

WHAT IS UPK?

What is Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK)? Which programs and providers are part of the UPK system?

Universal Pre-Kindergarten is an expansion of California's current mixed delivery system that meets the diverse early learning and care needs of children and families. It includes all existing state and federal early learning, childcare, and extended learning programs such as: transitional kindergarten (TK), state preschool, general childcare (CCTR), Extended Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P), Head Start, After School Education and Safety (ASES), Alternative Payment (AP), private pay childcare, etc. Legislation passed in 2021 ensures that families will continue to be free to choose the early learning and childcare programs that best meet their needs. If you are a childcare provider and are operating a childcare program, you are already part of UPK.

What are the eligibility criteria for TK?

Beginning in the 2022-23 school year, age-eligibility for TK increased every year based upon the child's birthday. For the 2025-26 school year, all children who turn 4 by September 1st will be eligible to enroll in TK. Because TK is part of the public school system, there are no family income requirements. TK is free.

If I am a parent, when should I start the enrollment process?

Schools can choose to offer full day or part-day programs, and not all schools within a district may offer TK. School enrollment typically begins in December, January, or February, so it's important that parents contact their school district early to maximize their chance of enrollment in their nearest TK-serving school. No age-eligible child may be denied access to TK within the district by being placed on a wait list.

Are families required to send their children to TK once they are age-eligible?

No. Parents can continue to choose a childcare or preschool program instead of or in addition to TK, even if their child is age-eligible for TK. TK is a voluntary program. State law was passed in 2021 clarifying that eligibility for TK does not affect a child's eligibility for other programs, including public-funded preschool, childcare, or voucher-based programs. Parents who would like to better understand all of the early learning and care options available to them, and learn how to get help with paying for care, are encouraged to contact the Santa Clara County Childcare Resource & Referral Program (R&R) at 669-212-5437 or via email at childcarescc@sccoe.org. The R&R is a free service to the community. Families who would like to run their own search for programs are invited to visit the Santa Clara County Childcare Portal at www.childcarescc.org.

What is ELO-P?

The Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P) requires schools to provide after or before-school learning and care to low-income, foster youth, and English learner (“unduplicated”) pupils in TK to 6th grade. Enrolled children must receive a total of 9 hours of combined school time and after-school care on school days and 30 days of care during non-school days. ELO-P requirements are aligned with the existing After School Education & Safety (ASES) program and schools can contract with community-based providers to provide ELO-P.

ELO Programs must have specific program elements, including:

- An educational and literacy element in which tutoring or homework assistance is provided in one or more of the following areas: language arts, mathematics, history and social science, computer training, or science
- An educational enrichment element
- Programs must be guided by the [CA Quality Standards for Expanded Learning](#)

If I am a childcare provider, how does my program get involved with UPK? AND How do providers partner with school districts?

If you serve children ages 0 to 5, you are already part of UPK and do not need to take any additional actions to be involved. Advertising in the community encourages families to contact the Santa Clara County Childcare Resource & Referral Program to better understand program options. It is highly recommended that childcare providers reach out to the Childcare Resource and Referral Program at 669-212-5437 to ensure that their business information is up-to-date so that families will receive the correct information about your hours of operation, if you are open to receiving vouchers, etc.

Information about the Santa Clara County Childcare Resource & Referral program has been provided to all school districts and UPK coordinators to facilitate connections between providers and school districts. School districts are strongly encouraged to include community-based providers in their expanded learning plan. You can partner with your school district by participating in your district’s UPK community engagement and planning process or by joining the UPK Mixed Delivery Planning Workgroup by contacting ecarmona@sccoe.org.

How will my program get paid if I partner with a school district?

ELO-P funds flow to school districts from the state. Districts may operate ELO-P themselves or may contract with a community-based provider to operate their ELO-P program. If a district partners with a community-based provider for ELO-P, it would be through a subcontract. State law prohibits school districts from contracting TK to community-based providers.