

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · INDIANA

Enrolling a Child in School in Indiana: Documents, Immunization and 2026

The state has put in writing the reasons for which enrollment may not be denied. The one real limit is immunization, and there enrollment and attendance come apart.

SHORT ANSWER

This is the clearest answer a family without a number gets in Indiana: **the state department of education has put in writing the reasons for which enrollment may not be denied**. Not having a Social Security card, not having proof of address, not having a birth certificate, not speaking English and being undocumented are **not grounds for refusal**; the memorandum cites a 1982 Supreme Court decision directly for one of them. **The one real limit is immunization**, and there you must separate two words: **enrollment must happen in every case, attendance need not**. If a child's immunizations are missing and the school does not grant the statutorily allowed **twenty-day waiver**, the child may not attend beyond the first day of school.

The reasons that cannot be used, from the department's own list

The memorandum the state department of education sent to principals over the signature of its state attendance officer lists, one by one, the cases in which a child's enrollment may not be denied. The ones that bear directly on a newly arrived Turkish family:

- **Not having rental receipts, a mortgage document, a driver license, a Social Security card, a lease agreement or other official identification.** The memo's own sentence: state law does not require **any document with an address** as a prerequisite to enrollment. A school may ask for documents to determine legal settlement, **but if the parent does not have documents or proof of residence, a child cannot be denied attendance for that reason alone**.
- **Not being a citizen of the country or the state.** A child who intends to remain in Indiana for **at least thirty days** must be in school, and the memo says enrollment must be **immediate, without regard to legal domicile**.
- **Being undocumented.** The memo states that children of undocumented aliens must be allowed to attend public school and grounds it in a Supreme Court decision.
- **Not speaking English.** Also written down, and also grounded in a Supreme Court decision.
- **Not having a birth certificate.** A school may require a first-time enrolling student to provide a certified copy of a birth certificate **or other reliable proof of date of birth**, but that is not a condition of enrollment: if it is not provided **within thirty days**, the school notifies the state clearinghouse for missing children. **That notification is routine, not an accusation**; the child is not removed. We say so explicitly so that it does not frighten a newly arrived family.

- **Not having a stable residence** (federal protection applies for homeless children), **moving during the year** (at the parent's choice the child may stay at the same school at least through the end of the term), **living with a relative** (a third-party custodial agreement may be accepted where a parent's signature cannot be obtained), **arriving late in the semester**, and **not having an individualized education program document** (the student must be enrolled immediately and provided services, with a committee convened within ten days).

THE ONE REAL LIMIT IS IMMUNIZATION, AND HERE YOU SEPARATE TWO WORDS

- The memo's own sentence: children must be enrolled in school **whether or not they have required immunizations**.
- But if they do not and the school refuses to grant the statutorily allowed **twenty-day waiver**, the child **may not attend beyond the first day of school**.
- **So enrollment and attendance are not the same thing** and we deliberately use separate words in this guide. Your right to enroll is not in question; whether your child sits in the classroom depends on the immunization side.
- **Practical consequence:** bring your child's immunization record with you from Türkiye and have it translated into English if you can. The Turkish schedule may not line up exactly with what Indiana requires; gaps are closed by talking to the school nurse, but leaving that to enrollment day delays the child's start.
- **We could not read Indiana's current immunization schedule from an official state source in this research**, so we reproduce no list here; ask your school district for it.

English language support: screening within thirty days

In Indiana a **home language survey** is completed once at enrollment and kept in the student's file. If a language other than English is indicated, the student is given a **placement screener**, and identification and placement must be completed **within thirty calendar days of enrollment**. If you move to another school within Indiana, the original survey follows the student. What this changes: **your child is not held back for not speaking English**, they are enrolled and screened for support. Fill in the survey carefully on enrollment day; leaving Turkish off it deprives your child of that support. Family resources are published on [the education department's own page](#).

WE WRITE OUT A TENSION AS IT STANDS

- School districts' own enrollment pages can ask for more than the state memo does. A concrete example: one district requires **a driver license showing your current address** for its residency check, and requires that address to match a second document. **For a newcomer whose Indiana license has not been issued yet, that is a real obstacle**, because the license itself depends on a lawful status document.
- Another district's enrollment letter for 2025 and 2026 says proof of Indiana residency must be collected for all students, which is the opposite of what the state memo says.
- **We take no side, but we state the hierarchy**: the state memo is the higher authority and it says plainly that a school may ask for documents, but a child may not be refused for lacking them.
- **Our advice**: take as many of the district's listed documents as you can, **but do not postpone enrollment over a missing one**. If you are refused, mention that you can take the matter to the department's state attendance officer; the memo was written for exactly these situations.

Find out which school district you are in, before you sign

In Indiana the city boundary and the school district boundary are not the same thing, and in the largest county that is a serious trap: **there are eleven separate school districts in that county**, and the city's own district covers only the old, pre-consolidation city limits; eight township districts and two town districts are separate units. So **having an address in that city does not mean your child attends the city's school district**. In small settlements the picture is simpler, but **legal settlement** still decides: if you live outside a district's boundary you may need to file a transfer application and wait for approval. **Find out which school district the house you are renting sits in before you sign the lease**. The city and the county merged; the schools did not.

Enrollment in most districts runs entirely online, which can be an obstacle for a newcomer without a computer or internet at home. We found a concrete solution in one small district: **it offers walk-in registration**, and in its own words a computer is provided for anyone who needs help or needs access to one, with school staff present to assist. **We did not find that option in the other districts**, but it is worth asking for; ask your own district the same question. If you need a computer and a printer, **a library card** is a second door, and no identification number is asked for there.

- 1 Settle the address and confirm the district** before you rent; the largest county has eleven separate districts.
- 2 Ask for your own district's document list**, but do not delay enrollment over a missing item on it.
- 3 Go to enrollment day with this bag**: the child's passport, a birth certificate and translation if you have them, the immunization record, any proof of address you hold and the previous school's report card if there is one.
- 4 Take the immunization side seriously**, because enrollment and attendance are two different things in Indiana and your child's first day depends on it.
- 5 Ask for the twenty-day waiver by name** and find out in writing whether it has been granted.
- 6 Write Turkish on the home language survey**; screening is completed within thirty days and it is a support door, not an obstacle.

- 7 If you are refused, raise the state attendance officer and ask for the answer in writing.
- 8 Keep the school meal assistance application separate from enrollment, and ask your attorney about the immigration side of public benefits before you decide anything.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN INDIANA

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