

July 25, 2017

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:

SUBJECT: Free Prekindergarten: Star of Texas Award Eligibility Criterion

During the 85th legislative session, an additional prekindergarten eligibility criteria was created to provide free public prekindergarten to children of peace officers, firefighters and first responders who have demonstrated remarkable courage and heroism in serving and protecting their communities throughout the state.

Free Public Three- and Four-Year-Old Prekindergarten

In 2017, the Texas Legislature amended via House Bill 357 [Section 29.153](#) of the Texas Education Code (TEC) to include among those who are eligible for free public prekindergarten, a child of a person eligible for the Star of Texas Awards. House Bill 357 was signed by Governor Abbott on June 15, 2017 and is effective immediately.

Summary of Prekindergarten Eligibility for Certain Children:

A child is eligible for free prekindergarten if they are four years old on or before September 1 of the current school year and meets one of the seven criteria listed below. A district may offer (but is not required to offer) a three-year-old program to eligible children, and the same criteria would apply. Age is always calculated as of September 1, of the current school year (for purposes of establishing eligibility). Therefore, a child is eligible for enrollment in prekindergarten if at least three years of age and:

1. is unable to speak and comprehend the English language;
2. is educationally disadvantaged (which means a student who is eligible to participate in the national free or reduced-price lunch program);
3. is homeless;
4. is the child of an active duty member of the armed forces of the United States;
5. is the child of a member of the armed forces who was injured or killed while on active duty;
6. is or ever has been in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services (foster care) following an adversary hearing held as provided by Section 262.201, Family Code; or
7. is the child of a person eligible for the Star of Texas Award as:
 - a. a peace officer under Section 3106.002, Government Code;
 - b. a firefighter under Section 3106.003, Government Code; or
 - c. an emergency medical first responder under Section 3106.004, Government Code.

The Office of the Governor, Criminal Justice Division honors recipients annually in September. The resolution (certificate) awarded to an individual serves as proof of eligibility to enroll these children in free prekindergarten if they are age-eligible. A list of past honorees may be viewed on the [Criminal Justice Division—Past Honorees webpage](#). If an individual has a prekindergarten-aged child and has been nominated, but not notified as an honoree prior to the current school year, an individual may make a request to the Office of Early Childhood Education to make an eligibility determination based on the nomination submitted for review to the Criminal Justice Division.

If you have additional policy questions, please contact Howard Morrison in the Office of Early Childhood Education at Howard.Morrison@tea.texas.gov.

Sincerely,

Marnie Glaser
Executive Director of Early Childhood Education
Academics Division