

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · ARIZONA

Enrolling a Child in School in Arizona: 2026 Guide

Status is treated as irrelevant and a foreign birth certificate is accepted, but a statutory 30-day clock runs on the identity document. Finding your district, residency proof, exemptions and language support.

SHORT ANSWER

Find the right door first: **there is no such thing as "the city's school district" in Arizona**. An address falls into an elementary district plus a high school district, or into a unified district, and a single city can contain more than twenty combinations. On the enrollment rules you have to **read two halves together**: the state education agency's guidance treats immigration status as **irrelevant** and says a school may not refuse enrollment over a foreign birth certificate, **but** the statute runs a **30-day** clock on the identity document and, if it expires, provides for the school to refer the case to local law enforcement. Reading one half without the other is misleading.

Find your district first

Schools in Arizona belong to neither the city nor the county: each is an **independent school district** with its own elected board. In Phoenix, there are more than twenty elementary districts and several high school districts inside the city limits, and the county's 2026 tax table shows **28 separate district combinations whose city is Phoenix**. So **this guide cannot give you one enrollment office address**; you first have to find which district your address falls into. The same district also determines most of your property tax bill, so the question answers two jobs at once while house-hunting. Compulsory-attendance and age rules are statewide: **school is compulsory from 6 to 16**, every school must admit children **aged 6 to 21** living within its boundaries, kindergarten starts at 5 and first grade at 6, and age is measured as of **September 1**.

The first half: status is irrelevant, a foreign birth certificate is accepted

- The state education agency's residency guidance for districts, in its own words: **"The undocumented or non-citizen status of a student (or his or her parent/guardian) is irrelevant to that student's entitlement to an elementary and secondary public education."**
- **"Inquiring into students' citizenship or immigration status, or that of their parents or guardians, is not relevant to establishing residency within the district."**
- **"A school district or charter school may not bar a student from enrolling because he or she lacks a birth certificate or has records indicating a foreign place of birth, such as a foreign birth certificate."**

And a **Social Security number is not among the required documents**. What the statute lists, as one of several alternatives to a birth certificate, is an *application* for a Social Security number. The agency also instructs districts that personally identifiable information other than name and address, **including a Social Security number and account numbers, should be redacted by the parent or the school official before the document is filed**, and that what a family gives the school is a confidential education record under federal law.

The second half: 30 days, 10 days, and a law enforcement referral

The same statute turns hard here, and we have to write it in full. Within **30 days** of first enrollment the family must provide a certified birth certificate **or** other reliable proof of the pupil's identity and age. The alternatives the statute lists are genuinely wide: **a baptismal certificate, an application for a Social Security number, original school registration records, and an affidavit explaining the inability to provide a copy of the birth certificate**. A photocopy goes in the file and **the original is handed back**. The basis is [A.R.S. 15-828](#).

If the deadline passes, the school must write to the family giving **ten more days**, and if compliance is not obtained within that period the school, in the statute's words, **shall refer the case to the local law enforcement agency**. The school must also **immediately** report to local law enforcement any affidavit that appears inaccurate or suspicious in form or content. **Read that correctly:** the referral is about the **identity document**, not about immigration status, and the list of acceptable alternatives really is wide. But the clock is a statutory one. For a family arriving mid-year from Türkiye with only a Turkish birth certificate, the practical answer is this: **a foreign birth certificate is expressly acceptable under the agency's own guidance**, so hand the document in within the first thirty days and ask for written confirmation that you did.

Residency proof: one document is enough, but a post office box is not

SITUATION	WHAT IS REQUIRED
An ordinary household	A single document carrying the parent's full name and a physical residential address; a post office box is not accepted . Accepted items: an Arizona driver license or ID card, Arizona vehicle registration, a deed or mortgage document, a property tax bill, a lease , a utility bill (water, electric, gas, cable, telephone), a bank or credit card statement, a W-2, a payroll stub, tribal enrollment documentation, or another document from a state, tribal or federal agency
Living in someone else's home	The agency expressly covers this, including multigenerational households . The parent completes an Affidavit of Shared Residency , and the person holding the home signs a notarized statement that the student lives there and provides a document in their own name. The agency publishes model forms for both situations. This is the document people most often get stuck on, so have it prepared in advance
A family experiencing homelessness	No residency document is required and the birth certificate rule does not apply
A military family	Ten days after arrival

Immunizations: Arizona allows a personal belief exemption

- As a rule a student may not attend without immunization records and a principal must **suspend** a student who has none. But there are three flexibilities.
- **One dose is enough to start:** a child may begin school having had **one dose** of each required immunization and bringing a written catch-up schedule from a physician, registered nurse practitioner or health agency. The school reviews the record at least twice a year until the series is complete.
- **A medical exemption:** on the written statement of a physician or registered nurse practitioner giving the condition and its probable duration.
- **A personal belief exemption:** on a statement signed by the parent confirming they received the health department's information, understand the risks, and do not consent because of personal beliefs. That is the opposite of some states in this series: Arizona still accepts the signed personal belief statement.
- **But know this before you decide:** an exempt or unimmunized child is **excluded from school during an outbreak** of a vaccine-preventable disease identified by the state or local health authority. Students experiencing homelessness get until the fifth calendar day after enrollment. The basis is [A.R.S. 15-873](#) and [A.R.S. 15-872](#).

Language support is delivered inside English, and one convenience: open enrollment

We cannot make a promise here, because the law points the other way. **Proposition 203**, approved by voters in November 2000, requires all public school students to be taught in **English language classrooms**, with English learners taught through **Structured English Immersion** during a transition period not normally intended to exceed one year. The daily minimum changed in 2019: **120 minutes a day in grades K-5 and 100 minutes in grades 6-12** of English language development. The state board adopted four models, one of them a fifty-fifty dual language model, but that is contested ground: the state superintendent of public instruction has said publicly that schools using that model violate state law and risk a loss of funding. **The Proposition 203 text was read from official-domain summaries and no statutory language was quoted. So do not expect bilingual instruction**, expect English language support inside an English language classroom. And **the research found no Arizona school district page listing Turkish as a translation service, a dual language program or a staffed language**; read that as what we did not find rather than as "none exists", and ask your own district. On the favorable side there is a genuinely useful rule: **mandatory open enrollment**. A student may apply to transfer to **any public school in the state**, inside or outside the district of residence, **to the extent there is capacity in the classroom**. No seat is promised, so get the application windows from your district.

TAKE THESE TO THE ENROLLMENT APPOINTMENT

- **Find out which school district your address falls into.** There is no single enrollment office in this guide and the same city holds dozens of districts.
- **A lease or a utility bill is enough**, but an address with a post office box is not accepted. If you live in someone else's home, have the notarized shared residency affidavit prepared in advance.
- A document showing the child's identity and age: **a Turkish birth certificate is accepted.** But **a statutory thirty-day clock runs**, with ten more days after it, and then the statute provides for the school to refer the case to local law enforcement. Hand the document in on time and ask for written confirmation.
- Immunization records, or one dose of each required immunization plus a written catch-up schedule. If you are considering an exemption, factor in the **exclusion rule during an outbreak.**
- Set your expectation on language correctly: **no Turkish support was found**, and machine translation inside a parent app is not a language service. Ask for an interpreter at enrollment and ask in writing which languages are provided.



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