

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · MARYLAND

Maryland School Enrollment Guide 2026

Twenty-four countywide districts, the international admissions office, the 20-day immunization window, the shared-housing affidavit and your right to an interpreter.

SHORT ANSWER

Maryland school districts are **countywide**: there are 24, one per county plus Baltimore City, and there is no separate city district. Enrollment therefore runs through the county school system rather than your town, and the town name in your address does not change your district. For a family arriving from Türkiye the key distinction is this: **a child born outside the United States or schooled in another country goes to the district's international admissions office, not the neighborhood school**. The document list published by the county district we reviewed **mentions neither a Social Security number nor immigration status**.

The international admissions office comes first

For a child with foreign schooling, the first stop is not the neighborhood school. In Montgomery County that office is **International Admissions and Enrollment (IAE)**: Rocking Horse Road Center, 4910 Macon Road, Suite 147, Rockville, MD 20852, weekdays 8:00 to 16:00, phone **240-740-4500**, and **no appointment is needed**. The office verifies eligibility, meets the parent and student, reviews school records, **evaluates the foreign transcript and transfers high school credits**, sets the grade level and places the student in a school. For a family arriving with a Turkish high school transcript this is the single most consequential appointment of the move. There is also a separate category for students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE); for a child whose schooling was broken by migration that is a real category, so say so.

Step by step

- 1 Find your district by county.** Your district follows the county you live in; the town or city name in your address does not change it. You locate the neighborhood school from your address and go to the school registrar.
- 2 If there is foreign schooling, start at the international admissions office.** Bring the transcript, the diploma and any course descriptions, all with English translations.
- 3 Open an account on the parent portal.** Enrollment does not advance until the application is submitted; you upload the documents and a staff member reviews them for placement.
- 4 Be ready for the language screening.** If the home language survey calls for it, the family is invited for an in-person English screening: one-to-one with certified assessors, 45 to 90 minutes.
- 5 Call the assigned school and finish the enrollment.** Once results are sent, the enrollment closes at the school.

- 6 Book the immunization appointment before you enroll.** Required immunizations must be completed within 20 days of enrollment, and the clock starts at enrollment.

Document checklist

WHAT IS ASKED FOR	WHAT IS ACCEPTED
☐ Proof of age	A birth certificate; a passport ; a physician letter; a hospital record; notarized affidavits; a birth registration
☐ Identity of the enrolling adult	Photo ID of the legal parent or guardian: a license, a passport or another legal identity document
☐ Proof of relationship	A birth certificate naming the parent or guardian, a court order, a separation agreement or a divorce decree
☐ Residency, if you rent	A current lease . If it has expired or you do not hold the original, a lease extension with a current bill, or a lease addendum with a current bill
☐ Residency, if you own	A current property tax bill or a report from the state real property records search
☐ Residency, if you share housing	A notarized shared housing affidavit plus three documents showing you live at the address. The notarized form can count as one of the three; banks, utilities, government agencies, health care providers and community organizations are accepted sources
☐ Immunizations	The Maryland immunization certificate MDH-896 or a printed immunization record from a physician or clinic
☐ Health inventory	Required for students entering Maryland public schools for the first time or transferring from a private school
☐ Age eligibility	Age 5 by September 1 and not yet 21 on the first day of school

THE REAL OBSTACLE IS NOT STATUS, IT IS SHARED HOUSING

The document list published by the county district we reviewed **does not ask for a Social Security number and never asks about immigration status**. Under Plyler v. Doe (1982) every child living in the United States may attend free public school regardless of their own or their family's immigration status, and the district's list is consistent with that. The honest framing: the district does not publish an explicit statement that status is irrelevant, it simply does not ask. For a newly arrived family the real burden is staying with relatives: you need **a notarized affidavit plus three separate proofs of address**. From the day you arrive, start collecting mail in your own name, a bank statement and a letter from a health care provider.

Immunization rules

The state sets the list and the school enforces it. From kindergarten through grade 12 every student must show a complete primary series for **tetanus, diphtheria, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis B, varicella, meningococcal disease and Tdap**, with **two doses** of varicella from kindergarten through grade 12. Proof comes on the MDH-896 certificate or a printed immunization record. Exemptions are narrow: a

medical exemption approved by a physician, nurse practitioner or health officer, and a **religious** exemption based on the parent's bona fide religious beliefs and practices. There is no personal belief exemption. This is where Turkish families get stuck: the immunization card brought from Türkiye is accepted as a source, but the entries have to be transcribed onto the Maryland form by a physician or clinic. The official schedule we obtained was prepared for the 2025-2026 period, so confirm the line for your child's grade with your school.

Language support: do not expect written Turkish

A child is identified through the **home language survey** completed at enrollment; if the answers indicate a language other than English, the district must administer the statutorily required English proficiency assessment, and the result drives placement. The district we reviewed translates written material into **seven languages**: Amharic, French, Korean, Mandarin Chinese, Portuguese, Spanish and Vietnamese, with Arabic added to the languages spoken by parent support staff. **Turkish is on none of those lists.** What does help: the district's language services unit provides in-person, remote and **telephone interpretation**, and that service covers parent-teacher conferences, kindergarten orientation, **individualized education program (IEP) meetings**, special education assessments and **disciplinary meetings**. Ask the school office **by email** to arrange telephone interpretation before each meeting, so you have a record. Written translations are generally produced within 10 business days.

The library card is the easiest door in the state

If the paperwork is wearing you down, here is some good news. The county library card is **free at any age** and the documents it accepts are the most flexible list in this guide: **one photo ID and one proof of address**, and the accepted photo IDs explicitly include a **valid out-of-country passport**, so **a Turkish passport is accepted directly**. Accepted proofs of address include a residential lease, a utility or phone bill, a bank statement, a property tax bill, a vehicle registration and a check preprinted with your name and address. **A Social Security number is not asked for anywhere.** The card is open to anyone who lives, works or attends school in the county, and also to residents of all of Maryland, Washington DC and six Northern Virginia jurisdictions. For a child under 18 the accompanying adult's ID is enough, and teenagers aged 13 to 18 can get a card on their own photo ID without a parent present.

THREE THINGS TO PREPARE BEFORE YOU LEAVE TÜRKİYE

- **School records:** the transcript, the diploma and any course descriptions, all with English translations. The international admissions office transfers high school credits from these documents, so a missing record is a lost course.
- **The immunization card:** bring it, but know that a physician here has to transcribe it onto the Maryland form, and book that appointment before enrollment day.
- **Proof of address:** if you will stay with relatives, start getting mail in your own name from day one, open a bank account and register with a health care provider.

Enrollment, document and immunization requirements vary by county; confirm them on your own county district's page. Information as of October 6, 2026.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN MARYLAND

Have a question about your immigration status?

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