

Planning Ahead for Pre-K: Funding Options, Eligibility, and Next Steps

Pre-K Funding Options You May Hear About

There are **two separate funding options** that may apply to some families. Each has different eligibility requirements, and families may qualify for **one, both, or neither**, depending on their circumstances.

1. Education Savings Accounts/Texas Education Freedom Act (ESA / TEFA)

Education Savings Accounts (ESAs), sometimes referred to as TEFA, are a **state-funded program** that provides families with funding to help cover private school tuition and certain educational expenses.

Important things to know:

- Families apply **directly through the State of Texas**
- Eligibility and funding decisions are made by the state, not UTCDC
- Participation is completely optional

Who may qualify:

When applications exceed available funding, the state prioritizes families in the following order:

Tier 1 (Children with Disabilities)

- Approximate Household Income Range: \leq ~\$160,750
- Highest priority.
- Must have an IEP

Tier 2 (Low Income)

- Approximate Household Income Range: \leq ~\$64,300
- Strong priority

Tier 3 (Moderate Income)

- Approximate Household Income Range: ~ \$64,300–\$160,750

Tier 4 (Higher Income)

- Approximate Household Income Range: \geq ~\$160,750
- Eligible, but limited to 20 % of funding

Families who would otherwise pay tuition for Pre-K may still be eligible, depending on state criteria. The first year will likely be the easiest to receive funding as fewer people are aware of the program.

Applications are expected to open in **early February**.

More information and registration details are available here:

 <https://educationfreedom.texas.gov/>

2. AISD–UTCDC Pre-K Partnership

UTCDC is also implementing a Pre-K partnership with Austin ISD that allows **eligible families** to attend UTCDC Pre-K with **AISD funding support**, while remaining in UTCDC classrooms with UTCDC teachers.

Who qualifies:

Eligibility is determined by AISD and may include factors such as income eligibility, language status, foster care, homelessness, military status, or other state-defined criteria. Families DO NOT need to reside in the AISD area to qualify for this program; registration would be handled as an inter-district transfer.

Important clarification:

Families applying for **tuition-based public Pre-K** would **not** be eligible to use the AISD–UTCDC Pre-K partnership. However, they may still qualify for ESA funds.

Important Information About What Funding Covers

For both ESA funding and AISD Pre-K funding:

- Funding covers **only the public-school day and school year**, approximately **9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.**
- Funding does **not** cover early care, after care, school breaks, or summer programming
- Families who need care outside the public-school day/year may enroll in:
 - **Early/Late Care and School Break care** at a flat rate to be announced in late spring. These rates will be aligned with what families would typically expect to pay for these services in similar area programs.
 - **Summer Care** at regular UTCDC tuition rates
 - Families with a CCS award would continue to use their award to cover these costs

What's Coming Next

- **Parent Input Form (due February 13th):** We'll be asking families to share their anticipated plans for the upcoming school year to help us plan staffing and classrooms.
- **Pre-K Information Session (Feb. 12th @ 12pm via Zoom):** Families will be invited to meet our Pre-K teachers, learn more about our curriculum, and hear how our program supports kindergarten readiness. ***This will be the venue to ask questions about ESA and PreK funding sources.***