

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · NEW JERSEY STATE

New Jersey School Enrollment Guide 2026 (With Clifton and Paterson Examples)

Public school enrollment rules, documents, worked examples from Clifton and Paterson, and rights for immigrant families.

SHORT ANSWER

New Jersey regulation (N.J.A.C. 6A:22-3.4) bars school districts from requiring or requesting a Social Security number or immigration or citizenship status as a condition of enrollment, and bars denying enrollment for lack of one document type as long as other proof is offered. Each district runs its own enrollment process: Clifton Public Schools registers at the Clifton Welcome Center (745 Clifton Avenue) or online, and Paterson Public Schools registers at Central Registration (90 Delaware Avenue).

Rules that apply statewide

- **N.J.A.C. 6A:22-3.4:** districts cannot condition enrollment on an income tax return, immigration/citizenship/visa status, or a Social Security number. Instead, any one of a broad list of documents is accepted: a tax bill, a deed, a lease, a mortgage, a notarized landlord letter, voter registration, a driver's license, a bank statement, a utility bill, and more.
- A district "shall not deny enrollment based on failure to provide a particular form or subset of documents," as long as other proof is presented.
- New Jersey's Department of Education (NJDOE) reissues guidance to districts every August reminding them of this rule ("Ensuring Access to Public Education Regardless of Immigration Status").
- Homeless or unstably housed students (covered by McKinney-Vento) are enrolled immediately without standard documents.
- Families complete a Home Language Survey if a language other than English is spoken at home; those students take the WIDA ACCESS test every winter, with the state's exit threshold at 4.5 out of 6.0.
- Each district sets its own enrollment process, kindergarten age cutoff, and Pre-K eligibility.

Enrolling in Clifton Public Schools (an example)

To make the steps concrete, Clifton's process is summarized below; your own district's process may differ.

- 1 Online pre-registration is fastest: fridayparentportal.com/clifton/preregistration. For in-person registration, visit the **Clifton Welcome Center, 745 Clifton Avenue, Clifton, NJ 07013, (973) 458-6709** (school-year hours weekdays 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., walk-ins accepted until 3:00 p.m.).

- 2 Gather your documents: the child's birth certificate or passport (original), immunization records, a current physical exam form (Universal Child Health Record Form, within the last 365 days), and school transfer records if applicable.
- 3 Provide proof of residency: up to three documents from a broad list, such as a tax bill, a deed, a lease, a mortgage, a notarized landlord letter, a bank statement, or a utility bill. A Social Security number is not required.
- 4 After the online submission, upload your documents through the automated email link or drop them off at the Welcome Center.
- 5 For kindergarten, the child must be 5 years old on or before October 1.

Free Pre-K and bilingual programs in Clifton

Clifton Early Learner Academy (CELA) offers free full-day preschool to every Clifton child turning 3 or 4 by October 1, on a first-come, first-served basis. Three sites: CELA Brighton (290 Brighton Road), CELA Allwood (39 Allwood Road), and CELA Speer (37 Speer Avenue). A separate free program exists for children ages 3 to 5 with special needs, (973) 470-2286. The district serves over 1,400 Multilingual Learners speaking more than 50 home languages; School 13 runs a Turkish bilingual program, alongside Spanish, Ukrainian and Arabic programs.

Enrolling in Paterson Public Schools (an example)

For families living closer to Paterson, Central Registration is at **90 Delaware Avenue, Paterson, NJ 07503**, (973) 321-2501. Required documents include a transfer card from the previous school, immunization records and a physical exam, the most recent report card or transcript, two proofs of Paterson residency, a birth certificate, and custody documentation if applicable. Paterson serves over 9,000 Multilingual Learners across 30-plus languages and runs a dedicated Newcomers High School for students who are new to the U.S. with limited English proficiency. Call ahead to confirm current hours before visiting.

Document checklist (typical)

DOCUMENT	NOTES
☐ Child's birth certificate or passport	Original document, showing date of birth
☐ Immunization record	Signed by a doctor or clinic
☐ Physical exam form	Ask your district; Clifton requires one from the last 365 days
☐ Proof of residency	A few documents from a broad list, such as a lease, a utility bill or a tax bill; the number required varies by district
☐ School transfer records	Transcript or report card, if applicable
☐ Social Security card	Not required; no New Jersey school can ask for an SSN

YOUR RIGHTS AS AN IMMIGRANT FAMILY

- Under N.J.A.C. 6A:22-3.4, no New Jersey school district can require a Social Security number for enrollment or ask about your or your child's immigration or citizenship status.
- Missing documents do not block enrollment; you just need to provide some other proof.
- Homeless or unstably housed families can enroll their children immediately without standard documents.
- Have your child's Turkish vaccine record translated into English and reviewed by a U.S. doctor to avoid delays.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN NEW JERSEY

Have a question about your immigration status?

Attorney Asim Clinch serves clients across New Jersey, in Turkish and English. Free evaluation:

clinchlaw.com/free-evaluation · +1 866-491-7669

Office: 321 N Central Expy, Ste 206, McKinney, TX 75070

Attorney responsible for this guide: Asim Clinch, Esq., Clinch Law Firm P.C. Attorney Asim Clinch is a member of the Missouri Bar (No. 76084) and practices U.S. federal immigration law.

Attorney advertising. This guide is general information only. It is not legal advice and is not a substitute for the advice of an attorney. Information compiled from official sources as of September 25, 2026; fees and procedures change, so check the official site before you act. Reading this guide does not create an attorney-client relationship. The choice of a lawyer is an important decision and should not be based solely upon advertisements. Latest version: clinchlaw.com/city-guides/new-jersey-immigration-attorney