



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

# DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: August 7, 2024  
To: Local Educational Agency Leads  
Route To: Principals, LEA Registrars, School Nurses, all Staff Involved in the Student Enrollment Process  
From: Kathy Ehling, Assistant Commissioner  
Division of Educational Services

## Enrollment of Students Based Upon Immigration Status

This memorandum is to ensure that all local education agency (LEA) personnel are aware of federal and state laws that prohibit denying the enrollment of students in public schools based on immigration status. In [Plyler v. Doe](#), 457 US 202 (1982), the United States Supreme Court held that undocumented children living in the United States could not be excluded from public elementary and secondary schools based on their immigration status. The [United States Department of Education's \(USED\) September 6, 2023 letter to Chief State School Officers](#) affirms that school districts are prohibited from requiring students to disclose or document their immigration status, making inquiries of students or parents that may expose their undocumented status, or engaging in any practices that hinder the right of access to public schools.

New Jersey Administrative Code ([N.J.A.C. 6A:22-3.3](#)) prohibits the barring of any student from public elementary and secondary schools based on immigration/visa status, except for students on F-1 visas. Districts should continue to enroll all students between the ages of 5 and 20 who are domiciled in the district or who are otherwise entitled to attend pursuant to [N.J.S.A. 18A:38-1](#) and its implementing regulations, [N.J.A.C. 6A:22-3.2](#), *et. seq.*

Additionally, [N.J.A.C. 6A:22-3.4](#) prohibits school districts from making enrollment contingent upon the receipt of information or documentation. Such prohibited documents include, but are not limited to, power of attorney/guardianship documents; income tax returns; documentation or information relating to citizenship or immigration status; and social security cards. When enrolling students, a school district may request verification of residency; **however, the district cannot deny enrollment based on a failure to present a particular form.** Further, when requesting documentation of a student's age, school districts may not prohibit enrollment if the parent/guardian cannot present a birth certificate or a foreign birth certificate.

The USED Office of Civil Rights and the United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division issued [examples of acceptable enrollment policies](#), such as requesting proof of residency in the school district, as well as policies that may not be used by schools to deny enrollment to any child.

### Distinguishing Between Immigrant and Migrant Students

It is important to note that immigrant does not necessarily mean migrant.

*Immigrant:* Under [Section 3201 of the Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#), the term "immigrant children and youth" means individuals who: (a) are aged 3 through 21; (b) were not born in any State; and (c) have not been attending one or more schools in any one or more States for more than 3 full academic years.

*Migrant:* As defined under [ESSA Section 1309\(2\)](#), a migrant student is a student who: (a) is 21 years of age or younger; (b) is, or whose parent/guardian is, a migratory fisher, dairy worker, lumber, or agricultural worker; and, (c) in the preceding three years has moved from one school district to another in order for the worker to obtain temporary or seasonal employment in agricultural or fishing work. Note: A [National Certificate of Eligibility \(COE\)](#), an official record of eligibility determination for migrant students, must be on file in the district verifying the student's migrant status. A young adult may also qualify as a migrant student if he/she has moved on his/her own for the same reasons. Any child or youth may be a migrant student independent of their nationality, ethnicity, or race.

## **Unaccompanied Immigrant Children and Records**

Children who enter the United States unaccompanied by a parent or guardian are placed in a short-term shelter operated by the Administration for Children and Families Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Unaccompanied children are issued Verification of Release (VOR) forms and identification cards when they are discharged from ORR care and unified with their vetted sponsor. Schools should accept ORR's VOR form or card if an unaccompanied child or their sponsor voluntarily presents it to establish proof of district residency and/or age for purposes of school enrollment.

Additionally, written requests for a copy of a child's immunization record can be emailed to [Requests.DUCS@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:Requests.DUCS@acf.hhs.gov). For more information regarding immunization records for all students see the following: [N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.2\(a\)](#), [N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.3\(b\)3v](#), [N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.2\(l\)4](#), [N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.2\(g\)](#), and [N.J.A.C. 8:57-4.1-24](#). The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) has provided additional guidance that any person can translate a foreign immunization record as long as compliance with New Jersey's immunization requirements can be determined. The NJDOH does not require the translation to come from a healthcare provider; however, all translations must include the printed name and signature of the translator. Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control provides a resource webpage to assist with determining foreign vaccines. To assist parents and school districts in identifying available supports for translation services, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) has created a [Translation Services](#) resource with a list of entities in each county that provide translation services at little or no cost.

More information on unaccompanied children can be found in the United States Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights [Fact Sheet](#). Additionally, information regarding [New Jersey's Migrant Education Program](#) can also be found on the NJDOE website.

For further information on the enrollment of immigrant students, contact your [Executive County Superintendent of Schools](#) or the Office of Supplemental Educational Programs at [ML@doe.nj.gov](mailto:ML@doe.nj.gov) or for clarification on school health requirements, contact the Office of Student Support Services at [healthyschools@doe.nj.gov](mailto:healthyschools@doe.nj.gov).

c: Members, State Board of Education  
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