North Carolina Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K) Program Requirements and Guidance

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NORTH CAROLINA NC Pre-K Prekindergarten Program

NC Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K) Program Requirements and Guidance

Table of Contents

Section 1: Introduction 1-1

Section 2: The County/Region NC Pre-K Committee

A. Purpose of the NC Pre-K Committee 2-1
B. Committee Structure and Meetings 2-1
C. Committee Authority and Responsibilities 2-9
D. Additional Functions-Committee and Contracting Agency 2-10
E. Reporting Program Progress 2-11
F. NC Pre-K Standardized Site Selection Process 2-12

Section 3: The NC Pre-K Child

A. NC Pre-K Child Application and Enrollment Eligibility 3-1
B. NC Pre-K Program Eligibility Scorecard 3-5
C. Eligibility for Families at or below 75% of State Median Income 3-6
D. Temporary Assistance to Needy Families/Maintenance of Effort 3-6
E. Family and Income Definitions & Guidance 3-7
F. Additional Enrollment Eligibility Criteria 3-9
G. Children with Unique Needs/Challenging Behaviors 3-12
H. Other Required Data Collection (Non-NC Pre-K) 3-14

Section 4: The NC Pre-K Site

A. Facility Requirements 4-1
B. Official NC Pre-K Week and Year 4-3
C. Program Attendance Policy 4-5
D. Nutrition 4-7
E. Transportation Fees 4-8
F. Wrap-around Services 4-8
G. Religious Activities 4-8
H. Remote Learning 4-9

Section 5: The NC Pre-K Classroom

A. Child Health Assessments 5-1
B. Developmental Screening 5-2

C. Early Learning Standards and Curricula 5-3
D. Formative Assessments 5-7
E. Staff-to-Child Ratio and Class Size 5-9
F. Mixed-Age Classrooms 5-10
G. Rest Time 5-10
H. Indoor and Outdoor Learning Environments 5-11
I. Family Engagement 5-12
J. Transition to Kindergarten 5-13
K. Early Literacy Assessments 5-13

Section 6: The NC Pre-K Staff

A. Site-Level Administrator Licensure and Credentials 6-1
B. Teacher Education, Licensure and Credentials 6-3
C. Teacher Assistant Education and Credentials 6-11
D. Substitute Staff 6-12
E. NC Pre-K Teacher and Teacher Assistant Standards 6-14
F. Professional Development Requirement 6-14
G. Compensation for Instructional Staff 6-15
H. NC Pre-K Reimbursement Rates by Site Type 6-17

Section 7: Evaluation and Monitoring

A. ECERS-3 Assessments 7-1
B. Child Maltreatment Investigations 7-3
C. Program and Fiscal Monitoring of Local NC Pre-K Programs 7-4
D. Monitoring Timeline 7-9
E. Monitoring Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and Maintenance of Effort (MOE) 7-10

Appendices

Appendix 1 Sample Committee Conflict of Interest Statement
Appendix 4 Sample Committee Agenda
Appendix 6 Sample Committee Meeting Minutes
Appendix 8 Sample Site Selection Sub-Committee Conflict of Interest Statement
Appendix 9 Early Childhood Behavioral Engagement and Developmental Needs Report
Appendix 11 Annual Timeline for Planning and Program Implementation
Appendix 14 No Income Documentation / Statement of No Income Templates

Glossary of Terms

Section 1: Introduction

The NC Pre-K Program is administered by the Division of Child Development and Early Education in the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. Detailed information for the NC Pre-K Program can be found on the *Division of Child Development and Early Education* website.

The NC Pre-K Program is designed to provide high-quality educational experiences to enhance school readiness for eligible four-year-old children. The program requirements are built on the premise that to be successful academically in school, children need to be prepared in all five of the developmental domains outlined by the National Education Goals Panel and the *North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development*. Each of these domains is critical to children's well-being and school success. Research shows that children who experience high quality care and education, and who enter school well prepared, are more successful in school and later in their lives. The five domains, as reflected in the *North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development* standards are:

- Approaches to play and learning
- Emotional and social development
- Health and physical development
- Language development and communication
- Cognitive development

The requirements are designed to ensure that a high-quality pre-kindergarten classroom experience is provided for eligible four-year-old children in each local NC Pre-K Program and that, to the extent possible, uniformity exists across the state.

Guidance

Program *Guidance* is included in some sections of this document. The purpose of this *Guidance* is to provide additional clarification to the (policy) requirements, when needed, and to encourage best practices in serving children in the NC Pre-K Program. The *Guidance* is intended to direct local NC Pre-K Committees, Contracting Agencies and NC Pre-K Programs to adopt policies and implement practices that address critical components of providing a high-quality pre-kindergarten program that meet the needs of all children.

The NC Pre-K Program is governed by the ***NC Child Care Rules***, the ***NC Open Meetings Law***, the *NC Public Records Law*, the ***NC State Board of Education Policy (Educator Licensure and Teacher Evaluation)***, the ***NC Pre-K Program Requirements & Guidance Manual,*** the ***NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development*** and the ***NC Pre-K Program Fiscal and Contracts Manual***. These documents may be downloaded from the *Division of Child Development and Early Education | NC Pre-K Program* webpage.

Return to Top

NC Child Care Law and Rules apply to all licensed programs that serve children in the North Carolina Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K) Program. The NC Pre-K Program Rules in G.S. 110, Article 7 and Chapter 9 shall apply except as provided in *Section .3000 NC Pre-Kindergarten Services*.

See also NC Child Care Rule 10A NCAC 09 .3001 Scope
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a)-(f);
Eff. November 1, 2012;
Readopted Eff. October 1, 2017

NC Child Care Rule .3000 is referenced throughout this document when a rule applies to a specific policy requirement (see example below). Please note, not all policy requirements are in the NC Child Care Rules.

Example of Child Care Rule:

See also NC Child Care Rule – 10A NCAC 09 .3006 Developmental Screenings
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a).
Eff. November 1, 2012;
Readopted Eff. October 1, 2017

NC Pre-K Contracting Agency (Contractor)

The NC Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS), Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) enters into a contractual agreement with a responsible county or regional NC Pre-K Contracting Agency (Contractor) to carry out the provisions of the NC Pre-K Program. Please refer to the *NC Pre-K Program Fiscal and Contract Manual* for specific contractual and budget requirements that pertain to the local NC Pre-K Contracting Agency and its subcontractors.

There are 91 local NC Pre-K Contracting Agencies that implement the operation of the NC Pre-K Program at the county/regional level. The NC Pre-K Contracting Agency is operated by public and nonprofit organizations such as, but not limited to, local partnerships, school systems and Head Start agencies. Each local County/Region NC Pre-K Committee is responsible for selecting a contracting agency to implement the NC Pre-K Program. See *Section 2: The County/Region NC Pre-K Committee* of this document for information about the Committee's purpose and responsibilities.

Each local NC Pre-K Contracting Agency has a Contract Administrator, Program Contact and Fiscal Administrator that oversees the operation of the NC Pre-K Program. All three positions can be held by one staff person or by a different staff person in each position. There can also be additional NC Pre-K staff that complete responsibilities for the NC Pre-K Program such as, but not limited to, data entry into the NC Pre-K Reporting Systems (Plan, Kids and APP).

See *Appendix 11* for an **Annual Timeline** to use as a guide for planning, implementing and monitoring NC Pre-K services.

Return to Top

Section 2: The County/Region NC Pre-K Committee

This section addresses the local NC Pre-K Committee structure and responsibilities.

A. Purpose of the NC Pre-K Committee

The NC Pre-K Program is built upon a system of existing local Smart Start partnerships, public school systems, Head Start agencies, and other entities that demonstrate the ability to provide high-quality pre-kindergarten services for eligible four-year-old children.

The NC Pre-K Program requires that every county (or region) that participates in providing services for NC Pre-K must establish and maintain a County/Region NC Pre-K Committee.

The purpose of the NC Pre-K Committee is to:

1. Select a Contracting Agency;
2. Review Contract with DCDEE annually to include revisions and/or updates based on changes to NC Pre-K due to legislation;
3. Develop operational policies and procedures;
4. Ensure collaboration and shared responsibility for developing, approving and implementing the local plan for delivering NC Pre-K services at the county/regional level;
5. Ensure NC Pre-K services are implemented based on the existing early childhood service delivery system and that service providers in the county/region, with the ability to provide NC Pre-K services, can express interest and be considered to serve as NC Pre-K sites (i.e., standardized site selection process);
6. Provide ongoing, collaborative advice about local policies and procedures in the implementation of NC Pre-K services; and
7. Provide oversight for the local program (both programmatic and fiscal).

B. Committee Structure and Meetings

NC Pre-K Contracting Agency Staff

The NC Pre-K Contract Administrator, NC Pre-K Fiscal Administrator and the NC Pre-K Program Contact (individuals named in the NC Pre-K Plan) work for the Contracting Agency and serve as a resource and provide support to the NC Pre-K Committee. These individuals **may not** serve as a co-chair, facilitator or member of the NC Pre-K Committee.

Return to Top

Responsibilities

Contracting Agency staff:

- Maintain Committee membership information in NC Pre-K Plan
- Recruit and recommend new members to the Committee for approval, as needed
- Provide training/orientation for new Committee members
- Organize Committee meetings (securing locations, setting dates, posting public notifications including changes and cancellations, etc.)
- Create Committee meeting agendas in collaboration with co-chairs
- Create handouts and other resource documents to be shared with Committee
- Create and maintain Committee meeting minutes
- Provide local and state-level program updates to Committee

Contracting Agency staff may **not**:

- Serve as NC Pre-K Committee members or be listed as Committee members in the NC Pre-K Plan
- Facilitate Committee meetings
- Call to order and/or adjourn Committee meetings
- Establish the presence of a quorum
- Call for votes, motions, and/or discussion related to actions requiring Committee vote
- Make or second a motion
- Vote

The NC Pre-K contracting agency staff is responsible for ensuring that all Committee members are following the Section I, Assurances and Requirements as stated in the County/Region Plan document.

Committee Co-Chairs

The County/Region NC Pre-K Committee must be co-chaired by the school superintendent (or designee) for the local education agency (LEA) and the board chair (or designee) for the local Smart Start Partnership. The co-chairs are responsible for convening the Committee per the ***NC Pre-K Program Requirements & Guidance Manual*** and may only serve as co-chairs and not as other Committee representatives. Only the Committee co-chairs may facilitate the NC Pre-K Committee meetings.

If there is more than one LEA or local Smart Start Partnership in a county or region, one superintendent and one local Smart Start board chair may be designated to serve as the co-chairs. It is recommended that all superintendents (or designees) and local Smart Start board chairs (or designees) in a county or region serve as members of the Committee.

New co-chairs should receive orientation training to review the purpose of the NC Pre-K Committee, the NC Pre-K Program Requirements, local NC Pre-K policies and procedures, as well as an overview of the funding and slot allocations across the county/region. New co-chairs will also be required to review and sign Section I of the County/Region Plan as well as the local Conflict of Interest Statement. Any changes to Committee co-chairs must be entered in the NC Pre-K Plan.

Return to Top

Designees

If a designee is assigned to **serve as a co-chair**, it must be documented in writing and that individual must be named in the NC Pre-K PLAN. The designee must have the same decision-making authority for the NC Pre-K program as the school superintendent or local partnership board chair. **The designee must ensure information from the NC Pre-K Committee meetings is shared with the school superintendent or local partnership board chair.**

Responsibilities

Committee co-chairs (or designees):

- Are named as Committee co-chairs in the NC Pre-K Plan
- Facilitate Committee meetings
- Call to order and adjourn Committee meetings
- Establish the presence of a quorum
- Call for votes, motions, and/or discussion related to actions requiring Committee vote
- Vote
- Follow open meeting law

Committee co-chairs (or designees) **may not**:

- Make or second a motion
- Serve as the NC Pre-K Contract Administrator, NC Pre-K Fiscal Administrator, or the NC Pre-K Program Contact or be named in one of those roles in the NC Pre-K Plan
- Serve as other NC Pre-K Committee representatives or be named as other Committee representatives in the NC Pre-K Plan

  Example: An individual is assigned as the designee for the LEA's Superintendent to serve as one of the co-chairs of the Committee. This individual is the local school system's Director of the Exceptional Children's Program. This individual **may only serve as the co-chair of the Committee** and another individual would need to be appointed to be the public school's exceptional children's preschool program representative on the Committee.

Co-chairs may designate another functioning early childhood committee or board (e.g., local Smart Start Board) in their county/region that has the appropriate membership to serve in the capacity of the NC Pre-K Committee. If an existing early childhood committee is designated to serve in this capacity, the existing early childhood committee must officially adjourn from its meeting and requirements, then officially reconvene as the NC Pre-K Committee operating under the NC Pre-K Requirements, with the required co-chairs and membership to perform NC Pre-K functions.

Return to Top

Committee Members

The local NC Pre-K Committee must consist of the two required co-chairs and a minimum of 8 committee members. Members of the Committee should represent various stakeholders in the community as well as subject matter experts in the field of child development and early education. Committee membership must include enough non-conflicted members to ensure a quorum is established for every Committee meeting.

Membership

Committee membership must be kept current in the NC Pre-K Plan and shall consist of at least one member from each of the following categories:

1) Licensed Child Care Center Representative: *(select at least one)*
   a) For-profit childcare center Administrator/Director
   b) Non-profit childcare center Administrator/Director
   c) Head Start Site Administrator/Center Director/Manager
   d) Public School Administrator/Principal
   e) Faith based Administrator/Director

2) Public School Representative: *(select at least one)*
   a) Public school exceptional children's preschool program representative
   b) Title I Preschool representative

3) Parent Representative: *(select at least one)*
   a) Parent or family member of preschool-age child(ren) representative (especially a child who is at-risk), either current or past NC Pre-K participants
   b) Parent Advocacy member
   c) Guardian Ad Litem

4) Head Start Program Representative: *(select at least one)*
   a) Head Start Program Director/Assistant Program Director/Executive Director

5) Child Care Agency Representative: *(select at least one)*
   a) Childcare resource and referral agency
   b) Member from a local childcare association or group representing the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors
   c) Other community agency serving children and families

6) County Representative: *(select at least one)*
   a) Department of Social Services or another childcare subsidy funding agency representative
   b) County/regional departments of health and mental health representative(s)

7) Health and/or Medical Professional Representative: *(select at least one)*
   a) Health care providers (e.g., nurse, pediatrician, family practitioner, oral health provider)
   b) Child Care Health Consultant
   c) Mental Health Professional

Return to Top

8) Other Representative: *(select at least one)*
   a) Early childhood professional organization representative(s)
   b) Local business community representative(s)
   c) Military representative
   d) Faith-based representative
   e) Early childhood representative from a university, community college/higher education
   f) Homeless agency representative
   g) Classroom teachers who are licensed in early childhood education
   h) County Manager/commissioner
   i) Chamber of Commerce
   j) Bank Chair
   k) County cooperative extension agency representative

In addition, the local NC Pre-K Committee may also consist of community members or volunteers who do not meet one of the required categories above. These members should be named in the NC Pre-K Plan and are required to review and sign Section I of the County/Region Plan as well as the local Conflict of Interest Statement.

Vacancies

When there is a vacancy on the Committee, the Contracting Agency should work in collaboration with the Committee co-chairs to identify a replacement and present a recommendation to the full Committee. The Committee must vote to approve the new member, and the results must be documented in the meeting minutes. Any changes to Committee membership must be entered in the NC Pre-K Plan.

Upon joining the Committee, new members should receive an orientation training to review the purpose of the NC Pre-K Committee, the NC Pre-K Program Requirements, local NC Pre-K policies and procedures, as well as an overview of the funding and slot allocations across the county/region. New members will also be required to review and sign Section I of the County/Region Plan as well as the local Conflict of Interest Statement.

Proxies

When a proxy attends a Committee meeting on behalf of a Committee member during a one-time absence the proxy must abstain from participating in any votes or decision-making activities. The proxy may be allowed to give a report to share any information or updates provided to them by the absent Committee member.

The proxy must ensure information from the NC Pre-K Committee meeting is shared with the Committee member.

Questions about Committee Membership?

Counties who are facing unusual challenges filling these positions are encouraged to contact their NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultant for additional guidance.

Return to Top

Committee Meetings

Laws Informing the Committee's Responsibilities

The NC Pre-K Committee is a public body subject to the ***NC Open Meetings Law*** (G.S. Chapter 143, Article 33C) and ***NC Public Records Law*** (G.S. Chapter 132). The local NC Pre-K Committee **is required** to operate in accordance with their obligations under those General Statutes (G.S.) when conducting all Committee meetings, including closed sessions.

Meeting Schedule

The NC Pre-K Committee, under the direction of the co-chairs, should set a meeting schedule and establish protocols that allow the Committee to fulfill its functions.

Meeting schedules (including changes and cancellations) should be made public in accordance with NC Open Meetings Law.

Meeting schedules may be publicized in many ways including but not limited to:

- Agency websites
- Social Media
- Community E-blasts
- Community Bulletin Boards
- Flyers
- Other public forums

Conflict of Interest Policy

The local NC Pre-K Committee serves as the decision-making body for the local NC Pre-K program and determines all final site approvals, slot placements, funding allocations, and provider reimbursement rates. Therefore, it is critical to avoid any conflict of interest as well as a perception of conflict of interest within the Committee.

The local NC Pre-K Committee must adopt a Conflict of Interest Policy to ensure that, at a minimum, all committee members understand the following:

- It is the duty of every NC Pre-K Committee member to disclose and avoid both conflicts of interest and appearances of conflict of interest.
- Individuals who may benefit directly or indirectly from decisions made by the NC Pre-K Committee may participate in discussions and offer input but must abstain from voting.
- Individuals with any employment, contractual or professional interest in any business, firm or corporation that may attempt to secure funding or a contract from the NC Pre-K Committee may participate in discussions and offer input but must abstain from voting.
    - This includes **ANY** employee of a public school system, Head Start program, or private childcare center that receives or is applying to receive NC Pre-K funding regardless of that individual's level of involvement with the NC Pre-K program.

Return to Top

All NC Pre-K Committee co-chairs and members are required to review and sign a Conflict of Interest Statement upon their appointment to the NC Pre-K Committee. Conflict of Interest Statements must be reviewed and signed annually and should be updated as needed throughout the year to reflect changes to an individual's interests. Signed Conflict of Interest Statements must be maintained onsite by the Contracting Agency.

See *Appendix 1* for sample Conflict of Interest Statements.

Minutes

The NC Pre-K Committee must maintain minutes of all meetings that document the following:

1. Meeting attendees to include members who are present/absent, staff and guests
2. Items discussed that are not voted upon
3. Items discussed that are voted upon to include:
    a) The motion
    b) Who made the motion
    c) Who seconded the motion
    d) Who abstained from voting
    e) Results of the vote
4. Actions taken or decisions made by the committee

See *Appendix 6* for sample Committee Meeting Minutes.

Agendas

The NC Pre-K Committee must meet **at least two (2) times per school year** as detailed below.

The local NC Pre-K Committee must meet prior to the beginning of the new school year in July/August to:

- **Review Contract including revisions based on changes to NC Pre-K due to legislation:**
    - Overview of Contract requirements including contracted slot numbers
    - Review and approve the provider reimbursement strategy (rates)
    - Approve by vote the Contract and budget allocations for the new school year
- **Adopt a Conflict of Interest Policy:**
    - Committee members approve by vote the Conflict of Interest Policy
    - Committee members must sign the Conflict of Interest Statement annually
- **Set a regular meeting schedule:**
    - Approve by vote a committee meeting schedule for the new school year

Return to Top

- **Review the Assurances and Requirements detailed in Section I of the County/Region Plan**
    - The Section I document can be found in the NC Pre-K Plan as part of the NC Pre-K County/Region Plan Document.
    - All committee members must sign Section I of the County/Region Plan.
        - Signatures validate that each member has read and agreed to the Assurances and Requirements.
        - All signatures must be collected by September 15th
        - The completed/signed Section I document must be maintained onsite by the Contracting Agency.

          NOTE: New members must sign the Section I document upon appointment to the Committee. It is not necessary to secure updated signatures from members that have already signed the Section I document for the current school year.

- **Review and approve annually by vote all required written plans for the following: (Send plans out in advance to allow committee members to review prior to the meeting)**
    - Prevention of suspension/expulsion of children with challenging behaviors
    - Transportation
    - Transition
    - Family Engagement
    - Working with children/families with Limited English Proficiency

- **Approve by vote any fees charged for transportation and/or meals**
- **Approve by vote (if applicable) to grant authority to the contracting agency to reallocate slots across NC Pre-K sites without NC Pre-K Committee approval (See Section C: Committee Authority and Responsibilities)**
- **Review any updates/changes made to the NC Pre-K Program Requirements**
- **Review information from regional meetings**

The local NC Pre-K Committee must meet midway through the school year in Jan/Feb to:

- **Conduct annual planning for NC Pre-K and approve an implementation plan:**
    - Review NC Pre-K County/Region Plan to include slot allocations at NC Pre-K sites
- **Select a contracting agency:**
    - Approve by vote the NC Pre-K Contracting Agency for the **next** program year
- **Provide financial update**
    - Review program budget (FSR expenditures, monthly reimbursements, etc.)
    - Overview of spending plan for direct services, administrative, and CCDF funds
    - Anticipated expansion or reversion of funds
- **Provide contract compliance update**
    - Review service data (children enrolled, number of sites/classrooms, etc.)
    - Update on progress towards meeting scope of work
- **Prepare for kindergarten transition**
- **Discuss Standardized Site Selection process (if applicable)**

Return to Top

- **Review NC Pre-K Site Monitoring results**
  - Overview of process followed, number of visits completed, action plans resulting from non-compliance, etc.

- **Share any other relevant NC Pre-K updates regarding:**
  - Site/classroom staff changes or vacancies
  - Technical assistance data
  - Training and professional development
  - Mentor and evaluation services
  - Child assessments
  - NC Pre-K Committee membership
  - Updates/changes made to the NC Pre-K Program Requirements
  - Information from regional meetings or other state meetings

See *Appendix 4* for sample Committee Agenda.

C. Committee Authority and Responsibilities

Actions Requiring Committee Approval

The County/Region NC Pre-K Committee is the decision-making body for the local NC Pre-K Program and is required to do the following:

1. Conduct annual planning for NC Pre-K and approve an implementation plan.
2. Select or change the NC Pre-K Contracting Agency.
3. Approve distribution of funding.
4. Review and approve the provider reimbursement strategy (i.e., payment rates to providers and other related costs).
5. Approve provider transportation charges to/from the NC Pre-K Program.
6. Approve costs that may be charged to cover the full/partial costs of meals when children do not qualify for free/reduced priced lunch.
7. Approve adding new sites or non-voluntary termination of sites in the County/Region Plan.
8. Approve the reallocation of slots across NC Pre-K sites

    a. This refers to an adjustment to slot allocations that takes place **after** the NC Pre-K Committee has approved the initial distribution of funding.
    b. Slots may only be allocated to facilities that are **currently approved** to serve as NC Pre-K sites.

The minutes of all NC Pre-K Committee meetings shall be kept on file and shall indicate members present/absent, discussions/questions, decisions made and the results of all votes. The minutes must also document that enough non-conflicted members were in attendance to establish a quorum prior to any votes.

Return to Top

Guidance

The NC Pre-K Committee has the option to discuss and vote to allow the Contracting Agency to reallocate slots across NC Pre-K sites without Committee approval. The co-chairs and the Committee may agree to transfer this decision-making authority to the Contracting Agency. The decision to transfer the authority to the Contracting Agency for this action must be presented, discussed and voted on during a public Committee meeting and be consistent with NC's open meetings law. Please consult your attorney with any questions related to this law.

The NC Pre-K Committee has the option to discuss and vote to require all NC Pre-K programs to utilize the same approved curriculum.

D. Additional Functions – Committee and Contracting Agency

The NC Pre-K Committee serves in an advisory role to the Contracting Agency in the development, implementation and **annual review and approval** of the following written plans:

- **A written plan to prevent the suspension and/or expulsion of children with unique needs/challenging behaviors** and to ensure their families have access to appropriate resources and supports to maintain their child's placement in NC Pre-K. The written plan for children with unique needs/challenging behaviors should be developed by the NC Pre-K Committee and Contracting Agency and should include the components found in *Section 3: The NC Pre-K Child – Subsection G. Children with Unique Needs/Challenging Behaviors* of this document;
- **A written transportation plan** showing how the transportation services for all children will be implemented to and from the NC Pre-K sites. In developing the written plan, the NC Pre-K Committee and Contracting Agency should identify community resources that are available and work with the school system, as feasible. Legislation allows for transportation of any NC Pre-K child to any NC Pre-K site on public school buses. If, after careful review, it is determined that transportation cannot be provided without creating a participation barrier the Contracting Agency must maintain a written record of what was decided through the Committee process;
- **A written transition plan** showing how the needs of participating children will be implemented as they transition into Pre-Kindergarten and then into Kindergarten. The written plan for transition activities should be developed by the NC Pre-K Committee and Contracting Agency and should include these components:
    - Specify how children will transition into the NC Pre-K classroom
    - Specify how children will transition into Kindergarten
    - Reflect the diversity and uniqueness of children, families and communities
    - Be revised as ongoing transition efforts are expanded;
- **A written family engagement plan** to implement strategies designed to develop partnerships with families and build reciprocal relationships that promote shared decision-making. The written plan for family engagement activities should be developed by the NC Pre-K Committee and Contracting Agency and should include the components found in *Section 5: The NC Pre-K Classroom – Subsection I. Family Engagement* of this document;

Return to Top

- **A written plan for working with children and families with limited English proficiency** to include resources in the community to support children and families with limited English proficiency**.** The written plan for limited English proficiency services should be developed by the NC Pre-K Committee and Contracting Agency to implement strategies for working with children and families with limited English proficiency. The written plan should support the children and families in the NC Pre-K classrooms to be engaged and informed throughout the school year;

The following action items are considered **best practices** but are not required:

- Developing and implementing a coordinated process for recruiting, identifying and placing four-year-old children who are at-risk, including but not limited to Health Check Coordinators, local Pediatricians/Health Care Providers (County Health Department) and other local agencies and organizations such as programs addressing homelessness;
- Participating in public/private collaborative efforts to offer professional development services to early childhood programs in the community
- Documenting agreements with other community agencies regarding the provision of services to young children with disabilities;
- Providing all families of participating children with information about access to health insurance such as NC Health Check (Medicaid for Children) and the importance of a medical and dental home for their children;
- Identifying and using community resources to develop a plan for obtaining child health assessments within the required timeframe;
- Developing a plan for consultation services from a qualified health consultant for all sites;
- Implementing policies for ensuring that qualified eligible teachers and teacher assistants are compensated at the appropriate levels; and
- Implementing inclement weather policies in collaboration with local providers that include options to extend the NC Pre-K instructional week past 32.5 hours or have children attend on a day that was originally scheduled as a teacher workday, vacation day or weekend day. All sites should follow the same make-up schedule unless there are clear barriers that prevent this for a certain site(s).

E. Reporting Program Progress

The Contracting Agency must report to the County/Region NC Pre-K Committee throughout the year on the implementation of the County/Region Plan including:

1. Program progress (recruiting, child identification and eligibility, enrollment and attendance);

2. Site updates (child placement, compliance history, NC Pre-K compliance);

Return to Top

3. Site staff education levels, staff salaries and progress toward goals (administrators, teachers, assistants);

4. Professional development activities including working with Limited English Proficiency learners;

5. Efforts to collaborate with other agencies (i.e., referrals for families with children with special needs and/or other behavioral, social, emotional and challenging needs);

6. Strengths and barriers to service delivery;

7. Efforts to implement plans related to the prevention of suspension/expulsion, transportation, transition, family engagement, limited English proficiency, helping families access health insurance, a medical and dental home, helping ensure child health assessments are completed and consultation from qualified health professionals; and

8. Fiscal and budget reports, including funds received and funds paid to subcontracting agencies.

F. NC Pre-K Standardized Site Selection Process

Session Law 2012-142 SECTION 10.1.(f) The Division of Child Development and Early Education shall establish a standard decision-making process to be used by local NC Pre-K Committees in awarding NC Pre-K classroom slots and student selection.
Session Law 2013-360 SECTION 12B.1.(b) Multiyear Contracts. – The Division of Child Development and Early Education shall require the NC Pre-K contractor to issue multiyear contracts for licensed private childcare centers providing NC Pre-K classrooms.

See also Budget Bill SESSION LAW 2012-142; SESSION LAW 2013-360SENATE BILL 402
History Note: Authority GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA SESSION 2011

1. The **local NC Pre-K Committee** determines a multi-year funding cycle and oversees the process to ensure the Site Selection Sub-Committee follows the standardized site selection process as outlined in the *NC Pre-K Site Selection Roles and Responsibilities*.

The Site Selection process must be opened and all steps completed prior to the start of a new funding cycle or every three years, whichever is less, but can be opened annually.

NOTE: The local NC Pre-K Committee is responsible for determining if existing NC Pre-K sites must re-apply during the site selection process. The Committee may decide that existing NC Pre-K sites that are maintaining all NC Pre-K standards do not have to reapply.

Return to Top

Examples:

- County A issues 2-year contracts for their NC Pre-K service providers – This county would need to open the Site Selection process every two years.
- County B issues 5-year contracts for their NC Pre-K service providers – This county would need to open the Site Selection process every three years.
- County C does not issue subcontracts (ex. the LEA serves as the Contracting Agency and all NC Pre-K sites are within the public school system) – This county would need to open the Site Selection process in accordance with their funding cycle or every three years, whichever is less.

The Site Selection process will be considered opened once the public notice and information session have been completed and the application due date has passed. If no eligible sites apply by the deadline, and existing sites are not required to re-apply, then the Site Selection process may be considered complete.

NOTE: When there is a county/regional need for additional site(s) and there are no approved sites "waiting" the local NC Pre-K Committee must open the site selection process and recruit new programs to apply for consideration.

Questions about Site Selection?
DCDEE recognizes that every county/region is unique and may experience situations that impact how Site Selection may be carried out locally. Contracting Agencies are encouraged to contact their NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultant for additional guidance.

2. The **local NC Pre-K Contracting Agency** supports the process to ensure the Site Selection Sub-Committee follows the standardized site selection process as outlined in the *NC Pre-K Site Selection Roles and Responsibilities*. The local NC Pre-K Contracting Agency must provide training to the Site Selection Sub-Committee before beginning the site selection process.

   The local NC Pre-K Contracting Agency must consult with the state office on next steps for the NC Pre-K allocation (e.g., reversion) when no eligible sites are available in the county/region.

3. The **Site Selection Sub-Committee** conducts the process with the support of the NC Pre-K Contracting Agency and oversight by the local NC Pre-K Committee as outlined in the *NC Pre-K Site Selection Roles and Responsibilities*. The local NC Pre-K Committee must appoint and approve by vote at least 3 **non-conflicted** Sub-Committee members. The Sub-Committee may include non-conflicted local NC Pre-K Committee members and/or community members who are non-conflicted. Each appointed member of the Site Selection Sub-Committee must read, understand and sign a *Site Selection Sub-Committee Conflict of Interest Statement*.

Return to Top

Members of the Site Selection Sub-Committee should represent various stakeholders in the community as well as subject matter experts in the field of child development and early education. Sub-Committee members may include representatives from the local business community, Health Department, Child Care Resource & Referral Agency, County Department of Social Services, 2- and 4-year colleges/universities and/or other community volunteers.

4. The *NC Pre-K Site Application Decision Tree* is used by the local NC Pre-K Committee, NC Pre-K Contracting Agency and Site Selection Sub-Committee to guide them through the site selection process.

5. The *NC Pre-K Site Application* must be completed by each new or previously funded (not currently funded) site interested in applying for consideration to be a NC Pre-K site. The local NC Pre-K Committee is responsible for determining if existing NC Pre-K sites must re-apply during the site selection process.

   The NC Pre-K Site Application, created by DCDEE, must be used for the site selection process and **cannot be altered or modified**.

6. The *NC Pre-K Site Selection Rubric* is designed to be used by the NC Pre-K Site Selection Sub-Committee as a comparative tool to help standardize the site selection process in each county or region across the state. These standards and indicators are designed to guide the Site Selection Sub-Committee's decisions in recommending sites for participation in the NC Pre-K program. The Site Selection Sub-Committee is required to complete a Rubric for each eligible site applicant, using information from the **NC Pre-K Site Application** and supporting documentation submitted by applicants. *Instructions for Using the NC Pre-K Site Selection Rubric* should be reviewed prior to scoring.

   The Teacher and Teacher Assistant Education Worksheet is included in the application and must be completed by the site administrator and scored by the Site Selection Sub-Committee.

   The NC Pre-K Site Selection Rubric, created by DCDEE, must be used for the site selection process and **cannot be altered or modified** with the exception of the additional locally determined indicators as described below in number 7.

7. **Additional Locally Determined Indicators** are determined by the local NC Pre-K Committee for the purpose of assigning up to eight (8) additional points to the Rubric score, for a total of 100 possible points. The local NC Pre-K Committee may decide to use only a portion or none of the 8 points for additional locally determined indicators. In this case, the total points on the Rubric score would be less than 100 points. The Site Selection Sub-Committee must list the additional indicators in section 5 of the Rubric. All additional locally determined indicators must be applied across all site applicants to ensure fairness during the site selection process.

Return to Top

Additional information gathered through routine monitoring visits and other information during an onsite visit to verify staff education and/or licensure, Plans of Study, a facility's license, etc., ***may be included*** in the decision-making process.

Additional measures or subscales of the ECERS-3, CLASS, or similar tools ***may not be used*** in addition to the indicators included in the Rubric, except as part of the 8 additional points.

The local NC Pre-K Committee makes the final site selection decisions based on the performance and compliance history of existing, already approved NC Pre-K sites, the rankings from the Rubrics for any sites that completed a NC Pre-K Site Application and recommendations from the Site Selection Sub-Committee. Final funding of slots is contingent upon approval of the budget passed by the North Carolina General Assembly. All awards are contingent upon and subject to appropriation, allocation and availability of funds.

Local NC Pre-K Committee members who may benefit directly or indirectly from decisions made by the Site Selection Sub-Committee may participate in discussions and offer input but should abstain from voting when the site involved is under consideration.

Return to Top

Section 3: The NC Pre-K Child

A. NC Pre-K Child Application and Enrollment Eligibility

During the application process, **information and documentation must be collected for each child and family in accordance with the definitions and guidance provided in this section.** This information will serve two purposes:

(1) to determine NC Pre-K eligibility and
(2) for the State to determine TANF (Temporary Aid to Needy Families) and CCDF (Child Care and Development Fund) Maintenance of Effort (MOE) matching contributions.

The **Contracting Agency is responsible for determining a child's eligibility and maintaining documentation** used to complete the NC Pre-K Program Eligibility Scorecard and support the child's enrollment. This documentation must include a complete and signed application with supporting documents that provide verification for the eligibility of each child enrolled in the NC Pre-K Program.

Contracting Agencies may delegate the responsibility for determining eligibility to the local NC Pre-K sites/subcontractors; however, the local **Contracting Agency is ultimately responsible** for ensuring that eligibility determinations made by subcontractors are accurate and in accordance with NC Pre-K Eligibility Guidelines. This responsibility is part of the NC Pre-K contracts issued by DCDEE as described in the *NC Pre-K Fiscal and Contract Manual*.

IMPORTANT:

- **Children receiving NC Pre-K services must reside in North Carolina.**
- Determination of child ***eligibility does not guarantee placement*** in the NC Pre-K Program. Placement is dependent on the availability of NC Pre-K funds that are appropriated each year by the NC General Assembly during the legislative session.
- Once a child is deemed **eligible**, they ***remain eligible throughout the program year***, regardless of changes to the family's situation. However, if a child was deemed **ineligible**, a ***family may reapply if their situation has changed*** since the initial date of application.
- A child may live in one county and receive NC Pre-K services in another county if both NC Pre-K contracting agencies agree to the terms and the out-of-county child is not displacing an in-county child from services. The out-of-county contracting agency would be responsible for enrolling the child, calculating the child's attendance, and reimbursing the site for that child's services.

Priority to Serve

Contracting Agencies are required to serve eligible children as defined below:

Income eligible and categorically eligible - Children who are determined eligible based on their family's income being at or below 75% of the state median income level and children who are categorically eligible are given the ***highest priority*** and ***served first***.

Return to Top

Other factors to consider:

a) **Never served -** children who have received no prior early education services outside the home
b) **Underserved -** children who were in childcare previously but are currently not being served
c) **Continuity of care -** children who are currently enrolled at a NC Pre-K site in a non-NC Pre-K classroom

NC Pre-K Program Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for NC Pre-K, the family *(as defined in Section E)* must prove that their income is **at or below 75% of the State Median Income** level **OR** that they meet **Categorical Eligibility.**

- Up to 20% of children whose families exceed the income requirements can still be served if those children have other identified risk-factors *(as described in Section F)*

1) Age Requirements

a) To be enrolled, a child must be four-years-old on or before **August 31st** of the current program year.
b) Children who are not age eligible *(less than 4 years or eligible for kindergarten)* cannot be served with NC Pre-K funds.

Age eligibility is determined by the child's birth certificate, passport, medical records, or immunization records.

2) Categorical Eligibility Requirements

Age-eligible children are considered "categorically eligible" for NC Pre-K if the child/family is:

- Experiencing homelessness
- In foster care
- Receiving refugee services
- Receiving Public Assistance *(for family sizes of 8 or less*)*
  - WIC
  - Public Housing
  - TANF/Work First
  - Medicaid
  - SSI
  - Food and Nutrition Services (Food Stamps)
  - SNAP

Family sizes of 9 or more cannot be considered "categorically eligible" based on receiving Public Assistance due to the income thresholds used by the programs listed above - income must be collected and verified for these families.

Return to Top

a) Family income verification is **not required** for children who meet categorical eligibility; however, sufficient documentation must be collected to verify children meet Categorical Eligibility criteria.
   - Examples of documentation may include, but are not limited to:
     - Parent statement regarding homelessness status
     - Letter/statement from DSS regarding foster care placement
     - Public Assistance enrollment/award letters

NOTE: Contracting agencies should use their best judgement when determining what forms of documentation are acceptable. Documentation should clearly identify the public assistance program, who is receiving the assistance, and that the information is current.

3) Income Requirements

a) Income verification must be documented and calculated for all applicants seeking eligibility based on income.
b) Family income verification is **not required** for children who meet categorical eligibility.

Families must submit sufficient income documentation **at the time** of the application process in order for the Contracting Agency to verify the child's eligibility. If a family cannot provide any acceptable proof of income, they ***may submit written statements from employers detailing the amount and frequency of pay received for the most recent pay periods.*** (See the Income Verification/Documentation section below)

Contracting Agency staff must calculate the average income earned using the documentation submitted and **use the multipliers below to generate an estimated annual income.**
Income calculated must be based on documentation that accurately reflects the family's yearly earnings for the applicable year or their **current** situation at the time of application.

Income Multipliers	
Frequency of Pay	**Calculation Guidance**
Weekly	**Multiply by 52**
Bi-weekly	**Multiply by 26**
Semi-monthly	**Multiply by 24**
Monthly	**Multiply by 12**

Income Verification/Documentation

a) Tax Records
- W-2's
- 1040-Adjusted Gross line 11

Return to Top

b) Pay Stubs (most recent pay periods)
- Weekly – submit 4 consecutive pay stubs
- Bi-weekly - submit 2 consecutive pay stubs
- Monthly - submit at least 1 full month's pay stub

c) Award letters from the Social Security Administration

d) Award letters from the Employment Security Commission

e) Employer written statements
- Must reflect the employee's most recent pay periods
- Must include the amount **and** frequency of pay (*including overtime)*
- Must be signed by the employer
- Documented on letterhead *(if available)*

f) Signed statements when the individual has no verifiable countable income
- Includes the ***No Income/No Documentation Income Template*** as described below and found in the appendices section of this manual.

g) Self-employed individuals
- 1040-Adjusted Gross line 11 **or**
- 1099 or Bank statements for business minus 20% from total income if no tax documentation is provided **or**
- 1099 or Bank statements for business minus itemized expense receipts

No Income/No Documentation of Income

If a family states that they **do not have any income to report or do not have documentation of income**, and Contracting Agency staff have made the effort to verify the family's income, the Contracting Agency may choose one of the following options:

h) Accept the family's **signed written statement** or **signed child application** indicating employment and income status

i) Complete a **Statement of No Income** form

j) Complete a **Statement of No Documentation of Income** form

Contact your NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultant for questions about income and eligibility scenarios that are not included in this section.

Return to Top

B. NC Pre-K Program Eligibility Scorecard

The purpose of the NC Pre-K Program Eligibility Scorecard is to determine eligibility for NC Pre-K services using information from the child's application and supporting documentation submitted by the family.

NC Pre-K Program Eligibility Scorecard

Date Completed:

Child's Name: D.O.B: Phone:

Address: City: Zip:

Eligibility Determination Factors		
1) Will the child be four years of age on or before August 31st of the program year?	☐ NO *Child is not eligible* - STOP	☐ YES
2) What is the annual family gross income?	$	
3) What is the family size? ***(as defined by NC Pre-K)***		
4) Is this a military family? ***(as defined by NC Pre-K)***	☐ NO	☐ YES
5) Does the family's countable income fall at or below 75% of the State Median Income (SMI)?	☐ NO	☐ YES

TABLE A (Additional Risk Factors)		
Check one box for each:	Yes	No
Identified educational need(s) and/or current IEP	☐	☐
Identified developmental disability	☐	☐
Chronic health condition(s)	☐	☐
Limited English Proficiency	☐	☐

TABLE B - % Poverty (TANF/MOE Only)	Check one
130% and below	☐
131 - 185%	☐
186 - 200%	☐
201 - 250%	☐
251 - 300%	☐
Above 300%	☐

TABLE C (Categorical Eligibility)	
Experiencing homelessness	☐
In foster care	☐
Receiving refugee services	☐
WIC	☐
Public Housing	☐
TANF/Work First	☐
Medicaid	☐
SSI	☐
Food and Nutrition Services (Food Stamps)	☐
SNAP	☐

Child Eligibility Status (check one)	
Eligible	☐ Child is four years of age on or before August 31st of the program year **AND** has a family income **AT OR BELOW** 75% of the State Median Income level. ☐ Child is four years of age on or before August 31st of the program year and has one or more **Categorical Eligibility Requirements** *(as determined in Table C).* ☐ Child is four years of age on or before August 31st of the program year **AND** is from an eligible military family. ☐ Child is four years of age on or before August 31st of the program year with a family income **ABOVE** 75% of the State Median Income level but has one or more **Additional Risk-Factors** *(as determined in Table A).*
Ineligible	☐ Child is **NOT** four years of age on or before August 31st of the program year. ☐ Child has a family income **ABOVE** 75% of the State Median Income level and does **NOT** have **Additional Risk-Factors** *(as determined in Table A).*

The following information is not used to determine eligibility but will help DCDEE leverage federal funding.

Is either parent/guardian/kinship provider: (Check all that apply)

☐ Employed	☐ Seeking employment	☐ In post-secondary education
☐ In High School or in a GED program	☐ In job training	☐ Other:

Return to Top

C. Eligibility for Families at or below 75% of State Median Income

Income eligibility for the NC Pre-K Program is determined by family size and gross income

Table 1. 75% STATE MEDIAN INCOME	
Family Size	**75 Percent State Median Income**
1	$ 44,360
2	$ 58,009
3	$ 71,659
4	$ 85,308
5	$ 98,957
6	$ 112,607
7	$ 115,166
8	$ 117,725
9	$ 120,284
10	$ 122,844
11	$ 125,403
12	$ 127,962

Effective: January 1, 2026
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 American Communities Survey (ACS) 1-year Estimates

D. Temporary Assistance to Needy Families/Maintenance of Effort

Percent of Poverty Category: When a child is determined eligible for NC Pre-K, the percent of poverty category must be determined using Table 2. **NOTE:** This is used for the purposes of meeting TANF/MOE requirements and **will not affect** eligibility determination for the NC Pre-K Program.

Table 2. Determining Percent of Poverty Category for TANF/MOE Reporting							
Family Size	**100% Federal Poverty**	**130%**	**150%**	**185%**	**200%**	**250%**	**300%**
1	$15,650	$20,345	$23,475	$28,953	$31,300	$39,125	$46,950
2	$21,150	$27,495	$31,725	$39,128	$42,300	$52,875	$63,450
3	$26,650	$34,645	$39,975	$49,303	$53,300	$66,625	$79,950
4	$32,150	$41,795	$48,225	$59,478	$64,300	$80,375	$96,450
5	$37,650	$48,945	$56,475	$69,653	$75,300	$94,125	$112,950
6	$43,150	$56,095	$64,725	$79,828	$86,300	$107,875	$129,450
7	$48,650	$63,245	$72,975	$90,003	$97,300	$121,625	$145,950
8	$54,150	$70,395	$81,225	$100,178	$108,300	$135,375	$162,450
9	$59,650	$77,545	$89,475	$110,353	$119,300	$149,125	$178,950
10	$65,150	$84,695	$97,725	$120,528	$130,300	$162,875	$195,450
11	$70,650	$91,845	$105,975	$130,703	$141,300	$176,625	$211,950
12	$76,150	$98,995	$114,225	$140,878	$152,300	$190,375	$228,450

Effective: January 1, 2026
Source: The January 2026 poverty guidelines are calculated by taking the 2024 Census Bureau's poverty thresholds and adjusting them for price changes between 2024 and 2025 using the Consumer Price Index
NOTE: The FY 2026 poverty guidelines did not change from the income values used in FY 2025

Return to Top

E. Family and Income Definitions & Guidance

FAMILY and INCOME DEFINITIONS & GUIDANCE	
FAMILY	Family size includes: 1. The NC Pre-K child **2.** Parents and stepparents **living in the same household** **3.** All **minor** brothers and sisters, half-brothers, half-sisters, stepbrothers and stepsisters **living in the same household** **NOTE:** Minor siblings include anyone up to age 18 and still attending high school **at the time** the child's application is submitted. Additional Clarification: **1.** If a child is living with **legal guardian(s)** or **legal custodian(s)** then the family size consists of the NC Pre-K child, plus all of the child's minor brothers and sisters, half-brothers, half-sisters, stepbrothers and stepsisters living in the same household. **The adults and children of these adults are also included.** **2.** If a child is living with foster parent(s) or kinship provider(s) then the family size consists of the NC Pre-K child plus all of the child's minor brothers and sisters, half-brothers, half-sisters, stepbrothers and stepsisters living in the same household. **The adults and children of these adults are NOT included.** 3. Incarcerated or institutionalized individuals **are not** included in family size.
Legal Guardian and Legal Custodian	Legal Guardianship is awarded by the courts when the biological parent or step-parent no longer has parental rights of the child or the biological parent or step-parent is deceased. Legal Custodianship rights are set by the courts and may be as extensive or less extensive as the rights of a legal guardian. Family size includes the NC Pre-K child plus all of the child's minor siblings living in the same household. The legal guardian(s)/custodian(s) and their minor children are also included. The income of the legal guardian(s)/custodian(s) and any income received by the child, such as Social Security benefits, **would** be counted.
Foster Parent	Foster parents **do not** have legal guardianship. Guardianship remains with the Department of Social Services. **For a child in the custody of DSS** family size includes the NC Pre-K child plus all of the child's minor siblings living in the same household. Any income received by the child, such as Social Security benefits, **would** be counted. The income of the foster parents **would not** be counted. Return to Top

Kinship Provider	Kinship is the **self-defined relationship between two or more people and is based on biological, legal, and/or strong family-like ties**. For the purposes of NC Pre-K, kinship is established when the child lives with and is cared for by an adult who is not the child's parent, legal guardian, legal custodian, or foster parent. **For a child living with a kinship provider** family size includes the NC Pre-K child plus all of the child's minor siblings living in the same household. Any income received by the child, such as Social Security benefits, **would** be counted. The income of the kinship provider **would not** be counted.
Social Security	**SSI - Supplemental Security Income** is a needs-based program that provides monthly payments to people who are blind, elderly, or have a disability. [This income **IS NOT** counted] **SSA - Social Security Benefits** are payments made to qualified retirees and disabled people, and to their spouses, children, and survivors. [This income **IS** counted] **SSDI - Social Security Disability Insurance** is a program that provides monthly Social Security Disability payments to people under age 65 who have qualifying disabilities and sufficient work credits (this income **IS** counted).
Family Income	Count parent, stepparent or guardian's regular gross income (documentation required). **Regular gross income may include** regular employment **(including overtime pay)**, income earned through sales commissions averaged over several months, regular employment through a temporary employment agency, temporary unemployment pay, child support payments, alimony payments, workman's compensation and retirement/disability benefit income. **Excluded from regular gross income** are parent, stepparent and child Supplemental Security Income, adoptive assistance, foster care payments, Pell grants/scholarships and irregular income (e.g., Work First, Food Stamps, student loans). If **legal guardian** or **legal custodian,** count the adult's income and child's income including Social Security Income and Child Support Payments. Do not count Supplemental Security Income. Return to Top

F. Additional Enrollment Eligibility Criteria

1) Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness

Age eligible children whose families are experiencing homelessness are considered categorically eligible for NC Pre-K.

What is Homelessness?

In January of 2002, Congress authorized the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to help people experiencing homelessness. The federal law includes the Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program that entitles children who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence to a free, appropriate education and requires schools to remove barriers to their enrollment, attendance and success in school.
Examples of living situations that may qualify under the McKinney-Vento Act include, but are not limited to:

- Living with a friend, relative or other person/family because of a loss of housing
- Staying in a motel or hotel because of a loss of housing or fleeing domestic violence
- Living in an emergency shelter, transitional housing or domestic violence shelter
- Living in a car, park or public place, an abandoned building or bus station
- Living temporarily in substandard housing
- Living in a campground or an inadequate trailer home
- Living in a runaway or homeless youth shelter
- Youth who are living on their own, even if their families want them to come home

Guidance
The Division of Child Development and Early Education has partnered with NC State Coordinators of Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY), local liaisons and our partner agencies to ensure that information on the full range of childcare services is available for families experiencing homelessness.

Barriers that Limit Access to Early Childhood Programs
- Lack of documents needed to enroll in early care programs
- Lack of transportation to early care and education programs
- Lack of awareness regarding homelessness situations among early care and education providers
- Lack of flexibility in policies for required documentation families must provide for enrollment

Return to Top

DCDEE Next Steps to Increase Access to Services for Homeless Children and their Families:

- Partner with *National Center of Homeless Education (NCHE) State Coordinator*, *Local Liaisons* and *Head Start Collaboration Coordinator*
- Collaborate with *Early Years* to convene a Homeless Focus Group Meeting for partner agencies to develop a statewide action plan
- Provide training and technical assistance for early care and educators on early identification of homeless children and families, trauma-informed care and community resources
- Provide outreach to families at shelters, motels and food banks
- Provide training to staff who assist homeless families in applying for childcare subsidy and consumer education to ensure that they have a basic understanding of homelessness
- Develop a residency questionnaire or integrating questions about housing into existing forms, data systems or family interviews that prompt families to answer key questions about their living situation

Source: *DCDEE Website, Child Care and Development Fund, Supporting Children and FamiliesExperiencing Homelessness.*

2) Children of Eligible Military Families

Any age-eligible child who is a child of either of the following shall be eligible for the program:

1. An active duty member of the Armed Forces of the United States, including the North Carolina National Guard, State military forces, or a reserve component of the Armed Forces who was ordered to active duty by the proper authority within the last 18 months or is expected to be ordered within the next 18 months or
2. A member of the Armed Forces of the United States, including the North Carolina National Guard, State military forces, or a reserve component of the Armed Forces who was injured or killed while serving on active duty

Children of eligible military families with family incomes that exceed 75% SMI are **NOT** included as part of the 20% of over-income children served and are not required to meet any additional risk factors in order to be served.

The military member's Leave and Earnings statement should be used when **prioritizing children** of eligible military families. The statement will identify base pay as well as additional categories such as housing allowances and/or hazardous duty pay. Most counties in North Carolina with military installations only use the base pay amount when prioritizing children of military applicants. If the Leave and Earnings statement of the military member is not available the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) may be used to verify military status.

It is important to be consistent and handle all military applicants the same in your county.

Return to Top

3) Additional Risk Factors (Families over 75% SMI)

In addition, up to 20% of age eligible children enrolled may have family incomes more than seventy-five percent (75%) of the state median income if the child has one of the risk factors identified below.

These children should only be considered if there are any remaining placements after all income eligible and categorically eligible children have been placed.

1) **Educational needs** are indicated by the child's performance results on an NC Pre-K approved developmental screening or in an existing Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

2) **Developmental disabilities** are identified through evaluations followed by targeted tests and measures administered by education and/or health professionals. They may include but are not limited to cerebral palsy, sight or vision impairment, orthopedic impairment or autism.

3) **Chronic health conditions** must be diagnosed and documented by a professional health care provider. Chronic health conditions are considered as having the potential to interfere with a child's development and learning, as determined by a health care professional. This determination must include a signed and dated written statement, describing how the child would benefit from participating in a high-quality childhood program such as NC Pre-K

4) **Limited English Proficiency (LEP)** is identified by the child speaking limited or no English in the home as indicated by the family on the child's application and/or during the child's developmental screening.

Approved developmental screening instruments must be administered by appropriately trained screening professionals *(e.g., teachers, preschool coordinators)* and must be scored, signed/dated and indicate the specific delay. Developmental screenings are utilized to alert educators, families and administrators that there could be a potential delay in any category measured by the developmental screening.

Developmental evaluations must be administered by a trained specialist *(e.g., doctor, child psychologist, speech-language pathologist)* as required by NC Child Care Rule .3006.

Children with an **IEP** have already received an initial developmental screening and evaluation and do not need to be re-screened or re-evaluated. Families must provide a copy of the child's current IEP.

See also NC Child Care Rule – *10A NCAC 0 .09 3006 Developmental Screenings*
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a)
Eff. November 1, 2012;
Readopted Eff. October 1, 2017

G. Children with Unique Needs/Challenging Behaviors

Challenging behavior shall mean any repeated pattern of behavior, or perception of behavior, that interferes with, or is at risk of interfering with, optimal learning or engagement in pro-social interactions with peers and adults. It is behavior that interferes with children's learning, development, success at play or is harmful to the child, other children or adults, that puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure. The *National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI)* has additional information and resources on Social Emotional Behavior.

When a child demonstrates challenging behaviors that prevent his or her progress in any developmental domain, as referenced in the *North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development*, that impede the child's access to and participation in the assigned NC Pre-K classroom learning activities, the following shall apply:

(1) The Site Administrator shall notify the NC Pre-K Contract Administrator and the local school system's Preschool Exceptional Children Program for assistance if a child's cognitive, language and communication, emotional, social, health and physical needs exceed the program's capacity to address as indicated by one or more of the following:

(A) developmental needs assessments;

(B) home visits;

(C) consultations with the family members;

(D) daily recorded classroom teacher observations; and/or

(E) modified instructional plans and differentiated lessons based on the child's individual goals.

(2) The NC Pre-K Contract Administrator, Site Administrator, teacher and family members in consultation with the school system's Preschool Exceptional Children Program and other available community and state resources, such as Birth-through-Kindergarten licensed mentors and evaluators, Healthy Social Behavioral specialists, childcare health consultants, mental health specialists, social workers and other local child developmental experts, shall develop a coordinated support plan to support the NC Pre-K child's placement and participation in the NC Pre-K Program.

(3) The Division of Child Development and Early Education shall be notified when support plans recommended by the local school system's Exceptional Children Program require an alternative placement and support services for a child.

(4) A site administrator shall not suspend or expel a child from a NC Pre-K Program until the site administrator has completed the requirements of Subparagraphs (1), (2), and (3) of this Paragraph.

(5) Unless the operator determines the child poses a risk of harm to himself or herself or others and has completed the requirements of Subparagraphs (1), (2), and (3) of this Paragraph, no child shall receive less than the 6.5-hour NC Pre-K day. Risk of harm to oneself or others includes:

(A) physical aggression such as hitting, kicking, punching, spitting, throwing objects, pinching, pushing and biting;

(B) destroying property;

(C) tantrum behaviors that might include behaviors such as kicking, screaming, pushing an object or person, stomping feet or head banging;

(D) verbal aggression including yelling, threats and screaming;

(E) persistent or prolonged crying that is loud or disruptive or crying that interferes with the child's engagement in activities; and/or

(F) touching other children's private areas and removing clothing from themselves or others.

See also NC Child Care Rule10A NCAC 09 .3017 Children With Unique Needs And Challenging Behaviors
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a);
Eff. October 1, 2017

Guidance

If efforts to access the consultation needed to develop a coordinated plan of support prove unsuccessful, the NC Pre-K Contract Administrator shall contact their NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultant for guidance.

Teachers shall observe the child to identify what may be triggering the behavior, plan/record instructional modifications/differentiated strategies and document daily progress made by the child. Teachers shall document additional modifications needed based on daily observations and any other resources that may be identified to support the NC Pre-K child.

Teachers should plan and implement appropriate strategies to include, but not be limited to, the assistance of local Behavioral Specialists through the CCR&R and Smart Start Network. These and other strategies to support the child should be documented including the child's progress for at least six to eight weeks before contacting the local school system's Preschool Exceptional Children Program. The documentation will be shared with the Preschool Exceptional Children Program during consultation.

Teachers, Site Administrators and NC Pre-K Contract Administrators shall document and keep on file every effort made to support the child so they can remain in the NC Pre-K Program. The NC Pre-K teacher must complete the Early Childhood Behavioral Engagement and Developmental Needs Report or another form which documents the child's behavior and strategies implemented by the teacher. The Site Administrator must submit the report to the NC Pre-K Contract Administrator for review of what has been implemented and provide further guidance to support the child, family and teacher.

See *Appendix 9* for the Early Childhood Behavioral Engagement and Developmental Needs Report. The *Early Childhood Behavioral Engagement and Developmental Needs Report* can also be downloaded from the DCDEE website to complete the form electronically.

Teachers shall **maintain continuous collaboration** with the specialist(s) working with the child to discuss strategies implemented in the classroom and seek additional research based on effective practices to support the child.

Return to Top

RESOURCES

***Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Policies in Early Childhood Settings*,** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S Department of Education (2014)

North Carolina Early Childhood Suspension and Expulsion Policy Statement Summary

Division of Child Development and Early Education Suspension and Expulsion Policy Statement _

Additional ***Federal Resources***

H. Other Required Data Collection (Non-NC Pre-K)

1) Child Ethnicity and Race

The NC Pre-K Statewide Evaluation requires the collection of demographic characteristics for children receiving services, which includes ethnicity and race. The following descriptions should be used to help programs **document accurate information on the child's application**:

Ethnicity refers to cultural factors, including nationality, regional culture, ancestry and language. The **family must indicate** either "Yes" or "No" for whether the child is "Hispanic or Latino." This information determines the child's ethnicity.

Race refers to a person's physical characteristics, such as bone structure, skin, hair and eye color. The **family must choose** one or more options listed for race (e.g. American Indian, Black or African American, Asian, White, etc.). More than one option for race may be chosen from the list if the child is multi-racial.

2) Child's US Citizenship

A child's citizenship status is determined by the parent or guardian indicating "yes" or "no" on the signed NC Pre-K Child Application.

NOTE: US citizenship is **not required** for NC Pre-K eligibility – Data is used by DCDEE for TANF determination.

NC Pre-K Contracting Agency staff must check this information for accuracy during the application and eligibility process.

Return to Top

Section 4: The NC Pre-K Site

A. Facility Requirements

Programs serving NC Pre-K children shall maintain a four or five-star rated license. For new centers, a temporary license will be issued for six months with the expectation of the program achieving a four or five-star license at the end of the temporary time period.

Guidance

Pathways to the Stars, Section .3200, Standards for Two through Five Star Rated Licenses became effective July 1, 2025. Pathways to the Stars incorporates recommendations for change, such as:

- Offering a choice of three pathways to demonstrate quality and earn a 2-5 Star Rated License.
- Updating education standards for early childhood educators to expand options; and
- Adding standards for both educators and facilities that support continuous quality improvement and family/community engagement and leadership best practices

Pathway #1: Program Assessment

This pathway allows a program to demonstrate quality though practices that are research-based and measurable through a published and well-known assessment tool, the Environment Rating Scale.

Pathway #2: Classroom & Instructional Quality

This pathway allows a program to demonstrate quality through smaller groups of children, implementation of curriculum, child-focused planning, and training/coaching to support classroom and instructional quality.

Pathway #3 – Accreditation and Head Start

These accreditations have earned a **Three Star Rated License** pathway, based on programmatic requirements:

- National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA)
- National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)
- American Montessori Society (AMS)
- International Montessori Council (IMC)

These accreditations have earned a **Five Star Rated License** pathway, based on educational and programmatic requirements:

- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs (NAC)
- COGNIA, with early learning standards
- Head Start
- Early Head Start

Please see the resources below for additional guidance.

- Pathways to the Stars Info Session slide deck
- Pathways to the Stars Questions and Answers

Return to Top

See also NC Child Care Rule 10A NCAC 09 .3002 Facility Requirements
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a);
Eff. November 1, 2012
Readopted Eff. October 1, 2017
Amended July 1, 2025

Change of Ownership or Change of Location

If an NC Pre-K site experiences a change of ownership or change of location, the local NC Pre-K Committee has the authority to make decisions regarding the site's eligibility to continue as an NC Pre-K site.

The local NC Pre-K Committee may vote to:

- Allow the site to continue operation as an approved NC Pre-K site through the end of the contract cycle and require the site to participate in the next Site Selection Process prior to the existing subcontract's expiration date. The site will be required to maintain all requirements for the NC Pre-K Program.

  OR

- Allow the site to continue operation as an NC Pre-K site ***without*** participating in the Site Selection Process. The site will be required to maintain all requirements for the NC Pre-K Program.

  OR

- End the contract with the existing site and reallocate slots to other, approved NC Pre-K sites in the county/region. The site may be eligible to apply during the next Site Selection Process.

The NC Pre-K site must work with their Child Care Licensing Consultant to complete the change of ownership or change of location process resulting in the issuance of a Temporary License. If the program does not achieve at least a four or five-star license by the end of the temporary time period, the NC Pre-K Contracting Agency in collaboration with the local NC Pre-K Committee may deny eligibility to continue to participate in the NC Pre-K Program.

Once the local NC Pre-K Committee has made a decision regarding the site's eligibility to continue as an NC Pre-K site, site information should be updated in the NC Pre-K Plan system.

Return to Top

Guidance

New Site - If the site does not achieve at least a four-star license at the end of the temporary time period then a Provisional license may be issued for any length of time up to, but not exceeding, 12 consecutive months to allow a specific time period for the site to correct violations that do not cause conditions hazardous to the health and safety of the children in care at the facility.

NC Pre-K Site with Reduction in Star Rating - If a four or five licensed center participating in the NC Pre-K Program drops below 4 stars for any reason, then a Provisional license may be issued for any length of time up to, but not exceeding, 12 consecutive months to allow a specific time period for the program to correct violations that do not cause conditions hazardous to the health and safety of the children in care at the facility. **A Corrective Action Plan (CAP)** must be included that describes what the facility operator must do to comply with requirements. If the operator is unable to move the facility back to a four or five-star rated license by the end of the Provisional time period, the NC Pre-K Contracting Agency in collaboration with the local NC Pre-K Committee, may deny the site eligibility to participate in the NC Pre-K Program.

B. Official NC Pre-K Week and Year

NC Pre-K Program calendars must meet the following requirements:

- Covers at least 10 calendar months from August to May OR from September to June
- Provides child-directed and teacher-directed instructional learning activities daily for a minimum of 32.5 hours per week
  - Weeks that include closures for holidays or scheduled school breaks are excluded from this requirement
- Provides a minimum of 180 days OR 1,170 hours of instruction
  - Up to nine (9) mandatory teacher workdays (including days scheduled before or after the first/last day of school) may be counted towards this requirement

The 32.5-hour week refers only to the instructional portion of the day for children and does not include transportation. Time adjustments should be made in the schedule for transportation time to ensure that children have a minimum of 32.5 hours of instructional time each week.

NC Pre-K lead teachers and teacher assistants are expected to work 40 hours per week with a minimum of 32.5 hours of direct child contact. The remaining hours each week are for the lead teacher and teacher assistant to complete instructional activities.

Return to Top

Guidance

Official Week and Year Requirements - Whenever possible, the hours of operation should be consistent with the school system in the geographic location of the NC Pre-K site. Additionally, the site's schedule should generally follow the local public-school calendar. Variations from this guidance should be addressed between the NC Pre-K Contractor and NC Pre-K site. Hours of operation must be consistent with a minimum of 32.5 hours per week and 180 days OR 1,170 hours for a 10-month NC Pre-K year, including year-round public schools.

Home Visits/Staggered Entry - Days that are set aside for home visits and for staggered entry at the beginning of the school year may be included as part of the school calendar year. Throughout the school year a home visit may also count as an attendance day when used for instructional purposes or for a child who is unable to come to school due to special circumstances (e.g. extended illness, hospitalization and recovery).

Inclement Weather Make-Up Days - NC Pre-K sites should follow the local NC Pre-K Contracting Agency's written policy for inclement weather make-up days. Options should include adding additional days and/or providing remote learning during the site closure to meet the NC Pre-K minimum of 32.5 hours per week for 180 days OR 1,170 hours per school calendar year. The written policy for inclement weather make-up days should provide guidance to sites in finding a scheduling solution that will provide equivalent instructional time in all NC Pre-K classrooms, as well as meeting the needs of public schools, private sites and Head Start programs.

Staff Professional Development

Licensed administrators, teachers and teacher assistants in nonpublic and public schools must participate in professional development consistent with the NC State Board of Education policy. The *Professional Development* policy can be found on the Department of Public Instruction's website . Administrators, teachers and teacher assistants in nonpublic school settings working toward NC Pre-K qualifications must participate in a minimum of six documentedsemester hours per year.

NC Pre-K staff are required to work on all teacher workdays (up to 9) that are included in the school calendar and counted towards the minimum 180 day or 1,170 hour requirement. Local NC Pre-K sites are responsible for deciding if NC Pre-K staff are required to work on teacher workdays that are not counted towards the 180 day or 1,170-hour requirement.

Guidance

A Professional Development Day could be a day that the staff attends trainings or workshops relevant to their position as the NC Pre-K Lead Teacher, Teacher Assistant, Site Administrator or Principal. Staff of private facilities may attend the trainings set up for the NC Pre-K staff in public school sites. Professional Development Days could also be spent working in their classrooms preparing materials for their children.

Return to Top

C. Program Attendance Policy

Attendance

100% reimbursement will be provided when a child attends

- 25% or more of the operating days in a month, **or**
- at least one day during the first and last month of classroom operation, **or**
- at least one day during the child's first month of enrollment

0% reimbursement will be provided when a child attends less than 25% of the operating days during the month *(unless an attendance exception is approved)*

0% reimbursement will be provided when a slot is unfilled

Child attendance must be taken daily and submitted monthly for reimbursement. A child must attend a minimum of 25% of the site's operational days for the site to be reimbursed fully for the child's month of attendance. The NC Pre-K Plan and NC Pre-K Kids systems will calculate the attendance days and payment. During the first and last months of the operating year (August & May or September & June), a child must attend at least one day to be reimbursed for the entire month. This also applies to the first month of operation for classrooms that may open during the school year and the first month of attendance for children who enroll mid-year. For all other months, the NC Pre-K Plan and NC Pre-K Kids systems will calculate a full payment for a child who has attended between 25% and 100% of the attendance days in a month and nonpayment for children attending less than 25%. (See the *NC Pre-K Program Fiscal and Contract Manual* for detailed requirements on the payment process.)

Child Absences

When a child enrolled in the NC Pre-K Program is absent for more than three consecutive days, the Site Administrator shall contact the child's parent to discuss the absences and determine whether the parent wishes for the child to remain in the NC Pre-K Program. The Site Administrator shall document each attempt to contact the family and include decisions the child's parents make regarding the child's continued participation in the program. The Site Administrator shall contact the local NC Pre-K Contractor to share information related to the child's absence and to collaboratively determine what further actions may be necessary to maintain the child's attendance in the program. The Site Administrator shall not terminate a child's participation in the NC Pre-K Program before determining if barriers to the child's attendance exist and can be remedied through assistance such as access to transportation or additional educational activities in the case of a child's illness or disability.

However, if all efforts have been exhausted and the child does not attend the program after **10 consecutive operational days**, the NC Pre-K site and contracting agency should work collaboratively to determine if the child should be exited from the program. The NC Pre-K site and contracting agency must maintain documentation of all efforts to maintain the child's placement in the program including any written communication, phone calls, text, and/or any resources provided to the family. If a child must be exited from the program the child should be placed back on the waiting list for future reenrollment.

See also NC Child Care Rule 10A NCAC 09 .3002 Facility Requirements
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a);
Eff. November 1, 2012;
Readopted Eff. October 1, 2017
Amended July 1, 2025

Attendance Exceptions

Exceptions for an individual child's attendance can be requested for certain conditions such as:

- Illness, hospitalization, military leave, a family emergency, crisis requiring family travel **or**
- For natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, flooding **or**
- Other conditions that require the NC Pre-K site to close due to damages *(Examples, fire, water damage, loss of heating/air, etc.)*

These requests should be sent in writing to the NC Pre-K Contractor who will determine whether the exception is approved for the child's absence.

Contractors need to keep supporting documentation on file for the attendance exception detailing the circumstance for the reason(s) why the child was absent (e.g., written justification from a medical professional, email communications with the family regarding a family emergency, etc.). Documentation will be used for monitoring purposes by DCDEE.

An education service must be provided to the child in these circumstances and may include a hospital visit, home visit, remote learning services, etc. NC Pre-K Contractors and Site Administrators should work with families and make every effort to support a child's attendance and maintain the child's placement and participation in the NC Pre-K Program.

Homelessness

Per-child reimbursement rates will **not** be reduced for a child with multiple absences due to homelessness.

NOTE: NC Pre-K teachers should **attempt** to provide educational services to children until in-person instruction can resume.

NC Pre-K sites must communicate with their NC Pre-K Contracting Agency to request a Homelessness attendance exception. NC Pre-K Contracting Agencies will be responsible for verifying attempts to provide educational services and documenting attendance exceptions in the NC Pre-K KIDS database system.

D. Nutrition

NC Pre-K sites must provide breakfast or a morning snack and lunch during the regular school day that meets the USDA requirements for Meal Patterns for Children in Child Care Programs. The partial/full cost of meals may be charged when families do not qualify for free/reduced price meals. This fee must be approved by the local NC Pre-K Committee.

Childcare requirements that were adopted by the NC Child Care Commission and became effective on December 1, 2012 require that only unflavored skim or low-fat milk be served to

children two years old and older. Chocolate milk is not allowed. In addition, staff must role model appropriate eating behaviors by consuming only food or beverages that meet the USDA requirements in the presence of children. Changes to nutrition standards can be found in the NC Child Care Rule NCAC 09 .0900 General Nutrition Standards.

Effective July 1, 2012, changes occurred to General Statute 110-91(2) h.1. General Nutrition Requirements to give parental exceptions that allow a parent or guardian of a child enrolled in a childcare facility to provide food and beverages to their child that may not meet the nutrition standards adopted by the NC Child Care Commission and to opt out of any supplemental food program provided by the childcare facility. Effective December 1, 2012, childcare rules were ratified to implement the law. Child Care Rules .0901(c) and 1706 (b) state when children bring their own food for meals and snacks to the program, if the food does not meet the nutritional requirements of NC Child Care Rule NCAC 09 .0900 General Nutrition Standards, the operator must provide the additional food necessary to meet those requirements unless the child's parent or guardian opts out of the supplemental food provided by the program as set forth in G.S. 110-91(2) h.1. A statement acknowledging the parental decision to opt out of the supplemental food provided by the program signed by the child's parent or guardian shall be on file at the facility. Opting out means that the operator will not provide any food or drink so long as the child's parent or guardian provides all meals, snacks and drinks scheduled to be served at the program's designated times. If the child's parent or guardian has opted out but does not provide all food and drink for the child, the program shall provide supplemental food and drink as if the child's parent or guardian had not opted out of the supplemental food program.

The *Nutrition Opt Out Form* is available on the DCDEE website.

Guidance

Sites should inform families about the importance of good nutrition to encourage families to choose healthy food options for their children. Families and program staff can also be referred to the USDA My Plate website for additional information and resources to support good nutrition as well as the website for the NC Program *Eat Smart, Move More*.

See also NC Child Care Rule 10A NCAC 09 .0900 Nutrition Standards
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-91(2); 143B-168.3;
Eff. January 1, 1986;
Amended Eff. December 1, 2012; July 1, 2010; July 1, 1998; October 1, 1991; November 1, 1989

E. Transportation Fees

NC Pre-K Contractors may choose to use some of the NC Pre-K administrative allocations for transportation services. They may also use funds from other sources such as Smart Start or private funding.

When all other options have been exhausted, families with children participating in NC Pre-K programs may be charged a nominal amount for transportation to/from the NC Pre-K site if approved by the local NC Pre-K Committee. However, children who are at-risk should not be denied services based on the family's inability to pay.

F. Wrap Around Services

Families may also be charged for the cost of wraparound services provided before or after the NC Pre-K instructional day, during holidays or during summer months. NC Pre-K funds may not be used for wrap-around services.

Guidance

While NC Pre-K funding cannot be used for wrap around services (time periods before or after the NC Pre-K day), sites should attempt to meet the needs of families and children for full day childcare. When wrap around services are provided before and/or after the regular school day, during holidays or summer months, the provider may charge a fee for that service from participating families. Instructional staff's (teacher and teacher assistant) 40-hour-work week should not include wrap around services. Families should be referred to the local DSS office to apply for childcare funds to support wrap around care services.

G. Religious Activities

(a) During the NC Pre-K portion of the day, NC Pre-K sites may not use its NC Pre-K funding to pay for any of the following:

(1) Religious worship, instruction or proselytization
(2) Equipment or supplies to be used for any of the activities specified in paragraph (a) (1) of this section.

Guidance

It is important for teachers to understand and respect each child's cultural background that includes their family's beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviors that have a significant impact on the child's development and learning. (*NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development*)

Teachers may help children explore the similarities and differences among family traditions, holiday celebrations and cultural values. The aim is for children to understand that "families are different" and to be very sensitive to children who celebrate differently from the majority of the children (National Association for the Education of Young Children | NAEYC). Children may learn about other cultures, but there must not be practicing of any religion. Learning about religion is considered social studies, while practicing religion is considered worship.

H. Remote Learning

NC Pre-K programs are **NOT** allowed to operate **fully remote or hybrid classrooms**. However, remote learning may be provided to children for a **limited time** in response to any of the following circumstances:

- During the weeks prior to instruction (e.g., home visits and orientation may be done remotely)
- In response to inclement weather or to natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, flooding
- Other conditions impacting a child's ability to attend in-person such as illness, hospitalization, military leave, a family emergency, or crisis requiring family travel
- Other conditions that require the NC Pre-K site to close due to damage such as a fire, water damage, etc.

Remote Instruction

NC Pre-K teachers should provide short direct instruction and provide activities and learning opportunities for children and families to engage in independently that total approximately 32.5 hours of available material weekly for a remote learner/family. When possible, lead teachers or teacher assistants should offer blocks of live, direct remote instruction at least **once per day** if remote learning is being provided for **an individual child** or **twice per day** if remote learning is being provided to **all children.**

Family/Child Check-ins

Family/Child Check-ins are opportunities for teachers to connect with families via home visit, phone call, video conference, etc. Family Check-ins are only necessary during periods of ***extended*** remote learning**.**

Return to Top

Section 5: The NC Pre-K Classroom

A. Child Health Assessments

A health assessment is required to be on file at the NC Pre-K site within 30 days after a child enters the NC Pre-K Program and the assessment may be no more than 12 months old at the time of program entry. The health care provider is responsible for making appropriate referrals as indicated by the health assessment that shall include the following:

(1) physical examination;
(2) updated immunizations;
(3) vision screening;
(4) hearing screening; and
(5) dental screening.

The health assessment shall be done by a licensed physician, the physician's authorized agent who is currently approved by the NC Medical Board or comparable certifying board in any state contiguous to NC, a certified nurse practitioner or a public health nurse, meeting the Departments Standards for Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment Program.

Site-level administrators shall review all health assessment results at the time of the child's entry into the program to determine whether the assessment includes specific instructions for identified health needs that may require physical, occupational or other therapies to support the child's development and learning goals.

See also NC Child Care Rule 10A NCAC 09 .3005 Child Health Assessments
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a);
Eff. November 1, 2012
Readopted Eff. October 1, 2017

Guidance

Acceptable Health Assessment Forms

Forms that capture and report all the required health information per NC Child Care Rule .3005 and are signed/dated by a health care provider will meet the requirements of the rule. The *DCDEE Children's Medical Report* collects all the required health information to include the vision, hearing and dental screenings.

The NC Department of Instruction *NC Health Assessment Transmittal Form* (HAForm2016) collects all required health information except for the dental screening. If the HAForm2016 is used, a separate *Dental Screening* form will also need to be completed by a health care provider.

A child's last allowable Medicaid health assessment will meet this requirement.

All components of the health assessment can be completed during the child's physical including the vision, hearing and dental screenings.

Return to Top

Working with Families

If a child's health assessment is not in place on the first day of attendance, the family/parent should be given written notice to have the assessment completed within 30 calendar days in accordance with NC Child Care Rule 10A NCAC 09 .3005 (a). Contractors and sites should make every effort to assist families in obtaining a health assessment for their child and should enlist help from other community organizations and agencies.

B. Developmental Screening

All children enrolled in the NC Pre-K program shall receive a screening assessing the development of each child, across all domains, to ensure the child is growing and developing according to developmental milestones, unless the child has an existing Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The developmental screening shall be conducted by a health care, community or school professional trained in administering the screening tool. Children shall be screened within 90 days after the first day of attendance in the NC Pre-K Program or within six months prior to the first day of attendance. The screenings shall be used for the purpose of identifying children to be referred for further evaluation and testing based on concerns in one or more developmental domains.

Site-level administrators shall review all developmental screening results and share results with families when results indicate a need for further evaluation of the child in one of the domains of development: health and physical, emotional and social, cognitive, language/ communication and approaches to play and learning. The site-level administrator will work with the family to contact the local school system's Exceptional Children Program or other qualified resources to determine if a child is eligible for special education, related services or other supports for modifications in the classroom.

Children shall be screened using one of the approved screening instruments listed below:

1. Ages & Stages Questionnaires, Third Edition (*ASQ-3*) or
2. Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ)
3. Brigance Early Childhood Screen II (3-5 Years) or
4. Brigance Head Start Screen or
5. Brigance Preschool Screen – II, (under 4 years 11 months) or
6. Brigance K & 1 Screen – II (5 years 0 months and older) or
7. Brigance Early Childhood Screens III (3-5 Years or K & 1) or
8. Brigance Head Start Screens III
9. Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning, Third Edition (DIAL-3) or Fourth Edition (*DIAL-4*)
10. Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status (*PEDS*)

See also NC Child Care Rule 10A NCAC 09 .3006 Developmental Screening
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a);
Eff. November 1, 2012
Readopted Eff. October 1, 2017

Guidance

Any professional conducting developmental screenings must be trained in the use of the selected screening instrument. Oversight of the screening process should be provided by professional(s) with specialized training and expertise in early childhood assessments. Coordination with community service providers is recommended to avoid duplicate screening of children.

The NC Pre-K Site Administrator should use the developmental screening to identify children at risk who need further observation and /or a full evaluation based on screening results related to one or more domains of development (health/physical, emotional/social, cognitive, language/ communication and approaches to play and learning). Screening results, family input and observational information should be used to inform decisions about contacting the local school system's Exceptional Children Program or other qualified resources for further developmental evaluation to determine if a child is eligible for special education, related services or other supports for modifications in the classroom.

C. Early Learning Standards and Curricula

NC Pre-K programs shall use North Carolina's Early Learning and Development Standards (and subsequent editions), as developed by a group of state and national early childhood experts. The Early Learning and Development Standards can be found on the Division of Child Development and Early Education's website at *North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development*.

Teaching staff must use these early learning standards to guide and inform their planning and facilitation of comprehensive, developmentally appropriate, high-quality prekindergarten learning experiences for children. The early learning standards should also be used as guidance for informing families of their child's developmental process.

Each NC Pre-K classroom staff shall use an *approved curriculum* that aligns with the *North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development*. "Curriculum" means a curriculum that has been approved as set forth in the NC Child Care Rules by the NC Child Care Commission as comprehensive, evidence-based and with a reading component.

See also NC Child Care Rule 10A NCAC 09 .0102 Definitions
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-88; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7 (a);
Eff. January 1, 2013

Guidance *NEW*

The NC Curriculum and Formative Assessment review process is ongoing. New curricula and formative assessments may be added throughout the year. The approved list includes curricula for use in infant/toddler, school age, family child care home and religious programs. NC Pre-K classrooms must use an approved preschool curriculum from the list that is not for use in infant/toddler, school age, family child care home and religious programs.

NC Child Care Commission
Approved for NC Pre-K
Early Childhood Curricula

1. ***A Place to Grow*, 3-5** A Place to Grow, LLC 2020, (Approved for use in A Place to Grow early childhood programs) Aplacetogrow.com
2. ***Balanced Learning®, 3-4*** Primrose School Franchising SPE, LLC, 2021, 2025 primroseschools.com/
3. ***Balanced Learning®* Pre-Kindergarten** Primrose School Franchising SPE, LLC, 2021, 2025 primroseschools.com/
4. ***Connect4Learning,*** *2d Edition 4s,* Kaplan Early Learning Company, 2020, Kaplanco.com
5. ***Curiosity Corner,*** *2nd Edition,* Success for All Foundation, 2014, 2020, Successforall.org
6. ***Early Foundations,*** Knowledge Universe Education LLC, 2013, (Approved for use in Kindercare early childhood programs), kc-learning.com/about-us/education-approach
7. ***Early Innovator* 3-5**, Learning Care Group, Inc., 2016, (Approved for use in La Petite early childhood programs), LaPetite.com
8. ***ELA Engage, 3-5*** Early Learning Academies, 2025 (Approved for use in ELA earlychildhood programs, see brands on linked site) https://earlylearningacademies.com/our-brands/
9. ***Early Learning Matters***, 2nd Edition 3-5, Purdue University, 2018,(Approved for use with the stipulation that it is used with the Virtual Learning School), virtuallabschool.org/elm-curriculum
10. ***Empowered Child 3-5,*** Learning Care Group, 2016, (Approved for use in Child Time early childhood programs), learningcaregroup.com
11. ***Every Child Ready 3-4*** Collaborative Classroom, 2024 https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/programs/every-child-ready/
12. ***Experience Preschool Curriculum,*** Experience Early Learning™, Published annually Mothergoosetime.com/
13. ***Explorer 21,*** 3-5, Learning Care Group, 2016, (Approved for use in Everbrook Academy early childhood programs), learningcaregroup.com
14. ***Frog Street Pre-K***, Frog Street Press, Inc., 2020, (Approved with the stipulation formative assessment is used to inform planning; limit to two of the three small group opportunities; and centers are child choice rather than by rotation), Frogstreet.com/
15. ***FunnyDaffer,*** 3-5, Funnydaffer, 2020, funnydaffer.com
16. ***Galileo Pre-K Online,*** Assessment Technology, Inc., 2016, Ati-online.com
17. ***High Reach Learning Pre-K***, Communicorp, Inc., 2016 (Approved for use in Child Care Network early childhood programs), childcarenetwork.com/curriculum
18. ***High/Scope Preschool Curriculum,*** High/Scope Press, 2002-2016, Highscope.org
19. **Kids 'R' Kids First Class Curriculum®,** Fast Track for Preschool Kids 'R' Kids International, Inc., 2016, (Approved for use in Kids 'R' Kids early childhood programs), kidsrkids.com/
20. ***L.E.A.P. ®, Learning Experience Academic Program,*** The Learning Experience®, copyright 2007-present, (Approved for use in four-year-old classrooms of The Learning Experience early childhood programs.), thelearningexperience.com/
21. ***Learn As We Grow***, Learning Care Group, 2025 Approved for use in Learning Care Group early childhood programs. https://www.learningcare.com/brands/
22. **Learn Everyday®**: The Preschool Curriculum, Kaplan Early Learning Company, 2012, 2019 2d Edition, Kaplanco.com

Return to Top

23. ***Learning Beyond Paper***, Learning Beyond Paper, Inc 2024 https://www.learningbeyondpaper.com/
24. ***Life Essentials: Ready, Set, Go 4's,*** Essential Brands, Inc., 2015 (Approved for use in Kiddie Academy early childhood programs with the stipulation that programs not implement the letter of the week and teach literacy and math in the context of play and children's everyday experiences), kiddieacademy.com/academies/programs/preschool/
25. ***Life Smart 3-5***, Learning Care Group, 2016 (Approved for use in Tutor Time early childhood programs), learningcaregroup.com
26. ***Lighthouse CARES® Curriculum*** Children's Lighthouse Franchise Company, 2020 (Approved for use in Children's Lighthouse Franchise Company childhood programs with the stipulation that the Learning Wall, Learning Lesson and 3E Outdoor activities are optional for children) https://childrenslighthouse.com/
27. ***Lillio Learning for Preschool, printed curriculum*** (formerly Fireflies by FunShine Express) Lillio Learning, Published monthly (Approved for use with the stipulation that teacher-led art activities are optional for children) www.Funshineexpress.com
28. ***Lillio Learning ™ Powered by FunShine Digital*** for 3-5 years Lillio, Monthly (Approved for use with the stipulation that teacher-led art activities are optional for children) www.Funshineexpress.com
29. ***Nest Play Curriculum*** 3-5 The Nest, 2021-2025 (Approved for use in The Nest early childhood programs), https://thenestschool.com/curriculum/
30. ***Playworks,*** Preschool, LeafSpring Schools, 2019 (Approved for use in LeafSpring Schools with the stipulation to use approved curriculum only as supplemental supports) LeafSpringschool.com
31. ***Pre-K On My Way™ 4s***, Scholastic Inc., 2021, (Approved for use in 4 year old classrooms, limit to two of the 3 small group opportunities and no center rotations), teacher.scholastic.com/education/pre-k-on-my-way/index.html
32. ***Seedlings® Early Childhood Education Curriculum,*** Lightbridge Academy, 2025 (Approved foruse in Lightbridge Academy early childhood programs) lightbridgeacademy.com
33. ***STREAMin3,*** THRIVEin3 LLC and University of Virginia, 2024 https://streamin3.org/
34. ***Starfall 4's,*** Starfall Education Foundation, 2013, store.starfall.com/learn-more-prek-curriculum
35. ***The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool 4th Edition,*** Teaching Strategies, Inc 2002 teachingstrategies.com
36. ***The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool 5th Edition,*** Teaching Strategies, Inc 2010, teachingstrategies.com
37. ***The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool 6th Edition,*** Teaching Strategies, Guided Edition Teaching Strategies, Inc 2016, teachingstrategies.com
38. ***The Creative Curriculum for Preschool***, Guided Edition, Teaching Strategies, Inc., 2020, teachingstrategies.com
39. ***The Creative Curriculum for Pre-K***, Teaching Strategies, Inc., 2024, teachingstrategies.com
40. **The *Investigator Club® Prekindergarten Learning System***, NC Edition Robert Leslie Publishing, The Early Childhood Company® 2017 Investigatorclub.com/
41. **Three Cheers for Pre-K Uno, dos, tres ! Prekinder!** Savvas Learning Company LLC, 2022 https://www.savvas.com/solutions/literacy/core-programs/three-cheers-for-pre-k
42. ***Tools of the Mind, 7th Edition***, Metropolitan State College of Denver, 2012, Toolsofthemind.org

Return to Top

43. ***Wonder of Learning™*** Goddard Systems, LLC., 2025 (Approved for use in Goddard Schools) www.goddardschool.com/wonder-of-learning
44. ***World At Their Fingertips® 3-5,*** Bright Horizons®, LLC, 2021, (Approved for use in Bright Horizons® early childhood programs), brighthorizons.com/early-education-preschool/proven-approach
45. ***Young Achievers,*** The Children's Courtyard®, 2016, (Approved for use in The Children's Courtyard® early childhood programs), childrenscourtyard.com/educational-programs/curriculum/preschool/

Below is a list of curricula that may still be used by NC Pre-K Programs currently using the curriculum to meet NC Child Care Rule requirements. **New programs, and programs purchasing a new curriculum, may not use the curricula listed below**. DCDEE Approved Curriculum Exceptions

1. ***Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming Systems: Curriculum for Three to Six Years,*** Paul Brookes Publishing Co., Inc., 2002
2. ***Beyond Centers and Circle Time® Curriculum Pre-K Theme Series,*** Kaplan Early Learning Company, 2007
3. ***Big Day for Pre-K,*** Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015 Stipulation that programs not implement the letter of the week and teach literacy in the context of play and children's everyday experiences. No longer available for purchase. https://www.Hmhco.com
4. ***Connect4Learning***, Kaplan Early Learning Company, 2016, Kaplanco.com
5. ***Explorations with Young Children: A Curriculum Guide from the Bank Street College of Education,*** Gryphon House, 1992
6. ***Fireflies,*** Funshine Express, Published monthly, https://www.funshineexpress.com/fireflies.html
7. ***Frog Street Pre-K Frog Street Press, Inc.,*** 2013 https://www.Frogstreet.com
8. ***F.L.EX®*** Learning Program Goddard Systems, Inc., 2012
9. ***Investigator Club Prekindergarten Learning System, NC Edition,*** Robert Leslie Publishing, 2007-2012
10. ***Learn Every Day: The Preschool Curriculum,*** Kaplan Early Learning Company, 2012
11. ***Links to Learning,*** Nobel Learning Preschool Curriculum, 2006
12. ***Links to Literacy,*** Kaplan Early Learning Company, 2005***Little Treasures,*** The Macmillan/McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2011
13. ***Opening the World of Learning™*** **(OWL),** Pearson Early Learning, 2005

See also NC Child Care Rule 10A NCAC 09 .3007 Early Learning Standards and Curricula
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a);
Eff. January 1, 2013
Readopted Eff. October 1, 2017

Return to Top

D. Formative Assessments

Classroom staff shall be required to conduct on-going formative assessments to gather information about each child's growth and skill development, and how each child processes information and solves problems during the learning process. Classroom staff shall use this information to plan and deliver instruction and review each child's progress with his or her family, based on each child's development and learning needs. All formative assessments used by the NC Pre-K Program must be approved by the NC Child Care Commission.

NC Child Care Commission Approved
Early Childhood Formative Assessments

1. ***Balanced Assessment Evidence of Learning Portfolio,*** Primrose Schools® Franchising Company, 2021 (Approved for use in Primrose Schools® with the stipulation it is used with the Balanced Learning® curriculum and teachers must use the formative assessment to inform planning.) https://www.primroseschools.com/
2. ***Cognitive Toybox***, Cognitive Toolbox, Inc. 2021 (Approved with the stipulation that only observation based tools are used with children under 3 years old), cognitivetoybox.com
3. ***COR Advantage,*** High Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2014, https://Highscope.org
4. ***Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP), Preschool,*** California Department of Education, 2015, https://www.desiredresults.us/
5. ***ELA Assessment,*** Early Learning Academies, 2025 (Approved for use in Early Learning Academy early childhood programs, see brands on linked site) earlylearningacademies.com/our-brands/
6. ***Experience Early Learning Authentic Assessment Experience Early Learning™,*** Published annually. (Approved for use with Experience Early Learning curriculum) www.mothergoosetime.com
7. ***Funnydaffer Ongoing Formative Assessment*** Funnydaffer LLC, 2026 (Approved for use with Funnydaffer curriculum) www.funnydaffer.com
8. ***Galileo Pre-K Online,*** Assessment Technology, Inc., 2012-2017, Ati-online.com
9. ***GOLD ™,*** Teaching Strategies, Inc., 2010-2011, TeachingStrategies.com
10. ***Kids R Kids Formative Assessment*** Kids 'R' Kids International, Inc., 2016 (Approved for use in Kids 'R' Kids early childhood programs) www.kidsrkids.com
11. ***Learn As We Grow Assessment*** Learning Care Group (Approved with the stipulation that it is used with Learn As We Grow™ curricula in Learning Care Group early childhood education programs) www.learningcaregroup.com
12. ***Learn From the Start Assessment*** Learning Care Group, (Approved with the stipulation that it is used with Learning Care Group Curricula in Learning Care Group Early Childhood Education Programs), https://www.learningcaregroup.com/
13. ***Meaningful Assessment and Planning Process (MAPP), Bright*** Horizons, 2021, (Approved for use with the *World At Their Fingertips* curriculum in Bright Horizons early childhood programs), https://www.brighthorizons.com/
14. ***MECK Pre-K Formative Assessment, Smart Start of Mecklenburg County,*** (Approved for use in Mecklenburg County Prekindergarten programs administered by Smart Start of Mecklenburg
15. ***Preschool Child Observation Record (COR), 2nd Edition*****,** HighScope Press, 2003
16. ***The Creative Curriculum® Developmental Continuum for Ages 3-5,*** Teaching Strategies, 2001

Return to Top

17. ***The Investigator Club Pre-Kindergarten Assessment and Intervention System, NC Edition*** Robert-Leslie Publishing, The Early Childhood Company®, 2012-2017 and 2022 (Approved for use with the Investigator Club® Prekindergarten Learning System, NC Edition), www.investigatorclub.com/
18. ***Work Sampling System® Preschool - 4, 4th Edition, Pearson, 2001,*** pearsonclinical.com
19. ***Work Sampling System® 5th Edition,*** Pearson, Inc., 2013 (Approved with the stipulation that programs purchase the P-3 and P-4 Combined Classroom Kit), pearsonclinical.com

See also NC Child Care Rule 10A NCAC 09 .3008 Formative Assessments
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a), (b);
Eff. March 1, 2013
Readopted Eff. October 1, 2017

Return to Top

Documenting Child Data in *MyTeachingStrategies*® Platform

NC Pre-K teachers may use any formative assessment tool that has been approved by the NC Child Care Commission. However, all NC Pre-K teachers are **required** to document child growth and development data from the Spring/Final Checkpoint in the *MyTeachingStrategies*® platform regardless of which formative assessment tool is selected. Access to the *MyTeachingStrategies*® platform is provided for all teachers and staff who support classrooms with at least one NC Pre-K child.

Guidance

The NC Pre-K teacher should:

- Collect ongoing assessment data for each child by gathering information about what children know and do, how they interact with other children/adults and how they process information/solve problems.
- Use the assessment information to tailor instruction to the individual needs of each child.
- Discuss the assessment information with the teacher assistant as you plan for each child.
- Review child's progress with his/her family.

E. Staff-to-Child Ratio and Class Size

The classroom shall not exceed a maximum staff-to-child ratio of one to 10 with a maximum class size of 20 children, with at least one teacher and one teacher assistant per classroom. A classroom of 10 children or less shall have at least one teacher.

Classrooms that provide for inclusive settings for children with disabilities may require an adult to child ratio lower than 1 to 10. For LEA administered public school exceptional children's preschool classrooms, ratios must be in compliance with the *North Carolina Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities*, Section1508-Class Size: School Age and Preschool.

See also NC Child Care Rule 10A NCAC 09 .3009 Staff-to-Child Ratio and Class Size
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a);
Eff. November 1, 2012
Readopted Eff. October 1, 2017

Guidance

Inclusive classrooms are encouraged by the NC Pre-K Program. The value of inclusive settings ensures that the strengths, unique learning needs and abilities are addressed for each child. Inclusive classrooms may require an adult to child ratio lower than 1 to 10.

Return to Top

F. Mixed-Age Classrooms

Children may be placed in an NC Pre-K classroom that do not meet age eligibility requirements, but these children **cannot be funded** using NC Pre-K dollars and must not be reported in the NC Pre-K Kids system. When choosing to operate a mixed-age classroom, it is important to ensure developmentally appropriate practices for each child including appropriate staff to child ratios. Consult with the NC Pre-K State Office and/or your DCDEE Child Care Consultant when considering this option.

Guidance

Mixed Age Classrooms - The NC Pre-K Program is designed to provide high quality educational experiences to enhance school readiness for eligible four-year-old children. At times, younger children may be enrolled in the NC Pre-K classroom along with the four-year-old children. Before grouping children of mixed ages, the following should be considered:

- The optimum age range
- Proportion of older to younger children
- Teaching and curriculum strategies should maximize the educational benefits for the group.
- Planned activities should be age appropriate and effectively meet the developmental needs of all children in the classroom, as determined by on-going formative assessment, regardless of age.

If children younger than three years of age are being considered for a mixed age classroom, please contact your NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultant and DCDEE Child Care Consultant for further guidance.

G. Rest Time

A rest/quiet period is required for each child every day, the length of which shall be determined per the individual needs of each child.

During rest time, the staff/child ratio is considered in compliance if at least one staff is in the classroom with children while resting and is visually supervising all children. The second person needed to meet the 1 to 10 ratio must be on the premises, within calling distance of the classroom to remain in compliance.

At least one alert staff member is always in the classroom, actively supervising the children with no lapses. Additional staff must be onsite and can be called to assist in the event a need arises during rest time.

Guidance

Preschool-aged children should be provided with a regular time every day that they are encouraged, but not forced, to nap or rest. The nap/rest time should be regularly scheduled so that it happens at about the same time each day. The nap/rest time schedule must be reasonable for most of the children in the group. For those children who are early risers or non-nappers, accommodations must be made to meet their needs such as:

- Children can read books quietly or play quietly with toys on their mat or cot.
- Children can read or play quietly in another part of the classroom away from sleeping children.
- Children can go outside where they can participate in free play or specific activities, if they are supervised by the required number of staff.

The lead teacher and assistant should:

- Provide learning opportunities for children who are awake (e.g., read stories, implement differentiated instruction for an individual child or a small group of children).
- Write notes and/or call families to discuss their child's progress or concerns.
- Plan instruction to meet the interest of the children (e.g., lesson plans or create activities or games).
- Review assessment data and determine the short and long-term goals for each child.

H. Indoor and Outdoor Learning Environments

Classrooms shall provide high-quality indoor and outdoor learning environments that support the implementation of *North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development*, as well as the chosen curriculum. The outdoor classroom is considered an extension of the learning environment. Both indoor and outdoor environments shall address curricular objectives by encouraging child-initiated, teacher-supported, active learning experiences. During the NC Pre-K day, classrooms serving NC Pre-K children shall provide outdoor time, either as part of a small group, whole group, or individual activity, for no less than 45 minutes per day when permitted based on weather conditions.

See also NC Child Care Rule 10A NCAC 09 .3002 Facility Requirements
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a).
Eff. November 1, 2012;
Readopted Eff. October 1, 2017

Return to Top

I. Family Engagement

NC Pre-K classrooms shall provide meaningful opportunities for families to be engaged in their child's education. NC Pre-K Contractors, in consultation with the local Committee, shall develop a comprehensive plan for family engagement to implement strategies in local NC Pre-K classrooms. Strategies should be designed to develop partnerships with families and build reciprocal relationships that promote shared decision making. The following are examples of meaningful opportunities for families to be engaged in their child's education:

(1) Allowing NC Pre-K program teachers the opportunity for home visits;

(2) Formal and informal parent/teacher conferences;

(3) Classroom visits and options for parents and families to participate in classroom activities;

(4) Parent education;

(5) Allowing family members the opportunity for involvement in decision making about their own child and about their child's early childhood program; and

(6) Opportunities to engage families outside of the regular school day.

A log of activities, opportunities or communications made for family engagement must be on file at the NC Pre-K site.

ReadyRosie Family Engagement Solution

Access to the ReadyRosie solution has been provided for all NC Pre-K programs in order to support increased engagement and partnership with families. NC Pre-K programs are required to provide all NC Pre-K families with information about the ReadyRosie solution and must incorporate ReadyRosie resources into their existing family engagement plans.

Guidance

Teachers should:

- Provide ongoing opportunities for families to be engaged in their child's learning.
- Schedule events outside of the regular school day to meet the needs of working families.
- Provide times for families to be involved in planning events for the class (e.g., field day, parties, make-n-take activities, workshops).
- Locate outside resources to support families (e.g., community agencies, incorporate appropriate take-home activities into your newsletter or monthly calendars)
- See NC Foundations for Families at *NC Foundations for Families*

See also NC Child Care Rule 10A NCAC 09 .3010 Family Engagement
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a);
Eff. November 1, 2012
Readopted Eff. October 1, 2017

Return to Top

J. Transition to Kindergarten

Kindergarten Search Engine

The Kindergarten Search engine is available on the DCDEE website and provides the following information:

- The educational opportunities for kindergarten offered by local school administrative units.
- The educational opportunities for kindergarten offered by charter schools.
- Scholarships for enrollment in nonpublic schools provided pursuant to Part 2A of Article 39 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes, or any successor program.

NC Pre-K programs are required to provide all families with the address for the Kindergarten Search engine and a brief description of the information available.

Upon request, NC Pre-K programs must furnish to a family a list of the following educational opportunities located in the same county as the NC Pre-K facility, or, if specified, any other county:

- The educational opportunities for kindergarten offered by local school administrative units.
- The educational opportunities for kindergarten offered by charter schools.
- Scholarships for enrollment in nonpublic schools provided pursuant to Part 2A of Article 39 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes, or any successor program.

Kindergarten Transition Reports

In accordance with the **Excellent Public Schools Act of 2021** (Session Law 2021-8), a formative assessment must be administered at the end of the Pre-K school year, and the results of the assessment must be shared with the receiving kindergarten teacher. NC DPI, NC Department of Health and Human Services, and Teaching Strategies have collaborated to create a Transition Report to address this legislative requirement and support the state's transition to kindergarten efforts.

All Pre-K teachers in public schools, as well as teachers in NC Pre-K programs located in private sites and Head Start sites, will complete a Transition Report within Teaching Strategies GOLD® for each child in their class no later than May 31st. Transition Reports will be transferred to receiving kindergarten teachers via NC ELI as the new school year begins, providing information about a child's knowledge, skills, and abilities related to Widely Held Expectations for child development.

Return to Top

K. Early Literacy Assessments *REVISED*

GOLDFinch™ by Teaching Strategies®

N.C.G.S. § 115C-83.4B requires the Department of Public Instruction to establish an Early Literacy Program and ensure the following:

- The administration of a formative assessment to children at the conclusion of their participation in the NC Pre-K program to determine their kindergarten readiness and the alignment of their literacy instruction with the Science of Reading.
- The administration of a dyslexia screening instrument to all NC Pre-K children.
- The results of each child's formative assessment and dyslexia screening are shared with the child's kindergarten teacher at the beginning of the next school year.

GOLDFinch™ by Teaching Strategies® is the state-approved early literacy assessment tool and is provided to all NC Pre-K classrooms. Training will be provided to educators and administrators working with children in the NC Pre-K program to ensure appropriate instruction and intervention strategies are used with students who exhibit potential indicators of dyslexia.

Finch™ Literacy Screener - ***REQUIRED***

This game-based universal literacy screener for children identifies children who may be at risk for reading difficulties and dyslexia. The assessment generates a screener report and automatically feeds GOLD® portfolios with preliminary levels.

NC Pre-K teachers shall administer both the **Entry Screener** and **Exit Screener** components of the Finch™ Literacy Screener for all enrolled children and shall communicate results and recommended next steps with families.

The recommended administration window for the Pre-K Entry Screener is **July 1st – November 20th.**

- For children who begin services **after November 1st**, the Entry Screener should be administered within 30 days of the child's first day.
- For children who begin services **after December 31st**, only the Exit Screener is required.

The **required** administration window for the Pre-K Exit Screener is **April 1st – May 31st**.

- If child was not assessed with the Entry Screener, the two Family Survey questions must be completed with the Exit Screener.

All Family Survey questions and Exit Screener components of the Finch™ Literacy Screener must be completed by May 31st.

Finch™ Formative Games ***– OPTIONAL***

This game-based assessment includes fun, age-appropriate games that can be completed in less than 5 minutes per week and automatically feeds GOLD® portfolios with preliminary levels.

Return to Top

Guidance

North Carolina Finch™ Implementation Path

- Login to SmartTeach® and verify that the correct children are active in your class.
- Download the Finch App and log in with your SmartTeach® credentials.
- Utilize the Finch User Guides to help you get started!
- **Finch Formative Games** ***(Optional)***
  - Complete Recommended Online PD in the Develop area of *SmartTeach®*: *Getting Started With FinchFormative Games (1hr)*
  - Review Support Article: Finch Formative Games User Guide
- **Literacy Screener** ***(Required)***
  - Complete Online PD in the Develop area of *SmartTeach®*: *Getting Started With Finch Literacy Screener(1hr)*
  - Review Support Articles: Finch Literacy Screener User Guide
  - How to Administer the Literacy Screener
  - Complete the Home Language Survey for each child who will take the Literacy Screener

Section 6: The NC Pre-K Staff

All NC Pre-K Site Administrators, Lead Teachers, and Teacher Assistants must be named and approved in the NC Pre-K Plan. Verification of **relevant degrees, credentials, and/or licenses must be collected and maintained for ALL NC Pre-K Site Administrators, Lead Teachers, and Teacher Assistants prior to requesting approval in the NC Pre-K Plan.**

It is the responsibility of the NC Pre-K Contracting Agency to ensure that all data entered into the NC Pre-K Plan is accurate and that information is updated when changes occur for staff.

A. Site-Level Administrator Licensure and Credentials

NC Child Care Rule

(a) Administrators of NC Pre-K sites shall have:

(1) A NC Principal's License, or

(2) A North Carolina Early Childhood Administrator Credential (NCECAC) Level III, or

(3) hold a Bachelor's Degree in any field with 18 semester hours in early childhood education and child development, and complete six semester hours in childcare administration or nine semester hours in business administration or a combination of childcare administration and business administration.

(4) If the site-level administrator does not meet Subparagraphs (a)(1), (2), or (3) of this Rule, the following shall apply:

(A) provisional approval shall be given for four years from the time the site began participation with the NC Pre-K program for the administrator to attain a NC Principal's License, or a NCECAC III, or complete a Bachelor's Degree in any field with 18 semester hours in early childhood education and child development, and complete six semester hours in childcare administration or nine semester hours in business administration or a combination of childcare administration and business administration; and

(B) progress toward this requirement shall be considered a minimum of six documented semester hours per year in early childhood education, child development, childcare administration and business administration course work.

(b) When the site administrator is unable to work due to illness, other health related conditions, disability, death, or natural or man-made disasters, the interim site-level administrator shall be employed not to exceed 12 weeks and have the following:

(1) NCECAC I Credential or;

(2) the equivalent as follows:

Return to Top

(A) NC Early Childhood Credential plus three years of experience as a director, co-director, or assistant director; and

(B) Early Childhood Administration I (EDU 261) and Early Childhood Administration II (EDU 262); or

(C) six semester hours of childcare administration coursework; or

(D) nine semester hours of business administration coursework; or

(E) a combination of Parts (2)(B), (C), or (D) of this Paragraph that equals nine semester hours.

(3) NC Principal's License.

(c) In determining whether to approve an extension request, the Division shall consider the following:

(1) the number of children and families who may lose services if the classroom is not approved for the extension;

(2) the effect upon children and families if children are relocated to another Pre-K site;

(3) documentation of the Pre-K program's efforts to secure a permanent site-level administrator for the vacancy;

(4) availability of funding sources other than Pre-K funds to support affected children;

(5) reasons for the vacancy, including:

(A) maternity leave;

(B) death, disability, or illness; and

(C) natural or man-made disasters.

(d) Administrators of NC Pre-K sites shall not serve as the NC Pre-K teacher or teacher assistant.

See also NC Child Care Rule 10A NCAC 09 .3011 NC Pre-K Site-Level Administrator Qualifications
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a);
Eff. November 1, 2012
Readopted Eff. October 1, 2017.

Return to Top

B. Teacher Education, Licensure and Credentials

NC Child Care Rule

(a) All teachers shall hold or be eligible to hold a North Carolina (NC) Birth through Kindergarten (B-K) Initial or Continuing License or a NC Professional Educator's Initial or Continuing License with a B-K or Preschool Add-on License issued by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Teachers working toward the required education and license shall meet one of the following requirements:

(1) a NC B-K Initial License;

(2) a NC Lateral Entry B-K License;

(3) a NC Residency B-K License;

(4) a NC Emergency B-K License as determined by the Early Educator Support (EES) Unit;

(5) a NC Professional Educator's License with a Provisional B-K or Preschool Add-On;

(6) another state's license; or

(7) a BA/BS degree and be eligible for a NC Residency B-K License.

(b) Pre-K teachers with a NC Lateral Entry B-K License as specified in Subparagraph (a)(2) of this Rule shall make progress toward the NC Professional Educator's B-K Continuing License by:

(1) obtaining a and following an official Lateral Entry B-K Plan of Study issued by an accredited college or university with a North Carolina Department of Public Instruction approved B-K Teacher Education Program;

(2) submitting to the Division, college or university transcripts verifying the completion of a minimum of six semester credit hours per school year in accordance with Subparagraph (1) of this Paragraph;

(3) completing the three-year North Carolina State Board of Education Beginning Teacher Support Program in accordance with G.S. 115C-300.1 and North Carolina State Board of Education Policy LICN-004; TCED-0016; and

(4) achieving the NC B-K Initial or Continuing Professional License issued by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction within three years.

(c) Pre-K teachers with a NC Residency B-K License as specified in Subparagraph (a)(3) of this Rule shall make progress toward the NC B-K Initial or Continuing Professional License by:

(1) obtaining and following an official Residency B-K Plan of Study issued by an approved North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) Educator Preparation Program (EPP) based on:

(A) submission of all college transcripts to the EPP;

Return to Top

(B) overall GPA of 2.7 or higher on the undergraduate degree or as determined by the EPP; and

(C) employment as a Lead Teacher in a non-public NC Pre-K or Developmental Day Preschool classroom;

(2) submitting to the Division, college or university transcripts verifying the completion of a minimum of six semester credit hours per school year in accordance with Subparagraph (1) of this Paragraph;

(3) meet the Division's and EPP's requirements to renew the Residency B-K License no more than two times within a three-year period; and

(4) achieving the NC B-K Initial or Continuing License issued by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction within three years.

(d) Pre-K teachers with a NC Emergency License shall make progress toward the Residency B-K License by:

(1) obtaining and following an official Plan of Study prepared by an EPP. This official Plan of Study must specify how to qualify for a Residency B-K License during the upcoming school year.

(2) submitting to the Division, college or university transcripts verifying the completion of a minimum of six semester credit hours or less per school year in accordance with Subparagraph (1) of this Paragraph; and

(3) holding an Emergency License does not guarantee conversion to a Residency B-K License the following school year.

(e) Pre-K teachers with a NC Professional Educator's License with a Provisional B-K or Preschool Add-on shall make progress towards clearing the Licensure Add-On provisions by:

(1) obtaining and following a Plan of Study issued by an accredited college or university with a North Carolina Department of Public Instruction approved B-K or Preschool Add-On Teacher Education Program;

(2) submitting to the Division college or university transcripts verifying the completion of a minimum of six semester credit hours per year in accordance with Subparagraph (1) of this Paragraph;

(3) completing the three-year North Carolina State Board of Education Beginning Teacher Support Program in accordance with G.S. 115C-300.1 and North Carolina State Board of Education Policy TCED-0016; and

(4) completing all coursework required as prescribed by the official BK Add-On or Licensure Only Plan of Study within five years from the initial effective date of the BK provisional licensure area established by North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

Return to Top

(f) Teachers not meeting the annual minimum semester hours as set forth in Subparagraphs (b)(1), (c)(1) and (d)(1) of this Rule shall submit a written request to the Division of Child Development and Early Education Early Educator Support Unit requesting an extension to complete the requirement. Teachers shall submit a written request to the Division of Child Development and Early Education Early Educator Support Unit. The written request shall include the reason for not meeting the provisions of this Rule, a list of the required coursework and semesters hours to be completed as prescribed by the Plan of Study, a timeline for completing the required semester hours, and documentation supporting course enrollment and expected completion dates.

(g) In determining whether to approve less than the annual minimum required semester hours, the Division shall consider reasons, including:

(1) parental or family leave;

(2) death, disability, or illness; and

(3) natural or man-made disasters.

(h) Teachers shall maintain the B-K or Pre-K/K Add-on Continuing License in accordance with G.S. 115C-296(b)(1)b.4. 115C-296 (II). and NC State Board of Education Policy LICN-005. These policies can be found at Policy Listing | NC State Board of Education

(i) Teachers with expired B-K Continuing licenses shall meet the provisions set forth in G.S. 115C-296(II). and North Carolina State Board of Education Policy LICN-005. These policies can be found at Policy Listing | NC State Board of Education

(j) The site-level administrator shall maintain documentation available for review by the Division, of the progress toward the requirements as specified in this Rule.

All NC Pre-K lead teachers employed by nonpublic schools must be enrolled with the Early Educator Support Unit of the Division of Child Development and Early Education. The enrollment application may be found online at EES Enrollment Application.

See also NC Child Care Rule 10A NCAC 09 .3012 NC Pre-K Teacher Education, Licensure and Credentials
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a); Eff. November 1, 2012
Readopted Eff. October 1, 2017.;
Amended Eff. February 1, 2021

Return to Top

Nonpublic NC Pre-K Lead Teachers

Early Educator Support (EES) Unit Enrollment Requirements

NC Pre-K Lead Teachers employed in nonpublic schools must enroll with the EES (formerly EESLPD) Unit by completing and submitting the EES Enrollment Application along with the required supporting documentation specified on the application. Documents containing a teacher's personal identifying information (social security number, date of birth, address) can only be submitted to the EES Unit via the DocuSign EES Document Submission upload link or postal mail at the following address: Postal Mailing Address: Attn: Early Educator Support (EES) Unit NC Division of Child Development & Early Education – NC DHHS 2201 Mail Service Center Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2200

Transcripts

Official transcripts can be submitted via postal mail to the mailing address above. They can also be submitted electronically by following the *instructions*. Transcripts will not be accepted under any circumstance that are emailed directly to DCDEE staff.

All official transcripts sent to the Early Education Branch will be used for the appropriate educational review of each applicant. Once the transcripts are received by DCDEE, they become the property of DCDEE and cannot be returned to the educator or sender.

Please note: **Official transcripts must arrive at DCDEE in the original sealed envelope**. **Do not** *open, make copies or write on transcripts* before mailing to DCDEE. It is recommended that NC Pre-K Site Administrators and teachers maintain copies of other documents submitted to the EES Unit.

Licensure Eligibility and Continuation Requirements

Prospective NC Pre-K Lead Teachers

NC Pre-K Contracting Agencies and Site Administrators are advised to use the ***Prospective Teacher Eligibility Requirements Chart*** and the ***NC Approved Educator Preparation Programs (EPP) list*** as initial guidance tools in determining **licensure eligibility** for prospective NC Pre-K Lead Teachers at nonpublic NC Pre-K sites.

Return to Top

The chart below should be reviewed prior to employment offers, enrollment in the EES Unit for services, and teacher placement in the NC Pre-K Plan.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Prospective Teacher Eligibility Requirements</th></tr>
<tr><td>Option 1

EXISTING LICENSURE

Teacher currently holds an active or expired Professional Educator's License</td><td>If the prospective applicant holds one of the following:

• NC Continuing License
• NC Continuing BK or Pre-K/K Add-on License
• NC Continuing Provisional BK or Pre-K/K Add-on*
• NC Initial License
• NC Initial BK or Pre-K/K Add-on License
• NC Initial Provisional BK or Pre-K/K Add-on License*
• NC Lateral Entry BK License*
• NC Residency BK License*
• NC Emergency License*
• Out-of-State License
• International License

*Educators must complete coursework at a rate of 6 semester hours per school year with a grade C or higher on each course or have met all educational requirements as stated in Child Care Rule. Please contact your BK Licensure Specialist to determine if requirements have been met by the educator for the specific license. The educator may not be eligible as a NC Pre-K Lead Teacher if requirements have not been met.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Option 2

UNLICENSED EDUCATOR

Teacher does not hold a Professional Educator's License</td><td><u>Options 2A: Residency Birth-Kindergarten (BK) Licensure</u>

The Residency License replaced the lateral entry pathway to licensure.

<u>Definition</u>
The Residency License as defined in § 115C.270.20.a.5 is a one-year license with an option to renew no more than twice within a 3-year period as determined by the EPP and the EES Unit. Residency Licensure allows qualified individuals to obtain employment while meeting all requirements for the designated teaching area.

The Residency License is requested by the EES Unit. NC Pre-K Lead Teachers in nonpublic sites are required to submit an Enrollment Application to the EES Unit.

<u>Eligibility for a Residency BK License</u>
Individuals must meet the requirements listed below to obtain a Residency License:

Return to Top</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr>
<td rowspan="2">Option 2

UNLICENSED EDUCATOR

Teacher does not hold a Professional Educator's License

(continued)</td>
<td>

Employed in a nonpublic NC Pre-K classroom as a NC Pre-K Lead Teacher
Hold a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution with a cumulative GPA of 2.7 or higher
Completed 24 semester hours of coursework relevant to the requested licensure area as determined by the Educator Preparation Program (EPP)
Enrolled in a NC Department of Public Instruction approved Educator Preparation Program (EPP)

</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>
<u>Option 2B: Emergency Birth – Kindergarten Licensure</u>

The request of an Emergency License is at the discretion of EES Unit Staff only after an educator has been deemed ineligible for a Residency BK License.

<u>Definition</u>
The Emergency License is a one-year, nonrenewable license that provides an optional pathway to Residency Licensure. The Emergency License allows qualified individuals to obtain employment while meeting all requirements to convert to a Residency License.

An Emergency License can only be requested by the EES Unit after receiving the eligibility denial regarding Residency BK Licensure from the EPP.

A request for an Emergency License may be initiated for those who are not accepted into a Residency BK Licensure Program for the following reasons:

Late hire
GPA less than a 2.7
Lack of 24 semester hours of Birth-Kindergarten content as determined by the Educator Preparation Program (EPP). Teacher must have a minimum of 18 semester hours in Birth-Kindergarten content as determined by the EES Unit to qualify for an Emergency License

</td>
</tr>
</table>

Expired Professional Educator's Licenses

If the teacher holds an expired Initial or Continuing NC Teaching license in an area other than Birth – Kindergarten, such as Elementary Education (K-6) or Special Education, they are required to obtain an official Plan of Study for a BK or Pre-K/K Add-on License.

Return to Top

Upon enrollment within the EES Unit, the teacher will be asked to submit a Plan of Study. Once submitted a request to extend an Initial or validate an expired Continuing License will be submitted to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) by the designated EES BK Licensure Specialist.

If the teacher holds an out of state license in an area other than Birth – Kindergarten, such as General Education or Language Arts, they must submit all documentation requested by the EES Unit. Once all documents are submitted, the EES BK Licensure Specialist will work with the teacher to submit a request to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) to issue a NC Teaching License. If NCDPI issues the NC Teaching License without the area of BK or Pre-K/K on the license, the teacher will be required to obtain an official Plan of Study for a BK or Pre-K/K Add-On License.

If the conversion of an out of state license to a NC teaching license is denied by NCDPI, the teacher is no longer eligible for approval until An EPP has verified their eligibility for a residency license, or the EES has verified eligibility for an emergency license.

For Currently Enrolled Teachers

NC Pre-K Contracting Agencies and Site Administrators are advised to use the ***Requirements for Continued Eligibility Chart*** below as a guidance tool to ensure NC Pre-K Lead Teachers at nonpublic NC Pre-K sites are meeting **eligibility** requirements. Teachers who fail to meet eligibility requirements may not be eligible to continue serving as an NC Pre-K Lead Teacher.

Requirements for Continued Eligibility	
Lateral Entry BK License	Lateral Entry **is no longer issued by NCDPI — effective June 30, 2019**. See Residency BK License requirements.
Emergency BK License	**Requirements** Teacher must meet all requirements set by the EPP and the EES Unit in the current school year to be eligible for a Residency BK License the following school year.
Residency BK License	**Requirements** Complete a minimum of six semester hours of coursework per school year as prescribed on the official Plan of Study issued by the EPP with a grade C or higher on each course. Return to Top

Residency BK License (continued)	**Renewal of a Residency BK License** To renew the license for the second or third year, the following requirements must be met: • Completed educational requirements set by the EPP and the EES Unit the prior school year • Taught at least six calendar months during the prior school year • Continued enrollment in the teachers selected EPP • Continued employment as a NC Pre-K Lead Teacher in a NC Pre-K classroom • Completion of Form RL by the teacher, the EPP and the EES Unit verifying renewal for year two or three Failure to renew for either the second or third year will result in the expiration of the license. The NC Pre-K Lead Teacher will then need to immediately contact their EES BK Licensure Specialist for additional guidance regarding the possibility of a Residency BK License renewal. **Conversion to an Initial BK License** To convert a Residency BK License to an Initial BK License, all professional development and educational requirements must be successfully completed prior to the expiration date of the license. The teacher must also have the recommendation of the EPP and notify their designated EES BK Licensure Specialist upon completion of requirements to begin the clearing process.
Initial BK License or Initial License with a BK or Pre-K/K Add-On Licensure Area	**Requirements** Participate in an approved Beginning Teacher Program (BTSP) for a total of 3 years which includes being assigned a mentor and evaluator to convert to a NC Continuing License.
Continuing BK License or Continuing License with a BK or Pre-K/K Add-On Licensure Area	**Professional Development Requirements** Observations and evaluations are conducted annually. Final Summative ratings of "proficient or higher" must be maintained on 3 of the 5 NC Professional Teaching Standards with one of the 3 being Standard 4. Return to Top

	Renewal Requirements To renew a Continuing License, teachers are required to complete a total of 8 CEUs or 80 contact hours within the 5-year renewal cycle. Teachers must complete CEUs or Contact Hours in the specific areas below: • 3 BK Content (30 Contact Hours) • 3 Literacy (30 Contact Hours) • 2 General (20 Contact Hours)
Initial or Continuing License with a Provisional BK or Pre-K/K Add-On Licensure Area	**Requirements** Complete an approved BK or Pre-K/K Add-on teacher education program at an NC regionally accredited college or university. Complete six semester hours of coursework must be completed each school year successfully (Grade C or higher on each course) as prescribed on the official Plan of Study.

Bilingual staff

NC Pre-K sites that serve children and families who do not speak English or have limited English proficiency are encouraged to hire staff that are fluent in the child's native language.

C. Teacher Assistant Education and Credentials

All teacher assistants shall:

(1) have a high school diploma or its equivalent and shall either:
  (a) hold a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential; or
  (b) hold or be working toward an Associate Degree or higher in birth-through-kindergarten, child development, early childhood education, or an early childhood education related field. Teacher assistants working toward the Associate Degree shall make progress by completing a minimum of six semester hours per year.

(2) complete a minimum of 15 hours of annual in- service professional development. A combination of college coursework, Continuing Education Units (CEUS), or clock hours may be used to complete the requirements of this Rule.

(3) The site-level administrator shall document the progress of teacher assistants who are working toward the required education. This documentation must be maintained in the individual's staff record available for review by the Division.

Return to Top

See also NC Child Care Rule 10A NCAC 09 .3013 NC Pre-K Teacher Assistant Education and Credentials
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a);
Eff. November 1, 2012
Readopted Eff. October 1, 2017.;
Amended Eff. April 1, 2022

Guidance *REVISED*

Teacher Assistants working towards an AA/AAS Degree or higher in an early childhood education related field shall make progress by completing a minimum of six semester course hours a year. The six hours of coursework would need to be completed by the beginning of the next school year.

Coursework transcripts shall be provided to the Site Administrator for review and shared with the NC Pre-K Contractor prior to the beginning of the next school year.

The Council for Professional Recognition now offers the **Birth to Five CDA** to provide flexibility to those individuals who work with a broad age range of children. The Birth to Five CDA will meet Teacher Assistant requirements.

D. Substitute Staff

(a) When a member of the NC Pre-K teaching staff is unable to work, due to illness, other health related conditions, disability, death or natural or man-made disasters, a substitute staff person shall be provided to maintain the staff-to-child ratio as specified in Rule .3009 of this Section and shall be able to implement the curriculum and formative assessments in accordance with Rules .3007 and .3008 of this Section. Substitute staff shall be at least 18 years of age and meet the following minimum qualifications:

Short Term Vacancies

(1) When teachers are absent from the Pre-K classroom for 15 or fewer days, substitute staff shall meet one of the following:

(A) Nonpublic Schools (Private Child Care/Pre-K Settings):

Substitutes in private settings shall have

- a high school diploma or a GED, and
- completed one course in early childhood education or child development, such as the North Carolina Early Childhood Credential; or

(B) Public School Settings: Substitutes shall meet the requirements of the substitute policy consistent with the local education agency (LEA).

Long Term Vacancies

(2) when teachers are absent from the Pre-K classroom for 16 or more attendance days, substitute staff hold an Associate Degree in birth-through-kindergarten, child development, early childhood education or an early childhood education related field.

(b) Substitutes for teacher assistants shall be at least 18 years of age and have a high school diploma or a GED.

(c) Substitute staff shall not exceed 12 weeks without approval from the Division of Child Development and Early Education NC Pre-K Unit. Upon written request of the NC Pre-K Contract Administrator, the Division may grant an extension of the 12-week vacancy. The request shall include why an extension beyond 12 weeks is needed and a timeline for employing a permanent teacher or assistant teacher. In determining whether to approve substitute staff to work beyond 12 weeks, the Division shall consider the following:

(1) the number of children and families who may lose services if the classroom is not approved for the extension;

(2) the effect upon children and families if children are relocated to another Pre-K site;

(3) documentation of the Pre-K program's efforts to secure a permanent teacher for the vacancy;

(4) availability of funding sources other than Pre-K funds to support affected children;

(5) reasons for the vacancy, including:

(A) maternity leave;
(B) death, disability, or illness; and
(C) natural or man-made disasters.

See also NC Child Care Rule 10A NCAC 09 .3014 NC Pre-K Substitute Staff
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a); Eff. November 1, 2012
Readopted Eff. October 1, 2017

Guidance

The complete list of degrees in the field for both NC Pre-K teacher assistants and NC Pre-K long term substitute lead teachers:

AA/AAS or higher degree in:

- Birth-Kindergarten
- Child Care Administration
- Child Development
- Child and Family Development
- Child and Family Studies
- Child Psychology
- Early Childhood Education
- ECE-Special Education
- ECE-Teacher Associate
- Elementary Education
- Human Development and Family Studies
- Human Growth and Development
- Human Growth and Family Studies
- Psychology
- School Age Children
- Sociology
- Special Education

Individuals holding an **AA/AAS or higher degree** in a field other than those listed above may also be approved as an NC Pre-K teacher assistant or NC Pre-K long-term substitute lead if the DCDEE Status Letter issued by the Workforce Education Unit indicates a Degree Type of **"Degree/Field – EC/CD"** or **"Degree/Field – EC/CD & SA"**.

Note: Individuals who were last evaluated **prior to May 2023** will need to log in to their DCDEE WORKS account and upload a request for re-evaluation in order to receive an updated DCDEE Status Letter that includes the Degree Type.

E. NC Pre-K Teacher and Teacher Assistant Standards

NC Pre-K teachers and teacher assistants shall provide child-directed and teacher-directed instructional day-to-day learning activities for children enrolled in the NC Pre-K program for at least 32.5-hours a week. In addition to these day-to-day instructional experiences, the Pre-K program shall provide adequate additional time for the teacher and teacher assistant staff for planning, scheduling and conducting home visits, meeting with children's families, or attending required professional development activities as set forth in Rule .3016. These related activities shall take place outside of the 32.5-hour work week of direct teacher-child contact.

See also NC Child Care Rule 10A NCAC 09 .3015 Instructional Staff Standards
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88: S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a);
Eff. November 1, 2012
Readopted Eff. October 1, 2017

Work Week Requirements

NC Pre-K lead teachers and teacher assistants are expected to work 40 hours per week. A minimum of 32.5 hours each week are for direct contact with children in the classroom or outdoor learning environment. The remaining 7.5 hours each week are for the lead teacher and teacher assistant to complete related instructional activities. All 40 hours worked per week must be focused on the NC Pre-K classroom that the lead teacher and teacher assistant are assigned to at the NC Pre-K site.

During the 40-hour NC Pre-K work week lead teachers and teacher assistants must not:

- Provide coverage for staff in other classrooms (as floaters or substitutes)
- Provide transportation services (this includes driving as well as monitoring)
- Provide wraparound care services for children
- Provide administrative services (front desk coverage, providing tours, managing center/site needs, etc.)
- Any other duties that are not directly related to the delivery of NC Pre-K classroom services

F. Professional Development Requirement

North Carolina licensed administrators, teachers, and teacher assistants employed by public and nonpublic schools shall participate in professional development consistent with the level of education and type of educator licensure required for employment in accordance with 10A NCAC 09 .3011, .3012, and .3013. The Professional Development policy and resources are available on the North Carolina Department ofPublic Instruction's website.

See also NC Child Care Rule 10A NCAC 09 .3016 Professional Development Requirements
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a);
Eff. November 1, 2012
Readopted Eff. October 1, 2017

Return to Top

NC Pre-K teachers and Site Administrators who are employed by a nonpublic school are required to complete a series of mandated professional development prerequisite sessions that support the teacher licensure process upon enrollment with the Early Educator Support (EES) Unit and, as required annually, based on changes and updates to the teacher licensure and evaluation policy approved by NC State Board of Education.

When planning professional development, NC licensed teachers are required to follow their professional development plans that are developed based on their formally assessed teaching practices conducted by assigned mentors and evaluators. Professional development for NC licensed educators is based on BK licensure type and level, per NC State Board of Education policy.

DCDEE will offer professional development opportunities for teachers, teacher assistants and administrators to the extent feasible and when funds are available. Contractors, subcontractors including principals, directors and classroom staff may be required to participate in targeted professional development specified by DCDEE based on identified program needs.

When Contracting Agencies offer required professional development opportunities for administrators, lead teachers, and/or teacher assistants, NC Pre-K site administrators must ensure that all staff are able to attend and are compensated appropriately. Arrangements must be made for qualified substitute staff to serve in the classroom during these times if NC Pre-K children are in attendance.

G. Compensation for Instructional Staff

Compensation includes all salary, wages, health and/or retirement benefits paid to eligible NC Pre-K teachers and teacher assistants working in public and nonpublic school NC Pre-K Programs as defined in this Section. Compensation may also include other benefits such as childcare services discounts, disability insurance, educational scholarships, holiday pay, longevity pay, sick leave, vacation, other types of personal leave and/or other employer sponsored benefits (dental insurance, vision insurance).

Teacher Eligibility

a. Teachers who are employed by **public school** NC Pre-K Programs will receive salaries based on the NC Public School Teacher Salary Schedule and receive health and retirement benefits offered through the NC State Health Plan and NC State Retirement System.

b. Teachers who are employed by **nonpublic school** NC Pre-K Programs and currently hold either NC Birth-Kindergarten (BK), Preschool Add-On, Provisional BK, Provisional Preschool Add-on, Lateral Entry BK licensure are eligible to receive a compensation package that aligns with the NC Public School Teacher Salary Schedule. All Site Administrators are encouraged to offer competitive salaries and commensurate benefits to those offered by public schools.

Return to Top

Teacher Assistant Eligibility

a. Teacher assistants who are employed by **public school** NC Pre-K Programs will receive salaries based on the NC Public School Salary Schedule for Non-Certified Staff and receive health and retirement benefits offered through the NC State Health Plan and NCState Retirement System.

b. There are no specific salary recommendations for teacher assistants who are employed in **nonpublic school** NC Pre-K Programs. However, to promote quality and continuity Site Administrators are encouraged to offer compensation commensurate with that of teacher assistants employed by public schools found in the State Salary Guide on the NC Department of Public Instruction's website.

Compensation Packages for Nonpublic School Programs

1. Compensation packages may include salary only, or salary plus any variety of benefits. Examples of benefits in addition to salary/wages include:
   - Child Care discounts
   - Disability Insurance
   - Educational Scholarships
   - Health Insurance
   - Holiday Pay
   - Longevity Pay
   - Retirement Plans
   - Sick Leave
   - Vacation Pay
   - Other: Dental, Vision, or other employer determined benefits

2. Local NC Pre-K Contract Administrators should work with each local Site Administrator, as needed, to develop a written compensation plan that includes salary/wages and a list of potential benefits. There is no minimum or maximum compensation target that must be met; however, local nonpublic school NC Pre-K Site Administrators are encouraged to provide a compensation package for lead teachers and teacher assistants commensurate with compensation provided in local public school settings, based on available state and local fiscal resources.

Guidance

Salary Schedule Resources - NC Department of Public Instruction's Teacher and Teacher Assistant Salary Schedules may be found at Compensation for Public School Employees | NC DPI.

Return to Top

Best Practice - It is recommended that local NC Pre-K Contract Administrators contact the local public school's personnel or human resources office for salary schedules and any other information that would inform compensation discussions with local NC Pre-K Site Administrators, Lead Teachers and Teacher Assistants employed by nonpublic schools. Local programs are also encouraged to ***consider*** referring to the *Public School Teacher and Teacher Assistant Salary Schedules* for prior years and/or *NC Institute for Child Development Professionals* Salary Scales (See Tab Compensation/Benefits, Salary Scales for Teachers, Teacher Assistants) to use as the minimum benchmark for compensating Lead Teachers and Teacher Assistants.

Labor Laws - Programs providing NC Pre-K services should refer to state labor laws pursuant to the *North Carolina Wage and Hour Act* and to federal and labor laws pursuant to the Fair Labor Standards Act regarding questions about wage and hour rules and employment classifications (i.e., exempt versus nonexempt) of NC Pre-K instructional staff based on educational degrees and credentials.

Work Week - Compensation should be based on a 40-hour work week that includes a minimum of 32.5 hours direct child contact. *See Section 6. E. Instructional Staff Standards* of this document and 10A NCAC 09 .3015 Instructional Staff Standards.

How to convert an annual salary to an hourly wage:

- Add total number of paid days for the NC Pre-K school year. This number would include actual NC Pre-K workdays, usually 180, plus any paid holidays, vacation, teacher workdays or professional development days.
- Calculations are based on a 40-hour work week with 8-hour days. ***Sample calculations***:

Hourly wage = Annual Salary ÷ Days ÷ 8

Hourly wage = $33,000 ÷ 200 ÷ 8 = $20.63/ hour (includes 20 paid holiday/vacation days)
$33,000 ÷ 180 ÷ 8 = $22.92/ hour (includes 0 paid holiday/vacation days)
$40,000 ÷ 190 ÷ 8 = $26.32/hour (includes 10 paid holiday/vacation days)
$40,000 ÷ 180 ÷ 8 = $27.78/hour (includes 0 paid holiday/vacation days)

H. NC Pre-K Reimbursement Rates by Site Type

NC Pre-K Lead Teachers must meet all education and license requirements as specified above in *Subsection B: Teacher Education, Licensure, and Credentials* **and** be approved in NC Pre-K Plan prior to rate assignment.

Note: Lead teachers should only be listed in the NC Pre-K Plan as having a BK license or other license if the NC Pre-K Contracting Agency has **verified the license type** and has a copy of the license on file.

Contracting agencies **may not** assign rates below the NC Pre-K reimbursement rates for any classroom.

Head Start Programs and Head Start Programs administered by a Public School	
NC Pre-K Lead Teacher	
Teacher Licensure Status	**NC Pre-K Rate**
Holds a Professional Educator's License	$449
Holds no License and is working towards BK License	$449
Long-term Substitute Lead Teacher	
Teacher Degree Status	**NC Pre-K Rate**
Holds BA/BS or higher in ECE or an ECE related field and holds a Professional Educator's License	$449
Holds BA/BS or higher in ECE or an ECE related field	$449
Holds AA/AAS in ECE or an ECE related field	$449
Public School Programs	
NC Pre-K Lead Teacher	
Teacher Licensure Status	**NC Pre-K Rate**
Holds a Professional Educator's License	$525
Holds no License and is working towards BK License	$525
Long-term Substitute Lead Teacher	
Teacher Degree Status	**NC Pre-K Rate**
Holds BA/BS or higher in ECE or an ECE related field and holds a Professional Educator's License	$525
Holds BA/BS or higher in ECE or an ECE related field	$525
Holds AA/AAS in ECE or an ECE related field	$525
Private/Nonpublic Programs	
NC Pre-K Lead Teacher	
Teacher Licensure Status	**NC Pre-K Rate**
Holds B-K/Pre-K/K Initial License	$748
Holds B-K/Pre-K/K Continuing License	$748
Holds Provisional Pre-K/K Add-on License	$748
Holds Provisional B-K License Add-on License	$748
Holds NC Lateral Entry BK License	$748
Holds Other NC Teacher's License	$748
Holds Another State Teacher's License	$748
Holds Residency BK License	$748
Holds Emergency BK License	$748
Holds no License and is working towards BK License	$748
Long-term Substitute Lead Teacher	
Teacher Degree Status	**NC Pre-K Rate**
Holds BA/BS or higher in ECE or an ECE related field and holds a Professional Educator's License	$748
Holds BA/BS or higher in ECE or an ECE related field	$748
Holds AA/AAS in ECE or an ECE related field	$748

Section 7: Evaluation and Monitoring

A. ECERS-3 Assessments

10A NCAC 09 .3002 FACILITY REQUIREMENTS

(b) NC Pre-K programs that have earned a four-or five-star rated license using the program assessment licensure pathway or the classroom instructional quality licensure pathway in Rules
.3203 and .3205 of this Chapter shall have an assessment completed every three years using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Third Edition assessment tool.

Classrooms that score below 5.0 shall be reassessed the following year and a minimum score of
5.0 must be achieved in order to continue to be approved as a NC Pre-K site. At least one NC Pre-K classroom shall be selected for an assessment during the reassessment process.

NC Pre-K programs that have earned a four-or five-star rated license using the accreditation and Head Start licensure pathway in Rule .3207 of this Section are not required to have an assessment and shall instead comply with standards set forth by those organizations regarding program quality standards.

See also NC Child Care Rule 10A NCAC 09 .3002 Facility Requirements
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a);
Eff. November 1, 2012
Readopted Eff. October 1, 2017
Amended Eff. July 1, 2025

Guidance
The ECERS-3 requirement is based on the selected pathway by which the facility earned its four or five-star license. It is not based on individual classrooms.

Pathway #1: Program Assessment – ECERS-3 Assessment is REQUIRED
Pathway #2: Classroom & Instructional Quality – ECERS-3 Assessment is REQUIRED
Pathway #3 – Accreditation and Head Start – ECERS-3 Assessment is NOT REQUIRED
Please see the resources below for additional guidance.

- Pathways to the Stars Info Session slide deck
- Pathways to the Stars Questions and Answers

Return to Top

Guidance

Guide to the NC Pre-K ECERS-3 Assessment Process

1. If the Program Assessment or Classroom and Instructional Quality pathway is chosen, the DCDEE Child Care Consultant will request the ECERS-3 assessment from the NC Rated License Assessment Project (NCRLAP).
2. At least one of the classrooms selected for the ECERS-3 assessment must be a NC Pre-K classroom. If a NC Pre-K classroom is not chosen as part of the random selection process, the NCRLAP assessor will return another day (within two weeks) to complete an ECERS-3 assessment for at least one NC Pre-K classroom.
3. When all the ECERS-3 assessments for the facility have been completed, the NCRLAP will email the assessment reports to the DCDEE Child Care Consultant.
4. The DCDEE Child Care Consultant will contact the facility director/administrator and the NC Pre-K Site Administrator (if different from the facility director/administrator) to schedule a visit to deliver and review the assessment reports, including the NC Pre-K ECERS-3 assessment.
5. After the visit, the DCDEE Child Care Consultant will email a copy of the NC Pre-K ECERS-3 assessment report to the local NC Pre-K Contract Administrator to share the assessment report, items discussed, recommendations and available technical assistance opportunities related to the NC Pre-K ECERS-3 assessment that may include the NC Pre-K Early Educator Support, Licensure and Professional Development mentor and evaluator.
6. If a NC Pre-K Program has a rated license assessment, it is not necessary to request a standalone ECERS-3 assessment for a new NC Pre-K classroom since the classroom was not in operation at the time of the rated license assessment. NC Pre-K ECERS-3 assessments are conducted as part of the rated license assessment process; therefore, a separate ERS request should not be submitted to NCRLAP for an expansion of a new NC Pre-K classroom. If the classroom is still open at the program's three-year reassessment, then it will be included in the random selection process.

Return to Top

If the NC Pre-K classroom scores less than 5.0 on the ECERS-3 assessment:

An Improvement Plan is required when the classroom ECERS-3 score does not meet the minimum assessment score (5.0) on any classroom assessment.

- The classroom will have one year to make improvements.
- The DCDEE Child Care Consultant will contact the local NC Pre-K Contract Administrator and the NC Pre-K Site Administrator to set up a meeting to discuss the assessment report and to develop an Improvement Plan. The Improvement Plan and timeline will be developed jointly with the DCDEE Child Care Consultant and Supervisor (if necessary), the local NC Pre-K Contract Administrator, the NC Pre-K Site Administrator, lead teacher, teacher assistant and the lead teacher's NC Pre-K EES mentor and/or evaluator. Other resources, such as the local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency, Smart Start Partnership, Public School or Head Start agency may also be included, as applicable.
- A copy of the final Improvement Plan must be maintained by the local NC Pre-K Contractor, NC Pre-K site and the DCDEE Child Care Consultant.
- Follow-up assessments will be conducted to ensure the minimum rating is met during the following school year. The DCDEE Child Care Consultant will request the follow-up assessment from the NCRLAP. The classroom must achieve at least a 5.0 on the follow-up assessment to continue to be approved as a NC Pre-K site.
- A classroom may be exempt from the Improvement Plan requirements if the classroom location or teacher has changed since the ECERS-3 assessment occurred. However, the classroom may be subject to a new assessment.

B. Child Maltreatment Investigations

The Division of Child Development and Early Education will notify local Contract Administrators of any administrative action issued at a NC Pre-K site. Administrative action may be issued as the result of violations of childcare requirements and/or a substantiation of child maltreatment.

The Division of Child Development and Early Education does not share information about pending child maltreatment investigations, as they are confidential. At the conclusion of an investigation, if child maltreatment is not determined, information about the investigation shall remain confidential. Only information about violations of childcare requirements and any administrative action issued as a result of an investigation can be shared. At the conclusion of an investigation, if child maltreatment is substantiated, visit information, including violations of childcare requirements and any administrative action issued will be available.

Return to Top

The NC Pre-K site in question may continue operating the NC Pre-K classroom until the administrative action corrective action plans are complete. If the allegation of child maltreatment is substantiated, NC Pre-K funds may be terminated where there is maltreatment that jeopardizes the health and safety of children enrolled in the program.

In some cases, NC Pre-K Program payments will continue through the appeals process. However, NC Pre-K funds will be terminated when the participating NC Pre-K site childcare facility license has been suspended or revoked. Any substantiation of child maltreatment, or any administrative action resulting in a change of the license status, may impact future participation in the NC Pre-K Program.

C. Program and Fiscal Monitoring of Local NC Pre-K Programs

The Division of Child Development and Early Education, local Contract Administrators and Site Administrators are required to monitor for program/policy and fiscal/contract compliance for the NC Pre-K Program.

Monitoring by the Division of Child Development and Early Education

DCDEE Child Care Consultants will monitor for compliance of the NC Child Care Rules, which includes Section .3000, NC Pre-Kindergarten Services. Results of DCDEE facility licensing monitoring visits will be shared with the Site Administrator, the local NC Pre-K Contractor and sent to the Division of Child Development and Early Education to be placed in the program's Master File. DCDEE Administration Section staff will monitor for program compliance with the NC Pre-K Program Requirements (Policy) that inform the work of the local contracting agency and the local NC Pre-K Committee, and for requirements not in the NC Child Care Rules. The NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultants will provide technical assistance, as needed, to ensure compliance.

Monitoring Tools

Monitoring tools developed by the Division of Child Development and Early Education must be used at the local level for self-review and verification of compliance with the operating requirements.

1. **NC Pre-K Site Monitoring Tool (Site Tool) – Completed by the Site Administrator (or designee, not the classroom teacher)** – The Site Tool is designed to provide a checklist of those components of the program that must be reviewed for compliance annually at the site and classroom level. The Site Monitoring Tool must be submitted to the local Contractor by October 31st of the program year. A copy will be maintained on file at the childcare facility, along with supporting documentation, for review by DCDEE staff. Classroom teachers are required to self-monitor per the "Rubric for Evaluating NC Teachers".

2. **NC Pre-K Fiscal & Programmatic Monitoring Worksheet – Completed by the local Contractor (or designee)** – The Worksheet is designed to provide a checklist of those components of the program that must be reviewed for compliance annually at the local Contractor level based on fiscal and programmatic requirements. An electronic survey of the Fiscal & Programmatic Monitoring Worksheet will be submitted to DCDEE by November 15th of the program year, prior to the DCDEE monitoring process. DCDEE Administration Section staff will contact selected Contractors to schedule a date/time to conduct monitoring through a desk audit or an on-site visit. A copy of the Worksheet will be maintained on file at the contracting agency, along with supporting documentation, for review by the DCDEE Administration Section staff.

Guidance

The required Site Monitoring Tool, Fiscal & Programmatic Monitoring Worksheet are organized by specific program, policy or fiscal requirements. The tool/worksheet lists specific documentation required to support the cited requirement/standard and tracking columns are included for self-monitoring. Supporting documentation, listed under the "source" column, must be available for review by the local Contractor and by DCDEE personnel during monitoring and technical assistance visits. To download monitoring tools please go to: NC Pre-K | North Carolina Prekindergarten Program

Site Administrator Responsibilities:

1. Each Site Administrator must monitor each NC Pre-K Program classroom during the instructional day on a regular basis. A NC Pre-K Site Monitoring Tool must be completed for each NC Pre-K site and all NC Pre-K classrooms.

2. When a particular standard or requirement has not been met based on monitoring with the Site Tool, each site should establish a written plan to meet compliance. The plan should define who is responsible for accomplishing the task, a timeline and information to indicate progress toward meeting the requirement.

3. By October 31st of the program year, the Site Administrator or designee should complete the NC Pre-K Site Monitoring Tool, sign/date the Assurance Statement and send an original OR scanned copy of the completed NC Pre-K Site Monitoring Tool, to include attaching the Action Plan for items not met, to the local NC Pre-K Contract Administrator. NOTE: If a site or classroom becomes a NC Pre-K site or classroom after October 1st, a Site Tool should be completed and submitted to the local Contractor within 90 days of the first attendance day at that site/classroom.

4. A copy of the Site Monitoring Tool should be available at each NC Pre-K site and shared with the DCDEE Child Care Consultant during compliance visits, as requested, and with the DCDEE NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultant, as requested, during technical assistance visits/calls with the contracting agency.

Local Contractor responsibilities:

1. Local Contractors monitor NC Pre-K sites/classrooms and complete the NC Pre-K Fiscal & Programmatic Monitoring Worksheet.
2. Any non-compliance with fiscal or programmatic requirements based on monitoring with the NC Pre-K Fiscal & Programmatic Monitoring Worksheet may result in corrective action, including reimbursement for unallowable expenditures.
3. The local Contractor (or designee) ensures that:
    a. By October 31st of the program year an original copy of the NC Pre-K Site Monitoring Tool from each NC Pre-K site is on file.
    b. By January 15th of the program year, at least one annual on-site visit or virtual/desktop review will be made to each NC Pre-K Program site/classroom. During the visit/review, the Site Tool should be discussed and validated by the local Contractor (or designee). For sites/classrooms that have not met specific requirements, written plans for compliance should be attached to the Site Tool and reviewed/monitored for completion. This may require additional classroom visits by the Contractor (or designee). In addition, the Contractor will follow up with the site/classroom on concerns if any are identified by the DCDEE Child Care Consultant during the annual licensing visits to the program and/or by the DCDEE NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultant.
    c. By November 15th of the program year, the Contract Administrator must complete, sign, and submit to DCDEE the electronic survey for the NC Pre-K Fiscal & Programmatic Worksheet. The Worksheet monitors compliance of the NC Pre-K Program fiscal, programmatic and contract requirements. The information from the Worksheet will be reviewed by the DCDEE Administration Section staff. If monitoring results require corrective action, then all written action plans, timelines, exceptions from the state office and other information to support progress toward requirements not met must be kept on file at the contracting agency. This information must be made available, if needed, for discussion with the DCDEE NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultant during technical assistance visits/calls.
    d. Selected Contractors will be contacted by the DCDEE Administration Section staff to schedule a date/time between December and April of the program year to conduct a desk audit or on-site monitoring visit. The DCDEE monitoring staff will discuss the items from the visit/review (fiscal, policy and contract) with the Contract Administrator and DCDEE NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultants. A formal close-out letter will be sent to the contracting agency by June 30th of the program year following the visit/review providing details of the monitoring.

Return to Top

e. The Contract Administrator must complete any fiscal corrective actions identified by DCDEE in the formal close-out letter within 30 days. **Any corrective actions for fiscal non-compliance must be completed within 90 days of notification by the state office.**

4. Results are reported to the local NC Pre-K Committee prior to **June 30th** of the program year. Information included in the tool/worksheet should be considered in planning for the upcoming program year.

Guidance

Although local Contractors are responsible for ensuring that income eligibility is determined correctly, documentation may be stored at the individual NC Pre-K sites as long as the Contractor can obtain the eligibility documentation when it is requested by DCDEE NC Pre-K and/or Administration Section staff. It is important for the Contractor to have verification on file that was used in determining child eligibility, such as the NC Pre-K Program Scorecard (Section 3, page 3-4).

State level responsibilities:

1. Visits by DCDEE Child Care Consultants will be made to NC Pre-K classrooms to ensure classrooms are in compliance with all NC Child Care Rules, including Rule .3000, NC Pre-Kindergarten Services. These visits may occur at any time during the program year. The DCDEE Child Care Consultant will report information gathered from these visits to the local Contract Administrator.

2. NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultants will provide technical assistance and training to local NC Pre-K contracting agencies and Committees. In addition, the NC Pre-K state office and teacher mentor/evaluation staff will follow NC State Board of Education Licensure Policy and Procedures to carry out the provisions of teacher evaluation.

3. Reporting and monitoring information may also be obtained through the NC Pre-K County/Region Plan (NC Pre-K Plan), the NC Pre-K Attendance Reporting System (NC Pre-K Kids), the NC Pre-K Application, Prioritization, and Placement System (NC Pre-K APP) and the NC Educator Effectiveness System (NCEES). These systems include extensive information about children, staff, and programs. Child information will include the necessary information required to support the State's Maintenance of Effort (MOE) for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).

Return to Top

4. DCDEE Administration Section staff will schedule monitoring from December through April of the program year to review results, including action plans that are collected and documented on the NC Pre-K Fiscal Monitoring Worksheet by the county/region Contractor. DCDEE Administration Section staff will verify that all requirements have either been met or plans for achieving compliance are in place. If specific fiscal, programmatic or contract requirements have not been met as specified in the formal close-out letter, DCDEE Administration Section staff will confirm that the Contractor (or designee) submits final monitoring results, including supporting plans for items not met, to DCDEE within 30 business days of the formal close-out letter. This may require additional follow-up (email communication, telephone calls, technical assistance visits) by DCDEE personnel to provide support in areas not fully implemented.

5. An original copy of the tool/worksheet will be maintained by the state office as evidence that program, policy, and fiscal requirements are in compliance.

Guidance

For fiscal monitoring purposes, it is best practice for a copy of the NC Pre-K Program Scorecard to be kept in each child's enrollment file/record verifying his/her eligibility for NC Pre-K services. At the time of the fiscal monitoring, the Scorecard may be needed to facilitate review of a child's record to verify the Contractor determined eligibility correctly for the child to receive NC Pre-K services.

Return to Top

D. Monitoring Timeline

Local NC Pre-K Contractors should conduct ongoing monitoring throughout the year, not limited to the schedule listed below.

When	What	Who
By October 31st	Local NC Pre-K sites complete all items related to the **NC Pre-K Site Monitoring Tool**, including action plans and timelines, as applicable and submit the original **Site Monitoring Tool** to the local Contract Administrator by October 31st. A copy of the **Site Monitoring Tool** should be maintained on file at the NC Pre-K site for review, as needed, by **DCDEE staff.** (New sites and/or classrooms started after October 1st, should complete a **Site Monitoring Tool** and submit within 90 days of the first attendance day.) *All child developmental screenings not completed by October 31st should be noted in the action plan.	**NC Pre-K Site Administrator** (or designee) (site director or public school principal)
October 31st through January 15th	Contractors must conduct on-site visits or virtual/desktop reviews for all local NC Pre-K Program sites/classrooms. The **Site Monitoring Tool** should be discussed and validated by the local Contractor during these visits. Schedule follow-up visits as needed. Contractors should complete all items related to the **NC Pre-K Site Monitoring Tool**, including action plans and timelines, as applicable by January 15th.	**Local NC Pre-K Contract Administrator** (or designee)
By November 15th	Contractors complete the electronic survey for the **NC Pre-K Fiscal and Programmatic Monitoring Worksheet** to include explanations for compliance and Contract Administrator's signature and submit to DCDEE by November 15th.	**Local NC Pre-K Contract Administrator** (or designee)
December through April	The **NC Pre-K Fiscal and Programmatic Monitoring Worksheet** and supporting documentation will be reviewed by the **DCDEE Administration Section Staff**. Selected contracting agencies will be contacted to conduct monitoring between December and April.	**DCDEE Administration Section Staff**
December through April	The **NC Pre-K Fiscal and Programmatic Monitoring Worksheet** and supporting documentation will be reviewed by the **DCDEE NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultants.** Guidance/ technical assistance will be provided as needed through on-site visits/calls between **December and April**.	**DCDEE NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultants**
By June 30th	**DCDEE Administration Section Staff** will send out formal close-out letters by June 30th to contracting agencies that were selected for monitoring. The formal letter will provide details of the monitoring, including any findings that may require corrective action.	**DCDEE Administration Section Staff**

NOTE: DCDEE Child Care Consultants conduct compliance visits to NC Pre-K Programs using the **NC Child Care Rules**, including **Rule .3000-NC Pre-Kindergarten Services**. These visits may occur at any time during the program year.

Return to Top

E. Monitoring Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and Maintenance of Effort (MOE)

The Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant funds services and assistance to income-eligible families who have a child living in the home. The TANF block grant, administered by the State Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), has an annual cost sharing requirement referred to as the Maintenance of Effort requirement (MOE). Every federal fiscal year, each state must spend a certain amount of its own money to help eligible families in ways that are consistent with the purpose of the TANF program.

The NC Pre-K Program, designed to provide high-quality pre-kindergarten experiences that may allow parents to work, may count as MOE. See *NC Pre-K Program Fiscal and Contract Manual*.

Local NC Pre-K Programs are subject to monitoring visits by the DHHS Division of Budget and Analysis. The Division of Budget and Analysis, in conjunction with the State NC Pre-K Program, will select administrative programs for monitoring visits. Monitoring visits are not audits but reviews of randomly selected child records to ensure that funds to be counted as MOE meet the basic guidelines as outlined in the *NC Pre-K Program Fiscal and Contract Manual*.

Local NC Pre-K Programs should inform eligible NC Pre-K families, at the time of their enrollment into the program, that they should update the program if any of the following information changes during the NC Pre-K Program year. Families should be informed that NC Pre-K services would continue for their child and would not be affected by the information update/change.

1. Name changes
2. Child's living arrangement changes related to who has legal custody and/or guardianship of the child

Return to Top

APPENDICES

Return to Top

BEDROCK COUNTY NC PRE-K COMMITTEE
Conflict of Interest Policy

The Bedrock County NC Pre-K Committee has adopted the following conflict of interest policy:

Bedrock County NC Pre-K staff are obligated to always act in the best interest of the organization. This obligation requires that any Committee member, in their performance of NC Pre-K duties, seek only the furtherance of the NC Pre-K mission. At all times, Committee members are prohibited from using their job title, the organization's name or property, for private profit or benefit.

A. The officers or agents of the Bedrock County NC Pre-K Committee should neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value from contractors/vendors. This is not intended to preclude bona-fide Bedrock County NC Pre-K fund-raising activities.

B. No officer or agent of the Bedrock County NC Pre-K Committee shall participate in the selection, award, or administration of a purchase or contract with a vendor where, to their knowledge, any of the following has a financial interest in that purchase or contract:

    1. The officer or agent;
    2. Any member of their immediate family;
    3. Their partner;
    4. An organization in which any of the above is an officer, director or employee;
    5. A person or organization with whom any of the above individuals is negotiating or has any arrangement concerning prospective employment.

C. Disclosure - Any possible conflict of interest shall be disclosed by the person or persons concerned.

D. Committee Action - When a conflict of interest is relevant to a matter requiring action by the Bedrock County NC Pre-K Committee, the interested person(s) shall call it to the attention of the Bedrock County NC Pre-K Committee and said person(s) shall not vote on the matter. In addition, the person(s) shall not participate in the final deliberation or decision regarding the matter under consideration. When there is a doubt as to whether a conflict exists, the matter shall be resolved by vote of the Bedrock County NC Pre-K Committee, excluding the person(s) concerning whose situation the doubt has arisen.

E. Record of Conflict - The official minutes of the Bedrock County NC Pre-K Committee shall reflect that the conflict of interest was disclosed and the interested person(s) did not vote on the matter.

I agree to adhere to this policy and hereby disclose any potential conflict that I might have as a Committee member:

Date: _____

Printed name: _____

Signature: _____

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Division of Child Development and Early Education

NORTH CAROLINA NC Pre-K Prekindergarten Program

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

NC PRE-K PROGRAM COMMITTEE

The standard of behavior of the NC Pre-K Committee is that all members scrupulously avoid conflicts of interest between the interests of the NC Pre-K Program and personal, professional, and business interests on the other. This includes avoiding potential and actual conflicts of interest, as well as perceptions of conflicts of interest.

The Committee understands that the purpose of this policy is to protect the integrity of the NC Pre-K Program's decision-making process, to enable our parents to have confidence in our integrity, and to protect the integrity and reputations of the Committee members. Upon or before appointment, Committee members will make a full, written disclosure of interests, relationships, and holdings that could potentially result in a conflict of interest. This written disclosure will be kept on file and will be updated as it is appropriate.

During meetings or activities, Committee members will disclose any interests in a transaction or decision where the Committee member, family and/or significant other, employer, or close associates will receive a benefit or gain. After disclosure, the Committee member will be allowed to participate in the discussion but will not be permitted to vote on the motion.

I understand that this policy is meant to supplement good judgment, and I will respect its spirit as well as its wording.

Sign:_____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____

BEDROCK COUNTY NC PRE-K COMMITTEE

Conflict of Interest Policy Form

I submit the following information in accordance with the Conflict of Interest Policy of the Bedrock County NC Pre-K Committee. I understand that completing this form does not exempt me from declaring conflicts of interest as they arise in accordance with that policy.

1. Listed below are the organizations serving preschool children and/or their families with which I am associated in an official capacity, either in a supervisory or membership role.

2. Listed below are any employment, contractual or professional interests that I (or an immediate member of my family) have in any business, firm or corporation, of whatever nature, that may attempt to secure funding or a contract from the NC Pre-K Committee and/or the Bedrock County Partnership for Children.

3. Subsequent to filing this disclosure, I agree to disclose acquisition of any interest listed above by amendment hereto within thirty days of such acquisition.

4. I acknowledge that I have read the NC Pre-K Committee's Conflict of Interest Policy and agree to abide by its provisions, including possible exclusion from voting and/or participation in deliberation under conflict of interest circumstances described in the policy.

_____ _____

Signature of Committee Member Date

_____

Printed Name

Return to Top

Bedrock County Partnership for Children NC Pre-K Committee Meeting
July 9, 2025 @ 1:00pm
Sample Agenda

Call to Order & Welcome ..... Betty Jones, Co-Chair
Committee Member Introductions ..... Committee Members
Agenda Overview ..... Betty Jones, Co-Chair
Approval of Minutes ..... Committee Members

Agenda Items:	Action Items requiring a vote:
❑ Review NC Pre-K County/Region Plan for Bedrock County ❑ Sign Section I Document	
❑ Approve Conflict of Interest Policy ❑ Sign COI Statement	❑ Requires vote
❑ Approve Contract/Budget and Slot Allocations ❑ Approve slot allocations at NC Pre-K sites for upcoming year	❑ Requires vote
❑ Grant authority to the Contracting Agency to reallocate slots across NC Pre-K sites	❑ Requires vote
❑ Approve Committee meeting schedule for upcoming year	❑ Requires vote
❑ Approve Written Plans	❑ Requires vote
❑ Approve fees charged for transportation and/or meals	❑ Requires vote
❑ Review updates made to NC Pre-K Program Requirements	
❑ Review information from Statewide Meeting	
❑ Adjourn meeting	❑ Requires vote

Other Agenda Items ..... Betty Jones, Co-Chair
Questions and Comments ..... Committee Members
Adjournment ..... Betty Jones, Co-Chair

Return to Top

Bedrock County Partnership for Children
NC Pre-K Committee Meeting
January 12, 2026 @ 1:00pm
Sample Agenda

Call to Order & Welcome ..... Fred Smith, Co-Chair
Committee Member Introductions ..... Committee Members
Agenda Overview ..... Fred Smith, Co-Chair
Approval of Minutes .....Committee Members

Agenda Items:	Action Items requiring a vote:
❑ Selection of NC Pre-K Contracting Agency	❑ Requires vote
❑ Standardized Site Selection process	❑ Requires vote if Committee decides to open up Site Selection
❑ Annual planning for NC Pre-K ❑ Approve an implementation plan to include slot allocations at NC Pre-K sites for upcoming year	❑ Requires vote
❑ Contract compliance update ❑ Fiscal update to include FSR expenditures and monthly reimbursements	
❑ Review Kindergarten Transition steps	
❑ NC Pre-K Site Monitoring results	
❑ NC Pre-K updates	
❑ Adjourn meeting	❑ Requires vote

Other Agenda Items ..... Fred Smith, Co-Chair
Questions and Comments ..... Committee Members
Adjournment.....Fred Smith, Co-Chair

Return to Top

Bedrock County Partnership for Children
NC Pre-K Committee Meeting
January 12, 2026 @ 1:00pm
Sample Committee Meeting Minutes

The Bedrock County Partnership for Children's local NC Pre-K Committee Meeting was called to order at 1:00pm by Fred Smith, NC Pre-K Committee Co-Chair, with a quorum present and maintained throughout the meeting.

Members Present:
Members Absent:
Staff/Guests Attending:

Welcome and Introductions
Fred Smith welcomed everyone to the meeting and Committee members introduced themselves and provided information for their title/agency.

Agenda Overview and Approval of Minutes
Fred Smith presented the meeting agenda and asked the Committee to review the July 9, 2025 minutes. A request was made by Fred Smith for any corrections. No corrections were needed for the July 9, 2025 minutes. Fred Smith requested a motion to approve the minutes without any corrections. Wilma Gates approved the motion and Barney Lee seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Selection of Contracting Agency
Fred Smith requested a motion that Bedrock County Partnership for Children serve as the Contractor for the NC Pre-K Program in Bedrock County for the next school year. There being no questions/discussion, Wilma Gates made the motion for the NC Pre-K Contracting Agency be approved as presented for the next school year and Fred Avery seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Site Selection Process
Fred Smith called on John Davidson to discuss the possibility of opening up the Site Selection process due to several 4 star private sites showing an interest in becoming an NC Pre-K site. John Davidson discussed with the Committee the overview of the Site Selection steps. Barney Lee made a motion to open up the Site Selection process to review sites for the upcoming school year. Wilma Gates seconded the motion. All voted in favor except for Betty Johnson, owner of Bedrock Child Care Center, who abstained from the vote due to a conflict of interest. John Davidson discussed with the Committee that he would arrange for Thelma Howard, NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultant for the region, to attend the next Committee meeting to present a training on the Standardized Site Selection process.

Conduct Annual Planning for NC Pre-K and Approve an Implementation Plan
Suzanne Swain provided each Committee member with the County/Regional Plan for the upcoming school year. The Plan included slot allocations at NC Pre-K sites for the upcoming school year. Each member reviewed the document. Fred Smith asked if there were any questions from the Committee members. There was none, and Susie Byrd made a motion for the County/Regional Plan to be accepted for the upcoming school year. Wilma Gates approved the motion and Fred Avery seconded the motion with no discussion. All voted in favor.

Return to Top

Contract Compliance Update
Betty Jones asked Suzanne Swain to review the children enrolled and the number of current sites and classrooms to the Committee. Suzanne updated the Committee on the progress of meeting the scope of work as outlined in the NC Pre-K Contract.

Financial Update
The Contract and budget allocation for 2025-26 school year was presented to the Committee by John Davidson, NC Pre-K Contract Administrator. Each member received a copy and time was given for questions/discussion. An overview of the spending plan for direct services, administrative funds were reviewed and FSR expenditures/monthly reimbursements were discussed to include the reversion of funds at the end of the current year. A question was presented by Fred Camden, DSS Committee Representative, regarding additional funding/allocations. John Davidson responded that this would be dependent on the legislative session and their recommendations. Mabel Peterson asked if there was any anticipation of a reversion of funds. Suzanne Swain noted all monies were anticipated to be spent and therefore there should be no reversion of funds.

Review Kindergarten Transition Plan
Fred Smith asked Suzanne Swain to inform the Committee of what steps are being taken towards transitioning children into Kindergarten for the upcoming school year. She discussed that NC Pre-K teachers would be meeting with area Kindergarten teachers during the March teacher workday to discuss plans for preparing children's formative assessment data to be distributed to each child's respective Kindergarten teacher.

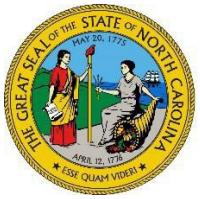
NC Pre-K Site Monitoring Results
Fred Smith asked Suzanne Swain to discuss the Site monitoring results for the county. Suzanne Swain presented an overview of the process that was followed and that 26 NC Pre-K sites would be monitored by January 15, 2026. One NC Pre-K site had an action plan created due to non-compliance with completing the anecdotal notes for the 2nd quarter on three children in the classroom.

NC Pre-K Updates
Fred Smith called on John Davidson to share any relevant NC Pre-K updates. John Davidson shared information on staff changes, professional development workdays for March and April, upcoming parent conferences and the date for the winter NC Pre-K Statewide meeting on February 23, 2026.

With there being no other Committee business, Fred Smith called for motion to adjourn the meeting, Susie Smith made the motion and Tom Jones gave a second. All voted in favor. Meeting was adjourned on January 12, 2026 at 3:00pm.

Minutes taken and submitted by Patricia Cumberland.

Return to Top



NC DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES
Division of Child Development
and Early Education



Site Selection Sub-Committee Conflict of Interest Statement

The goal of using a non-conflicted NC Pre-K Site Selection Sub-Committee is to:

(1) ***recommend*** eligible sites for child placements to participate in the NC Pre-K Program, and

(2) ***advise*** the local NC Pre-K Committee as they work with the NC Pre-K Contracting Agency to fulfill contractual site selection obligations.

The slate of choices that are recommended by the Site Selection Sub-Committee should reflect geographic and demographic diversity provided in public and private early education settings. The final selection of sites is determined by the local NC Pre-K Committee.

The local Site Selection Sub-Committee must consist of three or more members and may be a "Non- Conflicted" subset of the current NC Pre-K Committee. As NC Pre-K Committees make decisions about appropriate membership of the local Site Selection Sub-Committee, the following principles (1-6 below) should be used to guide decisions.

1. It is the duty of every Site Selection Sub-Committee member to ***avoid both conflicts of interest and appearances of conflict of interest***. As part of the selection process for membership on the Site Selection Sub-Committee, potential members should be asked to disclose any conflicts of interest.

2. Each member must ***sign a statement*** attesting to the level and degree of a potential conflict of interest or perception of a conflict of interest. Statements must be maintained as part of the NC Pre-K Committee meeting minutes.

3. Meetings may begin with the following question: Does any Sub-Committee member have any known conflict of interest or appearance of conflict with respect to any matters coming before the NC Pre-K Committee today? If so, please ***identify the conflict or appearance of conflict and refrain from serving*** on the Site Selection Sub-Committee. Minutes must reflect any identified conflict of interest.

4. Members should ***not solicit or accept gifts, entertainment or favors of monetary value*** from anyone representing an NC Pre-K program site or site applicant. This includes any employment, contractual or professional interest that I or an immediate member of my family have in any business, firm or corporation of whatever nature that may attempt to secure funding or a contract from the local NC Pre-K Contracting Agency and/or NC Pre-K Committee.

5. Members should ***not use their position*** on the Sub-Committee, the NC Pre-K program name, or any property belonging to the NC Pre-K program for private profit or benefit.

6. ***Members may not include*** current or applying providers *(public or private)* or their representatives.

I have reviewed the Conflict of Interest Statement above and I agree to adhere to all the items listed.

_____ _____

NC Pre-K Site Selection Sub-Committee Member (**print and sign**) Date

Return to Top

Early Childhood Behavioral Engagement and Developmental Needs Report

This report is required for use with a child who demonstrates persistent challenging behaviors (Hemmeter, Fox, & Snyder, 2014, p.24) that prevent his/her progress in any developmental domain (see NC Early Learning and Development Progressions http://earlylearningprogressions.fpg.unc.edu/ and impede the child's access to and participation in the NC Pre-K Program. The intention of this report is to document family communications about the challenging behavior and behavioral regulation strategies implemented in the classroom, and to inform the NC Pre-K contract administrators prior to referral to the Exceptional Children Preschool Program. To complete this form electronically, download the *Early Childhood Behavioral Engagement and Developmental Needs Report* from the DCDEE website.

Teachers, Site Administrators and NC Pre-K Contract Administrators shall document and keep on file every effort made to support the child.

The NC Pre-K Contract Administrator, Site Administrator, teacher and the family, in consultation with the school system's Preschool Exceptional Children Program and other available resources, shall work together to develop a coordinated plan to support the NC Pre-K child's placement in the NC Pre-K Program. Every effort shall be made to maintain the child's enrollment and participation in the NC Pre-K program.

If efforts to access the consultation needed to develop a coordinated plan of support prove unsuccessful, the NC Pre-K Contract Administrator shall contact the Division of Child Development and Early Education for guidance.

What is challenging behavior? Any repeated pattern of behavior, or perception of behavior, that interferes with or is at risk of interfering with optimal learning or engagement in pro-social interactions with peers and adults that interferes with children's learning, development, and success at play, is harmful to the child, other children, or adults, that put a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure. Challenging behavior is thus defined on the basis of its effects. While some children's challenging behaviors are developmentally or culturally normative and effectively addressed by adult vigilance and the use of appropriate guidance procedures, other children need more targeted evidence-based practices (Tier II) to prevent and/or address challenging behaviors that are persistent or unresponsive to universal evidence-based approaches (http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/explore/glossary.htm).

Examples of persistent challenging behaviors for preschool children may include:
(1) physical aggression such as hitting, kicking, punching, spitting, throwing objects forcefully, pinching, pushing, and biting;
(2) climbing on things in the classroom that are not permitted;
(3) destroying property, destroying what another child is working on regardless of the other child's response;
(4) taking toys away from other children forcefully;
(5) running that poses a safety risk for the child or others or elopement from the classroom;
(6) tantrum behaviors that might include behaviors such as kicking, screaming, pushing an object or person, stomping feet, or head banging;
(7) verbal aggression including yelling, threats, screaming at another person, calling children bad names, and saying bad words;
(8) ordering an adult to do something (e.g., "leave me alone");
(9) persistent or prolonged crying that is loud or disruptive or ongoing crying that interferes with the child's engagement in activities;
(10) inappropriate use of materials (e.g., jumping off chairs, slamming materials, throwing objects);
(11) statements that are noncompliant (e.g., "I'm not going to do it") or clear and explicit verbal or physical refusal to follow directions; or
(12) inappropriate touching, stripping, and other behaviors that are hurtful, disruptive, or dangerous to self or others (Hemmeter, Fox, & Snyder, 2014, p. 24).

Hemmeter, M.L., Fox, L., & Snyder, P. (2014). Teaching pyramid observation tool (TPOT) for preschool classrooms manual research edition. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brooks Publishing Co.

Return to Top

Early Childhood Behavioral Engagement and Developmental Needs Report

Site Administrators and teachers must complete and submit this form to the NC Pre-K Contract Administrator to review what has been implemented and provide further guidance to support the child, family and teacher. The documentation will be shared with the Preschool Exceptional Children Program during consultation. Attach the teacher's planned modifications/individualized strategies and documented progress for the child. This form can be completed electronically.

NC Pre-K Site:
Child's Name:
Teacher's Name:
Site Administrator's Name:

Submission Date:
County:
Teacher's Contact Information:
Site Administrator's Contact Information:

Actions	Dates	Contacts/Results	Next Steps (Who, what, when)
Documentation of challenging behavior: When does it occur, what happens right before it occurs, what happens after, how often does it occur, and how long does it last			
Designated observer conducts assessment of current classroom practices in preventing challenging behaviors and promoting social-emotional development; Identifies new strategy to implement			
Documented teaching strategies implemented to maintain child's participation in the NC Pre-K Program (e.g., teacher's planned modifications or individualized strategies and recorded progress of the child for at least 6 weeks)			
Documented communications with families about child's behavioral concerns; Face to face, phone calls, emails, texts etc. that are not routine and are specifically conducted to address topic of child's behavioral concerns			
Documented collaboration with specialists due to child's challenging behaviors (e.g. local school system's Preschool Exceptional Children's Program, local Smart Start, Child Care Resources & Referral, Triple P, mental health consultant, psychologist, or other professionals)			
Documented teacher's professional development to support classroom practices (e.g., completed Foundations: Social-Emotional training, visited other classrooms, mentored by others, etc.)			
Outcomes of attempts made to maintain child's participation in the NC Pre-K Program (provision of additional staff, conducted a Functional Behavioral Assessment and implemented a Behavior Improvement Plan, referral to the Preschool Exceptional Children's Program, transferred to another appropriate setting, etc.)			

Return to Top

NC PRE-K PROGRAM ANNUAL PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Month	Contractor Responsibilities and Important Events
July	• July/August Local Committee Meeting (See Section 2 of the NC Pre-K Program Requirements for meeting requirements) • NC Pre-K database systems ready (APP, Kids, Plan) • Finalize data entry into: ✓ NC Pre-K APP (Child Eligibility/Placement) • Upload child data into: ✓ NC Pre-K Kids (Create site/classroom/child forms) • Begin data entry into: • NC Pre-K Plan (Instructional Staff, Site and Classroom Approvals)
August	• NC Pre-K Programs/Sites open • NC Pre-K Contracting Agency staff orientation/training • Local NC Pre-K Site/Classroom staff orientation/training • NC Pre-K APP & Kids – Continue child eligibility and placement process • NC Pre-K Plan – Complete following items: ✓ Site year end dates are entered ✓ Lead Teacher/ Teacher Assistants assigned to classrooms ✓ Number of children and payment rates entered for each classroom on Rates and Children Screen • Request for cash advance is due to DCDEE
September	• NC Pre-K Plan – Continue completion of following items: ✓ Lead Teacher/ Teacher Assistants assigned to classrooms ✓ Number of children and payment rates entered for each classroom on Rates and Children Screen ✓ Section 1 Committee Member Signatures received by September 15th ✓ Section 2 Principal/Director signatures received by September 15th • Train local NCPre-K Site Administrators on site monitoring responsibilities and due dates • August FSRs and attendance reports sent to DCDEE by 10th business day of month
October	• Site Monitoring Tool due to local Contractor by October 31st • Survey link emailed from DCDEE with electronic NC Pre-K Fiscal and Programmatic Monitoring Worksheet • Begin completing electronic NC Pre-K Fiscal and Programmatic Monitoring Worksheet • September FSRs and attendance reports sent to DCDEE by 10th business day of month Return to Top

November	• Begin site monitoring visits after completed Site Monitoring Tool is received • Validate Site Monitoring Tool results (verify Plans of Study, transcripts, license/credentials, classroom lesson plans/daily schedules) • Electronic NC Pre-K Fiscal and Programmatic Monitoring Worksheet submitted to DCDEE by November 15th • October FSRs and attendance reports sent to DCDEE by 10th business day of month
December	• Continue site monitoring visits • NC Pre-K Plan – Other Estimated Resources due by December 15th (online) • DCDEE fiscal and programmatic monitoring begins • November FSRs and attendance reports sent to DCDEE by 10th business day of month
January	• Complete site monitoring visits by January 15th • DCDEE fiscal and programmatic monitoring continues • Certified Other Resources submitted to DCDEE by January 15th • Child Find Activities begin • January/February Local Committee Meeting (See Section 2 of the NC Pre-K Program Requirements for meeting requirements) • December FSRs and attendance reports sent to DCDEE by 10th business day of month
February	• DCDEE fiscal and programmatic monitoring continues • January FSRs and attendance reports sent to DCDEE by 10th business day of month
March	• DCDEE fiscal and programmatic monitoring continues • February FSRs and attendance reports sent to DCDEE by 10th business day of month
April	• DCDEE fiscal and programmatic monitoring continues • March FSRs and attendance reports sent to DCDEE by 10th business day of month
May	• NC Pre-K Plan- Other Estimated Resources due by May 15th (online) • April FSRs and attendance reports sent to DCDEE by 10th business day of month Return to Top

June	• May/June FSRs and attendance reports due per DCDEE close-out procedures for May and June expenditures (reimbursement requests received after this date will not be guaranteed) • Formal close-out letters for monitoring results will be mailed from DCDEE by June 30th • Begin review/update of the following Sections in the NC Pre-K Plan: ✓ Committee Section ✓ Contact Information ✓ Site & Classroom ✓ Budget
Helpful Resources	NC Pre-K Home Page (DCDEE Website) NC Pre-K APP NC Pre-K Kids NC Pre-K Plan
Contact Information	NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultants Regional Map Early Education Support Unit Regional Map NC Pre-K Program State Contacts **Includes contact information for Contracts, Budget, and Monitoring

September-May

DCDEE Child Care Consultants conduct compliance visits to NC Pre-K sites and classrooms using the NC Child Care Rules, including Child Care Rule .3000 NC Pre-K Kindergarten Services. DCDEE NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultants monitor local NC Pre-K Program Contracting Agencies and Committees using the NC Pre-K Program Requirements and Guidance Manual. These visits may occur at any time during the program year.

Return to Top

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Division of Child Development and Early Education

NORTH CAROLINA NC Pre-K Prekindergarten Program

Statement of No Documentation of Income

This form should be completed by designated Contracting Agency staff and NOT the family

Child's Name:_____ **D.O.B:** _____

Purpose: To be used when a family states that they **do not have documentation of income**
Section 3 (A.2) Families must submit sufficient income documentation **at the time** of the application process in order for the Contracting Agency to verify the child's eligibility, income calculated must be on documentation that accurately reflects the family's yearly earnings for the applicable year or their **current** situation at the time of application.

Guidance: Questions to consider asking to gather useful information as it relates to the family's income situation:	
Can you get a written statement from your employer? If so, make sure the statement: - Reflects the most recent pay periods - Includes the amount **and** frequency of pay (*including overtime)* - Is signed by the employer - Is documented on letterhead *(if available)*	**Did you have any receipts?** • If so, take what they have and calculate it for the correlating months and document it.
Are you self-employed? • If so, did you file taxes? If yes, ask for their 1099. If not, ask how much they earned per month.	**Do you pay other employees?** • If so, ask for their 1099 or receipts of income prior to paying expenses (including employee pay). They may have documentation of revenue and expenses.

Complete the following section if the family meets one of the following criteria:

- The family has *no documentation due to homelessness*
- The family is *self-employed*/*contractually employed* and *financial records have either been lost/destroyed or not kept*
- The family is unable to produce *sufficient income documentation*

Estimated Income *(ask the family to estimate income earned from the preceding 12 months)*

Amount	*Month*	*Year*	*Source*
$	*Jan*	*20___*	
$	*Feb*	*20___*	
$	*Mar*	*20___*	
$	*Apr*	*20___*	
$	*May*	*20___*	
$	*June*	*20___*	

Amount	*Month*	*Year*	*Source*
$	*July*	*20___*	
$	*Aug*	*20___*	
$	*Sep*	*20___*	
$	*Oct*	*20___*	
$	*Nov*	*20___*	
$	*Dec*	*20___*	

Total Estimated Annual Income: _____

Reason: Why is the family reporting that they have **NO DOCUMENTATION OF INCOME**?

_____

_____

_____ _____

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Signature(s) **Date**

Signature certifies that the information provided is true. Providing false information may impact a child's NC Pre-K eligibility or enrollment.

_____ _____

Staff Signature **Date**

Signature serves as proof of verification to determine eligibility based on the information provided by the parent/guardian during the date of application.

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Division of Child Development and Early Education

NORTH CAROLINA NC Pre-K Prekindergarten Program

Statement of No Income

This form should be completed by designated Contracting Agency staff and NOT the family

Child's Name:_____ **D.O.B:** _____

Purpose: To be used when a family states that they **do not have any income**
Section 3 (A.2) Families must submit sufficient income documentation **at the time** of the application process in order for the Contracting Agency to verify the child's eligibility. Income calculated must be based on documentation that accurately reflects the family's yearly earnings for the applicable year or their current situation at the time of application.

Guidance: Questions to consider asking to gather useful information as it relates to the family's income situation:	
How do you support yourself?	**Did you work any part of the year?** • If so, ask for proof. If they do not have proof, fill out the *Statement of No Documentation of Income*
Are you receiving assistance from anyone else? • If so, how long? • Are you living in the same household?	**Did you apply for unemployment at any time during the preceding year?** • If so, were you approved or denied? *(Ask for approval/printout or denial letter)*
Are you receiving assistance from any of the following resources: ○ Medicaid/Food Stamps ○ Rental Assistance/Utility Assistance ○ Other: _____	

Reason: Why is the family reporting that they have **NO INCOME**

_____

_____

_____

_____

Under penalty of law, I (Parent/Guardian)_____declare that I have no income of any kind, earned or unearned. I also declare that_____, provides (or has provided) basic living expenses *(such as but not limited to housing, food, and clothing)* free of cost to me and my child/children from_____to_____.

_____ _____

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Signature(s) **Date**

Signature certifies that the information provided is true. Providing false information may impact a child's NC Pre-K eligibility or enrollment.

_____ _____

Staff Signature **Date**

Signature serves as proof of verification to determine eligibility based on the information provided by the parent/guardian during the date of application.

Glossary of Terms

Allocation – State NC Pre-K Program funds that are allocated by DCDEE to NC Pre-K contracting agencies for direct services and administration funds. See *NC Pre-K Fiscal and Contract Manual* for more information.

At-Risk – A term applied to students who have not been adequately served by social service or educational systems and who are at risk of educational failure due to lack of services, negative life events or physical or mental challenges.

Birth through Kindergarten License (BK) – Birth-Kindergarten programs are designed to prepare educators to work with children, with and without disabilities, birth through age five.

Categorical Eligibility – An additional means for determining a child's eligibility for the NC Pre-K Program. Age-eligible children are deemed categorically eligible for NC Pre-K if they meet one or more specific criteria as defined in the NC Pre-K Program Requirements and Guidance manual.

Child Care Health Consultant (CCHC) – Health professionals with practical knowledge and skills related to child health, child development and health/safety in childcare settings. Visit Find a CCHC for the statewide list of CCHCs.

Continuing License (formerly SP 2) – A five-year renewable license for teachers who have completed at least three years of licensed teaching experience and passed all required state licensure exams.

Contract – A mutually binding legal relationship between the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS), Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) and the county/region NC Pre-K Contracting Agency that is selected to administer the NC Pre-K Program by the county/region NC Pre-K Committee. NC Pre-K contracts with DCDEE are Financial Assistance contracts.

Contract Administrator - The person designated by the county/region NC Pre-K Committee to oversee the NC Pre-K contract.

Contracting Agency (Contractor) – The county/region agency that enters into a contract with the NC DHHS/DCDEE to provide services for the NC Pre-K Program. The term includes public and non-profit organizations such as, but not limited to, local partnership/smart start agencies and public school systems.

Return to Top

County/Region NC Pre-K Committee – A Committee of local early education professionals and representatives whose focus is to provide high quality pre-kindergarten education services for eligible at-risk children age who are four years old by August 31st of the program year. The Committee must be chaired and convened by a school superintendent in a county/region or designee and the board chair for the local Smart Start Partnership for Children or designee. The Committee determines the NC Pre-K Contracting Agency, approves the County/Region Plan and advises the Contractor during the contract period. The Committee also has the responsibility to select the non-conflicted Sub-Committee members for the standardized site selection process. The NC Pre-K Committee is required to meet in January/February and July/August of each NC Pre-K school year.

Curriculum – A plan of instruction that details what students are to know, how they are to learn it, what the teacher's role is and the context that learning/teaching will take place in the classroom.

Developmental Screening – A brief developmental assessment procedure designed to identify children who should receive more intensive diagnostic assessment. Developmental screening identifies children in need of further developmental evaluation, enabling early intervention.

Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) – Also referred to as the "Division". It is a state agency of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services that oversees the early care and education system that serves approximately 250,000 children in more than 6,000 licensed early education/childcare facilities in North Carolina.

Direct Services Funds – Direct services funds are NC Pre-K funds paid to the county/region Contracting Agency for the NC Pre-K services rendered to eligible children under the contract. Direct services funds that are received by the Contractor must be passed to the local early childhood provider for payment of direct services for eligible children unless the Contractor is a provider of the direct services. These funds are a fixed payment rate per child per month of service delivered. Providers may choose to use this funding for items pertaining to NC Pre-K services such as salary/benefits for teaching staff, equipment, supplies, curriculum and related materials, developmental screening tools/assessment efforts, staff to conduct developmental screenings and staff training. Since the NC Pre-K Program funds do not cover the full cost of operating a quality Pre-K program, the funds are generally used to offset a portion of the cost to administer the NC Pre-K Program. The calculation is based on the number of children attending times the monthly classroom rate of payment.

Eligible Child – A child who meets the established criteria to participate in the NC Pre-K Program as defined in the NC Pre-K Program Requirements and Guidance manual.

Equipment – Tangible, nonexpendable, personal property having a useful life of at least two years and acquisition cost of $500 or more per unit.

Early Educator Support (EES) Unit (formerly the EESLPD) – The EES Unit is the statewide education agency that facilitates the NC Birth through Kindergarten (BK) Licensure process for Lead Teachers in nonpublic schools (NC Pre-K and Developmental Day classrooms) to attain and maintain a NC BK Continuing, Initial or Residency License.

Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (**ECERS-3) –** A classroom assessment tool designed to assess group programs for preschool-kindergarten aged children from 30 months through 5 years of age.

Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) State Coordinators – State plans must include procedures that ensure children experiencing homelessness have access to public preschool programs the same as is provided to other children. State coordinators must gather comprehensive state information and remove policy barriers to enrollment, retention and school success in Early Childhood Education. State coordinators serve on the State Intervention Coordinating Council (under IDEA, Part C).

Expulsion – An action taken by a program removing a child from his/her regular class for disciplinary purposes for the remainder of the school year. This practice would only be used as a last resort for a NC Pre-K child and only after consulting with the DCDEE NC Pre-K Program Unit about alternative resources and supports to maintain the child's placement.

Family Engagement Plan – A written plan specifying the process by which early childhood education programs encourage family participation, decision making, and collaboration related to their children's education each program year.

Formative Assessments – A process used by instructional staff to gather information, etc., as well as to inform instruction, communicate with families and inform professional development. Classroom staff are required to conduct ongoing, regular formative (or instructional) assessments to gather information about each child's growth and skill development.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP) – The legal document that defines a child's special education program. An IEP includes the disability under which the child qualifies for Special Education Services, the services the team has determined the school will provide, his/her yearly goals/objectives and any accommodations that must be made to assist his/her learning.

Initial License (formerly SP 1) – A non-renewable, three-year license for new teachers who have completed an Educator Preparation Program (EPP) but have less than three years of teaching experience. Teachers are required to upgrade to a five-year Continuing License by completing at least three years of teaching experience and passing any required state licensure exams.

Legal Custodian – The caregiver of a child appointed by the court to fulfill the obligations that would normally be handled by the parents (could be long or short-term).

Legal Guardian – A court-ordered relationship where an adult is appointed by the court to care for a minor child ("ward") and to make decisions about the child's education, support and maintenance. Legal Guardianship is awarded when both biological parents are deceased, or their parental rights have been terminated by the court.

Limited English Proficiency Plan – A written plan specifying strategies for working with children and families with limited English proficiency. The written plan should include resources in the community to support children and families with limited English proficiency and to support the children and families in the NC Pre-K classrooms to be engaged and informed throughout each program year.

Local Liaisons – Local liaisons play a critical role in the implementation of the Mckinney-Vento Act. Local liaison responsibilities include identifying homeless children and youth and ensuring that homeless students can enroll immediately and participate fully in school.

NC Child Care Rules – Chapter 110 of the North Carolina General Statutes governs Child Care Facilities. The legislative intent and purpose of these General Statues is to recognize the importance of the early years of life to a child's development with respect to the early care and education of children.

NC Early Childhood Administrator Credential (NCECAC) or its equivalent – Administrators must meet requirements in two component areas to earn qualification as a Level I, II or III Administrator. These components are outlined in the *Early Childhood Administrator Position Requirements*. Early Education/Childcare Administrators of star-rated programs must submit the required documentation to the DCDEE Workforce Education Unit (WORKS) to be evaluated for qualification as a Level I, II or III Administrator. Site Administrators/Directors of programs with a NC Pre-K classroom(s) must hold a Level III Administrator qualification.

North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development (NCFELD) – A resource to be used by parents/families, teachers, caregivers, early interventionists, home visitors and other professionals who support and promote children's development and learning.
NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development

NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) – Charged with implementing the state's public-school laws and the State Board of Education's policies and procedures governing pre-kindergarten through 12th grade public education.

NC Department of Public Instruction, Licensure Division – North Carolina Department of Public Instruction/Licensure Division is authorized by the North Carolina State Board of Education to carry out the policy established for educator licensure in North Carolina.

NC Department of Public Instruction's Online Licensure System – A one-stop shop for educators, licensees and the general public that enables the North Carolina public to verify an Educator's License. Educators and applicants can submit license applications, renew a license and change their addresses, among other services. NC Pre-K lead teachers are required to use this system for all educator licensure actions.

NC Rated License Assessment Project (NCRLAP) – Established in 1999 to better define the quality of childcare in the state and to assist parents in choosing childcare. NCRLAP is responsible for setting up the policies and procedures for the implementation of all rating scale assessments for licensed childcare providers, as well as responsibility for the oversight of the hiring and training of rating scale assessors.

Not-for-Profit Agency – Any corporation, trust, association, cooperative or other organization that (a) is operated primarily for educational, service, charitable or similar purposes in the public interest; (b) is not organized primarily for profit; and (c) uses its net proceeds to maintain, improve or expand its operations.

Preschool or Pre-K/K Add-On License – The Preschool Add-On license is available to individuals who currently hold a clear license in Elementary Education, Special Education or Family and Consumer Education/Child and Family Development. The Preschool Add-On license qualifies individuals to be employed in Pre-Kindergarten classrooms.

Professional Development Plan – A formal document aligned with the NC Professional Teaching Standards that is developed by the BK licensed teacher in collaboration with the assigned mentor/evaluator and Site Administrator. This document is informed by the teacher's ongoing self-assessment coupled with the assigned mentor/evaluator's formative assessment of classroom practices.

Provisional BK or Preschool Add-On License – Issued to a teacher with another North Carolina teaching license or another state's teaching license. Teacher is required to complete a minimum of 6 semester hours annually based on the teacher's individual Plan of Study towards either a BK or Preschool Add-On license. All coursework required by the Plan of Study must be completed within five years of the issuance of the Provisional license.

Residency BK License – A provisional one-year license that is renewable twice allowing up to three years to complete all requirements for an approved Educator Preparation Program (EPP) and pass required exams, such as the edTPA, while teaching full-time in a classroom.

Site – Designation for a licensed childcare program that houses one or more NC Pre-K classrooms.

Return to Top

Site Selection – A county/regional process for awarding NC Pre-K slots and student selection by a local NC Pre-K Contractor. See NC Pre-K | North Carolina Prekindergarten Program for more information.

State Median Income (SMI) – Median household income in a given year is the income for a household that is at the midpoint of all household incomes reported in the state. It is not an average. Instead, it represents the middle income or the point at which half of all households earn more, and half of all households earn less. For NC Pre-K eligibility, the family income must be at or below 75% of the current state median income level.

Suspension (In Program) – Instances in which a child is temporarily removed from his/her regular classroom for disciplinary purposes but remains under the direct supervision of NC Pre-K personnel. Direct supervision means that NC Pre-K, or other related personnel are physically in the same location as children under their supervision.

Suspension (Out of Program) – Instances in which a NC Pre-K child is temporarily removed from his/her regular school for disciplinary purposes to another setting (e.g., home). This includes part-day or full-day instances. Local NC Pre-K Contractors are required to work with the DCDEE NC Pre-K Program Unit to help support children in the NC Pre-K classroom or find acceptable alternative community resources to address the child's needs.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families/Maintenance of Effort (TANF/MOE) – The Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant funds services and assistance to income-eligible families who have a child living in the home. The TANF block grant, administered by the State Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), has an annual cost sharing requirement referred to as the Maintenance of Effort requirement (MOE). Every federal fiscal year, each state must spend a certain amount of its own money to help eligible families in ways that are consistent with the purpose of the TANF program. The NC Pre-K Program, designed to provide high-quality pre-kindergarten experiences that may allow parents to work, may count as MOE.

Transition Plan – A written plan specifying how NC Pre-K children will transition into the NC Pre-K classroom and then into kindergarten each program year.

Transportation Plan – A written plan specifying how the transportation needs will be met for participating NC Pre-K children each program year.

Unique Needs – Children who demonstrate significant delays in their emotional or social development, sensory function or behavior.

Return to Top

Workforce Online Reporting and Knowledge System (WORKS) – The Division of Child Development and Early Education Workforce Online Reporting System (DCDEE WORKS) system functions as a single portal of entry for the North Carolina childcare workforce. This system will collect, report and track childcare workforce education and professional development information needed to support education requirements, as required by NC Child Care Rules to include the NC Pre-K Program. See WORKS for more information.

Yay Babies – NC statewide focus group that began by bringing together state agencies, CCR&R, professional organizations, advocates for children, the homeless, and other stakeholders to raise awareness about priorities for serving homeless families.

Return to Top