

Frequently Asked Questions



Straight Answers for Parents

Why should I enroll my child in preschool?

Preschool can help children succeed in grade school – and in life. In fact, more than 85% of all brain development happens in the first 5 years of life. For a list of the “Top 10 Reasons to Enroll Your Child in Preschool,” please [click here now](#).

What’s happening with preschool in our area?

We’re working hard to increase the number of children who attend preschool in our service area, which includes all of Calhoun County, MI, plus Bellevue, Olivet and Union City.

Why is there a campaign to increase preschool enrollment?

Enrolling more children in preschool is a great way to benefit our entire community. That’s why the W.K. Kellogg Foundation is helping to fund this campaign. And now you can help. Almost 20% of local families that could qualify for free or low-cost preschool services aren’t using those benefits today. Please help us encourage those parents to apply today so their children can also have a great start on life.

What benefits are available to local parents?

You may qualify for up to \$7,250 in free tuition through Head Start or GSRP. Even if you didn’t qualify before, you may qualify now, thanks to the expanded income eligibility guidelines ([click here now](#) to learn more).

What age children are accepted into these programs?

Head Start and GSRP are designed for children ages 3-4. That’s usually the age group right before kindergarten. *Important Note:* Head Start also has other programs for younger children. Those other programs are not included in the information on this website. To learn more about Head Start for younger children, please call Community Action at (269) 965-7766 during regular business hours.



Will I qualify for free or low-cost tuition benefits?

You may qualify. The only way to find out is to submit your application. You could qualify for up to \$7,250 in free preschool tuition. *Now’s the time to find out!*

What’s changing about the application process?

We’re making it easier than ever to apply for preschool benefits. The improved process is faster, easier to understand and easier to complete. You can now apply online or using our mail-in application.

We’ve also created a special Peer Team to help parents just like you navigate the preschool enrollment process. ([Click here now](#) for a flyer with step-by-step instructions)

How much does it cost to apply for preschool tuition benefits?

Applying is totally free! Plus we offer you free help and free step-by-step instructions. To learn more, visit our website at www.MyChildNeedsPreschool.com or call our free help line at (269) 660-1606, ext. 6141 from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday - Friday. If you prefer, you can send an e-mail message to: info@MyChildNeedsPreschool.com.

How can I apply for free or low-cost tuition benefits?

You can apply in two easy ways:

Method #1 – Apply online quickly and easily at www.MyChildNeedsPreschool.com ([click here now](#)).

Method #2 – Apply using the [mail-in application form](#)

Remember: You only need to apply once. Please do **not** submit multiple applications because it will only slow down the process. Thank you for your cooperation!

(continued on next page)

What determines if I will qualify for free or low-cost preschool tuition benefits?

The biggest factor in determining who qualifies is household income. Click [here](#) now to read the latest income guidelines. Or call (269) 660-1606, ext. 6141 for help.

What's the difference between Head Start and GSRP?

Head Start and GSRP (Great Start Readiness Program) are two government-supported programs that provide free or low-cost preschool services for families, including eligible families in our local area. Here's a quick look at what they do and how they differ:

Head Start is a preschool program for parents that is funded by the federal government. It provides quality preschool services at various locations in our area for families that earn up to 100% of the federal poverty level in terms of annual income. Locally, Head Start is operated by Community Action.

GSRP (also known as Great Start Readiness Program) is a state-funded program for families who make up to 250% of the federal poverty level in terms of annual income. Locally, GSRP is administered by the Great Start to Readiness Program within the Calhoun County Intermediate School District.

Other important differences: **Head Start** is a comprehensive preschool program that also provides access to oral and physical health services, and social services. Every Head Start program has a health manager, often a nurse, to complete any missing components of the required physical exam. Head Start also conducts screenings and provides follow-up with nutrition, socialization, and mental health counseling. In contrast,

GSRP is a 4 day per week classroom-based experience which begins the third week of September and continues through mid-May. It helps to prepare children for kindergarten. At least 90% of children in GSRP programs across the county must live in families with income at or below 250% of the poverty level. GSRP help children get ready for school, increases attendance and reduces the number of children who repeat a grade by almost one-half. GSRP classrooms use the HighScope curriculum. Most of our GSRP classrooms are school day but a few part-day classrooms are available.

What preschool locations participate in Head Start and GSRP?

Click [here](#) for a *map and directory* of participating preschools.

Can single parents apply for free or low-cost preschool tuition benefits?

Yes! Absolutely. We want as many people as possible to enroll their children in preschool. It doesn't matter if you are married, divorced or single. We also do not discriminate based on race, ethnicity or national origin. Apply today to find out if you qualify for up to \$7,250 in preschool benefits!

What cities and towns are served by this program?

These programs serve families in all of Calhoun County, Michigan, plus Bellevue, Olivet and Union City.

I have trouble getting my children to preschool. How can you help?

We know that finding transportation can be a big obstacle to enrolling your child in preschool. That's why our new Peer Team members are trained to help you understand the various options available in our area. To send a message to our Peer Team, call (269) 753-2087 or send an e-mail to: info@MyChildNeedsPreschool.com.

What documents do I need to apply for preschool tuition benefits?

If you qualify for free or low-cost preschool tuition benefits, you'll be asked to provide a few simple documents about income level, residency, child's age and vaccinations for your child. For a complete list, please [click here now](#).

If I'm an immigrant (born in another country), can I still apply for preschool tuition benefits?

Yes. You can apply for free or low-cost preschool tuition.

To attend a Head Start or GSRP preschool, is my child required to be vaccinated? Where can I learn more?

Yes. Vaccinations are required by law for any child in a Head Start or GSRP program. [Click here now](#) for more information. Your local Public Health Department can help you make sure your child is properly immunized. Vaccinations are available at reduced cost or no cost for families in our area, depending on your income level.

Start by calling the Calhoun County Public Health Department today at (269) 969-6363 for assistance. Or you can [click here now to download an info sheet](#).

