



Alabama

Alabama Pre-kindergarten Initiative

The Alabama Pre-kindergarten Initiative is modeled on the Georgia program, except services are not universally available to all children. In Alabama, all four-year-old children are eligible, regardless of family income or other risk factors; however, the program served only 936 children in 2003-04. More than half of all children receive services in community-based settings.

Eligibility

Income: no restriction

Age: children who are 4 years old by September 1 of the program year

Priority: none; enrollment must be open and nondiscriminatory

Length of Program

Hours/day: six and a half hours per day, five days per week

Days/year: 175 days

Eligible Providers

Local schools, community agencies, child care centers, churches, Head Start programs, Even Start programs, and family services centers

Number Served

936 (2003-04): 396 in public school settings, 540 in community-based settings

Total Annual Budget

\$3.23 million (2003) from the state education trust

Monitoring

The Alabama Office of School Readiness Technical Assistant conducts on-site monitoring and evaluates program progress during random visits throughout the year. At least two visits are required annually; the first visit is announced and any subsequent visits are unannounced. The facility must also hold a current license from the department of human resources. Programs must use a curriculum approved by the Alabama Office of School Readiness.

Governance

How are state pre-k programs integrated into community-based settings?

The statute authorizes pre-k program delivery in community-based settings, but does not mandate it. The Alabama Office of School Readiness (OSR) determines who will provide the

pre-k program through a competitive process and subject to funding availability, previous program compliance (for continuation programs), and identified regional need.

Are there requirements to integrate pre-k and child care at the state or local level?

At the state level, the OSR is required to coordinate with the regulatory division for the licensing of child care centers and the adult and child care food program. The state OSR office also partners with the Head Start State Collaboration office and the Department of Human Resources.

Each community must form a Collaborative Task Force to guide the pre-kindergarten program. The members of this group will plan for and contribute to the collaboration of community resources to provide a high quality program. Representatives of the Department of Human Resources, school systems, health, rehabilitation services, chambers of commerce, and others who serve children and families should be included. Each task force meets quarterly, and local programs send minutes of the meetings to OSR.

As additional funds become available, all programs providing state pre-k shall collaborate with existing early education and child care programs to develop an integrated school readiness program. These programs include: adult and community education programs, Even Start literacy programs, pre-kindergarten early intervention programs, Head Start programs, programs offered by public and private providers of child care, migrant pre-kindergarten programs, Title 1 programs, subsidized child care programs, and teen parenting programs.

Procedures and Supports for Community-Based Providers

What are the rules/guidelines for notifying and selecting pre-k providers?

Existing providers may learn about opportunities to participate in the pre-k program through the OSR website, word of mouth, local media, and Children's Policy Councils. In addition, all licensed child care providers, Head Start centers, and child care management (resource and referral) agencies received a copy of the request for proposals.

There is no on-site review of programs, but they must meet all standards prior to approval. The application process is the same, regardless of the type of pre-k setting.

What resources are available to help providers become eligible to deliver pre-k services?

Providers may use pre-k funds for classroom equipment, supplies, books, curriculum development, to achieve accreditation, and to expand or renovate a facility. Programs may receive up to \$10,000 in start-up funds. Alabama also has a T.E.A.C.H. initiative, but it is not supported by pre-k funds or limited to pre-k teachers.

Do teachers working in community settings earn comparable wages and benefits once they obtain the same credentials as teachers in school-based settings?

Yes. The lead teacher salary must be based upon the Alabama Department of Education Teacher Salary Schedule.

Supports for Working Families

Is there any explicit discussion in the legislation or regulations of extending the day, coordinating with the child care subsidy program, or helping working families?

As specified in the Operating Guidelines, the Office of School Readiness “does not require or provide extended day services. Extended day services for pre-kindergarten children may be provided at the parent’s expense. Income-eligible families may receive services through the Alabama Department of Human Resources, Childcare Management Agency office, or the Department of Family and Children’s Services subsidized child care.”

What policies help working families access pre-k and other supports?

Children receive hearing, vision, dental, and physical exams at the beginning of the program year. Families must participate in a minimum of six hours of family enrichment activities or workshops offered by the pre-kindergarten provider or OSR. These activities may include workshops on first aid, transition to kindergarten, or health and safety. Providers should offer at least 18 hours of program opportunities for families to meet this requirement.

Funding

What is the per-child payment for the pre-k program?

The payment is \$3,333 per child (\$60,000 per 18-child classroom).

How does the state pre-k funding affect other potential sources of funds for a provider?

Pre-k children served in Head Start centers receive only pre-k funding, but the program must still meet Head Start standards.

Sources

- Interview: Dr. Trellis Smith Williams, Office of School Readiness, 05/24/2004
- Website: <http://dca.state.al.us/OLD/osr/pre-k.html> or <http://dca.state.al.us/OSR/index.htm>
- Legislation: <http://alisd.b.legislature.state.al.us/acas/CodeOfAlabama/1975/26-24-23.htm>, <http://alisd.b.legislature.state.al.us/acas/codeofalabama/1975/26-24-24.htm>, <http://alisd.b.legislature.state.al.us/acas/CodeOfAlabama/1975/26-24-25.htm>
- Program Guidelines and Requirements: <http://dca.state.al.us/OLD/osr/OpGuides02-03.pdf>
- Other: Pre-kindergarten in Alabama, Annual Report 2001-02, <http://dca.state.al.us/OLD/osr/Pre-Kreport.pdf>

For information about national trends, read CLASP’s *All Together Now: State Experiences in Using Community-Based Child Care to Provide Pre-kindergarten* at http://www.clasp.org/publications/all_together_now.pdf.