

Title I Preschool Programs: Frequently Asked Questions and Resources

How are Title I funds used for preschool programs?

A district may reserve an amount from its total allocation for the purposes of a Title I preschool program for eligible children in the district. The district may also distribute the reserved preschool funds to specific Title I schools, or other public early childhood education programs, to operate a Title I preschool. A Title I school can also choose to use a portion or all of its allocation for a preschool program. If a district does not have the available facilities to house a preschool program, they may choose to work with eligible children at existing childcare programs, such as Head Start. Title I funds can also be used to complement or extend Head Start programs, for example, serving eligible children that Head Start was unable to serve or extending the hours or days of a Head Start program. Using Title I funds to rent, lease, or remodel a space for a preschool program is permissible, if no other appropriate space is available and if the costs are reasonable. A portion of Title I funds may also be used for health, nutrition, and other social services for preschool children if a needs assessment has deemed these services necessary, and they are not reasonably available through other sources. Title I preschool programs must meet the supplement-not-supplant requirement.

Who is eligible for Title I preschool programs?

Children from birth until the age that the district provides free public elementary education are considered preschool-aged. Children eligible for a Title I preschool program in a Targeted Assistance school are those who are failing or most at risk of failing to meet Massachusetts' academic achievement standards. Additionally, children who previously participated in Head Start, Even Start, Early Reading First, or Title I preschool in the last two years, homeless children, and children in neglected and delinquent programs, are automatically eligible for Title I preschool. In a Schoolwide program operating a Title I preschool, all preschool-age children are eligible to participate. Children in private preschools are generally not eligible for Title I services.

How is eligibility determined for preschool-aged children?

To determine if a preschool-aged child is failing or at risk of failing, several criteria can be used. These include teacher judgments, interviews with parents, and developmentally appropriate measures of child development. Family income may also be used to determine eligibility for Title I preschool, but not as the sole determinant. If a district has no existing assessment data for preschool children, Title I funds may be used to identify eligible children.

What achievement standards and curriculum requirements apply to Title I preschool programs?

A district that uses Title I funds to provide early childhood development services to low-income children below the age of compulsory school attendance must ensure that those services comply at a minimum with the achievement standards established under section 641A(a) of the Head Start Act. The specific

Head Start standards applicable to Title I preschool programs are in regulations at 45 CFR 1304.21 – Education and Early Childhood.

The activities and materials used in Title I preschool programs should be based on scientifically-based reading research and should develop children’s language, cognitive, and early reading skills. It is recommended that the district refer to the Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences and the Early Childhood Program Standards for Three and Four Year Olds when developing a preschool curriculum, to ensure that the curriculum is aligned with the early childhood standards in Massachusetts. Districts may also find it beneficial to refer to the Kindergarten Learning Experiences for Massachusetts, so that they can ensure their preschool curriculum is aligned with the standards the children will be expected to meet in kindergarten.

How are children assessed in a Title I preschool program?

Under Title I, third grade is the earliest grade at which children must be tested. However, when teachers know more about the individual development and progress of the children, they are better able to meet their needs in the classroom. Therefore, periodic assessments are recommended. Appropriate assessments for preschool children include individually administered standardized assessments, observational checklists completed by teachers, and analysis of student work. Additionally, teachers should frequently observe the children in classroom activities, as well as talk with them and talk with their parents.

Are Title I preschool teachers required to meet the same qualifications as K-12 Title I teachers?

The Highly Qualified Teacher requirements that are specific to Title I teachers, do not apply to preschool teachers unless a state considers preschool to be a part of its public elementary and secondary school system, which Massachusetts does not. Teachers working in preschool programs in public schools in Massachusetts are required to hold the appropriate Massachusetts teaching license for certification in Early Childhood, grades PreK-2.

What are the required qualifications for paraprofessionals working in a Title I preschool program?

All paraprofessionals paid with Title I funds must have earned a secondary school diploma or equivalent. Additionally, any paraprofessional paid with Title I funds and hired after January 8, 2002, must have (1) completed at least two years of study at an institution of higher education; (2) obtained an associate’s or higher degree; or (3) met a rigorous standard of quality, and demonstrate – through a formal state or local academic assessment – knowledge of, and the ability to assist in instructing, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness.

Paraprofessionals should not provide direct instruction or introduce new content or skills, but rather they should provide instructional support under the direct supervision of a qualified teacher. Therefore, a Title I preschool program staffed entirely by paraprofessionals is not permitted.

What is required of Title I preschool programs regarding parental involvement?

All the same parental involvement provisions in section 1118 of Title I that apply to K-12 Title I programs, also apply to preschool programs, except the discussion of the school-parent compact at parent-teacher conferences in elementary schools. Therefore, Title I preschool programs must develop or revise an existing parental involvement policy, host an annual parent meeting on the Title I preschool program, provide opportunities for training parents to support the student at home, assess parents regarding their opportunity for involvement in the program, inform parents of their children's progress, and inform parents of the results of the Annual Review meeting. Where appropriate, parents of children in a Title I preschool program may participate in relevant professional development activities along with teachers.

What transition activities should take place between a Title I preschool and the local elementary school?

A Schoolwide program is required to include plans for assisting preschool children in the transition from early childhood programs, such as Title I preschool, Head Start, or Even Start, to local elementary school programs. Targeted Assistance programs must coordinate with and support the school's regular education programs, which may include services to assist preschool children in the transition to elementary school. Some recommended actions that preschool programs can take to effectively transition children from preschool to kindergarten include coordinating professional development activities for preschool and kindergarten teachers in order to align preschool and kindergarten curricula and goals; arranging for kindergarten and preschool teachers to visit each other's classrooms; and having preschool teachers provide the future kindergarten teachers with children's portfolios or a written record of their learning during preschool.

Where can I find additional information and resources?

To review the official U.S. Department of Education Title I Preschool Guidance, Serving Preschool Children Under Title I, visit the U.S. Department of Education's website at:

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/preschoolguidance2012.pdf>

To review the Head Start standards relevant to Title I preschool programs, refer to the following:

1304.21: Education and Early Childhood Development.

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/Program%20Design%20and%20Management/Head%20Start%20Requirements/Head%20Start%20Requirements/1304/1304.21%20Education%20and%20early%20childhood%20development..htm>

Section 641A: Standards; Monitoring of Head Start Agencies and Programs.

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/Program%20Design%20and%20Management/Head%20Start%20Requirements/Head%20Start%20Act/headstartact.html#641A>

Both are located on the website, <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov> under Regulations & Policies at the bottom of the page.

To review Massachusetts' *Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences and Early Childhood Program Standards for Three and Four Year Olds*, visit the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care's website at:

http://www.eec.state.ma.us/docs1/research_planning/ta_guideprelearnexper.pdf

http://www.eec.state.ma.us/docs1/research_planning/ta_earlychildprogstan.pdf

To review Massachusetts' Kindergarten Learning Experiences, visit the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's website at:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/ess/reports/0408kle.pdf>

For guidance on providing high-quality early childhood education, review *Teaching our Youngest: A Guide for Preschool Teachers and Child Care and Family Providers*, published by the U.S. Department of Education and located on their website at:

<http://www2.ed.gov/teachers/how/early/teachingouryoungest/index.html> OR

<http://www2.ed.gov/teachers/how/early/teachingouryoungest/teachingouryoungest.pdf>

For additional information and resources regarding early childhood assessments, visit the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care's website at:

http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eoeterminal&L=4&L0=Home&L1=Early+Education+and+Care&L2=Research%2c+Planning+%26+Publications&L3=Early+Childhood+Curriculum+%26+Assessment&sid=Eeoe&b=terminalcontent&f=EEC_research_planning_childassessment&csid=Eeoe