



#190-22

Commonwealth of Virginia
Virginia Department of Education
Superintendent's Memo #190-22

DATE: August 26, 2022
TO: Division Superintendents
FROM: Jillian Balow, Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: **Coordinated Preschool Enrollment**

More than 90,000 kindergartners enter Virginia public school classrooms each fall. Many of these students have benefitted from quality early childhood experiences - through the Virginia Preschool Initiative(VPI), Head Start, Virginia Early Childhood Foundation(VECF) Mixed Delivery, private child care and/or family child care - that helped put them on track for success. Yet too many children still lack access to quality preschool, leading to higher numbers of kindergartners who start the school year without the foundational literacy, math, and social-emotional skills needed to be successful. This memo provides important strategies for school divisions to consider as they coordinate preschool enrollment to maximize access and choice.

Virginia's communities need to continue to ensure the maximization of enrollment slots across all early childhood programs, enabling families to access the early childhood option of their choice and ensure their child is prepared to be successful in school. Local communities are charged with implementing approaches to leverage funding opportunities across all programs.

Coordination Strategies Outlined in the Appropriations Act

All communities are expected to coordinate across preschool programs to make decisions regarding enrollment and assessing the local need for preschool programming. Historically, the Virginia Appropriations Act has required VPI and Head Start Programs to demonstrate coordination with all parties necessary for the successful delivery of comprehensive services, including the schools, child care providers, local social services agency, Head Start, local health department, and other groups identified by the lead agency.

Developing Memorandums of Understanding (MOU)

VPI programs continue to be required to develop and maintain a MOU with Head Start Programs and other early learning programs receiving federal funds to coordinate services, and preserve and maintain the maximization of federal funds locally. This MOU based on the early childhood requirements updated in the [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#) and the [Head Start Act of 2007](#) specifies provisions for this partnership that can include joint recruitment strategies, joint preschool applications, participation in Community Needs Assessments, coordinated staff training, and Head Start representation on the VPI Steering Committee. The purpose of the MOU is to model strong partnerships promoting coordination and linkages at the local level. It should address the needs of both parties and outline the level of commitment to continue to meet the needs of children and families in the communities it serves. This is described in [House Bill 5005 Item 145 C.14.b.2](#):

The proposal must demonstrate coordination with all parties necessary for the successful delivery of comprehensive services, including the schools, child care providers, local social services agency, Head Start, local health department, and other groups identified by the lead agency. The proposal must identify which entities were consulted and how the locality will ensure that federal funds are preserved and maximized including demonstrating compliance with Title I of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act to ensure that a Local Educational Agency receiving Title I funding coordinates with Head Start programs and other early learning programs receiving federal funds by developing Memorandums of Understanding with such agencies to coordinate services. The proposal must also demonstrate a plan for supporting inclusive practices for children with identified special needs.

Prioritizing Head Start Slots for Enrollment

VPI programs must continue to coordinate and collaborate with Head Start programs on enrollment activities. VPI four-year-old slots are allocated to address the number of eligible children served by Head Start. In the 2020-2022 Virginia Appropriation Act, the following language was added to describe this coordination in [House Bill 5005 Item 145 14.a.2](#):

These state funds and required local matching funds shall be used to provide programs for at-risk four-year-old children, which include quality preschool education, health services, social services, parental involvement and transportation. It shall be the policy of the Commonwealth that state funds and required local matching funds for the Virginia Preschool Initiative not be used for capital outlay, not be used to supplant any Head Start federal funds provided for local early education programs, and not be used until the local Head Start grantee certifies that all local Head Start slots are filled. Programs must provide full-day or half-day and, at least, school-year services.

Local Strategies for Coordinated Preschool Enrollment

For additional guidance and best practices on coordinating preschool enrollment, please review the [Coordinated Preschool Enrollment](#) webinar that was conducted on August 16, 2022.

Assessing Local Need and Local Eligibility Waiver Flexibilities

To provide additional flexibility in serving more at-risk children in communities, localities that can demonstrate that more than 15 percent of VPI slots are needed to meet the needs of children and families in their community may apply for a VPI Local Criteria Waiver. VPI programs with an approved waiver may fill a larger percentage of their slots using local at-risk criteria rather than income-based criteria. School divisions may complete an application through the VDOE's Single Sign-On Web System during the following application window.

- Fall application timeframe: September 1, 2022- October 15, 2022

Role of Ready Regions

The newly-established [Ready Regions Network](#) consists of nine regional lead offices, administered by VECF, and is tasked to coordinate family access to early childhood care and education services, implement the uniform measurement and improvement system, and support continuous quality improvement efforts. Starting this year, they will increase support for local efforts to increase coordination and strengthen enrollment systems.

For More Information

If you need additional information or have questions about the Head Start Program, please contact, Taundwa Jeffries, Director of the Head Start State Collaboration Office via email at Taundwa.Jeffries@doe.virginia.gov or by telephone at (804)921-2842. Any questions regarding the Virginia Preschool Initiative, please contact Tiffanie Meehling, Early Childhood Specialist for VPI Programs, via email at Tiffanie.Meehling@doe.virginia.gov or by telephone at (804) 225-3665.

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