

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · NEW YORK STATE

New York State School Enrollment Guide 2026 (NYC DOE and Other Districts)

Enrollment rules from kindergarten to high school, documents, a New York City example, and rights for immigrant families.

SHORT ANSWER

Every child ages 5 to 21 in New York State has the right to free public education regardless of immigration status. Schools may not ask for an SSN or ask about immigration status. New York has hundreds of separate school districts; New York City's Department of Education (DOE) is by far the largest. School attendance is compulsory through age 16. A student is enrolled immediately even if documents are incomplete, with 3 days to provide proof of residency.

Rules that apply statewide

- **The right to enroll doesn't depend on status.** Under Plyler v. Doe, every child ages 5 to 21 living in New York can attend public school for free, regardless of immigration status.
- **An SSN cannot be required, period.** The New York State Education Department (NYSED) does not require districts to collect students' Social Security cards or numbers for any purpose, and schools are prohibited from requesting an SSN, or any information that would reveal immigration status, at enrollment. That's a stronger rule than Texas's "SSN is optional."
- **Enrollment happens immediately.** A student is enrolled right away even with incomplete documents, with 3 days to provide proof of residency. Homeless or newly arrived students are enrolled immediately even without immunization records, with 14 days to get the first dose.
- **School is compulsory through age 16.** Newly arrived youth past that age can still enroll full-time in high school if they want to.
- **There's no single statewide enrollment portal.** New York has hundreds of school districts, each running its own process. New York City's DOE, with over a million students, is by far the largest.

Enrolling in New York City (an example)

Because it's the largest district, NYC DOE's process is summarized below to make the steps concrete; your own district's process may differ.

- 1 Most K-8 students enroll directly at their "zoned school," based on their address; find yours at schoolsearch.schools.nyc or by calling 311.
- 2 If you don't have a zoned school, or need help, visit one of the Family Welcome Centers across the five boroughs (list below). Call 718-935-3500 for an appointment; online booking is temporarily disabled.

- 3 Complete the enrollment form; the student doesn't need to be present at all, and a parent doesn't need to be present either if the student is 18 or older or emancipated. Forms do not need to be notarized.
- 4 Set up a NYC Schools Account (myschools.nyc) to apply and track your child's progress from 2-K through 12th grade.

Family Welcome Centers (New York City)

BOROUGH	ADDRESS
Bronx	1 Fordham Plaza, 7th Floor, Bronx, NY 10458
Bronx	1230 Zerega Avenue, Room 24, Bronx, NY 10462
Brooklyn	1780 Ocean Avenue, 3rd Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11230
Brooklyn	415 89th Street, 5th Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11209
Brooklyn	1665 St. Mark's Avenue, Room 116, Brooklyn, NY 11233
Manhattan	333 Seventh Avenue, 12th Floor, Room 1211, New York, NY 10001
Manhattan	123 Morningside Drive, Room 235, New York, NY 10027
Queens	30-48 Linden Place, 2nd Floor, Flushing, NY 11354
Queens	90-27 Sutphin Boulevard, 1st Floor, Jamaica, NY 11435
Staten Island	365 Bay Street, Staten Island, NY 10301

Hours: Monday to Thursday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Friday 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Bring government-issued ID to enter any building. General help line: 718-935-2828.

Document checklist

DOCUMENT	NOTES
☐ Proof of the child's age	Birth certificate, passport, or baptism record
☐ Immunization record	If available; missing records do not block enrollment
☐ Most recent report card/transcript	If available
☐ Proof of address (2 documents)	Two documents from a broad approved list: a lease/deed, a utility bill, official government mail, and more
☐ Custody or guardianship documents	If applicable, issued within the last 60 days
☐ Social Security card	Not required; schools cannot ask for an SSN

3-K and Pre-K for All (New York City)

In New York City, 3-K (children born in 2023) and Pre-K (born in 2022) are free for every eligible child regardless of status or income. The 2026-27 main application round ran January 14 to February 27, 2026, with most offers sent in May. Check schools.nyc.gov for the next round.

Language support

Every family completes a Home Language Survey if a language other than English is spoken at home; the student is tested for English proficiency and placed, with parent involvement, in the right program (ESL or bilingual). NYC DOE has a dedicated Multilingual Learners section and a bill of rights for parents of English language learners.

Districts outside New York City

Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Yonkers and the many districts across Long Island and Westchester each run their own enrollment process. The statewide rules (status-blind enrollment, no SSN, compulsory attendance through age 16) apply everywhere; contact your own district directly for its specific document checklist.

YOUR RIGHTS AS AN IMMIGRANT FAMILY

- Under the 1982 Plyler v. Doe decision, every child living in New York can attend public school regardless of immigration status.
- Schools may not ask about your or your child's immigration status, and cannot require an SSN.
- Missing documents do not block enrollment; you're given time to provide them (3 days for proof of residency).
- Families who are homeless or lack stable housing (covered by McKinney-Vento) can enroll their children immediately even without immunization records.
- 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 YORK

Have a question about your immigration status?

Attorney Asim Clinch serves clients across New York State, in Turkish and English. Free evaluation: clinchlaw.com/free-evaluation · +1 866-491-7669

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