

## FY26 Voluntary Prekindergarten Implementation Checklist

During the 2024 legislative session, changes were made to voluntary prekindergarten [Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 142D.08](#) that will go into effect in for **the 2025-2026 school year, Fiscal Year (FY) 26**. The school readiness plus (SRP) program will end and these program seats have been renewed under a single public pre-k program, voluntary prekindergarten (VPK).

This document provides an overview of annual program requirements and deadlines for funded voluntary prekindergarten (VPK). View the [VPK/SRP homepage](#) and the [VPK/SRP Resources for Funded Programs webpage](#) for the most recent information about webinars, program finance, and guidance. The updated *VPK Program Implementation Manual* is posted and contains detailed information about each of the topics listed below. Contact [DCYF.VPK@state.mn.us](mailto:DCYF.VPK@state.mn.us) with any questions.

*Please note:* Programs are required to meet all statutory program requirements to receive VPK funding. This document is a month-by-month checklist to support implementation and reporting, but programs should review the full list of requirements on their signed Statement of Assurances that was submitted with the application.

### Ongoing

- ☐ **Contacts and Communication:** DCYF maintains a contact list with the superintendent, early childhood coordinator/program contact, and the business manager. If any of these contacts change, email [DCYF.VPK@state.mn.us](mailto:DCYF.VPK@state.mn.us) and have the district Site Verification Coordinator update [MDE-ORG](#).
- ☐ **Amendments to VPK Program Delivery:** Children may only be served at the sites listed within your annual allocation letter. Any program changes made to the original allocation must be approved through an amendment process with DCYF.
  - Contact June Reineke at [June.Reineke@state.mn.us](mailto:June.Reineke@state.mn.us) to initiate the amendment process.
  - *Note:* All amendment agreements must be renewed annually.
- ☐ **Assessment:** Ensure that all students are assessed in the fall spring (exit), and winter if possible (assessing in the winter is encouraged but not required).
  - View the [KEP webpage](#) for additional information about approved assessments.
- ☐ **Curriculum:** Programs must use curriculum aligned with the state early learning standards, and kindergarten through grade 3 academic standards. Instructional strategies must incorporate play-based learning to foster children's social and emotional development, cognitive development, physical and motor development, and language and literacy skills, including the native language and literacy skills of English learners, to the extent practicable.
  - View the list of aligned curricula on the [Parent Aware Resources webpage](#).
  - Monitor [READ Act Resources](#) for updates and information related to prekindergarten.
- ☐ **Screening:** Confirm that all children in a VPK-funded seat have completed an Early Childhood Screening within 90 calendar days of program enrollment.
  - View the [Early Childhood Screening webpage](#) for resources.
  - Contact [DCYF.ELS@state.mn.us](mailto:DCYF.ELS@state.mn.us) with questions.

- **Food Service:** As of July 1, 2023, The [Free School Meals for Kids Program](#) legislation provides the reimbursement for a free breakfast and lunch to students who receive meals through their school's participation in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP). Schools that participate in the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National School Lunch Program (NSLP) must now participate in the state funded Free School Meals Program. This includes VPK/SRP Programs. Please consult the [Free School Meals FAQ](#), for answers to your questions.

Schools should continue to collect Application for Educational Benefits forms to determine if a student qualifies for free or reduced-price meals. Applications for Educational Benefits are not needed to determine eligibility for students on the direct certification list. Forms and information are available on [Student Meal Applications](#). Send additional questions to [DCYF.VPK@state.mn.us](mailto:DCYF.VPK@state.mn.us).

## DCYF Data Reporting Systems and Requirements

- **MARSS:** Appropriately code all children in a VPK/SRP classroom in the Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS).
  - Review enrollment and MARSS coding to ensure that students funded with VPK/SRP are accurately reported. If a student leaves your program, select a new student to fill the VPK/SRP seat and code them in MARSS appropriately.
  - NEW for **FY25**-Students who are referred and qualify for early childhood special education (ECSE) services may be dually enrolled as a VPK and ECSE student in the MARSS system. For more information specific to dual enrollment review [Concurrent Enrollment VPK/EC Flow Chart](#) .
  - View the [MARSS Student Accounting webpage](#) and specifically the [Procedure 06 - VPK - Reporting Voluntary Prekindergarten Students](#) and [Procedure 06 - EC - Reporting Early Childhood Special Education Students](#) memos for details.
  - Attend scheduled MARSS webinars or contact [MARSS@state.mn.us](mailto:MARSS@state.mn.us) with questions.
- **UFARS:** Ensure revenue and expenses are coded in the Uniform Financial Accounting Reporting Standards (UFARS) system.
  - View the [VPK/SRP Resources for Funded Programs webpage](#) for [UFARS guidance](#).
  - Contact [MDE.UFARS-accounting@state.mn.us](mailto:MDE.UFARS-accounting@state.mn.us) with questions.
- **MCCC:** Enter all courses, including VPK and SRP courses, in the Minnesota Common Course Catalog (MCCC). If the VPK/SRP site is at an elementary school, preschool classrooms must be included with the data upload for that site.
  - View the [MCCC webpage](#) for deadlines, guidance, and to report courses.
  - Contact [MDE.MCCC@state.mn.us](mailto:MDE.MCCC@state.mn.us) with questions.
- **STAR:** Enter all VPK/SRP staff, both licensed and non-licensed, in the Staff Automated Reporting (STAR) system. STAR data is reported two times each year, in the fall and spring.
  - View the [STAR webpage](#) for details, timelines, and to report staff in the system.
  - Contact [STAR.PELSB@state.mn.us](mailto:STAR.PELSB@state.mn.us) with questions.
- **ECE Outcomes:** Upload child assessment data from your KEP assessment to Early Childhood Education (ECE) Outcomes using directions that are updated and shared via email annually. ECE Outcomes uses MDE's Education Identity and Access Management (EDIAM) Security System so that it is a secure way to submit student data to MDE.

- KEP assessment data for all rating periods is submitted once at the end of the school year (in June), and the deadline is June 30.
- Access the data reporting system, and the recommended rating period dates, via the [Early Childhood Education \(ECE\) Outcomes webpage](#).
- Contact [DCYF.VPK@state.mn.us](mailto:DCYF.VPK@state.mn.us) with questions.

## Monthly Actions

### July

- ☐ Determine your program's selection criteria for identifying children to fill VPK funded seats.
- ☐ Conduct outreach and connect with community partners to identify at-risk children.
- ☐ If you are in a mixed delivery partnership, finalize the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and/or contract. A copy of the signed MOU is collected as part of the *Beginning of the Year Program Implementation Survey* completed each September.

### August

- ☐ Recruit and enroll students for any remaining VPK classroom seats.
- ☐ Attend the *VPK Implementation Webinar* for the new school year.
- ☐ Collect **Application for Educational Benefits** forms to determine if a student qualifies for free or reduced-price meals. Forms and information are found on [Student Meal Applications](#).
- ☐ If your program needs to make adjustments to VPK seats as listed in your current fiscal year (FY) allocation notice OR if you had an amendment in the previous school year and would like to renew the amendment, [contact June Reineke](#) to discuss options.
- ☐ Assessments: Purchase your KEP assessments, set up the online system (rating periods are entered, all teachers/staff have access, and student data is entered), and ensure new teachers/staff receive training and support.
- ☐ Metered payments begin August 30 for VPK funded children.

### September

- ☐ Enter enrolled VPK students into MARSS.
- ☐ Complete the *VPK Beginning of the Year Program Implementation Survey* to provide DCYF with current information about your assessment, curriculum, and teacher observation tools. DCYF will send a link to the survey in late August.
- ☐ Communicate requirements/expectations about KEP assessments to teachers/staff ([required items](#), data collection periods, and documentation).
- ☐ Work with district data entry personnel to Insure the class size projection entered in the [Average Daily Membership Web Estimates \(ADMWE\) system](#) is accurate as all VPK application information is based on this number. ADMWE is the means by which districts and charter schools provide the department with their estimated Average Daily Membership (ADM) for three school years.

### October

- ☐ Complete MARSS data entry by October 1
- ☐ Complete collection of fall (entry) child assessment data using a KEP approved assessment for all children participating in classrooms with VPK funding.

## November

- ☐ In early November, ensure KEP assessment data has been entered for the fall rating period by all teachers for all students.

## December

- ☐ Breathe!!!

## January

- ☐ Complete the VPK application or program reporting materials.
  - Application/Reporting details and resources will be posted on the [VPK/SRP homepage](#).
  - Attend the VPK Application/Reporting Webinar(s) and Open Office Hours.
  - Applications or Reports are due by January 30 at 4:30 p.m.

## February

- ☐ DCYF will review applications for the upcoming school year and will contact programs if additional details or clarification is needed. Please submit requested information as soon as possible to ensure your application is complete.
- ☐ Complete collection of winter child assessment data using a KEP approved assessment for all children participating in classrooms with VPK/SRP funding. Ensure KEP assessment data has been entered for the winter rating period, if applicable, by all teachers for all students.

## March

- ☐ By March 1 (or closest Monday if the 1<sup>st</sup> falls on a weekend), DCYF will notify programs if their application for the upcoming school year is complete and meets the requirements for funding. **Note:** This notice just informs you that your application is complete. Funding decisions will be made and funding notifications will be sent after the spring legislative session has ended.

## April

- ☐ The reporting window for entering courses into MCCC opens. Enter all courses including VPK courses by August 15.

## May

- ☐ Complete collection of spring (exit) child assessment data using a KEP approved assessment for all children participating in classrooms with VPK funding. Ensure KEP assessment data has been entered for the spring rating period by all teachers for all students.
- ☐ Complete these VPK data requirements:
  - Upload child assessment data. If you have already submitted your fall and/or winter assessment data, upload your spring data. If you have not uploaded after each reporting period, upload all data.
  - Complete *Annual VPK Program Survey*.
  - Participate in the VPK Program and Documentation Review process, if requested.

## June

- ☐ Complete child assessment and *Annual Program Survey* submissions by June 30 (this includes components outlined in May).
- ☐ Celebrate a successful year!