

2026-2027 Pre-K Programs

Determining Family Eligibility



Agenda

- I. Overview
- II. Eligibility Criteria for LA 4 and NSECD
- III. Using the eScholar DirectMatch System
- IV. Alternative Methods for Determining Child Eligibility
- V. Unallowable Income Verification Documentation
- VI. Calculating Monthly Income
- VII. Eligibility Determination Best Practices



Overview



Purpose and Objectives

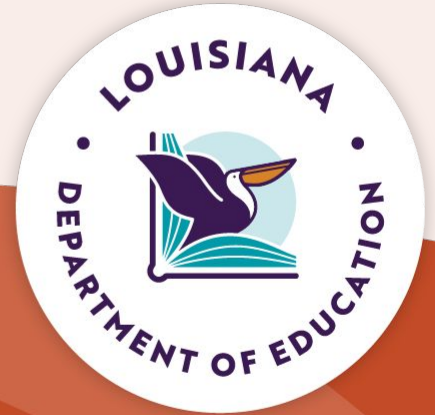
Purpose: The purpose of this presentation is to assist Community Network Lead Agencies (CNLAs) with making pre-K program eligibility determinations.

Objectives:

- identify which documentation is needed to make an eligibility determination
- identify acceptable income verification documentation
- calculate household income



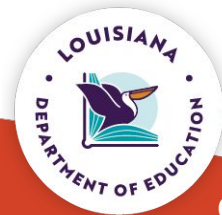
Eligibility Criteria for LA 4 and NSECD



Pre-K Program Eligibility Overview

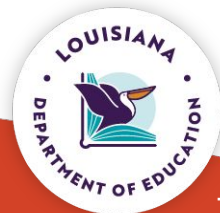
LA 4 and NSECD public pre-K programs serve children who meet certain eligibility criteria:

- Age
- Income
- Applicable documentation for immunizations



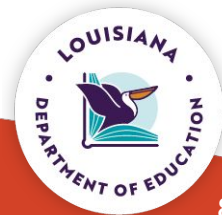
Definition of “Economically Disadvantaged”

- Children in families with incomes at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level are considered “economically disadvantaged” and are therefore eligible for one of Louisiana’s pre-K programs.
- Children in foster care and children experiencing homelessness are categorically-eligible for publicly funded seats.
- Children with special needs and children whose home language is not English may be eligible to receive services but must still qualify to participate in publicly funded programs.
 - These children may be able to be served through other funding sources such as Title I, 8(g), and/or IDEA.



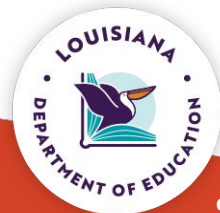
Important Eligibility Reminders

- CNLAs/sites should not deem a child ineligible for a pre-K seat for reasons other than income and age.
 - This includes medical issues (including toilet training), guardianship, clothing, transportation, and more.
- LA 4 seats are awarded to serve children residing within the jurisdiction of a participating public school system.



Important Eligibility Reminders

- Should an LEA/site consider it necessary to prevent a child from enrolling or consider disenrolling a child for any reason, they must do the following:
 - Communicate with the child's guardian what service limitations they may face (e.g., due to medical issues or other limitations requiring adaptations and modifications)
 - Explain to the child's guardian what the site's plan is for supporting this child to receive educational services and
 - In collaboration with the family, document in writing how the site will best meet the child's needs.



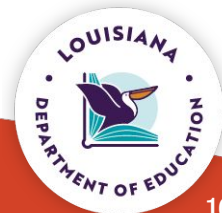
Age Requirement

Children must be 4 years old by September 30 of their pre-Kindergarten year.

The CNLA must use the child's state-issued or foreign birth certificate or current passport or visa to

- Verify date of birth **and**
- Verify that the person completing the application is the person listed on the birth certificate **or**
- Verify court-issued documentation showing permanent or temporary legal custody, such as the following:
 - Custody Judgments
 - Child Placement Agreement from DCFS
 - Non-Legal Custodian Affidavit
 - Notarized Provisional Custody by Mandate
 - Notarized Military Power of Attorney

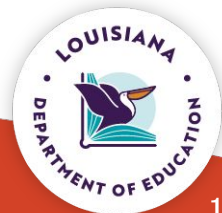
Birthdates	Age
10/1/2021 - 9/30/2022	Four Years Old



Income Requirement

Children in Louisiana are eligible for public pre-K programs if they are

- Matched in eScholar DirectMatch
- In a family that receives Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits
- In a family with a household income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level
- In foster care and/or
- Experiencing homelessness



Documentation for Immunizations

A child must be up-to-date on vaccinations for their age according to a valid immunization record.

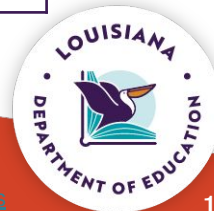
Children may not be determined ineligible for a publicly funded pre-K program due to lack of immunizations:

- If a family cannot afford to pay for their child's immunizations, families can receive free immunizations through the [Vaccines for Children \(VFC\)](#) program.
- If a child is unvaccinated due to medical, religious, or philosophical beliefs, parents may claim exemption from the immunization requirements by submitting the [Statement of Exemption](#) form.

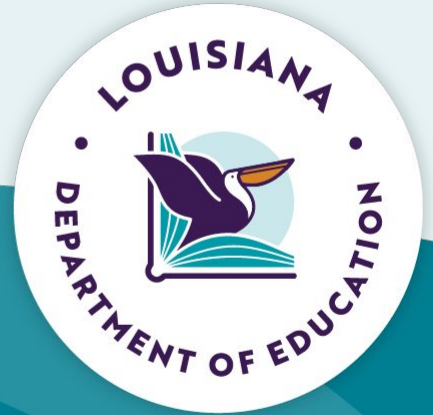


Immunizations Requirement

Louisiana Early Learning Center Immunization Entry Requirements	
Immunizations	Doses
Child must be up-to-date on immunizations for their age according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's <u>Immunizations Recommended for All Children</u>	



eScholar DirectMatch



eScholar DirectMatch Confidentiality

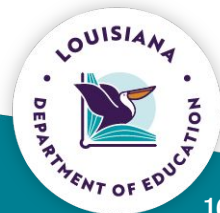
eScholar DirectMatch is a system that CNLAs are required to use to verify SNAP and Medicaid benefits:

- Information included in eScholar DirectMatch is collected for state and federal reporting, making data available to educators and other stakeholders and providing services to students.
- Child data are protected by state and federal laws and must be maintained in a confidential manner at all times. Unauthorized viewing, reproduction/copying, and/or distribution of any student record or information outside the intended and approved use are strictly prohibited.
- Users violating the authorized use of the system and/or data will lose access privileges to the system and/or data. Illegal access or misuse of the information will be reported to the proper authority.

eScholar DirectMatch

The Department requires CNLAs to use eScholar DirectMatch to determine if a child is eligible for LA 4 and NSECD services:

- When logging into the eScholar DirectMatch, users should access the login URL <https://secureid.ldoe.la.gov/uid/login>.
- Once logged in, eScholar users will be able to submit child data in the system to determine whether a child is eligible.
- If the eligibility determination team does not currently have credentials to access the eScholar DirectMatch system or are unsure of how to log on, please reach out to kishia.grayson@la.gov.



Income Verification Documentation Requirements

Alternatives to DirectMatch



Allowable Proof of Income

During the eligibility determination process, at least one form of income verification documentation must be reviewed if the eScholar DirectMatch process is not used.

Allowable Income Documentation

eScholar DirectMatch Match Report	Current foster care placement agreement from DCFS
Homeless status verification by the McKinney-Vento Liaison	SNAP Benefits Statement
Letter from the Social Security Administration verifying the child listed on the application is a recipient of SSI benefits	Two consecutive pay statements (within 2 months prior to the date of application)
An official letter from the employer	Statement of No Income Form
Declaration of Income for Irregular Employment Form	

Allowable Proof of Income - SNAP Benefits

Families on SNAP are categorically-eligible. Documentation must include child's name and effective dates. There are several different forms for this, including the following:

- The SNAP Change/Closure Letter sent from DCFS: this letter will include an expiration date on the first page and a full listing of household members on the following pages
- The CAFÉ Case Detail Report: this includes current certification dates as well as a list of included family members, is available via the CAFÉ portal, and can be accessed on most smartphones

The Louisiana Purchase Card is not accepted as valid proof that the family is a SNAP participant.



Allowable Proof of Income - Pay Statements

- Collect two (2) consecutive pay statements for the current year (within 2 months prior to the date they are completing the application) for each parent or guardian in the home.
- Income verification is only based on the regular or base pay rate.
 - E.g., holiday, overtime, or other bonus pay will not be considered in a family's gross income, as it is not representative of their typical average rate.
- Eligibility is based on gross household income. Therefore, if there are 2 or more adults contributing to the financial needs of the family, all of the adults' incomes must be counted for the family eligibility.
 - If the relative attests that they do not provide direct financial support, they should not be counted in the family size and their income should not be included.

Unallowable Proof of Income



Unallowable Proof of Income

The following list includes items that are not allowable for income verification:

- ✗ W-2 or 1099 forms OR tax returns as a primary source – W-2s may only be used if no other form of income documentation exists and they were issued within 2 months from the date they are completing the application
- ✗ Medicaid Documentation
- ✗ Child Support as an independent source (unless it is the sole source of income and is court ordered – parent/guardian must provide court documents as well as a letter stating that no other income is received)

Calculating Household Monthly Income



2026-2027 Income Limits

CNLAs should use the following income limits to determine whether the household income falls at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Federal Income Limits: 200% FPL <i>(Effective January 2026 for 2026-2027 Enrollment)</i>		
Family Size	Gross Annual Income	Gross Maximum Monthly Income
2	\$43,280	\$3,607
3	\$54,640	\$4,553
4	\$66,000	\$5,500
5	\$77,360	\$6,447
6	\$88,720	\$7,393
7	\$100,080	\$8,340

Translating Income Into a Monthly Figure

CNLAs should use the following calculation table to determine monthly income.

Monthly Income Calculation Table	
Pay Period	Formula
Hourly	$(\text{Hourly wage} \times 40 \text{ hours per week}) \times 4.33$
Monthly, same gross pay each month	Use gross salary
Paid same gross amount exactly 2 times per month (e.g., 1st and 15th of month)	$\text{Gross salary} \times 2$
Paid same gross amount every 2 weeks (e.g., every other Friday)	$(\text{Gross salary} \div 2) \times 4.33$
Weekly	$\text{Gross salary} \times 4.33$



Calculating Monthly Income

- Income is most consistently and accurately calculated using the hourly rate formula.
- Gross income must be calculated using a 40-hour week unless parent indicates they work less than 40 hours per week.

Example 1: If Mrs. Smith provides a check stub showing an hourly rate of \$25, you will calculate it as $(\$25 \times 40) \times 4.33$ to find her **average monthly income**. Mrs. Smith's monthly income is \$4,330. She is a single mom and has one child (family size of 2); therefore, she would NOT be eligible.

Federal Income Limits: 200% FPL (Effective January 2026 for 2026-2027 Enrollment)		
Family Size	Gross Annual Income	Gross Maximum Monthly Income
2	\$43,280	\$3,607

Calculating Monthly Income

- Should the parent/guardian indicate that **they do not work 40 hours per week**, they are required to submit a letter from their employer or pay statements confirming their regular hours. This verified amount may be used to recalculate their income.

Example 2: You receive a letter which shows Mrs. Smith only works 20 hours per week. You may calculate her income as $(\$25 \times 20) \times 4.33$, which equals \$2,165 for her **average monthly income**, which makes her child eligible.

Federal Income Limits: 200% FPL (Effective January 2026 for 2026-2027 Enrollment)		
Family Size	Gross Annual Income	Gross Maximum Monthly Income
2	\$43,280	\$3,607

Eligibility Determination Best Practices

Avoid Common Procedural Errors



Eligibility Determination Best Practices

In order to avoid errors in eligibility determination, it is recommended to:

- Obtain a coordinated network application for each pre-K (LA 4 and NSECD) program applicant
- Complete the 2026-2027 LA 4 and NSECD Eligibility Worksheet for each pre-K (LA 4 and NSECD) program applicant
- Use DirectMatch to determine eligibility
- Print the dated eScholar DirectMatch Report
- Obtain accurate household size information
- Obtain two pay statements dated within two months prior to the application date and/or
- Obtain income documentation for each individual that is 18 years of age or older that was counted in the household size

Eligibility Determination Best Practices

Additional best practices to avoid errors in eligibility determination include:

- Ensure that all forms are completed in their entirety as eligibility determinations cannot be accurately made with incomplete information
- Use the correct formula to calculate monthly income
- Obtain all supporting documentation including the following:
 - Custody Judgments
 - Child Placement Agreement from DCFS
 - Non-Legal Custodian Affidavit
 - Notarized Provisional Custody by Mandate
 - Notarized Military Power of Attorney
- Ensure that NSECD providers have access to the completed network application along with all supporting documents that were utilized in making the eligibility determination

Contact Information

For all questions related to pre-K programs
and eligibility determination:

Kishia Grayson

kishia.grayson@la.gov

