

Universal Preschool 101 for Partners



Joint Initiatives
FOR YOUTH + FAMILIES

WHO IS JOINT INITIATIVES?

- Joint Initiatives for Youth + Families (JI) is a non-profit organization whose three primary programs offer a range of services for youth (birth-21) and their families, extending from a preventive focus to more intensive intervention services.
- Under the Foundations (early childhood) program, JI is the Local Coordinating Organization for the Colorado Universal Preschool Program (UPK), which is in its second year of implementation in Colorado.
- More information about Joint Initiatives can be found at Jointinitiatives.org.



Foundations is the early childhood program of Joint Initiatives for Youth + Families.



WHO IS JOINT INITIATIVES?

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Universal Preschool 101

WHO: The UPK program is for children who are in their year before kindergarten, using an October 1st cut-off date for eligibility.* For the 2025-2026 school year, children must be 4 years old by October 1, 2025, (but may not be 5 as these children are eligible for kindergarten).

WHAT: All children who meet the age qualification are eligible for a minimum of 15 hours per week of preschool (August through May), free of charge to the family. Some families are eligible for 30 hours per week free, depending upon factors that may be present in their home. Any additional preschool/childcare hours above their UPK hours are paid by the family at the provider's published rates.

WHERE: Licensed Child Care Centers, Family Child Care Homes, and School Districts have enrolled as UPK providers in El Paso County. There are over 210 UPK centers/homes within the county.

WHEN: UPK runs on a school-year schedule. Today, we are in the 2024-25 school year, which will end in May of 2025. Families can still register for the 2024-25 year up until April 2025. Registration for the 2025-26 UPK year begins on December 17, 2024, with the school year beginning in August 2025.

*Some school districts in El Paso County use a different cut-off date for kindergarten other than October 1st. Children living in those districts will be eligible for UPK based on that district's kindergarten eligibility date.

HOW DOES UPK WORK?

- Families with age-eligible children will set up an account at upk.colorado.gov and browse the UPK providers in their area that meet their specific needs (full day, half day, location, etc.)
- Families complete the application, answering a few simple questions, and enter into their application the providers and programs that they have chosen for their child, in order of preference. Families can choose up to 10 providers.
- If the child is already attending at a UPK provider, has a sibling who is attending, or is a child of an employee at that provider, the child has priority status. Their application will automatically be matched with a seat at that provider if the family wants to continue with that provider.
- If the family does not have priority status, they will go through a matching algorithm and will be offered a seat based on their lottery number. UPK is NOT a first come, first served program. The first algorithm will run on February 10, and the second on March 10.
- Direct enrollment follows beginning April 1, 2025.

HOW DOES UPK WORK?

- Families with CCCAP can also enroll in UPK and receive the benefit of both programs. These programs can stack on top of each other to provide for a full day for eligible families provided that the family chooses a provider that has a CCCAP contract and is a UPK provider.
- Military families who are utilizing Child Care Aware will need to contact CCA to determine if they can blend UPK with the CCA supplement. CCA is talking with families on a case-by-case basis to determine what will be most beneficial for the family.
- Three and four-year-old children with IEPs must complete an application through the UPK portal. Families will not be able to choose a location as the application will be directed to the family's home school district for placement. If the district does not offer the preschool hours that the family needs, they may decline to receive special education services through the district and choose another UPK provider, provided that the provider can meet that child's needs.

3 YEAR OLDS

- Three-year-old children without IEPs can contact their school district directly to determine if the school district provides free preschool for children who are two years away from kindergarten.
- School district contacts are available on the UPK family page at jointinitiatives.org.
- Any child who is not 4 by October 1, 2025, who applies in the UPK portal will be shown to be ineligible for UPK UNLESS they have an IEP.
- Please educate families who have children who are younger than four to consider UPK in the child's year before Kindergarten so that they are aware of the program and its benefits.

WE NEED YOUR HELP TO REACH FAMILIES!

Help us to reach families whom you see every day by letting them know about UPK!

- JI has flyers in both English and Spanish with a QR code that makes it easy for families to begin the registration process. JI can also provide the flyer electronically for your use in emails, newsletters, or on your website and can translate flyers into other languages as requested and if feasible.
- JI/UPK staff can attend a staff meeting - in person or virtually – to educate your staff who work with families on the basics of UPK.
- JI staff can attend family events that you hold to talk about UPK and assist families in registering.
- JI has a family UPK webpage that provides families with additional information about UPK to which you can direct them. The QR code to that webpage is also on the UPK flyer.
- Other ideas?

WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT?

To request fliers, to have JI/UPK staff attend an event, or to attend a meeting to educate staff, contact:

Karla Rivera Ramirez

719-960-7336

kriveraramirez@jointinitiatives.org

You can also email **UPK@jointinitiatives.org** or call **719.630.0927 (Option 4)**

- Family registration for the 2025-26 year begins on December 17 and continues through the 2025-26 school year.
- Pre-registration period is December 17 through February 3, 2025 (priority registration).
- The first matching round takes place on February 10.

Please help us reach eligible families so they can choose where they would like their child to attend!

Questions?



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