

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · ALABAMA

School Enrollment in Alabama: The Answer in Four Steps 2026

A text sits in the code with no warning and a reader may find it online and panic. A federal court permanently stopped that section.

SHORT ANSWER

We answer this in **four steps**, because a reader who searches will find the statute and may be frightened by it: **(1)** a section requiring schools to determine a student's immigration status is still printed in the code **with no warning**; **(2)** that section was **permanently enjoined by a federal court**; **(3)** the statute's **own general rule** already lists school among the services needing no verification; **(4)** the constitutional backstop exists separately. In practice the districts point the same way: one district's policy says a request for a number is **voluntary**, another says **no student may be denied enrollment solely for failing to meet documentation requirements**. **The real barrier is not the number, it is address proof.**

Step one: the text is printed in the code

A section dating from the 2011 act sits in the Alabama code. It requires every public elementary and secondary school, **at the time of enrollment in kindergarten or any grade**, to determine from the student's original birth certificate or a certified copy whether the student **was born outside the jurisdiction of the United States**; it requires the parent in that case to **notify the school within 30 days** of the student's citizenship or immigration status; and it provides that **if no such documentation or declaration is presented, the school official shall presume, for the purposes of reporting under the section, that the student is unlawfully present**.

The text sits on the state's own legislative server today, in full, with the effective and supersession date fields **empty, no editorial note of any kind**, and the node updated this month. **That is exactly the root of the trap**: the server shows repeals but **gives no machine-readable signal at all about provisions a court has stopped**.

Step two: a federal court permanently stopped it

The order is *Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama v. Bentley*, Northern District of Alabama, **Doc. 180**, entered **November 25, 2013**. The relevant paragraph **permanently enjoins** the state defendants and the defendant school superintendents from implementing the provision, on the ground that it violates **the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment**. The appellate court had earlier held that the provision **imposes a substantial burden on the right of undocumented school children to receive an education**.

THREE CAUTIONS, ALL THREE PROTECT THE READER

- **The October 2013 date you will see online is wrong.** That is the date of **the parties' joint report**, not of the order. The correct citation is above and the order was entered **November 25, 2013**. We name that date only in order to say it is wrong.
- **Districts that were not defendants do not sit outside the order.** Certain superintendents are named defendants, but the force of the holding comes from the appellate court finding the provision **unconstitutional**, which governs Alabama generally.
- **The confidentiality and damages paragraphs inside that same enjoined section are part of the enjoined text.** So **we do not present them as live protections**, and you should not rely on them at a school either.

Step three: the statute's own general rule exempts school

A separate section of the same act lists the services for which **verification of lawful presence is not required**, and **the first item on that list is primary and secondary school education**. The list also names emergency medical treatment, **immunization**, testing and treatment for communicable disease, soup kitchens, crisis counseling, short-term shelter, prenatal care, child and adult protective services, and domestic violence services. **What the list says is that verification is not required**; it does not say the service is free, or that everyone is entitled to it.

Step four: the constitutional backstop exists separately

The Supreme Court's decision in *Plyler v. Doe* applies in Alabama as everywhere on access to public elementary and secondary education. **Research in this round did not look for a state education department statement restating it**, so we do not write that none exists; it fell outside the scope of the research.

In practice: what the districts say

This state has both city and county school systems, and some cities run their own district, **entirely separate** from the county district around it. So the answer **varies from district to district**, and you should not carry one district's answer over to another.

TOPIC	FROM THE DISTRICTS' OWN TEXTS
Number	One city district's board policy says exactly this: a Social Security number may also be requested, but the request is voluntary and is not a condition of enrollment . Another district's enrollment guide does not mention a number at all
Missing documents	One district's enrollment guide states in capitals that no student may be denied enrollment or admission for failing to meet documentation requirements . The same document also says enrollment is provisional until the documents arrive
Birth certificate	One district writes that it does not require a birth certificate from first-time enrollees, and that a birth certificate or another acceptable document may be requested for age verification

TOPIC	FROM THE DISTRICTS' OWN TEXTS
Parent identification	One district names, as photo identification, a driver license, a state identification card, a passport and an identification card issued by an official government agency or a consulate
Migrant students	One district's policy states that homeless, migratory and immigrant students and children in foster care will have equal access to the same free appropriate public education and that enrollment may not be denied or delayed because of barriers prohibited by law ; the principal may accept alternative evidence
Address proof	This is where the real barrier is. Districts generally ask for a lease or deed plus a current utility bill , and may require the document to be in the name of the adult enrolling the child
Staying with a relative	Several districts require a separate shared residence affidavit , the host's bill and identification, and mail addressed to the parent at that address; one district requires a home visit by a school official
Residency rule	Some districts require residence inside the city limits ; one writes that it accepts no waiver and no tuition enrollment and requires proof to be renewed every year

We write the home visit item in a way that will not alarm you: it is not an investigation, it is the district's residency verification procedure. But you should prepare for it **knowingly**.

Immunization

Districts require a current **immunization record** at enrollment, or an **exemption certificate** issued by the state health agency. The record can be obtained from **county health departments**, a family physician or some clinics. **And this item is good news for the reader:** the statute's list of services requiring no verification **names immunization**.

LANGUAGE: TURKISH IS ON NO LIST, BUT THERE IS A RIGHT TO ASK FOR

- One district publishes its enrollment forms in **English and Spanish**.
- One district's English learner plan **names no language at all** and says only this: **if students or parents need an interpreter at enrollment, one will be provided if possible. We keep the words if possible exactly as written.**
- One district's list of translated languages **could not be found**, and **Turkish appears on none of them**.
- **The sentence to write is this:** not that Turkish service exists, but that **a right exists to ask for and this is the door**. Make the request **in writing**, and note who received it and when.
- Keep one detail in mind: **the state health agency publishes its language assistance notice in Turkish**. No such text was found on the school side, but that does not mean Turkish support cannot be requested from agencies.

What to carry on enrollment day

TO PREPARE	NOTE
☐ Address proof	A lease or deed plus a current utility bill . They may require the document to be in your name

TO PREPARE	NOTE
☐ Shared residence affidavit	If you are staying with a relative. The host's bill and identification, mail addressed to you at that address; in some districts a home visit
☐ Parent identification	One district names a passport and an identification card issued by a consulate in its own text
☐ Immunization record	From a county health department, a family physician or some clinics. The statute's exemption list names immunization
☐ Birth certificate or proof of age	One district also accepts another acceptable document ; where to obtain the certificate is set out in the moving checklist guide
☐ A written interpreter request	Turkish is on no district's list. Make the request in writing and note the date
☐ If a number is requested, remember this sentence	From one district's own policy: the request is voluntary and is not a condition of enrollment . If your district's policy differs, ask in writing



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