The Michigan School Readiness Program started as a pilot program in 1985, serves at-risk 4-year-old children. Public schools, Head Start, private child care centers, and health and social service agencies may receive state funds through competitive grants. However, most of the funding is provided to public schools, based on a formula that takes into account factors such as the size of the school district and the number of children eligible for free lunch. A minimum of 50 percent of the children in this program must meet the income eligibility criteria (having a family income below 185 percent of the federal poverty level), as well as at least one other risk factor from a list of 25 possible factors. Children who do not meet the income eligibility criteria must exhibit at least 2 of the 25 risk factors.

Reorganization efforts are underway to integrate the delivery of early childhood special education services with the services provided by the Michigan School Readiness Program. The state Standards of Quality are currently being revised, and an accountability system has been developed and implemented to assess program quality.

During the 2003–2004 school year, the Michigan School Readiness Program provided 25,712 slots for 4-year-olds with a state budget of approximately $84.85 million.