



---

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Prekindergarten Expansion Grant and the Maryland State Prekindergarten Grant**

- 1. Question:** How many hours is considered a full day program? Are there funds for a half day Pre-K program?  
**Answer:** All grantees must operate a full-day program which consists of a 6.5 hour instructional day.
- 2. Question:** Does the grant allow mixed age classrooms?  
**Answer:** Yes, three- and four- year olds can be served in the same classroom.
- 3. Question:** Does a program have to dedicate classroom space for this grant exclusively or can there be a mix of private pay and grant funded students in the same classroom?  
**Answer:** A program may serve mixed-income students in the same classroom, however only the children meeting income eligibility requirements may be charged to the grant.
- 4. Question:** Can a program be awarded both the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant and the Maryland State Prekindergarten Grant?  
**Answer:** No, community-based program applicants may be awarded only **one** of the grants. Applicants are encouraged to please review the requirements for both grants to determine which one best meets your program's current status.
- 5. Question:** Can family child care providers apply for the grant?  
**Answer:** Yes, family child care providers can apply for the grant. The PreK Expansion Grant is awarded in support of Maryland's mixed delivery system which includes Local School Systems, community-based programs, both centers and family child care, and Head Start programs.
- 6. Question:** Can family child care providers increase their license capacity if they have a Pre-K Grant?  
**Answer:** The Prekindergarten Expansion Grant does not change or supersede any licensed capacity requirements. Please follow up with your licensing specialist with questions regarding licensed capacity.

7. **Question:** Do Montessori programs fit within the criteria for the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant?  
**Answer:** Yes, Montessori programs meeting the grant requirements may apply for the Pre-K Grant.
8. **Question:** Can religious-based programs apply for the grant?  
**Answer:** All programs meeting the grant requirements are eligible to receive grant funds. Religious-based programs are not allowed to engage in religious activities during the 6.5 hour PreK day.
9. **Question:** How does Pre-K funding work with federally-funded Head Start Programs?  
**Answer:** Head Start programs can participate in the Pre-K grant and can receive state supplemental funding in addition to their federal funding. Head Start programs will have to submit budgets and documentation that shows the funds are not supplanting each other and are used for different purposes.
10. **Question:** My program does not accept scholarships/vouchers. Does this mean that I cannot participate in the grant?  
**Answer:** All programs that meet the grant requirements may apply.
11. **Question:** Can parents supplement the cost of child care in addition to the grant funds awarded? (\$13,000 per child for PreK -Expansion Grant or \$10,094 per child for Maryland State PreK Grant?)  
**Answer:** No, you **may not** charge tuition for the 6.5 hour Pre-K day; however you may charge for wrap around care (i.e. before and after care) or accept scholarship funds for before and after care.
12. **Question:** Does the grant require assistant teachers?  
**Answer:** There is a maximum 10:1 ratio. If there are more than 10 children with one teacher, then there must be an assistant or second teacher that meets the grant requirements.
13. **Question:** Does the grant require meals for students? Can the meal be a snack or does it have to be a hot meal?  
**Answer:** The grant requires at least one hot or cold meal per day. A snack does not substitute for the meal. It is recommended that all meals served meet the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) requirements.
14. **Question:** Is there a required curriculum that all grantees must use?  
**Answer:** No, there is not a required curriculum, however the curriculum must be evidenced-based and aligned to the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards.
15. **Question:** Is MSDE accreditation the only acceptable accreditation for grant programs?  
**Answer:** Programs may seek accreditation from MSDE or any accrediting body recognized by MSDE. The list can be found on the [MSDE Accreditation Information](#) page.

**16. Question:** How can I find out more information about Maryland EXCELS?

**Answer:** <https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/child-care-providers/maryland-excels>

**17. Question:** How will I determine income eligibility for families who wish to enroll in my program?

**Answer:** MSDE will provide an income eligibility form to local school systems who will provide it to all public and private providers in that jurisdiction participating in publicly funded Prekindergarten to use with families during enrollment.

**18. Question:** How will private providers receive grant funding?

**Answer:** Private providers will submit invoices and supporting documentation to be reimbursed monthly.

**19. Question:** Does the grant support pay parity between child care and public school teachers?

**Answer:** The grant requires programs to pay instructional staff salaries and benefits that are comparable to the salaries and benefits of instructional staff employed by the county board of the county in which the early learning program is located. The certified teacher must be paid a salary comparable to at least the beginning teacher salary in the school system where their program is located. Programs may certainly pay more than the beginning salary based on a teacher's education and experience. The Grant Information Guide provides the teacher salary pay scale for each jurisdiction.

**20. Question:** What is a CDA?

**Answer:** Child Development Associate Credential

<https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/cda>

For general questions about the CDA, please contact their customer service email: [cdafeedback@cdacouncil.org](mailto:cdafeedback@cdacouncil.org)

For specific questions about the CDA funding through MSDE for child care providers, please visit the website: [www.marylandfamilynetwork.org/providers-cda](http://www.marylandfamilynetwork.org/providers-cda)

**21. Question:** Does ParaPro count towards qualifications for a Teacher Assistant?

**Answer:** No, Parapro does not count. A teacher assistant must have an Associates Degree or a CDA or be enrolled in those programs, or have a plan to receive a CDA or AA by 2025-2026 to be eligible to assist in a PreK Expansion classroom.

**22. Question:** How do teachers obtain MSDE P-3 Certification?

**Answer:** To receive a Maryland P-3 Certification, a teacher must have:

1. A minimum of a Bachelor's degree and has a college course transcript that shows the completion of all of the required Early Childhood courses and successful completion of a student teaching course through a college teacher preparation program **OR** completes a Maryland Approved Alternative Preparation Program

2. **AND** Passed the Praxis Basic Skills Assessments in Reading and Mathematics and the Praxis in Early Childhood content.

3. There are multiple routes to receiving teacher certification in Maryland:

- Complete a Maryland approved educator preparation program (traditional or alternative) and take the Maryland certification assessments. Teachers must create an account in the MSDE Certification portal, submit the Praxis scores, and have all of the course transcripts reviewed in order to apply for a P-3 Certificate.
- Complete an educator preparation program at a regionally accredited institution leading to certification in that state. Applicants must also present Maryland certification assessments or the valid professional certificate earned from the out of state program along with the assessments taken to achieve the certificate. Two years of satisfactory experience may be presented in place of the assessments taken in that state.
- Present a valid professional certificate and 27 months of satisfactory experience in the past 7 years in an area of certification comparable to a Maryland teaching certificate.
- Present a National Board Certificate from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in an area of certification comparable to a Maryland teaching certificate.
- Present verification of satisfactory completion of the coursework and experience requirements of a specific area under [Code of Maryland Regulations 13A.12.02](#) and Maryland certification assessments.

23. **Question:** What if we have a candidate with a Bachelors Degree in Early Childhood but not a P-3 certification?

**Answer:** The candidate must have a MD teaching certificate or be pursuing certification through a MD Approved Alternative Preparation Program.

24. **Question:** What is the Maryland Approved Alternative Preparation Program?

**Answer:** The Maryland Alternative Preparation Program provides a pathway to teacher certification in Early Childhood Education. The list of the current programs is available at:

<https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DEE/ProgramApproval/MAAPP.aspx>

25. **Question:** How long does it take to review certification documents once they are submitted to MSDE?

**Answer:** It can take up to six weeks; Questions can be directed to the [Division of Educator Certification](#)

26. **Question:** Can school systems accept teachers with conditional certificates for PreK? Does this apply to Private Providers as well?

**Answer:** Conditional certificates can only be issued by local school systems. Private providers are not eligible for conditional certificates issued by a school system.

**27. Question:** How long are children allowed to nap in programs awarded PreK grant funding?

**Answer:** COMAR does not require a rest time. A brief rest/quiet time for 3 and 4 year olds can be part of the daily schedule but should still allow for afternoon instructional time.

**28. Question:** Will the MOU with the Public School Systems (LEAs) impact Private Providers' recruitment efforts?

**Answer:** No. The MOU states that LEAs must collaborate with participating private providers around recruitment and create a coordinated enrollment system together. Private providers and LEAs will advertise the various options that parents can choose from.

**29. Question:** How can I get assistance with completing the grant application?

**Answer:** Technical Assistance webinars were conducted in October, November, December, and January. Links to the webinar recordings and materials can be found [Maryland Prekindergarten Grant Programs](#) webpage. Additionally, the MSDE will be holding several customer service support sessions for interested applicants in February and March. During these sessions, MSDE personnel will provide an overview of the grant program, the requirements, and the application. See the remaining dates on the webpage.

This page will be updated with frequently asked questions and answers on a continual basis.