

Enrollment

(How do I get my child into a public school in North Carolina?)

What is the difference between enrollment and assignment?

- **Enrollment** deals with which specific school *district* is responsible for educating eligible students.
 - State law establishes who has the legal right to enroll in particular school district.
- **Assignment** deals with how a district decides which specific *school* a child will be allowed to attend.
 - Local school districts have lots of authority to make decisions in this area.

Who can enroll in a North Carolina school?

- A child can enroll in a North Carolina school district if he or she:
 - a) is living in the attendance zone for that district:
 1. with a **parent or legal guardian**;
 2. in a **group home, foster home, or licensed facility**;
 3. with a **caregiver** because of specific, crisis situations, including abandonment, death or incarceration of a parent, abuse or neglect, military deployment, or natural disaster; or
 4. because he or she is **homeless**, including living in shelters, in campgrounds or motels, or doubled up with others due to financial or other related hardship.
 - These students receive special protections under a federal law called the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, including immediate enrollment, transportation, and other services to prevent interruption to their education.
 - b) is between the ages of 5 and 21, and has not yet obtained a high school diploma;
 - c) has not been convicted of a felony in adult criminal court; and
 - Children in *juvenile court* cannot be denied enrollment
 - Children who have been *charged* but not yet convicted of a felony cannot be denied enrollment
 - School district *may* enroll children with felony convictions, but are not required to do so.
 - Students with IEPs cannot be denied access to education based on a felony conviction
 - d) is not currently serving a long-term suspension (LTS) or expulsion
 - School district may enroll children with felony convictions, but are not required to.
 - Students with IEPs cannot be denied access to education based on an LTS or expulsion



GOLD STAR TIPS

If a child is denied enrollment due to a felony conviction or LTS, **determine if the child has or needs an IEP**. Students with IEPs are entitled to appropriate education even if LTSed or convicted of a felony. (See *Special Education overviews*)

Children denied enrollment due to a felony conviction or LTS/expulsion can **request readmission**

If a child might qualify as “homeless,” **request help from the district McKinney-Vento coordinator**

A student cannot be denied enrollment for *any* reason other than those listed above

Red flags during the enrollment process

A district can require documentation to prove **age**, **residence**, and **immunization**, but cannot do so in a way that discriminates against non-citizen students or requires more than the law does. Specifically, a school district cannot:

- Only accept a birth certificate as proof of age
- Request documentation of immigration status
- Refuse to immediately enroll a homeless student because of lack of documentation
- Require documentation of anything other than what is required for enrollment under State law
- Unreasonably delay enrollment after being provided all of the required documentation

Advocates for Children’s Services of Legal Aid of North Carolina
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You may want to contact a lawyer if your child’s enrollment is denied or unreasonably delayed.

