

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · VIRGINIA STATE

Virginia School Enrollment Guide 2026

Public school enrollment rules, rights for immigrant families, a free preschool program, and documents.

SHORT ANSWER

Virginia law (Code of Virginia § 22.1-287.03) explicitly bars every school division from requiring a student or parent to provide a Social Security number for enrollment. A separate section (§ 22.1-2.2) bars excluding a child from enrollment based on immigration or citizenship status, or requesting immigration documents except where state or federal law requires it; violating it carries a right to sue after 15 days' written notice to the school division. For kindergarten, a child must turn 5 by September 30. Each school division runs its own enrollment process; check your own county or city's page.

Rules that apply statewide

- **Code of Virginia § 22.1-287.03:** neither the Department of Education nor any local school board may require an enrolled student, a child receiving home instruction, or their parent, to provide a federal Social Security number. The state instead issues an SSN-independent student identification number.
- **Code of Virginia § 22.1-2.2:** no child may be denied free public education through secondary school based on their own or their parent's actual or perceived immigration or citizenship status; schools cannot deny enrollment, exclude a student from a program, or request immigration documentation on that basis, except where state or federal law requires it. Violating it carries a private right to sue (injunctive relief plus damages) after 15 days' written notice to the school division.
- **Code of Virginia § 22.1-3:** public school is free to every child who resides in the school division; enrollment is based on residency, not citizenship. Homeless or unstably housed children's enrollment is separately protected.
- These rules sit on top of the federal baseline set by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Plyler v. Doe* (1982), now written directly into Virginia law.
- **Kindergarten age:** a child must turn 5 by September 30.
- Each school division sets its own enrollment process, required documents and English-learner (WIDA) program; check your own county or city school division's official site for the current process.

Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI): free preschool

Virginia funds free preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds in families at or below 350% of the Federal Poverty Level. Several categories qualify regardless of income: children with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), homeless children, children in foster care, children of a teen parent, children of an incarcerated parent,

and children of a parent without a high school diploma. The program is run separately by each school division/locality; find your own area's VPI contact through the school division's site.

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; requirements vary by division
☐ Proof of residency	A lease, a utility bill or similar; number and type vary by division
☐ School transfer records	Transcript or report card, if applicable
☐ Social Security card	Not required; no Virginia school can require an SSN

Your rights as an immigrant family

WHAT TO KNOW

- Under Code of Virginia § 22.1-287.03, no Virginia school division can require a Social Security number for enrollment.
- Under Code of Virginia § 22.1-2.2, no school can deny enrollment by asking about your or your child's immigration or citizenship status, or by requesting immigration documents.
- Children in homeless or unstably housed families keep their right to enroll even without a fixed address.
- If these rights are violated, you have a right to sue after giving the school division 15 days' written notice; talk to an attorney.



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