



# Department of Human Service Programs

*Ellen Semonoff, Assistant City Manager*

City of Cambridge  
51 Inman Street  
Cambridge, MA 02139-1102  
askdhsp@cambridgema.gov

voice: 617-349-6200  
tty: 617-492-0235  
fax: 617-349-6248

Dear Families,

Thank you for your patience while we reviewed our current Preschool waitlist and enrollment policies and procedures. We have received feedback over the years about how difficult and confusing the waitlist and enrollment process can be for families and we take that feedback very seriously.

As a City program, we have a responsibility to ensure that we have equitable opportunities for all Cambridge families to enroll in our Preschools. We found that families who did not know that they could apply and be put on a waitlist when their child turned one year old were at a disadvantage. We also often heard from families that being on a very long waitlist, with little certainty about when or if your child might actually get a preschool slot was very challenging.

After careful consideration, we have decided to honor the existing waitlist for the next two years, out of fairness to the families and children who enrolled under the waitlist process. We will not be adding any additional names to the waitlist because we have enough children on the current list to fill all openings. Since we contacted all families to update information and confirm interest in remaining on the waitlist, the list has been significantly shortened.

Starting in September 2019, we will accept applications from any interested family whose children would be eligible to start preschool in September 2020. We will use a lottery process to determine who will be placed in a DHSP program and families will be notified at least six months in advance – giving them more time to find an alternate preschool if they do not get into a DHSP program.

## **What Families Need to Know**

Children who will turn 2.9 – 4 years old before **September 2018** and are currently on our waitlist

- We will process applications and make placements from our existing waitlist and enrollment process.

Children who will turn 2.9 – 4 years old before **September 2019** and are currently on our waitlist

- We will process applications and make placements from our existing waitlist and enrollment process.
- In the fall of 2019, we will be adding an additional 17 seats in our Preschools and we will be filling those seats citywide with children who qualify for financial assistance.

Children who will turn 2.9 – 4 years old before **September 2020** and Going Forward:

- You do not need to submit an application until September 2019
- DHSP will hold a lottery in the fall of 2019 and every fall moving forward.

- Our lottery system will be designed to ensure equitable opportunities for Cambridge families to enroll in our Preschools.
- All Cambridge children with birthdays between January 1, 2018 and April 1, 2016 will be considered eligible for the 2019 lottery for September 2020 enrollment.
- You will be notified in early winter, giving you time to make plans based on whether or not your child is accepted into the program.

As always, financial assistance will be available based on income. Increased outreach for these programs will be conducted to ensure that eligible families are aware of the programs and how to participate in the lottery.

In the past, many families did not know if their child had a seat in one of our programs until right before their child could begin. We hope that providing more notice will help children transition to preschool and will ease some of the stress for families of not knowing the enrollment status of their child. We believe the changes we are making to our enrollment process will help us to create more equitable opportunities to better serve Cambridge families.

Sincerely,

Meghan M. White  
Division Head  
Childcare and Family Support  
[meghanm@cambridgema.gov](mailto:meghanm@cambridgema.gov)  
617-349-6218  
[www.cambridgema.gov/DHSP](http://www.cambridgema.gov/DHSP)