

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · ILLINOIS

Illinois School Enrollment Guide 2026 (No SSN Needed, Immunization Deadline October 15)

Enrollment rules, documents, the immunization and health exam deadline, language support, and health coverage for children.

SHORT ANSWER

No SSN is needed to enroll a child in an Illinois school. Public Act 104-0288, effective January 1, 2026, writes into Illinois law that no child may be denied a free public education because of the child's or the parent's immigration status, and under the State Board of Education's August 2026 guidance districts must not inquire about it. You enroll in the district your address belongs to, and a student is entitled to enroll up to age 21. Immunization and health papers are due by October 15, or the child can be excluded.

Statewide rules

- **No SSN, no questions about status.** Under the State Board of Education (ISBE) guidance of August 2026, districts must not inquire about a student's or parent's immigration status. The residency documents a district requires, taken together, may not amount to proof of legal presence such as an SSN; a district may not demand a visa, a green card, an Illinois driver's license or state ID, and cannot insist on one particular document.
- **Your address decides the district.** Illinois has hundreds of separate districts, and your address, not your village, decides which one you belong to. Check with the ISBE school and district finder or on the district's own site.
- **Up to age 21.** The guidance recognizes free public education through grade 12 until age 21.
- **Students in temporary housing** (McKinney-Vento) can enroll immediately, without waiting for documents.

Enrolling step by step

- 1 **Find your district.**
- 2 **Get proof of age and identity ready.** A certified birth certificate is due within 30 days of enrollment; if you do not have one, alternative identification such as a passport, visa or government ID is accepted. A Turkish passport works for this.
- 3 **Bring proof of residency.** A lease, a bill; a district cannot insist on one particular document.
- 4 **Book the immunizations and health exam.** The deadline is October 15 (see below).

- 5 Fill out the home language survey.** Every student's first enrollment includes a Home Language Survey, and the answers decide whether your child takes the WIDA English proficiency screener. Turkish-speaking children are usually supported through a Transitional Program of Instruction. The State Board's multilingual department is at 312-814-3850.

Immunizations and health exam: October 15

THE DEADLINE

- Under state law (105 ILCS 5/27-8.1), proof of the required vaccines and a school physical are due by October 15 of the school year or the child can be excluded from school.
- A religious exemption certificate is also filed by October 15, and a medical exemption needs a clinician's letter.
- The required vaccines include DTP/Td, polio, MMR, hepatitis B, varicella, Hib for young children and meningococcal MCV4 in the older grades.
- You do not have to wait for the records to enroll, but October 15 is a real deadline. Book early.

Document checklist

DOCUMENT	NOTE
☐ Proof of age and identity	Certified birth certificate (within 30 days of enrolling); otherwise a passport, visa or government ID
☐ Proof of residency	A lease, a bill; no single document type can be insisted on
☐ Immunization records and school physical	Due by October 15
☐ Birth certificate and school records from Türkiye	Have English translations made up front; districts often ask
☐ Social Security card	Not required; districts may not ask about immigration status

A Chicago example

In Chicago Public Schools every K-12 student is entitled to a seat at their neighborhood school, with no application. Non-neighborhood schools go through GoCPS, and 3- and 4-year-olds through Chicago Early Learning. In Chicago the program for students in temporary housing is called STLS.

Health coverage for your child

- **All Kids:** anyone under 19 who lives in Illinois can enroll regardless of immigration status. HFS states that it does not report undocumented children and that All Kids does not count for public charge purposes except for long-term institutional care. All Kids unit 1-877-805-5312; apply at [ABE.illinois.gov](https://abe.illinois.gov) or 1-800-843-6154.

- **Pregnancy:** pregnant people are covered by Moms & Babies, including the 12 months after birth.
- **Adults have fewer options:** HBIA, the program for undocumented adults, closed on July 1, 2025, and enrollment into the senior program HBIS is paused. Speak to an immigration attorney before applying for any adult program.
- **Emergencies:** call 911 or go to the nearest ER; emergency departments must treat you regardless of insurance or immigration status.

YOUR RIGHTS AS AN IMMIGRANT FAMILY

- Under the Supreme Court's 1982 Plyler v. Doe decision, every child living in the U.S. can attend public school regardless of immigration status. Illinois has put that in its own statute through Public Act 104-0288.
- If a staff member insists on an SSN or immigration documents, show the State Board's [guidance on registration, residency and enrollment](#).
- Public Act 104-0288 also required schools to adopt, by July 1, 2026, a procedure for reviewing requests from law enforcement agents who want to enter a school. You can ask your school whether it has one.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN ILLINOIS

Have a question about your immigration status?

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