

Scope of Services

Voluntary Pre-K 2025-26

Tennessee Code Annotated Title 49, Chapter 6, Part 1 establishes requirements for voluntary pre-kindergarten (VPK) programs in Tennessee, including student eligibility requirements that local education agencies (LEAs) must follow in administering such programs.

LEA (hereinafter referred to as “the Grantee”) has been selected through the state’s competitive grant process to create and provide a high-quality VPK program for the 2025-26 school year. The program shall comprehensively address early learning educational needs, including cognitive, physical, social, and emotional, of four-year-old children who are eligible for enrollment under state law. The Grantee shall provide all programming in accordance with T.C.A. Title 49, Chapter 6, Part 1, the policies, rules, and regulations of the State Board of Education (SBE) and the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE), its state-approved grant proposal, and the Scope of Services requirements below. In the event of a conflict between the grant proposal and this Scope of Services, the Scope of Services requirements shall prevail.

A. Student Eligibility

- 1) The Grantee shall enroll children residing in the geographic area served by the LEA who are four (4) years of age on or before August 15 for the current school year and who are “at risk.” For the purposes of this program, “at risk” shall be defined as follows:
 - a) Children with or without disabilities who are:
 - i. four (4) years of age on or before August 15; and
 - ii. members of families with incomes that meet the eligibility requirements for free or reduced-priced lunch as determined pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1771; or
 - b) Dependent children who are four years of age on or before August 15 whose parent was killed, died as a direct result of injuries received because of war or is or has been officially reported as a prisoner of war or missing in action.
- 2) After the 30th full day of school, if the Grantee has enrolled all “at-risk” children as defined above, the Grantee may enroll children who are not at-risk but who:
 - a) Reside in the geographic area served by the LEA and who are:
 - i. four (4) years of age, with or without a disability, on or before August 15;
 - ii. three (3) years of age on or before August 15 and:
 - who have been in the Tennessee Early Intervention System (TEIS); or
 - who are screened and identified as educationally at-risk, as determined pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.); or

- iii. three (3) years of age on or before August 15, who are members of families with incomes that meet the eligibility requirements for free or reduced-price meals as determined pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1771.
 - b) Reside outside the geographic area served by the LEA;
 - i. are children of a parent employed by the LEA; and
 - ii. are four (4) years of age on or before August 15.
- 3) Enrollment of five-year-olds in VPK is not permitted.
- 4) Enrollment in the VPK program shall be voluntary.
- 5) Beginning in the 2026-27 school year, VPK utilization will be calculated by the number of children meeting the definition of at-risk outlined in T.C.A. § 49-6-104(a)(1).**

B. Structure of Program

In addition to complying with the requirements of the State Board of Education Chapter 0520-12-01 Standards for School Administered Child Care Programs ("Chapter 0520-12-01"), the Grantee shall:

- 1) Comply with all applicable state and federal laws, rules, and regulations. The Grantee is responsible for ensuring compliance with all state, and federal laws, rules and regulations, and requirements stated herein, whether operating the program directly or through a third party;
- 2) Provide in-person teaching and learning for a minimum of 6 hours per day and appropriate educational activities for a minimum of 5.5 hours of instruction per day.
- 3) During the daily schedule, children must be offered time to rest/relax. Rest/relax guidelines are as follows:
 - a) for programs operating seven (7) or fewer hours per day, rest/relaxation cannot last more than thirty (30) minutes;
 - b) for programs operating more than seven (7) hours per day, rest/relaxation can last up to but no more than one (1) hour.
- 4) Ensure VPK calendars and personnel contracts align with the requirements for public schools pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-3004(a);
- 5) Collaborate and coordinate with the IDEA Part B 619 school district staff to identify children with disabilities whose needs may best be served in the VPK program;
- 6) Ensure that all collaborative agreements for operating programs with non-school system entities (including, but not limited to, nonprofit and for-profit childcare providers and Head Start programs) are not only licensed by the Tennessee Department of Human Services

(DHS), but also have attained the highest designation under the rated licensing system administered by DHS pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-105;

- 7) Ensure all contracts with third parties to operate VPK programs contain the same requirements listed in this VPK Scope of Services;
- 8) Monitor all VPK classrooms for compliance with VPK Scope of Services, including those located in community agencies, schools, early learning centers, and other community locations; and
- 9) Ensure all teachers, educational assistants, administrators, substitutes, and all other direct services providers receive training on the VPK Scope of Services, and all other mandatory training as listed in State Board of Education (SBE) Rule 0520-12-01. All training shall be aligned to TDOE's early learning division or office of early learning, instructional quality standards.

C. Staffing

In addition to complying with the requirements of SBE Rule 0520-12-01, the Grantee shall:

- 1) Always maintain VPK classes at a maximum class size of 20 and a minimum adult: child ratio of 1:10;
- 2) Ensure all VPK classrooms are staffed with a teacher who is state-licensed and endorsed in early childhood education pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-104(b)(2). LEAs requesting a waiver must submit an endorsement exemption (waiver) transaction in TNCompass on behalf of an educator as soon as they intend to hire an individual requiring a waiver. Individuals may not serve as a teacher of record without the appropriate endorsement. Adequate progress towards full licensure, as identified on respective applications, must be made for the teacher to return to the classroom for a second year. After October 1, if the Grantee has not staffed all VPK classrooms with a licensed teacher, the Grantee shall immediately inform the TDOE Early Learning Division;
- 3) Ensure teachers in VPK classrooms working through a job-embedded placement hold the appropriate practitioner license endorsed in early childhood education;
- 4) Employ at least one educational assistant per classroom who holds at least a Child Development Associate credential (CDA), early childhood technical certificate, or associate degree in early childhood or be actively working toward those credentials pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-104(b)(3). If no person is available who holds these credentials, then a high school diploma and relevant experience in early learning is acceptable for employment. Teacher assistants who do not hold any credentials in early learning are encouraged to work toward credentials in early learning;
- 5) Ensure all general education and special education teachers have training and support to meet the needs of all children, including economically disadvantaged children and children with disabilities.

- 6) Employ an appropriately licensed and endorsed long-term substitute when the teacher of record is expected to be absent for a period of 30 or more consecutive days. The long-term substitute should be placed continually and consistently in the classroom until the teacher of record returns. The Grantee shall notify the TDOE Assistant Commissioner of Early Learning of any utilization of a long-term substitute;
- 7) Ensure all staff (teachers, teacher assistants, and direct supervisor of the early learning program) have a data-driven professional development plan identifying specific training and job-embedded professional learning opportunities to meet staff needs to improve classroom practices;
- 8) Implement the pre-K and kindergarten student growth portfolio models, or State Board of Education approved alternative growth models (Universal Reading Screener), for all pre-k and kindergarten teachers, including VPK teachers in community-based agencies;
- 9) Ensure all teachers are evaluated by personnel trained in the use of any approved TDOE teacher evaluation models pursuant to the rules and regulations of the State Board of Education;
- 10) Ensure that VPK teachers employed by the LEA and community-based agencies are provided the same employment rights and benefits available to K-12 teachers (planning time and duty-free lunch may occur outside the scheduled 5.5-hour instructional day); and
- 11) Ensure salaries for personnel in community-based agencies are reasonably comparable to those currently in effect in the LEA where the respective VPK program is located. Reasonably comparable is defined as a range of compensation that would ordinarily be paid for like services within the school system. Final salaries within the range may be commensurate with qualifications and experience.

D. Enrollment/Attendance/ Education Information System Data Collection

In addition to complying with the requirements of Chapter 0520-12-01, the Grantee shall:

- 1) Follow the enrollment selection process outlined in section A;
 - 2) Ensure that at least 90 percent of children enrolled in the VPK program qualify as “at-risk” as defined above and only children qualifying as “at-risk” count in calculated utilization rates;
 - 3) Support inclusionary practices by ensuring at least 10% of children enrolled in VPK qualify as children with disabilities and represent the various disability categories assigned to children ages 3-5, not in kindergarten, in the district;
 - 4) Create and implement a universal application to be completed by all families of students ages three-five years old, not enrolled in kindergarten, that gathers essential information for each
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child including, but not limited to: basic demographic information, proof of residency, and income, proof of age or birthdate, and medical and developmental history including immunizations, to ensure all preschool students have access to all applicable continuum options.

- 5) Continue enrollment of new students, subject to available seats, up to the last 20 days of school and ensure maximum group size operates at 95 percent capacity;
- 6) Adhere to the district's submitted VPK Attendance Policy with the goal of maintaining average daily attendance at a minimum of 90 percent;
- 7) Ensure that children enrolled in VPK receive 180 days of instruction. A staggered opening is appropriate over the course of two weeks, but VPK shall not close for registration or any other events without approval from the Assistant Commissioner of Early Learning;
- 8) Document a child's withdrawal from the VPK program in accordance with the district's attendance policy;
- 9) Enter information for all VPK children enrolled in school-based and community partner classrooms into the district and state student information systems on or before October 1st and in accordance with guidelines set by the TDOE;
- 10) Maintain and report daily attendance of enrolled students and those students on the waitlist to be enrolled in pre-K to the TDOE at the mid-year and end-of-year reviews;
- 11) Implement and document a restorative practice plan, such as consulting with district family engagement specialists, to address attendance concerns in collaboration with the family;
- 12) Document a parent-initiated withdrawal with code 10 and a school-initiated withdrawal with code 13. Use of code 13 requires submission of documentation for the reason of dismissal to the Assistant Commissioner of Early Learning a child is withdrawn, to include the attendance restorative practice plan;
- 13) Assign a classification code of (Q) to all VPK-funded students and a classification code of (L) to all "at-risk" students in the student management system (note: students can be coded with both Q and L). The number of students with a classification code of (Q) should never exceed the number of allotted VPK seats assigned to the district; and
- 14) Assign a classification code of (ID619) to all VPK-funded students with a current active Individualized Education Program (IEP).

E. Health, Nutrition and Safety

In addition to complying with the requirements of Chapter 0520-12-01, the Grantee shall:

- 1) Establish, as part of enrollment, a process to ensure each child enrolled will have hearing and vision screenings in accordance with T.C.A. 49-6-5004, which may or may not be a part of the required health examination;
- 2) Ensure all children are taught about personal safety through an approved personal safety curriculum; and
- 3) Follow guidance provided by the Center for Disease Control and local health department guidance to inform strategies on how to ensure health, nutrition, and safety through the new and evolving context of school closures and re-opening.

F. Guidance on Behavior Management

In addition to complying with the requirements of Chapter 0520-12-01, the Grantee shall:

- 1) Using the [TDOE Model Policy for Alternatives to Exclusionary Discipline](#), develop a behavior management policy that aligns to positive behavior supports and interventions. This can include, but is not limited to, strategies like those found in the "[Guidelines and Standards for Alternatives to Exclusionary Discipline Practices](#);"
- 2) In the event exclusionary discipline and/or suspensions are used, assign appropriate classification codes in the student management system. Exclusionary discipline is defined as the removal, on a long-term or short-term basis, of a child from a class, school, or educational program or activity for violating a school rule or code of conduct or in response to a child's behavior. Suspension is defined as the temporary removal of a child from the assigned educational setting for disciplinary purposes, including in response to a child's behavior;
- 3) Prohibit spanking or any other type of corporal punishment;
- 4) Implement and document a restorative practice discipline plan, including, but not limited to consulting with district special education supervisors, to address behavioral concerns in collaboration with the family; and
- 5) Submit a written request to the Assistant Commissioner of Early Learning for the permanent dismissal of a child due to behavior, including, but not limited to documentation of the restorative practice plan and efforts.

G. Transportation

In addition to complying with the requirements of Chapter 0520-12-01, the Grantee shall:

- 1) Provide documentation of training on transportation procedures for all staff and faculty responsible for transporting and signing children on and off school buses; and
- 2) Provide for adult-to-adult transfer of students always.

H. Curriculum

In addition to complying with the requirements of Chapter 0520-12-01, the Grantee shall:

- 1) Provide for the use of a comprehensive, research-based educational curriculum, supported by an evidence-based foundational early literacy skills curriculum supplement, approved by TDOE's Early Learning Division, or Office of Early Learning, that is aligned with the Tennessee Early Learning Developmental Standards and the science of reading;
- 2) Ensure that state-approved curricula are being implemented with fidelity over the course of the entire school year, and unapproved curricula and/or supplements are not being utilized;
- 3) Provide an educational program that ensures all developmental areas – language, cognitive, social-personal competencies, and physical—are addressed, with a balance between direct instruction, individualized instruction, group activities, and choice of center-based activities with limited use of technology-based programming;
- 4) Ensure that instructional materials are high-quality and offer concrete and relevant experiences;
- 5) Provide an educational program to meet the wide range of developmental interests, abilities, and cultural diversities reflective of the children and families served by the program; and
- 6) Ensure that the organization and delivery of the daily activities within the developmental learning program are based upon teacher observations and assessment of each child's development.

I. Family Engagement

In addition to complying with the requirements of Chapter 0520-12-01, the Grantee shall:

- 1) Implement a plan to introduce each child and family to the VPK program prior to the first day of school;

- 2) Implement a transition plan to enhance promotion and smooth transition for each child and family into the kindergarten setting;
- 3) Implement a family engagement policy that may include, but is not limited to, family consultation, parenting skills training, home visits, and opportunities for parents/family members to volunteer. These services may be provided through a collaborative effort with other local agencies serving children and families;
- 4) Document quarterly family engagement opportunities and attendees;
- 5) Conduct a minimum of two (2) parent/teacher or family/teacher conferences each school year regarding each child;
- 6) Offer families an opportunity to learn about the personal safety curriculum taught in the school;
- 7) Assist families of children in the VPK program needing extended-day/extended-year services outside the 6-hour/180-day school year to obtain quality care. The Grantee may provide extended services, or they may collaborate with another agency to provide the extended services. A list of child care agencies can be obtained from the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency. (It is not mandated that the extended services be provided by the Grantee, but the Grantee must assist families in obtaining the needed care.) Any services provided beyond the minimum 6-hour day could be subject to fees payable by the family or other available resources; and
- 8) Administer the family survey distributed by the TDOE's Early Learning Division, in the spring of each school year.
- 9) Grantee shall not request any supplies, money, fundraisers, or fees from families enrolled in Voluntary Pre-K. This requirement includes field trip fees, snacks, school supplies, etc.

J. Collaboration with the Community

In addition to complying with the requirements of Chapter 0520-12-01, in accordance with T.C.A. § 49-6-106, Grantee shall:

- 1) Create and appoint a community pre-K advisory council (CPAC). The director of schools, or the director's designee, shall serve as chair and coordinate the activities of the council. The council shall include, but not be limited to, members representing the local school board, parents, general education teachers, special education teachers, nonprofit providers, for-profit providers, Head Start, the business community, and local government funding bodies, where applicable.
- 2) The council shall provide input to the local board of education in creating the board's application for programs, taking into consideration the number and type of existing programs currently serving children four (4) years of age within the geographical area served by the LEA.

- 3) While the content of the final application for programs shall be within the sole authority of the local school board, no board shall apply without first allowing the council to provide input, either in writing or otherwise, and without first giving due consideration to the council's input and recommendations.

K. Classroom Data Collection and Evaluation

In addition to complying with the requirements of Chapter 0520-12-01, the Grantee shall:

- 1) Collaborate with TDOE's Early Learning Division, or Office of Early Learning, on the development of program improvement efforts, which include measures of programmatic and instructional quality indicators;
- 2) In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-6-104(d)(7) as a measure of a high-quality pre-kindergarten program, VPK teachers receive coaching feedback based on annual classroom observations using the PK-3 Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and CLASS Environment tool. CLASS observations must be conducted by a reliably trained district staff person. Contracting of independent CLASS observers or outside agencies is prohibited. Pre-K teachers should only be utilized as CLASS observers when these duties will require six (6) or less hours spent outside of their own classroom. While annual observations are required, best practice when implementing the CLASS tool includes conducting at least two observations per teacher per year (i.e. fall and spring observations).

L. Monitoring

In addition to complying with the requirements of SBE Rule 0520-12-01, the Grantee shall maintain documentation on file in the classroom and easily accessible for monitoring that includes:

- 1) Number of children served, number of economically disadvantaged children, number of children with current IEPs (Individualized Educational Program) through Part B, Section 619, of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and other risk factors identified by TDOE;
- 2) Roster of children with a date of birth listed;
- 3) Process used to validate eligibility, such as: proof of income, screening tool results, or documentation of other educational risk factors (documentation must be maintained at the local level);
- 4) Approved educational curriculum and assessment used in the program;
- 5) Names of all pre-K teachers with verification of a valid Tennessee teaching license and applicable degree information such as early childhood endorsements;
- 6) Pre-K observation data with documentation of dates and times when observations were conducted;

- 7) Daily number of hours of the program's operation and the number of days the program serves children;
- 8) Names of program director, teacher(s), assistants, and other direct services staff;
- 9) Type of training provided for staff, including the number of hours of each type of training offered;
- 10) Transportation arrangements developed for each child;
- 11) A comprehensive list of the parent involvement activities implemented/planned for the remainder of the year;
- 12) A comprehensive list of collaborative/partnership activities with any other state/federal agencies or departments; and
- 13) A comprehensive list of any major equipment purchased or planned to be purchased with grant funds during the current school year.

M. Performance Measures

In addition to complying with the requirements of Chapter 0520-12-01, the Grantee shall be evaluated based on performance measures developed by TDOE's Early Learning Division, or Office of Early Learning. The performance measures shall include:

- 1) Documentation of compliance with the requirements of the VPK program listed in T.C.A. § 49-6-104;
- 2) Results of the required family survey administered by the program each spring;
- 3) Economically disadvantaged students enrolled in the program of 90 percent or above;
- 4) Daily attendance rates of 90 percent or above;
- 5) Students with disabilities enrollment rate of 10 percent or above;
- 6) Capacity rate of 95 percent or higher for 160 of 180 days with the flexibility of attendance granted to align with the district's attendance policy;
- 7) Classrooms served by qualified staff at 100 percent;
- 8) Inclusionary practices for economically disadvantaged students with disabilities;
- 9) Documentation of efforts made to enroll economically disadvantaged students first and the process followed to enroll other at-risk students per Title 49, Chapter 6, Part 1, and this Scope of Services;
- 10) Annual VPK monitoring report; and

11) Performance and documentation of appropriate staff evaluations.

N. Compliance

The Grantee shall comply with the requirements of the State Board of Education's Standards for School Administered Child Care Programs Rule 0520-12-01 and the VPK Scope of Services. If a Grantee is out of compliance with any part of the Scope of Services, VPK funding may be withheld until requirements are met, and remaining funds may be pro-rated for the number of days the classroom is out of compliance. The terms of this Scope of Services shall remain in effect for the duration of the VPK program's funding. Additionally, Tennessee Code Annotated Title 49, Chapter 6, Part 1 establishes no state funds received for pre-kindergarten programs pursuant to §§ 49-6-103 — 49-6-110 shall be used to supplant any other state or local funds for pre-kindergarten program.

General Assurances

Assurance is hereby provided that:

- 1) This program shall be administered in accordance with all applicable statutes, regulations, program plans and applications:
 - a) The laws of the State of Tennessee;
 - b) Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the regulations issued there under by the federal government;
 - c) The Equal Employment Opportunity Act and the regulations issued there under by the federal government;
 - d) The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the regulations issued there under by the federal government;
 - e) Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the regulations issued there under by the federal government;
 - f) The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the regulations issued there under by the federal government;
 - g) The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the regulations issued there under by the federal government;
 - h) Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA);
 - i) The condition that the submitted proposal was independently arrived at, without collusion, under penalty of perjury; and
 - j) The condition that no amount shall be paid directly or indirectly to an employee or official of the State of Tennessee as wages, compensation, or gifts in exchange for acting as an officer, agent, employee, subcontractor, or consultant to the Agency in connection with this grant.
- 2) Each agency receiving funds under this grant shall use these funds only to supplement, and not to supplant state and local funds that, in the absence of such funds, would otherwise be spent for activities under this section.
- 3) The Grantee shall file financial reports and claims for reimbursement in accordance with procedures prescribed by TDOE monthly.
- 4) The Grantee shall ensure that priority will be given to income-eligible four-year-old children and will not enroll any over-income children until after the 30th full day of school.
- 5) The Grantee shall ensure continuous quality improvement of the pre-K program by implementing quality measure tools and at the frequencies as defined in the VPK Scope of Services, Classroom Data Collection and Evaluation, to measure progress toward achieving goals and objectives. The grantee will use the classroom observation results to refine, improve, and strengthen the program and to modify the goals and objectives, as necessary.

- 6) The Grantee shall ensure that VPK programs are using a curriculum on TDOE approved list alongside a research-based foundational literacy skills supplement.
- 7) The Grantee shall ensure that VPK programs operate the same 180-day school calendar as K-12 for at least 6 hours per day.
- 8) The Grantee shall ensure that children enrolled in VPK receive a minimum of 5.5 hours of instruction per day.
- 9) The Grantee shall ensure that all VPK teachers have a Tennessee teaching license with an early childhood endorsement.
- 10) The Grantee shall ensure that every effort is made to hire assistant teachers with a CDA, an associate degree in early childhood, or equivalent.
- 11) The program shall comply with the Scope of Services outlining program requirements, including those in the *Voluntary Pre-K for Tennessee Act*.
- 12) This program shall comply with the submission and verification of student, staff, and class information for all school-based and non-school-based partner pre-k programs for which the school system receives funding. This includes but is not limited to reporting attendance through the district and state student information systems and ensuring that teachers meet licensing endorsement requirements or submit requests for a waiver in an appropriate time frame.
- 13) This program shall comply with the [State Board of Education's Rule Chapter 0520-12-01](#), Standards for School-administered Childcare, and the Early Childhood Education Policy 3.100 adopted by the State Board of Education.

Certification/Signature

By signing this report, I certify to the best of my knowledge and belief that the report is true, complete, and accurate and the expenditures, disbursements, and cash receipts are for the purposes and objectives outlined in the terms and conditions of the award. I am aware that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent information or the omission of any material or fact may subject me to criminal, civil or administrative penalties for fraud, false statements, false claims, or otherwise.

Director of Schools Signature

Date

VPK Director Signature

District Name