



Key Milestones for the 2026-2027 Program Year

Overview: This document outlines the key milestones for the 2026-2027 Colorado Universal Preschool program year, focusing on the provider program setup, family registration, pre-registration, and matching rounds. It also details processes for non-IEP direct enrollment and IEP direct placement.

Key Dates:

December 9, 2025: Family registration opens

December 9, 2025: Pre-registration window starts

February 16, 2026: First matching round

March 16, 2026: Second matching round

April 1, 2026: Direct enrollment starts

Key Terms:

Provider Program Setup Form (PSUF): A form that participating providers in the Colorado Universal Preschool (UPK) Program submit via the UPK Provider Portal to specify details about their program, such as the location, hours, and the number of UPK-funded seats they have available. It's a key step for providers to offer and adjust their UPK seats.

Local Coordinating Organization (LCO): A local community agency or organization, as identified in Colorado law (HB22-1295), responsible for supporting local access and equitable delivery of the Universal Preschool Program and other early childhood services. LCOs act as a liaison between families, providers, and the state, fostering partnerships and creating a locally supported plan for early childhood programs.

Continuity of Care (CoC): A priority placement factor in the UPK enrollment process that refers to a family requesting continued care for their child with a provider they are already attending or a program that is part of the UPK mixed-delivery system. This priority is addressed during the pre-registration application window.

Pre-registration application window: A specific period of time during which families can apply for UPK and receive priority placement with a provider based on certain criteria. These criteria include Continuity of



Care (CoC) (already attending the program), having a sibling attending the program, or being a child of an employee at the program.

Family Matching: The process used by the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) to assign children to UPK providers. It utilizes a mathematical algorithm, often referred to as the deferred acceptance algorithm (DAA), to match families with providers based on t

Non-IEP Direct Enrollment: The phase of the UPK enrollment process that follows the main matching rounds, during which families whose children do not have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) can enroll directly with a participating UPK provider, as long as the provider has open seats. This process typically continues until the end of the school year.

IEP Direct Placement: The enrollment process for children who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The student's Administrative Unit (AU) (often the local school district or BOCES) is responsible for determining the educational placement in accordance with the child's IEP and will place the student directly into the determined UPK program using the UPK system. Families with IEPs must still complete the UPK application.

Provider Seat & Program Setup Dates

October 10 - November 5, 2025, 11:59 pm	Providers submit program setup forms (PSUF) via the UPK Provider Portal . Forms submitted after November 5, after 11:59 pm, will be uploaded at the beginning of the new year (January 2026). Your Local Coordinating Organization (LCO) will contact you to confirm your submission and approve your PSUF. Please see the 26-27 Provider Program Setup Form Guide *Note: Three-year-old programs do not need a completed setup form (only school districts have a three-year-old program).
November 24 - December 5, 2025	Providers can add seats through the provider portal in preparation for the application opening and pre-registration. To remove seats, contact your LCO. If program changes are needed, submit those requests to your LCO, though the changes will not be updated in the portal until January 2026.
Feb 4 - Feb 11, 2026	Providers can add seats in preparation for the first matching round. To remove seats, contact your LCO.



Pre-Registration

December 9, 2025 - February 2, 2026	Pre-registration application window for families requesting Continuity of Care (CoC) placements, sibling attending, or child of an employee.
December 15, 2025 - February 2, 2026	Providers will receive matches each day for eligible family registrations and must accept or decline placements by February 2nd.
February 2-11, 2026	Families must accept pre-registration matches.
February 4 - Feb 11, 2026	Providers can add seats in preparation for the first matching round. If they need to remove seats, they must contact their LCO.

Family Matching

December 9, 2025 - February 2, 2026	Registration through upk.Colorado.gov opens for families.
February 16, 2026, by 5 pm	CDEC runs the first family-to-provider matching round.
February 18 - February 23, 2026	Providers review and accept or decline matches.
February 25 - March 6, 2026	Families notified of first round matches by 5 pm. Families must accept or decline by 11:59 pm on March 6.
February 25th - March 15th, 2026	Providers can add seats in preparation for the 2nd DAA. If you need to remove seats, reach out to your LCO.
March 16th, 2026, by 5 pm	CDEC runs the second family-to-provider matching round.
March 18 - March 23, 2026	Providers review and accept or decline matches.
March 24 - March 31, 2026	Families notified of second round matches. Families must accept or decline by 11:59 pm on March 31.



Direct Enrollment

December 9th, 2025, through the end of the 2026-27 school year	IEP: As soon as a family submits their application and is assigned to an AU, the AU can place the student into a program using the Program ID through the AU Portal. Families will accept matches as they happen throughout the school year, and providers will finish the enrollment process, moving students into Enrolled status.
April 1 until the end of the 2025-26 school year	Non-IEP: Families enroll directly through providers.

Resources:

[UPK Provider Portal](#)

[Find My Local Coordinating Organization \(LCO\)](#)

[26-27 Provider Program Setup Form Guide](#)

[Colorado Universal Preschool Help Desk](#)

[Provider Handbook](#)