



BACK TO SCHOOL: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

The following is an overview of the enrollment rules and is designed to address common issues faced by parents and relative caregivers.

Enrolling Your Child in School

Who can enroll my child?

A parent or any person having care or control of a child can enroll that child in school.

Where can my child attend school?

A child has a right to attend school in the school district where:

- (1) The child lives with a parent, guardian, or foster parent
OR
- (2) The child lives with a non-parent and:
 - ▶ The child is supported by that person as if he or she were their own child without receiving personal compensation or gain (NOTE: Public funds such as SSI, Aid to Families with Dependant Children or pre-adoptive payments do not count as “personal compensation”);
 - ▶ The non-parent intends that the child will live in their home all year long (not just during the school year); and
 - ▶ The non-parent submits a sworn statement (at the district’s request) to the School Board stating the first two requirements are met and that the non-parent will assume responsibility for the child with regard to school matters.

A child may also apply to attend a charter school outside the district where he or she lives.

When can my child attend school?

The school district **must** enroll the child within **5 business days** of receiving four required documents (see below). If a child is experiencing homelessness, the child has a right to enroll in school immediately and to remain in the same school she attended prior to becoming homeless and for the duration of homelessness.

If your enrolling school district asks the child’s old school for records, that district must send them within **10 business days**. **However, a delay in obtaining school records is not grounds for refusing to enroll a child or delaying attendance.**

What is the enrollment process?

- In order to enroll in school, your school district will require proof of the following, (known as “four in the door”):
 - AGE
 - Can be a birth certificate, notarized statement by the parent, etc.
 - TIP: try old school records if you have them
 - IMMUNIZATIONS
 - Can be oral assurance from old district or a doctor with records to follow later
 - RESIDENCY
 - Proof that you are a resident which may be a utility bill, government document, etc.
 - SWORN STATEMENT OF DISCIPLINARY RECORD
 - You can say “to the best of my knowledge” if not sure

- A school may also request that you complete a home language survey to identify your language needs and those of your child.

- Your school **CANNOT** require: CHILD’S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER; VISA/IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS; REASON FOR CHILD LIVING WITH YOU or COURT ORDER concerning the child’s placement or guardianship.

- Discipline can never be a reason to refuse to enroll a child promptly. Your school district cannot refuse to educate your child based on a disciplinary record or automatically place a youth in alternative education for disruptive youth upon return from a juvenile justice placement. However, if your child is currently expelled for a weapons offense from another district, a district may assign your child to an alternative placement for the duration of the expulsion.

- If you have problems enrolling a child in school, you can contact:

School Services Unit, Pa Department of Education
333 Market Street, Harrisburg, Pa 19126-0333
Monica Washington, mwashington@pa.gov or
717-783-6746 or send a fax to (717) 783-6802

Your district must respond to the PA Department of Education in 5 business days. If enrollment is denied, PDE’s Office of Chief Counsel may intervene to address the issue.

You may call the Education Law Center if you face enrollment barriers at 215-238-6970 or 412-258-2120.