

Kindergarten – Fact Sheet

Is kindergarten attendance mandatory for all children?

Yes. Code of Maryland Annotated Regulations (COMAR 13A.08.01.01B) requires that a child who resides in Maryland must attend a public or nonpublic kindergarten program regularly during the school year before entering the first grade unless the child is enrolled in an alternative program as specified in COMAR13A.08.01.02-2B.

What is an alternative program?

The regulations allow a parent to enroll their 5 year old child full time (6.5 hours per day for 180 days) in a licensed child care center, a registered family child care home, or in a Head Start 5 year old program if they notify the local school system in writing before the first day of school. The parent will then enroll their child the following year in first grade and provide documentation from the program of the date their child was enrolled and the number of days their child was absent.

Can a child be exempted from the kindergarten attendance requirement?

Yes. State Board of Education regulations allow parents or legal guardians to submit a one-year level of maturity waiver for a kindergarten-age child if they believe that a delay in kindergarten attendance is in the best interest of their child. The child, however, must attend kindergarten the next year. To defer a child's kindergarten attendance for one year, parents or legal guardians must file a written request with the local Superintendent of Schools before the opening of the school year in which the child becomes five years old, asking that enrollment be delayed due to the child's level of maturity. The child must be registered for enrollment in kindergarten the following school year.

How old must a child be to attend kindergarten? Can a younger child be admitted to kindergarten?

COMAR 13A.08.01.02B requires that a child admitted to the kindergarten program in the public schools be 5 years-old or older on September 1 of the school year in which the child applies for entrance. Local boards of education are also required to adopt a regulation permitting a 4 year-old child, upon the request by the parent or guardian, to be admitted to kindergarten if the local school superintendent or the superintendent's designee determines that the child demonstrates capabilities warranting early admission. The policies and procedures for determining whether or not a child gains early admission to kindergarten are determined by the local school system.

Can a younger child be admitted to a prekindergarten or kindergarten child care program?

While Age for School Attendance regulations do not apply to child care programs, it is best practice that these programs follow the Age for School Attendance regulations. Otherwise, if a parent enrolls their child in a public school later for prekindergarten, kindergarten, or 1st grade, the child will have to meet the age for attendance regulations regardless of whether a child was enrolled early in a child care program and the child would then repeat that grade.



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Is kindergarten a full-day program?

Yes. Since school year 2007-2008, all kindergarten programs in the public schools are full-day programs operating for 6.5 hours a day to support the academic, social, physical, and emotional development of kindergarten students.

FAQ – Kindergarten

