



New Entry Age for Kindergarten IN CONNECTICUT



Connecticut Office
of Early Childhood

Information for Families — February 2024

★ The Kindergarten Entry Age is Changing in Connecticut ★

Starting in the 2024-25 school year, children must be 5 years old on or before September 1st, 2024, to start kindergarten.*

★ **What if my child turns 5 after September 1, 2024?**

If your child turns 5 after September 1, 2024, they will start kindergarten in the fall of 2025.

★ **What if my child turns 5 after September 1, 2025?**

If your child turns 5 after September 1, 2025, they will start kindergarten in the fall of 2026. This age change is permanent with children having to turn 5 years old on or before September 1st of each year to start kindergarten.

★ **Are there exceptions for children who do not meet the new entry cutoff date?**

Yes. If your child is not 5 years old by September 1, 2024, and you want them to start kindergarten early, you must request an exception.

★ **How do I request early entry to kindergarten?**

- ★ **Parents (or guardians) should first reach out to the principal of the elementary school their child would attend to find out how to request early entry to kindergarten.**

Each school district will have their own process to follow. Contact information for all Connecticut school principals is available on the [Find Contacts website](#).

- ★ **The school must conduct an assessment.**

After receiving a request for an exception from a parent (or guardian), the school must assess your child to determine if early entry to kindergarten is developmentally appropriate for your child. Parent information and observation may be a part of this assessment. Communicate with the school principal regarding your child's development and whether the kindergarten classroom is an appropriate fit.

* **About the new state law:** In 2023, the Connecticut Legislature changed how old a child must be to start kindergarten. [Public Act 23-208, Section 1\(a\)](#) changed the birth date cutoff date from January 1 of any given school year to September 1 of any given school year.

Making the Decision to Ask for Early Kindergarten Entry

Moving on to kindergarten is a transition for young children and their families. We know that children learn and grow in different ways and at different times.

When deciding whether to ask for an early entry to kindergarten for your child you may want to consider your child's learning and development, the learning environment in kindergarten, and what your child's experience might be if they did not enter kindergarten. You may consider whether they have had a preschool experience and what type of experience is available for them in the coming year.

The resources below will help you think about each of these things.

Understanding Your Child's Learning and Development

Families know their children best, and what they know can be informed by tools and resources to understand child development. Child development is the term used to describe how children grow and learn in different areas of their life. It includes how they talk and read, how they feel and get along with others, how they express themselves through art and music, how they think and understand the world, how they move and use their body, and how they approach new challenges and problems.

[The Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards \(CT ELDS\)](#) were developed to help families, communities, and schools work together to support children's early learning and growth. They describe what young children ages 0 to 5 generally know and are able to do. The [CT ELDS Strategies for Learning at Home](#) include fun and easy ideas for supporting learning at home and in the community and are available in English and Spanish.

Tools and Resources

Connecticut offers many resources that can help families answer common questions about their child's development and support learning at home. The resources below help families with questions or concerns about their child and can be a helpful resource when talking with the school principal when requesting early entry into kindergarten.

- ★ Talk with your child care provider or play group leader to understand how your child uses their skills in a group setting and to get connected to supports to strengthen your child's development.
- ★ [2-1-1 Child Development](#) Infoline helps families understand their child's needs and answer questions about child health, behavior, development, and learning through multiple programs including:
 - ★ [Help Me Grow](#), a FREE statewide program starting at pregnancy that connects families and children to community services and resources. Call 1-800-505-7000 to reach a care coordinator.
 - ★ [The Ages and Stages Questionnaires \(ASQ-3\)](#) is a developmental screening tool supported by the CT Office of Early Childhood. You can enroll in CT's Ages and Stages Monitoring program for FREE. Contact 2-1-1 Child Development, answer a few questions and begin to keep track of your child's development from 2 months to 5 years of age. You can complete it on paper, online, or through the free Sparkler App. Families can also get help completing the ASQ-3 through [CT Help Me Grow](#).
 - ★ [The Sparkler app](#) is a free tool that provides an easy way for families to access the [Ages and Stages Questionnaires](#) on a mobile application. It helps parents check in on how their child is doing against key milestones from 2 months to 5 years of age — and provides fun activities to spark your child's growing mind, body, emotions, and words. Visit [Sparkler](#) to learn how you can download the app and get started today.

Children with Disabilities

Children with disabilities are entitled to the same process utilized for early entry to kindergarten that is available to all children.

- ★ Visit the [Connecticut State Department of Education's Preschool Special Education](#) website for guidance on education for children with developmental delays or disabilities.
- ★ Contact the [Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center \(CPAC\)](#) online or at 1-800-445-2722 for information or support with the special education referral process. CPAC is fully staffed by families of students with disabilities including bilingual Spanish, Portuguese, Creole, and French speaking Parent Consultants.
- ★ If your child is under 3 years old and you have a concern about their development, you can make a referral to the Connecticut Birth to Three system for a free developmental evaluation by calling 1-800-505-7000 or filling out the [Birth to Three online form](#).
- ★ If your child is already enrolled in Birth to Three and you have any concerns, you can find more information about your rights under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the dispute resolution process (for complaints) at <https://www.birth23.org/families/rights/mediation/>.

Understanding the Kindergarten Learning Environment

Young children thrive when the learning environment can meet their current needs and help them grow. It is important for families to make sure that their child and the school environment are a good fit. These tips and resources can help you know what to expect in kindergarten so that you can think about how your child's skills fit with the learning environment.

- ★ [The Hello Kindergarten! booklet \(English\)](#) and [\(Spanish\)](#) includes skills that are helpful for children as they enter kindergarten and ways you can support learning at home.
- ★ Although kindergarten classrooms share a common focus, the learning activities and instruction or curriculum may be different across districts. Talk with your school about their kindergarten program.
- ★ Some schools in Connecticut have started to include more purposeful play and project-based learning into kindergarten classrooms. Here are some examples of how schools are doing this:
 - ★ [Building Brains for the Future: A Look at Playful Learning in Preschool and Kindergarten](#)
 - ★ [A Virtual Field Trip - Oswegatchie Elementary School](#)

Help with Preschool for the 2024-25 School Year

Many families who have a child turning 5 years old between September 2, 2024, and January 1, 2025, were planning to send them to kindergarten before the cutoff date changed.

Below are resources for families and their children for the 2024-2025 school year.

- ★ If your child attends preschool, talk with the program about your family's situation and how they will continue to support your child's development if your child does not go to kindergarten.
- ★ If your child has not attended an early care and education program, consider how a preschool experience might support them before they enter kindergarten.
- ★ You can find information about child care by talking with other families, searching online, or using the [2-1-1 Child Care](#) online search tool.
- ★ If you need assistance with the cost of a preschool program, you can seek out possible supports, such as [Care 4 Kids](#), state-funded preschool opportunities, public school preschool programs, or Head Start. To find out about possible low-cost programs and Care 4 Kids financial assistance, contact [2-1-1 Child Care](#).