

Community-Based Early Childhood Programs: What does Act 166 mean for you?

Act 166, passed by the Vermont legislature in 2014, entitles all three, four, and five year-olds not enrolled in kindergarten to ten hours per week of publicly funded prekindergarten education (pre-K) for the thirty-five week school year.

The law allows families to choose from a variety of pre-K programs.

Whichever prequalified pre-K program a family chooses, tuition for 10-hours will be paid by the local school district, unless the district is within an approved Pre-K Region. Enrollment options include:

- A prequalified pre-K program operated by the local school district.
- A prequalified pre-K program operated by another school district that accepts out-of-district students located anywhere in Vermont or, within the approved pre-K region.
- A prequalified community-based (including Head Start) pre-K program located anywhere in Vermont or, within the approved pre-K region.

Your participation is VOLUNTARY; if you are interested in providing publicly funded pre-K, you have to be prequalified:

In order to be considered for prequalification, a program must:

- Have NAEYC accreditation OR 4 or 5 STARS or 3 STARS with a plan to reach 4 within 2 yrs.
- Align curriculum to the Vermont Early Learning Standards.
- Have a VT AOE licensed early childhood educator or early childhood special educator on staff according to type of program:
 - Private Center-Based = 1 licensed teacher per program
 - Family Child Care = 1 licensed teacher OR a licensed mentor teacher for a min of 3hrs/wk
- Use Teaching Strategies GOLD online assessment system and participate in (free) trainings to ensure reliable staff usage of TSG.
- Comply with all requirements of federal and state laws for your enrolled children with special needs including:
 - Allowing access by school district early childhood special education and related service personnel.
 - Federal: ADA, 504, IDEA and State: VT Child Care Program Licensing Regulations
- Operate a non-religious program
- Apply all of the statewide tuition received for 10 hours of publically funded pre-K to the families' tuition. [Prequalification Application.](#)

In addition, it is recommended that you establish and maintain relationships with your schools:

- Keep them informed of your intention to become prequalified and the number of eligible children you have enrolled (assists districts in their budgeting)
- Connect with them to let them know you are pre-qualified and to understand their enrollment process
- Sign a written agreement with them to establish the payment schedule and any other formal aspects to your relationship.

More information can be found on [Universal Prekindergarten](#) online.

For more information about IEP, 504, and ADA please see the [Serving Children with Disabilities in a Public PreK Program webinar.](#)

Contact Mack.Jones@vermont.gov with additional questions.