

**NYS Office of Children and Family Services
Bureau of Early Childhood Services
Policy Statement**

ID Number: 00-3

Topic: Enrollment of Prekindergarten Children in School-age Child Care Programs

Modalities Impacted: School-age Child Care Programs

Applicable Regulations: Part 414

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Effective: 9-13-00

This policy statement is effective immediately and cancels all previous memos or statements on the topic.

Section 390 of Social Services Law limits the enrollment in School-age Child Care Programs (SACC) to children who are of school age. Office Regulations at 18 NYCRR Part 414.1(g)(2) defines a child as school-age when that child is enrolled in kindergarten or a higher grade. While attendance in kindergarten is not part of the Compulsory Education mandate set forth in Education Law, most children in New York State do attend kindergarten. Each child develops at his or her own pace, however. At age five, and sometimes age four, some children are ready for the rigors of attending school. These children are ready to function in the larger group size with a higher child to staff ratio. However, some children of the same age benefit from remaining in the smaller group with the lower child to staff ratio provided in a child care setting. Recognizing these differences in individual child development, the Bureau permits the admission of this same age group in all modalities of child care: day care center, family day care and group family day care where group sizes and ratios are low, and School-age Child Care Programs where the group size and ratio requirements are larger for the same age group. This accommodates the individual differences among children.

In recent years, the State Education Department has initiated two Prekindergarten programs. Both the Experimental Prekindergarten programs established in school districts in the 1970's, and the Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) programs established in 1997, allow school districts to establish programs for children of Prekindergarten age for

the purpose of preparing these children for school. These programs offer the benefits of early childhood education to all children in the year before they will attend kindergarten.

In recognition of the fact that children who benefit from Prekindergarten programs may also benefit (within limits) from School-age Child Care Programs, the Bureau of Early Childhood Services will allow, with limitations, the addition of Prekindergarten children into School-age Child Care Programs.

At issue is the fact that School-age Child Care Programs are not currently permitted to enroll Prekindergarten children. Given the rapid expansion of the Prekindergarten program and the reality of care needs of many of the families of children enrolled, it is important to evolve our policies in this area to balance these needs with the development and safety needs of children. Therefore, this policy will define the conditions under which the Bureau will permit a program to provide child care to children of preschool age in a School-age Child Care Program.

Prekindergarten programs, under State Education Department (SED) regulations may take a number of forms. It may be “imbedded” within a full day child day care program or it may be a stand-alone morning or afternoon program, similar to many traditional kindergarten programs, or finally, it may operate as a stand alone “full-day” school program, where the definition of full day is consistent with the regular school day (typically 8:30 a.m. till 3 p.m.) *This policy statement addresses issues that relate to before and after-hours programming associated with both partial-day (stand-alone) Prekindergarten programs and full day Prekindergarten classes operated by a school.* Programs that are operating within a child day care center are not effected by this policy. They have always, and will continue to be, required to operate in accordance with 18 NYCRR Part 418

The Bureau of Early Childhood Services outlines the following program requirements and modifications for the inclusion of Prekindergarten children into School Age Child Care Programs.

Supervision:

The Bureau will require that a School-age Child Care Program admitting Prekindergarten participants to its program adhere to the Day Care Center regulation levels set for staff to child ratios and group size. Age groups may be mixed in Prekindergarten; therefore, ratios and group size must be based on the age of the youngest Prekindergarten child in the group attending a School-age Child Care Program.

Guidelines for Staff to Child ratios are as follows:

<i>Age</i>	<i>Size of group</i>							
3 Years	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	21
<i>ratio</i>	1:7	1:7	1:7	1:7	1:6	1:6	X	X

<i>Age</i>	<i>Size of group</i>							
4 Years	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	21
<i>ratio</i>	1:8	1:8	1:8	1:8	1:8	1:7	1:7	1:7

<i>Age</i>	<i>Size of group</i>								
5 Years	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	21	24
<i>ratio</i>	1:9	1:9	1:9	1:9	1:9	1:9	1:8	1:8	1:8

Staffing Qualifications

For School-age Child Care Program employees working with Prekindergarten children to understand the developmental level of these children in this age group and have experience or knowledge of their programming requirements, the Bureau requires that the staff caring for Prekindergarten children adhere to the Day Care Center staffing qualifications regulations [418.14 (e)].

Program Structure:

The School-age Child Care program must demonstrate that Prekindergarten children will have distinct space and program activities, which are appropriate to their age and development. Rooms or areas must contain age appropriate equipment, supplies and materials.

It is permissible to merge Kindergarten and Prekindergarten children into a single group, presuming there is an adequate staff to child ratio and group size. However, there must be distinct space and programming for Prekindergarten/Kindergarten groups separate from older school age children. Program plans for this age group must be submitted to the licensor/registrar for review.

For safety reasons, Prekindergarten children participating in School-age Child Care Programs may not be mixed with children any older than the Kindergarten class on the playground or in gym games. The above set forth ratios for staff to child supervision

must be maintained in all areas of the program including outside playgrounds and gymnasium areas.

Allowable Hours of Attendance:

Prekindergarten students, enrolled in a half-day session, must be limited to attending just one of the “wrap-around” time frames. For example: a child attending Prekindergarten classes in the morning may also attend the before-school program, similarly a child attending the afternoon Prekindergarten program may continue in the after-school day care program. Longer attendance hours would not be permitted by this modality of care for this age group. With the exception of holidays and short vacation periods, this policy would prohibit “all day” attendance timeframes for Prekindergarten children. It is the Bureau’s position that longer time periods (in SACC) than those explained above as “wrap around” are best served by attendance in a child day care center specifically designed for full day care if the parent is not available.

The exception to the above rule would be the following: a school district operating a Prekindergarten program with a schedule concurrent with its full regular elementary school day would be permitted to enroll children from the full day program into both the before-school and after-school *School Age Child Care* programs.

Children enrolled in either half day or full day Prekindergarten may attend School-age Child Care Programs during short vacation periods, holidays and snow days. On these days, it is permissible for the Prekindergarten child to be in attendance for the full time of program operation. Prekindergarten children may **not** attend School-age Child Care Programs during the summer vacation.

Requirement and Notification

School-age Child Care Programs admitting Pre-kindergarten students must be in compliance with all other regulations pursuant to 18 NYCRR Part 414. In addition, School-age Child Care Programs considering admission of Prekindergarten children must request a formal waiver from the Regional Office. Regional Office procedure for waiver reviews remains the same. Prekindergarten children may not be enrolled until such a waiver is granted.

APPROVED BY:

[x] Suzanne Zafonte Sennett

Date: 9-13-00