

Your Question:

How many states have universal (as opposed to income-eligibility based) pre-K programs?

Our Response:

Universal pre-K is [defined by two criteria](#) – eligibility defined only by age and an intent to enroll all children (i.e., providing sufficient funding and requiring all districts to offer programming). By this definition, only three states and the District of Columbia administer programs that can be considered universal.

Universal Pre-K Programs

State	Percentage of 4-year-olds enrolled	Percentage of school districts that offer program
District of Columbia	87	100
Florida	75	100
Oklahoma	76	99
Vermont	78	100

An additional nine states have universal eligibility policies that are open to all — regardless of income or family characteristics — and serve a significant portion of the 4-year-old population but are not necessarily available to all eligible students. The table below lists the states and program coverage. In states operating multiple programs, only programs with universal eligibility policies are noted. Please note that some states with universal eligibility policies may also allow local programs to target eligibility criteria based on community needs.

Universal Eligibility Programs

State	Percentage of 4-year-olds enrolled	Percentage of school districts that offer program
Alabama	32	100
California Transitional Kindergarten	21	100
Georgia	60	100
Iowa Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program	64	98
New Jersey Abbott Preschool Program	25	19
New Mexico	38	79
New York	54	71
West Virginia	59	100
Wisconsin	72	99

This information is based on the most recent data collected by the [National Institute for Early Education Research](#).

Additional Resources

- [How States Fund Pre-K: A Primer for Policymakers](#) – Education Commission of the States, 2018.
- [How Much Can High-Quality Universal Pre-K Reduce Achievement Gaps?](#) – Center for American Progress, 2016.
- [Approaches to State Pre-K Eligibility Policy](#) – Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes, 2015.