

# CAMBRIDGE

Preschool Program



# Cambridge Preschool Program Family Guide

Est. 2023





# Welcome to the Cambridge Preschool Program!

---

*We are thrilled that your preschooler and family will be joining us for the 2025-2026 school year!*

We are committed to providing a high-quality experience for your family, from application, enrollment, and placement to a warm handoff to your preschool provider. This guide provides information about how to navigate the application process.

---

## What's in this guide?

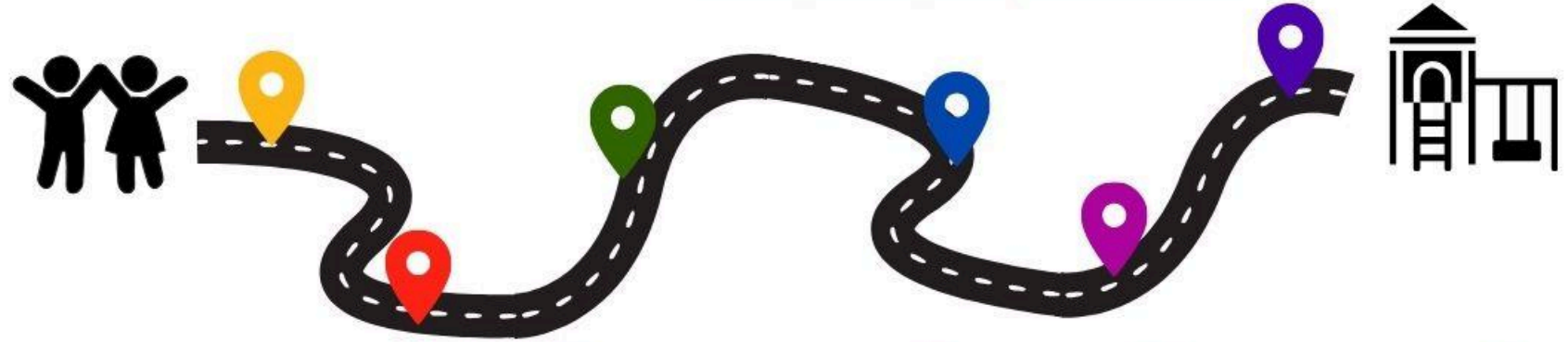
### Cambridge Preschool Program Enrollment Roadmap

- [Cambridge Preschool Program Eligibility Criteria](#)
- [Timeline for CPP Application and Enrollment](#)
- [CPP Application Platform](#)
- [Preparing to apply to the Cambridge Preschool Program](#)
- [Applying to CPP](#)
  - [Required documents](#)
  - [Language Immersion Testing for Cambridge Public Schools](#)
  - [CPP Application Support](#)
- [What happens once my CPP Application is complete?: Matching & Notification](#)
- [Accept/Decline CPP Placement](#)

- [Enrollment in a CPP Partner Program](#)
- [Students with an identified special need, or a developmental concern](#)
- [Things to consider with the different programs in the CPP mixed delivery system](#)
  - [CPP Affiliate Programs](#)
  - [Cambridge Public Schools \(CPS\)](#)
  - [Community-Based Programs](#)
  - [Department of Human Service Programs](#)
- [Other important components of CPP](#)
  - **Child Care Vouchers**
  - **Hardships**
  - **Mid-year eligibility**
  - **Re-enrollment for subsequent years**
- [Glossary](#)



# CAMBRIDGE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM ENROLLMENT ROADMAP



1

### SEARCH

Families are encouraged to explore CPP options!

- Program Profile provides you a snapshot of our partner programs.
- Use filters to search programs by location, hours, or transportation.

2

### APPLY

**Applications will be accepted through midnight on 10/31/24.**

The CPP application consists of a series of questions to assess ELIGIBILITY, collect child and family INFORMATION, and allow families to RANK their preschool choices.

3

### MATCHING

Children will be matched with a preschool program based on the information provided in the application. Children who are 4 years old prior to August 31, 2025, would like to remain in their current program, or are otherwise considered "high priority" will be prioritized in the matching process.

4

### NOTIFICATION

Families will be notified of their preschool match in **January 2025**.

5

### ACCEPT/DECLINE

- If a family ACCEPTS the preschool match, they then ENROLL in that program.
- If a family DECLINES the preschool match, they will be ineligible to reapply and will need to seek a private preschool placement, if desired.

6

### ENROLLMENT

**CONGRATULATIONS!** Families will complete the enrollment process with their preschool program provider, and children will begin their first day of the Cambridge Preschool Program in **Fall 2025!**

For more information on the Cambridge Preschool Program please visit [www.earlychildhoodcambridge.org/CPP](http://www.earlychildhoodcambridge.org/CPP)

AUG. 2024

## Eligibility for the Cambridge Preschool Program

- Any child who is 3 or 4 by 8/31/25 AND is a Cambridge resident is eligible to apply.
- All 4-year-olds will be matched with a preschool program.
- Children/families who meet the criteria below receive priority in the CPP application process:
  - Family is [eligible for free or reduced lunch](#) (for Cambridge Public Schools)
  - Family income at or below 65% of area [median income](#) (city and community programs)
  - Family is currently experiencing homelessness
  - Child is in foster care
- There are approximately 200 seats available for Cambridge 3-year-olds, with over half of those spots reserved for families who meet priority criteria. Families who do not meet priority criteria are still eligible to apply for the limited number of seats available in either DHSP and/or CPS locations. Because enrollment in CPP is not guaranteed for 3-year-olds, families applying for a 3-year-old are encouraged to also apply directly to other programs. **\*Any family with a 3-year-old who is interested in a community preschool and who does not meet the priority criteria outlined should apply for preschool directly with their program of choice.**

## Timeline for CPP Application and Enrollment

- Now - SEARCH available programs
- 10/1 - 10/31 - APPLY for CPP
- 10/31 - January - Verification and Matching process
- January 2025 - Notification of preschool placement
- January - February - Accept or decline placement
- ENROLL with your preschool program

## CPP Application Platform

The CPP Application Platform has two main functions:

- Browse and Search all CPP Preschool Programs that are part of the mixed delivery system.
- CPP Application: You will answer basic questions, upload the required documents, and rank their CPP program choices.
- Families will use an email address to create a personal account.

## Preparing to apply to the Cambridge Preschool Program

Choosing a preschool program is an important decision! The CPP Application Platform - **SEARCH PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS** function is a place to start. In this part of the platform, you will see the many options CPP offers.

Some highlights of this part of the CPP Application Platform are:

**Program Profiles** provide a snapshot of our partner programs. You can view pictures, program hours, curriculum, a brief description of the program, information about extended day offerings, a link to program websites and so much more!

**Use the filters to:**

- See what programs are in a certain location (for example, search programs closest to your home address) with an interactive map!
- View programs that offer a school day program or those that offer extended day programming and those that offer transportation.

It's helpful for families to think about the following:

- How far is the program from my home or work?
- How much does the program cost? Is there any financial assistance available?
- What is the program's schedule? Hours? Summer hours? Holidays?
- Are there any holidays or school breaks when the program is closed?
- Is food provided or is there an additional cost? What kind of meals and snacks?

We recommend visiting programs, talking to program staff and current families. It's also helpful to talk with your friends, neighbors, and others you trust in the community about your choices. Some tools to help during this process:

- [Things to Look for in a High-Quality Preschool](#) (OEC)
- [CPP Programs At-A-Glance](#)
- [What to Look for In Ideal Learning Environments](#) (Trust for Learning)

**Before starting the application, you should:**

- **Have your preschool program choices for 6-10 locations**
- **Have all required documents ready (see below)**

## Applying to CPP

The CPP application consists of a series of **questions** to assess eligibility, collect child and family

information, and allow families to rank their preschool choices. The application is also the place where you will **upload the required documents** (listed below). In the final part of the application, a family will **select and then rank a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 10** providers which your family is comfortable with. In the application, families will also indicate if their child is currently enrolled at any of their ranked choices, we refer to this as **continuity of care** and/or if the child has a **sibling at any one of their ranked choices**.

Some things to consider:

- Do not rank more than 6 programs if you do not intend to send your child to those programs.
- **If you would like your child to remain in their current program, it is highly recommended that the program be ranked first.**
- All verified applications received during the application window will be entered into the matching process.
- These applications will be entered into the matching process at the same time, ours is not a first come first serve system.
- Late applications (after 10/31/24) received for otherwise eligible 4-year-olds will not be entered into the matching process and will be offered a preschool placement at a program with available space at a later date.

A completed application includes:

- Answers to all required questions
- A minimum of 6 programs are ranked in the application
- All required documents are uploaded
- The CPP Application system sends an automated email after you complete your applications that indicate your application has been SUBMITTED
- The CPP team reviews your application and all supporting documents once it is approved The CPP Application system sends an automated email that your application has been VERIFIED

## Required Documents

**Parent or guardian photo identification** (Driver's License, State-Issued Photo ID, Passport)

### Proof of income\*

- Most recently filed tax return AND 4 consecutive pay stubs (last 30 days), if a 2-parent household then both parents' pay stubs or
- Current award letters for any benefits you are receiving (TANF, SSI, SNAP, WIC, etc.)

*For foreign students studying at our Universities - possible documents that can establish income - what they are living on while here:*

- Department of Treasury Form 8843 "Statement for Exempt individuals"
- Fellowships - Award statements or letters from universities here, as well as from home country universities which may give grants and awards to study here
- University Awards (and Loans) Statements which may include living expenses and other aid besides tuition.
- Paystubs, if they're employed in the US
- Form I-20 for all members of the family or form DS-2019/J-1
- IRS Form 1040NR

**Proof of child's age/date of birth** (Child's birth certificate, passport, or other government-issued document)

### Proof of residency AND occupancy

One of the following documents for **proof of Cambridge residency**:

- Lease
- Section 8 Agreement
- Purchase & Sales Agreement
- Mortgage Statement
- Deed
- Letter from Homeless/Transition Service Provider\*\*
- Real Estate/Property Tax Bill

One of the following documents for **proof of occupancy (dated within 30 days)**:

- Gas Bill



- Oil Bill
- Electric Bill
- Cable Bill
- Letter from Homeless/Transition Service Provider\*\*

**Current proof of physical with updated immunizations and proof of a lead screening.**

*Important notes about required documents*

*\*Proof of income is optional. If proof of income is not provided, any extended day or summer care charges will be the full responsibility of the family. Families may be eligible for free or reduced for extended day or summer care, but proof of income must be provided.*

*\*\*An alternative to this letter is the [Cambridge Public Schools Doubling Up Form](#).*

*Families moving to Cambridge may submit a **signed lease, purchase & sales agreement**, or letter from a University housing provider **documenting a Cambridge address**, even if they have not yet moved into their new home. Additional proof of residency/occupancy will be required at a subsequent date.*

*Proof of residency does not apply to students and families experiencing homelessness covered under the McKinney-Vento Act. If a child and their family are experiencing homelessness and staying in a shelter, a letter from shelter staff stating that they live there is required. All families experiencing homelessness should contact the Office of Early Childhood which will work with families to complete a preschool application and subsequent enrollment.*

## **Language Immersion Testing for Cambridge Public Schools**

Families who complete registration for CPP, select a CPS language immersion program for their child, and whose child speaks the program language - Spanish, Mandarin, and/or Portuguese - **will be contacted by Kathy Sampson, Assistant Registrar at the CPS Student Registration Center, and she will schedule a language competency test for the child.** Parents and caretakers with general questions about the immersion programs can contact Kathy Sampson at 617-349-6067 or by email at [ksampson@cpsd.us](mailto:ksampson@cpsd.us). Testing for CPS language immersion programs will coincide with the registration period of Oct 1, 2024, to October 31, 2024.

## **CPP Application Support**

[The OEC website](#) can be a first stop if you have questions about the CPP Application Process. On our site, you will find helpful information, as well as Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for our largest partners [Cambridge Public Schools](#) and [Department of Human Service Preschools](#).

Our OEC team and our family support partners are available for application support. During the application window, check the OEC website for a list of places where in-person application support will be available.

Some things you might need help with are:

- Assistance with selecting the programs you will rank
- Assistance with the technology
- Help prepare the needed documents
- Support for English language learners
- Help with your application, including adding documents to your application
- Anything else related to completing your application on time

Please reach out to our office if you need assistance or have questions - [cpp@cpsd.us](mailto:cpp@cpsd.us) or 617-349-6608

## **What happens once my CPP Application is complete?: Matching & Notification**

All verified applications (families will get a message from the CPP Application platform that indicates their application has been verified) during the application window will be entered into the matching process. The matching process uses a computer algorithm to match applicants to programs. **Children who would like to remain in their current program, have siblings in their preferred program, or are otherwise considered "priority" will be prioritized in the matching process. Priority criteria:**

- Family is [eligible for free or reduced lunch](#) (for Cambridge Public Schools)
- Family income at or below 65% of area [median income](#) (city and community programs)
- Family is currently experiencing homelessness
- Child is in foster care

Families will be **notified of their CPP match in January 2025**. Notification of your preschool match will include the information needed to make an informed decision, including if there are additional costs for your preschool match.

## **Accept/Decline CPP Placement**

In early January 2025, families will receive notification of their match via email. **Families will have 2 weeks to accept or decline their match.** During the 2 weeks, families are welcome to contact the program they've been matched with for more information, or to tour the school if they haven't already. Once they have made their decision they will access the family portal and accept or decline the placement.

Two important notes:

- Families who enroll in a preschool program that also provides extended day and summer care may have an additional cost (CPP funding only covers school-day, school-year)
- Families may choose to decline their match. If they do, they will not receive another placement for the 2025-2026 school year. However, OEC does offer a Hardship Policy, and you'll find the details later in this guide.

**For 4 year olds:**

- If a family accepts the preschool match, they then enroll their preschooler in that program.
- If a family declines the preschool match, they will be ineligible to reapply (You will need to seek a private preschool placement for your child, if desired).

**For 3 years olds (limited seats):**

- If a family accepts the preschool match, they then enroll their preschooler in that program.
- If a family declines the preschool match, they will be ineligible to reapply until the following year.
- If your 3-year-old child is not offered a preschool match, they will be placed on a waiting list. Over the course of spring and summer, there may be spots that open up at a program. We will reach out to any families eligible for the opening that ranked the school on their application.
- If a space becomes available in one of your selected preschools, your family will be notified and you will have the ability to accept/decline that match at that time.

**Enrollment in a CPP Partner Program**

Congratulations, you and your preschooler are ready to fully enroll with your Cambridge Preschool Program partner!

Our CPP Partners are excited to welcome you to their program. Enrollment will be different based on which type of program in our mixed delivery system you were matched with. Here's an idea of what to expect.

**Cambridge Public Schools**

Once you have accepted your placement you will be informed of any additional information or documents that are required by the public schools. As it gets closer to the end of the school year families can anticipate hearing from the school in which the child is placed. This will include information about teacher assignment, Open Houses, and back to school information. Inquiries should be directed to the school directly.

**Community-Based Preschools**

You will hear from your new CPP Program by early March 2025, so be on the lookout for a phone call, or an email depending on the program. Most communication will now come from the program (not the Office of Early Childhood).

Some things to expect that a program might want to know/confirm with you:

- Review their program philosophy, hours, school calendar and other key details (lunch offered etc.)
- Confirm your desired weekly schedule
- Confirmation of family information
- See if you have any questions or want to learn more about their program
- Provide information about additional paperwork that is needed to complete your child's enrollment
- Verbally confirm that you intend to enroll at the program
- Provide you with a name and contact information for any questions that come up
- If applicable, the partner program will inform you of charges for extended day programming, and when payments are due.

#### DHSP

After you accept your seat, you will receive a communication/letter which includes key information to complete your enrollment in DHSP Preschools. You can expect this communication around 2 weeks after you accept the placement. It will include:

- Information on how to register in the DHSP TRAX system
- The additional required documentation
- Contact information to set up a tour of your new preschool

It is critical that you register in TRAX and provide the required additional documents. Not completing these steps or waiting until late in the summer to complete these steps, could delay your child's preschool start date. Preschool Program Directors will reach out late summer (if family is registered in TRAX), if you have not heard from someone by late August please reach out.

### **Students with an identified special need, or a developmental concern**

There are questions in the CPP Application to gather information on children with any special need or developmental concern. Your answers to these questions will help our office, and ultimately the program your family is placed in, do their best to meet your child's needs. **Applications that indicate a child has an identified special need or developmental concern receive follow-up from the Office of Early Childhood, Center for Families or Special Start of the Cambridge Public Schools.** CPP partners closely with the [Cambridge Public Schools Special Start Program](#).

A family who is applying for CPP, who has a child with a developmental concern, could be involved with the CPS-Special Start Program. If your family is working with a special start during the CPP Application Window please talk with the identified CPS-Special Start staff person or contact our office for support with the application. These children and families typically will fall in one of the below categories:

- **The child is enrolled in a Special Start Integrated or Substantially Separate Classroom as indicated by their child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP).**
  - **Do not not submit a CPP Application**
  - Families considering enrolling in a placement other than what is recommended through their IEP should consult with their IEP Teams.
- The child has a current IEP which provides services only.
  - Consider these services when you are selecting preschools for your CPP application.
  - YES, do submit a CPP Application
- The child is in the evaluation process or has been referred
  - YES, do submit a CPP Application
  - The outcome of your child's Special Start evaluation may determine the options for your child

If you have any questions or want to talk more about your child, or your child's application please do not hesitate to contact our office directly at [cpp@cpsd.us](mailto:cpp@cpsd.us) or 617-349-6885

## **Things to consider with the programs in the CPP mixed delivery system**

### **CPP Affiliate Partners**

**Affiliate Programs\*** are part of the CPP mixed delivery system and unlike other CPP partners, affiliate programs define their own admissions policies. Some key elements of these programs that families need to pay close attention to are -

- Families who want their child to attend an employer sponsored early childhood program partner (Campus Child Care/Harvard, MIT, Biogen) **and** have an affiliation with their chosen program's employer or institution (either as an employee or student) must apply and enroll directly to those programs **first**.
- Do not submit a CPP application during the application window unless you would like your child to enroll in a program other than one in which you have an employee or student affiliation.
- Those enrolled in affiliate programs who may be eligible for funding through the Cambridge Preschool Program **will be notified by their program with instructions about how and when to submit a CPP**

## application

The programs, and the affiliation needed -

Bright Horizons (Biogen or MIT)

- Bright Horizons at Biogen (employed by Biogen)
- The David H Koch Childcare Center (employed by or student at MIT)
- Kendall Childcare Center (employed by or student at MIT)
- Stata Childcare Center (employed by or student at MIT)

[Campus Child Care Group \(employed by or student at Harvard University\)](#)

**Contact** - Katy Donovan 617-945-1658 or [execdirector@campus-cc.org](mailto:execdirector@campus-cc.org)

- Harvard Yard Child Care Center
- Botanic Gardens Child Care Center
- Radcliffe Child Care Center
- Oxford Street Cooperative
- Peabody Terrace Children's Center
- Soldier's Field Park Children's Center
- Western Avenue Children's Center

[Head Start \(federally funded program, family income\)](#)

**Contact** - 617-623-7370 or [sflorian@caasomerville.org](mailto:sflorian@caasomerville.org)

- Frisoli Center
- Jefferson Park

At this time families who enroll at Head Start will not submit a CPP Application.

**Enrollment in affiliate programs** - If you are affiliate program eligible, and plan to attend one of the CPP affiliate programs, you will enroll your child with that program first. Please contact that program directly (not OEC) to enroll, and only submit an application to the CPP program after receiving notification from the affiliate program.

**Please note:** If you are enrolled in an affiliate program **do not submit a CPP application during the 10/1/24-10/31/24 application window, UNLESS it is your desire to be matched with a different preschool partner site.**

*\*Select Campus Childcare locations will have limited spaces for children and families without a Harvard*

*affiliation. Those locations will be searchable within the application.*

### **Cambridge Public Schools (CPS)**

CPS offers a 6.5 hour school day for the school year. CPP students will follow the public school calendar. There are 12 elementary schools. Be sure to check the website of your assigned school for specific hours. Please note that every Wednesday schools are dismissed 30 minutes early. Once enrolled in a school students will matriculate in that school for the remainder of their elementary career.

**There is no extended day/afterschool option for CPP students enrolled within the public schools.** Breakfast and lunch is provided to all students free of charge. Transportation is available to students that are 4 years old. Information about transportation can be found on the district website ([www.cpsd.us/departments](http://www.cpsd.us/departments)) find transportation under departments.

CPS offers programming for English language learners. **SEI** - Shelter Immersion program offers English language instruction tailored to the specific linguistic, cultural, and educational needs of multilingual learner students in our programs. Students who list a language other than English as their first language will be tested to determine if the SEI programming is appropriate for their learning.

Our **Special Start Program** is designed to support children that require special education services. This program is an integrated model in which classrooms have students with and without disabilities in one classroom. The classroom has 7 students with identified disabilities and 8 students without disabilities. Students are able to enter the program at the age of 3. Special Start classrooms follow the same curricula and are actively included in the school community.

### **Community Based Programs**

Our community partners offer various childcare programs, including care within a family childcare setting. Some programs may have additional charges for care during non-standard hours. The curriculum and play activities align with the program's main goals and beliefs, ensuring that the activities cater to children's developmental needs and meet our standards for high-quality learning. These providers understand and accommodate the diverse needs of the families they serve, promoting a sense of community and belonging. They adhere to high standards and incorporate best practices to support children's development and connect and engage families in their preschool community.

### **Department of Human Service Programs**

Many DHSP programs are housed within CPS buildings, however they are separate from CPS. Enrollment in a DHSP Preschools Program does not mean that a student will remain at that school for their elementary school. In this application cycle, DHSP has added new classrooms in North Cambridge and at the Tobin School

The City of Cambridge subsidizes all DHSP preschool classrooms to offer more affordable preschool options to Cambridge families. All income priority families (of both 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds) receive **free** full day/ full year education and care. For all other families, tuition rates are determined on a sliding scale ([2025-2026 DHSP Preschool Tuition Rates for 4-Year-Olds](#), [2025-2026 DHSP Preschool Tuition Rates for 3-Year-Olds](#)) based on household income and household size. Through CPP, the City covers the cost of the school-day/ school-year portion of the day for 4-year-olds enrolled in DHSP Preschools.



## Other important components of CPP

**Massachusetts Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA) (ChildCare Vouchers)** - Massachusetts CCFA can help you pay for child care and out-of-school time programs. Programs that accept Childcare Vouchers will list this on their profile page on the CPP Application. CPP provides school day/school year coverage and families who have a childcare voucher can apply this to wrap-around care (after care, vacations, summer programming). For more information about child care vouchers, including eligibility and how to apply please visit - <https://www.mass.gov/child-care-financial-assistance>

**Hardship Policy** - OEC and our CPP partners will work to ensure a good match between program and family. We encourage families to communicate and establish a partnership with their new school. We know that there are circumstances where unanticipated situations arise that might warrant a school transfer (for example, a change of employment status, long-term illness, or relocation). If your family is experiencing a challenge that potentially warrants a transition to an alternative program, please contact the Office of Early Childhood at [cpp@cpsd.us](mailto:cpp@cpsd.us) or 617-349-6608.

**Mid-year Eligibility-** Those moving to Cambridge after January 15, 2024 may still apply for the Cambridge Preschool Program but will have more limited preschool options. The CPP application, for any 4-year-olds by 8/31/24, will remain open, and children will be matched to available programs. Please contact the Office of Early Childhood at [cpp@cpsd.us](mailto:cpp@cpsd.us) or 617-349-6608 if you are interested in applying outside of the Fall enrollment period.

**3 year olds remaining in their program for the following year** - In the fall of the previous school year, CPP families with a 3 year old will be asked via a form, sent to their email, if they will re-enroll in their school for their 4 year old CPP year or if they want to re-enter the match for a different placement. These families will be asked to prove residency/occupancy and if needed income in the spring. Failure to provide these documents could result in loss of CPP funding for the preschool spot.

### GLOSSARY

#### CPP APPLICATION PROCESS DEFINITIONS

**Submitted** - The application has been received by OEC

**Awaiting Documents** - Additional documents are required to verify application

**Verified** - The application has been reviewed and no additional documents, or information, are required to match the family with a program. This does not guarantee a placement for a family.

### **CPP MATCH PROCESS DEFINITIONS**

**Offered** - A seat has been made available to a child at a specific preschool program for the upcoming school year.

**Seat Unavailable** - There is not a seat available for the child at a specific preschool program for the following school year.

**Accepted** - The family has accepted the seat at the preschool program with which their child has been matched.

**Enrolled** - The family has completed all necessary paperwork and processes to finalize their registration at their matched preschool program.

**Declined** - The family has decided NOT to accept the preschool program with which their child was matched.

### **ACRONYMS**

**COEC** - Office of Early Childhood (formerly Birth to Third Grade Partnership)

**CPP** - Cambridge Preschool Program

**CPSD/CPS** - Cambridge Public Schools

**DHSP** - Department of Human Service Programs