Income</b>	<b>Gross Monthly Income</b>
2	\$34,840	\$2,903
3	\$43,920	\$3,660
4	\$53,000	\$4,417
5	\$62,080	\$5,173
6	\$71,160	\$5,930
7	\$80,240	\$6,687

# Alternatives to Direct Match

## Translating Income into a Monthly Figure

<u>Monthly Income Calculation Table</u>	
Pay Period	Formula
Paid hourly	$(\text{Hourly wage} \times 40 \text{ hours per week}) \times 4.33$
Paid monthly, <i>same gross pay each month</i>	Use gross salary
Paid same gross amount exactly 2 times per month ( <i>e.g., 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of month</i> )	$\text{Gross salary} \times 2$
Paid same gross amount every 2 weeks ( <i>e.g., every other Friday</i> )	$(\text{Gross salary} / 2) \times 4.33$
Paid weekly	$\text{Gross salary} \times 4.33$

# Alternatives to Direct Match

## Calculating Monthly Income

- ✓ Income is most consistently and accurately calculated using the HOURLY RATE formula.
- ✓ Gross income must be calculated using a 40-hour week.

Example: If Mrs. Smith provides a check stub showing an hourly rate of \$25, you will calculate it as  $(\$25 \times 40) \times 4.33$ . Mrs. Smith's monthly income is \$4,330. She is a single mom and has one child, (family size of 2), therefore she would NOT be eligible.

- ✓ If the parent/guardian claims that they do not work 40 hours per week, they will need to get a letter from their employer indicating how many hours they regularly work. You may then recalculate their income based on that amount.

Example: You receive a letter which shows Mrs. Smith only works 20 hours per week. You may calculate her income as  $(\$25 \times 20) \times 4.33$  which equals \$2,165 which makes her child eligible.

# Alternatives to Direct Match SNAP Benefits

**Families on SNAP are categorically eligible.** Documentation must include child's name and effective dates. There are several different forms for this.

- The *SNAP Change/Closure* letter sent from DCFS. This letter will include an expiration date on the first page and a full listing of household members on the following pages.
- The *CAFÉ Case Detail* report will include current certification dates as well as a list of included family members. This report is available via the CAFÉ portal and can be accessed on most smartphones.

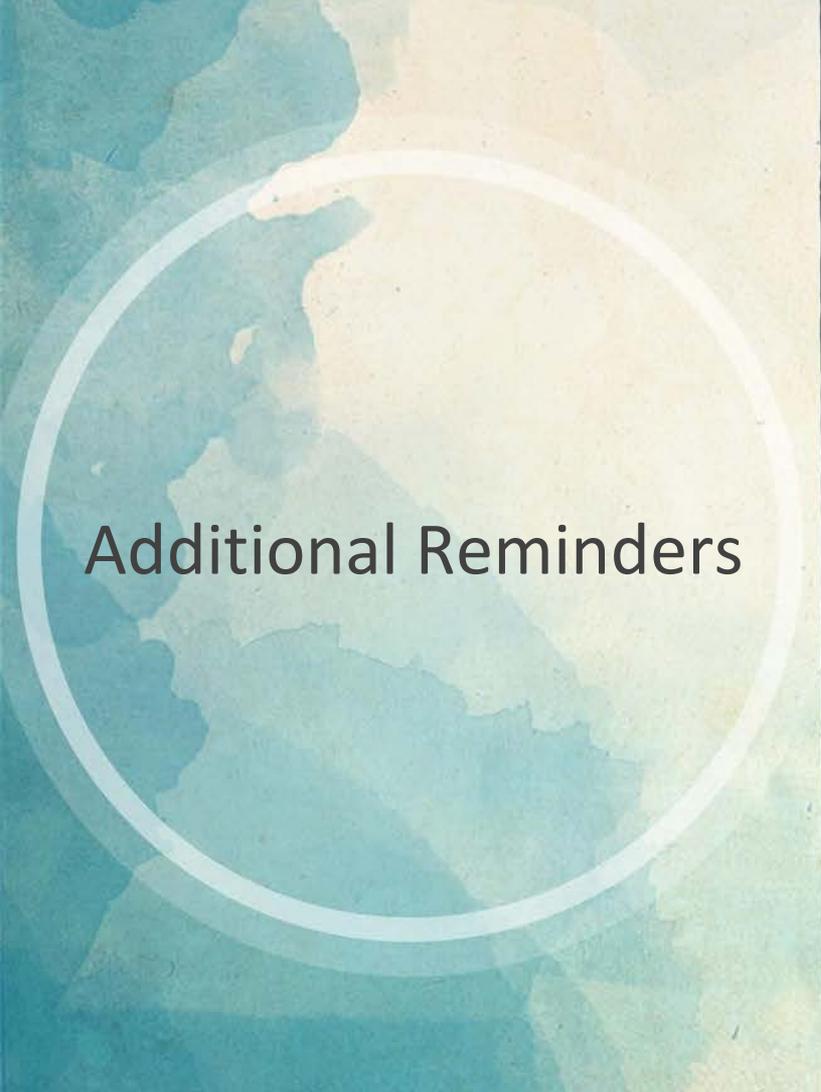
**The Louisiana Purchase card is not accepted as valid proof that the family is a SNAP participant.**

# Alternatives to Direct Match

## Unallowable Proof of Income

The following list includes items that **ARE NOT** allowable for income verification:

- ❑ W-2 or 1099 forms OR tax returns as a *primary* source. These may only be used if no other form of income documentation exists.
- ❑ Medicaid Documentation
- ❑ Child Support as an independent source (UNLESS it is the sole source of income AND is court ordered. MUST provide court documents as well as a letter stating that no other income is received).



## Additional Reminders



# Additional Reminders

## Immunization Requirements

**Children must be current on all age-appropriate immunizations pursuant to R.S 17:170.**

**School Entry Complete-Minimum:**

4-DTP, 3-Polio (last DTP and Polio after 4th birthday),

2-MMR after 1st birthday

3-Hep B

\*Child Care Center: Hib also required

\*\* Beginning Aug 2003, Varicella (chicken pox) vaccine or history of the disease is required for school and child care entry.

**More information can be found at <https://lalinks.org/linksweb/>.**

# Additional Reminders

## No Shots, No School... Not True

Children may not be determined ineligible for a publicly funded pre-K program due to lack of immunizations.

- If a family cannot afford to pay for their child's shots, families can receive free immunizations through [Shots for Tots](#).
- If a child has never been vaccinated, but parents would like for them to, they may be able to follow the [accelerated schedule for children starting immunizations late](#). They should ask their pediatrician for more information.
- If a child is unvaccinated due to medical, religious, or philosophical beliefs, parents may claim exemption from the immunization requirements by submitting the [Statement of Exemption](#) form.

# Additional Reminders

## Contact Information

**For all questions related to pre-K programs and eligibility determination:**

Lindsey Bradford

[Lindsey.Bradford@la.gov](mailto:Lindsey.Bradford@la.gov)

or

Amanda Colon

[Amanda.Colon@la.gov](mailto:Amanda.Colon@la.gov)