



# Program Integrity School Readiness Policy Unit 2017-19 Coalition Plan

## Coalition Plan Certification

A Publication of the  
Office of Early Learning

September 2017

## Purpose

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The intention of this certification is to validate and certify the coalition’s approved School Readiness (SR) Program Plan, on file with the Office of Early Learning (OEL) School Readiness Policy Section, is current and in use. It is OEL’s intent to request only those SR Program Plan Elements that have changed, require annual updates or require updates based on rules that became effective after the previous coalition plan submission and approval.

By completing this certification, the early learning coalition acknowledges and confirms that School Readiness services will be executed as approved by OEL and in compliance with all applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations and the approved State Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Plan.

## Instructions

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Indicate “Yes,” “No” or “N/A” to certify the coalition’s current SR Program Plan aligns with the most recently approved plan element on file at OEL, as indicated by the “approval date” column. The “N/A” option should only be used for those elements that are not applicable to the coalition, (example: Element I.E. Fiscal Agent Contract). If the coalition indicates “No” for any of the elements below, the coalition should submit a plan amendment to OEL for review. If a coalition needs to amend an element, please indicate this in the comments/explanation column.

The elements shaded in grey require the coalition to submit updated attachments to reflect recent revisions to rule. The coalition will submit a plan amendment for each element for approval from OEL.

Once the coalition submits the completed certification with all elements requiring amendments, OEL will have 45 days to review and approve the revised SR Program Plan.

<b>EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF <u>HILLSBOROUGH</u></b>						
<b>COMPLETION DATE: <u>SELECT DATE</u></b>						
<b>Certifications</b>		<b>Approval Date</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Comments/Explanations</b>
<b>I. Coalition Operations -</b>						
<b>A</b>	The coalition certifies that it is operating according to its most recently SR plan-approved <b>Board Roster</b> . If the coalition has a new board roster or has experienced recent changes in its board composition, submit a plan amendment and upload the new roster onto SharePoint in the 2017-19 Coalition Plan Submission Folder.	<a href="#"><u>1/23/2016</u></a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	Coalition submitted amendment on 9/27/17 updating Board membership
<b>B</b>	The coalition certifies that it is operating according to its SR plan-approved <b>Business Organization</b> chart, which includes the coalition's business units by title and function. The chart also includes position titles for each position within a unit. If the coalition has a new business organization chart or has experienced recent changes in its business organization, submit a plan amendment and upload the new business organization chart onto SharePoint in the 2017-19 Coalition Plan Submission Folder.	<a href="#"><u>1/23/2016</u></a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	Coalition revised its Business Organization to reflect change in service deliver model. New chart attached.
<b>C</b>	The coalition certifies that it is operating according to its SR plan-approved <b>Articles of Incorporation</b> . If the coalition has a new board roster or has experienced recent changes in its articles of incorporation, submit a plan amendment and upload the new articles of incorporation onto SharePoint in the 2017-19 Coalition Plan Submission Folder.	<a href="#"><u>1/23/2016</u></a>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>D</b>	The coalition certifies that it is operating according to its SR plan-approved <b>Bylaws</b> . If the coalition has a new board roster or has experienced recent changes in its bylaws, submit a plan amendment and upload the new bylaws onto SharePoint in the 2017-19 Coalition Plan Submission Folder.	<a href="#"><u>10/3/2016</u></a>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>E</b>	The coalition certifies that it is operating according to its SR plan-approved <b>Fiscal Agent Contract</b> . If the coalition has a new fiscal agency contract or has experienced recent changes in its fiscal agent contract, submit a plan amendment and upload the new fiscal agent contract onto SharePoint in the 2017-19 Coalition Plan Submission Folder.	<a href="#"><u>1/23/2016</u></a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	The coalition does not have a fiscal agent.

<b>EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF <u>HILLSBOROUGH</u></b>						
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	<b>Certifications</b>	<b>Approval Date</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Comments/Explanations</b>
	<i>*This applies only to coalitions that are not organized as a corporation or other business entity.</i>					
<b>F</b>	The coalition certifies that it is operating according to its SR plan-approved <b>Procurement</b> policies and procedures. If the coalition has a new procurement policy and procedure or has experienced recent changes in its procurement policies and procedures, submit a plan amendment and upload the new policies and procedures onto SharePoint in the 2017-19 Coalition Plan Submission Folder. <i>* The extended deadline for federal requirement to revise procurement policies is December 2017.</i>	<u>SELECT DATE</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pending (OEL-AB).
<b>G</b>	The coalition certifies that it is operating according to its SR plan-approved <b>Tangible Personal Property Maintenance</b> policies and procedures. If the coalition has a new policy or procedure or has experienced recent changes in its policies and procedures, submit a plan amendment and upload the policies and procedures onto SharePoint in the 2017-19 Coalition Plan Submission Folder.	<u>10/3/2016</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>H</b>	The coalition certifies that it is operating according to its SR plan-approved <b>Records Maintenance</b> policies and procedures. If the coalition has a new policy or procedure or has experienced recent changes in its policies and procedures, submit a plan amendment and upload the policies and procedures onto SharePoint in the 2017-19 Coalition Plan Submission Folder.	<u>10/3/2016</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>I</b>	The coalition certifies that it is operating according to its SR plan-approved <b>Information Technology Security Controls</b> policies and procedures. If the coalition has a new policy or procedure or has experienced recent changes in its policies and procedures, submit a plan amendment and upload the policies and procedures onto SharePoint in the 2017-19 Coalition Plan Submission Folder.	<u>10/3/2016</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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<b>Certifications</b>		<b>Approval Date</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Comments/Explanations</b>
<b>J</b>	<p>The coalition certifies that it is operating according to its SR plan-approved <b><i>Disbursements</i></b> policies and procedures. If the coalition has a new policy or procedure or has experienced recent changes in its policies and procedures, submit a plan amendment and upload the policies and procedures onto SharePoint in the 2017-19 Coalition Plan Submission Folder.</p> <p style="color: blue; font-size: small;">* <i>The extended deadline for federal requirement to revise procurement policies is to December 2017.</i></p>	<u>SELECT DATE</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pending (OEL-AB).
<b>II. Implementation -</b>						
<b>A</b>	<b><i>Minimum Children to be Served by Care Level</i></b> – OEL requires the coalition to submit the minimum number of children to be served by care level.					
<b>B</b>	<b><i>School Readiness Application and Waiting List Procedures</i></b> – OEL requires the coalition to submit a revised application and waiting list policies and procedures for 2017-19.					Included in School Readiness Policy Guide
<b>C</b>	<b><i>Eligibility and Enrollment Policies and Procedures</i></b> – OEL requires the coalition submit a revised eligibility and enrollment policies and procedures for 2017-19.					Included in School Readiness Policy Guide
<b>D</b>	The coalition certifies that it is operating according to its SR plan-approved <b><i>Parent Access and Choice</i></b> policies and procedures. If the coalition has a new policy or procedure or has experienced recent changes in its policies and procedures, submit a plan amendment and upload the policies and procedures onto SharePoint in the 2017-19 Coalition Plan Submission Folder.	<u>1/23/2016</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>E</b>	The coalition certifies that it is operating according to its SR plan-approved <b><i>Sliding Fee Scale</i></b> and associated policies. If the coalition has a new policy or procedure or has experienced recent changes in its scale, policies and procedures, submit a plan amendment and upload the scale, policies and	<u>6/28/2017</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

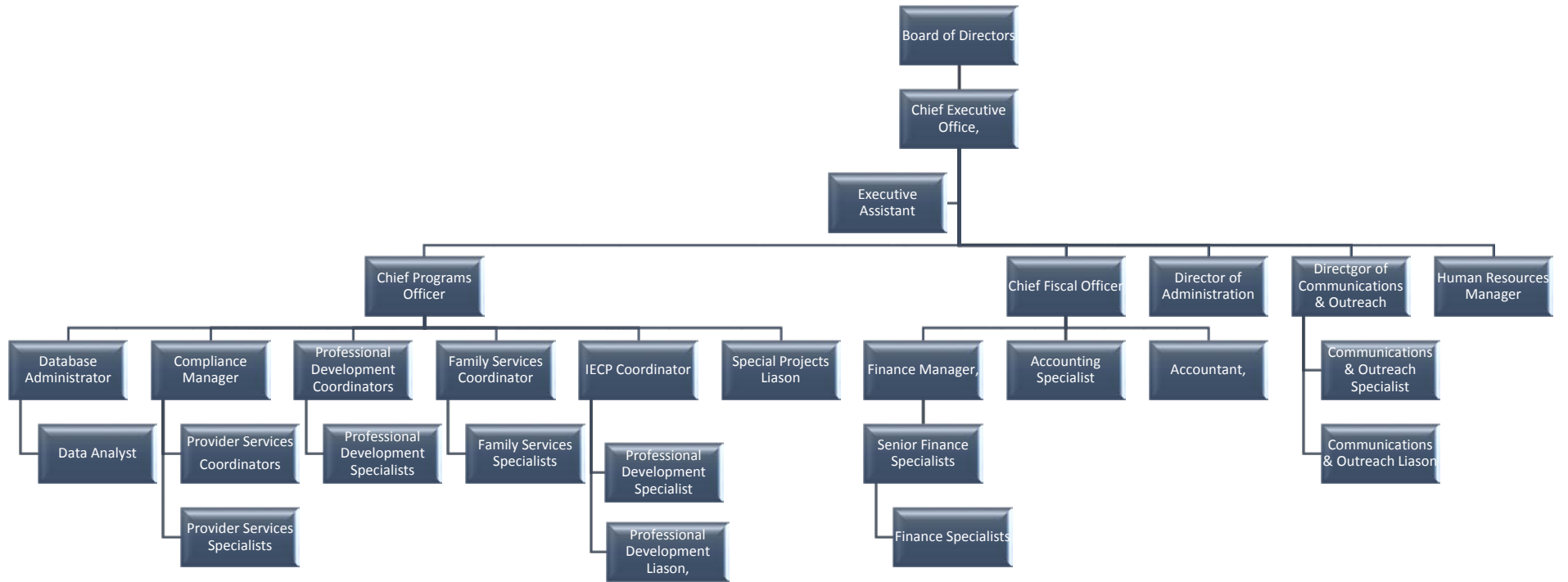
<b>EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF <u>HILLSBOROUGH</u></b>						
<b>COMPLETION DATE: <u>SELECT DATE</u></b>						
<b>Certifications</b>		<b>Approval Date</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Comments/Explanations</b>
	procedures onto SharePoint in the 2017-19 Coalition Plan Submission Folder.					
<b>F</b>	The coalition certifies that it is operating according to its SR plan-approved <b><i>Pre/Post Assessment Use</i></b> policies and procedures. If the coalition has a new policy or procedure or has experienced recent changes in its policies and procedures, submit a plan amendment and upload the policies and procedures onto SharePoint in the 2017-19 Coalition Plan Submission Folder.	<a href="#"><u>1/23/2017</u></a>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>G</b>	The coalition certifies that it is operating according to its SR plan-approved <b><i>Provider Payment Rates</i></b> and associated policies and procedures. If the coalition has new payment rates, policy or procedure or has experienced recent changes in its payment rates, policies and procedures, submit a plan amendment and upload the policies and procedures onto SharePoint in the 2017-19 Coalition Plan Submission Folder.	<a href="#"><u>1/23/2016</u></a>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>III. Quality Activities and Services -</b>						
<b>A</b>	The coalition certifies that it is operating according to its SR plan-approved <b><i>Child Care Resource and Referral and School-Aged Care</i></b> activities. If the coalition has a new practice, submit a plan amendment and upload the revisions onto SharePoint in the 2017-19 Coalition Plan Submission Folder.	<a href="#"><u>1/23/2016</u></a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Revised for 2017-2019 coalition plan
<b>B</b>	The coalition certifies that it is operating according to its SR plan-approved <b><i>Infant and Toddler Early Learning Programs</i></b> activities. If the coalition has a new practice, submit a plan amendment and upload the revisions onto SharePoint in the 2017-19 Coalition Plan Submission Folder.	<a href="#"><u>1/23/2016</u></a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Revised for 2017-2019 coalition plan
<b>C</b>	The coalition certifies that it is operating according to its SR plan-approved <b><i>Inclusive Early Learning Programs</i></b> activities. If the coalition has a new practice, submit a plan amendment and upload the revisions onto SharePoint in the 2017-19 Coalition Plan Submission Folder.	<a href="#"><u>1/23/2016</u></a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Revised for 2017-2019 coalition plan

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<b>Certifications</b>		<b>Approval Date</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Comments/Explanations</b>
<b>D</b>	<b><i>Quality and Performance Report</i></b> – OEL requires the coalition to submit the Quality and Performance Report.					
<b>IV. Financial Management -</b>						
<b>A</b>	<b><i>Budget</i></b> – OEL requires the coalition to submit a budget annually by August 25th.	<a href="#"><u>8/24/2017</u></a>				
<b>B</b>	<b><i>Prior Year Revenues and Expenditures</i></b> – OEL requires the coalition to submit its prior year’s revenues and expenditures report annually by October 1st.	<a href="#"><u>10/1/2017</u></a>				
<b>V. Monitoring -</b>						
<b>A</b>	<b><i>Monitoring Plan and Procedures</i></b> – OEL requires the coalition to submit the monitoring plan and procedures for monitoring SR Program Providers.					
<b>B</b>	The coalition certifies that it is operating according to its SR plan-approved <b><i>Grievance/Complaint</i></b> policies and procedures. If the coalition has a new policy or procedure or has experienced recent changes in its policies and procedures, submit a plan amendment and upload the policies and procedures onto SharePoint in the 2017-19 Coalition Plan Submission Folder.	<a href="#"><u>10/3/2016</u></a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>VI. Coalition Plan Validation -</b>						
<b>A</b>	<b><i>Public Input</i></b> – A SR program plan a coalition submits must include documentation that the coalition has solicited from the local community and considered comments regarding the plan.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>For coalition use only.</b>						
<i>The coalition certifies that it will provide all services compliance with the plan as OEL approved. The coalition further certifies that it will provide that it will provide the local services in compliance with all applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations and the State Child Care and Development Fund Plan that Federal Department of Health and Human Services approved.</i>						
<b>Authorized Signature:</b>		<b>Printed Name:</b>		<b>Title:</b>		<b>Date:</b>
<b>For OEL use only.</b>						

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<b>Certifications</b>	<b>Approval Date</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Comments/Explanations</b>
<p><i>OEL review. After receipt of a complete school readiness plan or amendment (including required supporting documents), OEL shall review the certification and approve, reject, or approve with conditions the provisions of the certification and provide written notification to the early learning coalition of its action within 30 business days of receipt of the completed document. OEL shall base its approval, rejection, or approval with conditions on the coalition's compliance with Chapter 1002, Part VI, F.S., the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Block Grant Florida State Plan, the federal CCDF regulations located at Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations Part 98, Subparts B through G and K and the School Readiness Plan Guide. The coalition shall not implement school readiness plans or amendments without the express written approval of OEL.</i></p>					
<b>Policy Analyst:</b>	<b>Completion Date: <span style="color: red;">Select Date</span></b>	<b>Policy Supervisor:</b>		<b>Completion Date: <span style="color: red;">Select Date</span></b>	



# Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County



Early Learning Coalition Plan Care Level Data (version - 08/06/2013)

ID DATABASE\_NAME

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104 EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF HILLSBOROUGH

FROM\_PERIOD

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DATA THROUGH REPORTING PERIOD BEGINNING ON: 07/01/2016

THROUGH\_PERIOD

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DATA THROUGH REPORTING PERIOD BEGINNING ON: 06/30/2017

FOR COALITION CODES

CODE

-----  
ALL\_DATA

RUN\_DATE

-----  
27-OCT-17

School Readiness: Children Served by Care Level

CARE\_LEVEL\_ORDER CARE CHILDREN\_SERVED

-----  
2 INF 1725  
3 TOD 2924  
4 2YR 3593  
5 PR3 3721  
6 PR4 3368  
7 PR5 2449  
8 SCH 5866  
10 SPCR 6

## Quality Activities

### **A. Child Care Resource and Referral Activities**

The Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County's Family Services Department offers CCR&R services to all families regardless of income that are seeking child care services in Hillsborough County. CCR&R provides families with information about early care and education and out-of-school time programs. Families contacting CCR&R are given a customized list of programs. In addition, CCR&R also offers families information to help them understand the importance of high quality early education experiences. All services are provided in accordance with the requirements established by the Office Early Learning (OEL).

Through community outreach and education, the ELCHC publicizes early learning services and educates parents/guardians and providers, human service agencies, and employers regarding early childhood services. Information is provided regarding School Readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten services, as well as other services such as inclusion services and programs funded by other sources. ELCHC advertises CCR&R services on the Coalition's website and other venues as funding allows.

Additionally, staff attend community events several times a year to do community outreach to ensure that the community is aware of the available services. In addition, the ELCHC is working with Bluejean Ware on the development of a mobile app that will help families access information regarding child care.

Describe the quality activities and services the coalition will implement to enhance infant and toddler early learning programs.

## **B. Infant and Toddler Early Learning Programs**

Coalition staff offers has recently begun offering Infant/Toddler Making the Most of CLASSroom Interactions (MMCI) to programs participating in the state's Performance Funding Projects as well as to infant/toddler teachers participating in the coalition's local quality initiative, *Quality Counts!*

Quality Counts! is being revised to more closely align with the quality criteria of the Performance Funding Project. Quality Counts! is a voluntary program to enhance the quality of early childhood programs throughout Hillsborough County. All legally operating programs may participate in the program. Participating programs are required to participate in continuous quality improvement activities such as MMCI training, coaching and locally approved training. Programs at the upper Tier 4 & 5 must use a formative assessment to such as TS Gold, Core, Galileo, or Desired Results Developmental Profile to guide inform the development of individual learning supports to support children's optimal growth.

To support program's continuous quality improvement, six members of the Professional Development Services staff are accredited through Teaching Strategies (APT) and are able to offer training to support the implementation of the Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers and Twos. In addition, eight ELCHC staff have achieved accreditation status in Teaching Strategies Gold. Twelve hours of training are offered to support provider's implementing Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers and Twos. An additional 12-hour training is available to support TS Gold Implementation.

Additionally, coalition staff offers other trainings to support infant/toddler teachers' knowledge of infant/toddler development, child observations, and other topics specific to infants, toddlers and twos. As funding permits, ELCHC provides materials and equipment for infant toddler classrooms, scholarships for infant/toddler teachers to attend conferences, and stipends to infant/toddler teachers for the completion of specific trainings such as Infant/Toddler MMCI, Teaching Strategies Gold, Creative Curriculum for Infant/Toddlers and Twos, etc.

Additionally, ELCHC contracts with Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) to support providers' continuous quality improvement efforts with infants and toddlers. HCPS staff have developed a number of trainings to support

infant/toddler teachers. For example, targeted trainings have been developed to support teacher's knowledge of developmentally appropriate strategies to enhance children's language development; support the administration of the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ); enhance practitioner's ability to support infant/toddlers' social/emotional development, and develop lesson plans and activities to support infant/toddler's daily experiences.

All ELCHC and HCPS professional development staff are certified CLASS observers. All ELCHC and HCPS staff are certified in one or more CLASS observations tools. Additionally, several ELCHC staff have been trained by the author(s) of the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-3. Data collected from the CLASS and/or ITERS-3 is used by ELCHC and HCPS staff to provide targeted coaching to enhance infant/toddler practitioners' ability to support children's learning success.

In addition, all ELCHC and HCPS professional development staff have completed the Early Learning Florida (ELFL) Coaching Training and have achieved certification. ELCHC and HCPS use the ELFL coaching model to provide coaching to infant/toddler practitioners participating in PFP and/or Quality Counts.

### **C. Inclusion**

ELCHC contracts with the Early Childhood Council- Inclusion Service (ECC) to maintain a Warm Line and to furnish training and technical assistance to support inclusive child care. Inclusion Specialists works with providers to improve behavior management techniques, make accommodations for children with special needs, and serve as a model for teachers learning to respond appropriately to the needs of children with serious health issues.

In addition, ELCHC funds an intervention team at through it contract with HCPS. Since intervention team members are HCPS employs they can conduct the assessments needed to determine whether or not 3 and 4-year old school readiness children are eligible for Exceptional Student Education Services offered by HCPS. Children are screened through the ASQ developmental screening process within 45 days of enrollment. If there are significant concerns a learning plan or individual learning plan is developed and delivered to the teacher and parent. Strategies and

support are offered and monitored. If warranted, further screening and evaluation occur. Typically, these involve speech and language as well as developmental and behavioral. Of course, the parent is involved in every step of the process and progress monitoring occurs monthly.

If no progress or significant progress is made, infants and toddlers are referred to Early Steps. Staff either walk the parent through the process or makes the referral for them. Older children that aren't making progress or show a need for a more thorough evaluation begin the evaluation process. Parents authorize permission for School District evaluation services. Staff completes a comprehensive evaluation process and meet as a team to discuss eligibility. Depending on eligibility and services needed, parents have several options to choose from. They can remain with their current provider and the school district can provide push in services which not only benefits the child but the teacher and other children in the room. Parents can take their child to a school site that offers the services for half day or hourly sessions. If determined by the team, the child may need more intensive support which would occur within a full day, self-contained Pre-K classroom. Many of these classrooms are blended with typically developing children and children with an IEP. Sometimes services are provided through a combination of models.

The key is to provide early intervention services and to make the transition to kindergarten seamless and enriching for the student.

**d. Does the coalition have a voluntary Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) in place for the coalition's service area?**

Yes No



Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County

# **School Readiness Policy Guide**

# Chapter 1

## Overview

Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Wise words spoken, but even more specifically, early learning education is a far greater tool for success. Studies have shown that experiences during the first five years of a child's life provide the foundation for success in school and chart a course for future success.

As a result, the Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County strives to ensure that children and their families have access to high-quality, affordable early learning programs and services in our community. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, we are funded through state and federal dollars. In addition, we receive local funding through our partnership with the Children's Board of Hillsborough County. The Coalition:

- Works to determine the needs of young children in our county.
- Develops, plans and works in collaboration with community partners to ensure children are ready for school.
- Assures the quality of early childhood services.
- Oversees Florida's free Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program, which serves over 10,000 children throughout Hillsborough County.
- Offers professional development for our early care and education teachers.
- Administers funding for the School Readiness program, which assists eligible, low-income parents get early education and care for their children so they can work and/or get the education or training necessary to become self-sufficient.
- Provides Inclusion and other services related to Special Needs.
- Promotes to community stakeholders the need for early education

Persons who will benefit from knowledge of the policies contained in this guide include:

- a) Agencies wishing to understand the eligibility requirements under the School Readiness Program
- b) Parents/guardians wishing to understand the basic requirements for eligibility determination for School Readiness;
- c) School Readiness Intake and Eligibility Personnel; and
- d) School Readiness Program Monitors;

Initial determination and re-determination of eligibility for the School Readiness Program shall be based on:

- Florida Administrative Code 6M-4.200;
- Florida CCDF Plan





- Early Learning Coalition Plan, current version;
- Agency policies that may be issued from time to time.

The overarching purpose of the School Readiness Program is to assist eligible families with child care costs. It is estimated that there may be as many as xxx children in the Hillsborough County who are eligible for the School Readiness Program. Due to funding limitations, financial assistance is not available for all children who may need child care.

Therefore, it is necessary to establish eligibility criteria to target child care fiscal and placement resources for those groups identified as having priority of need. In accordance with 1002.84(7), F.S. and 1002.87(1), F.S., priorities for service is as follows:

1. Priority 1: a child younger than 13 years of age from a family that includes a parent who is receiving temporary cash assistance under chapter 414, F.S., and subject to the federal work requirements. *(s.1002.87(1)(a), F.S.)*
2. Priority 2: an at-risk child younger than 9 years of age. *(s.1002.87(1)(b), F.S.)*
3. Priority 3: a child from birth to the beginning of the school year for which the child is eligible for admission to kindergarten in a public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2, F.S., who is from a working family that is economically disadvantaged, and may include such child's eligible siblings, beginning with the school year in which the sibling is eligible for admission to kindergarten in a public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2, F.S., until the beginning of the school year in which the sibling is eligible to begin 6th grade, provided that the first priority for funding an eligible sibling is local revenues available to the coalition for funding direct services. However, a child eligible under this paragraph ceases to be eligible if his or her family income exceeds 85% percent of the state median income. *(6M-4.200(3)(b)2, FAC)*
4. Priority 4: a child of a parent who transitions from the work program into employment as described in s. 445.032, F.S., from birth to the beginning of the school year for which the child is eligible for admission to kindergarten in a public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2, F.S. *(s.1002.87(1)(d), F.S.)*
5. Priority 5: an at-risk child who is at least 9 years of age but younger than 13 years of age. An at-risk child whose sibling is enrolled in the School Readiness program within an eligibility priority category listed in s. 1002.87(1)(a)-(c), F.S., shall be given priority over other children who are eligible under this priority. *(s.1002.87(1)(e), F.S.)*
6. Priority 6: a child who is younger than 13 years of age from a working family that is economically disadvantaged. A child who is eligible under this paragraph whose sibling is enrolled in the School Readiness program under s. 1002.87(1)(c), F.S., shall be given priority over other children who are eligible under this priority. However, a child eligible under this



priority ceases to be eligible if his or her family income exceeds 200 percent of the federal poverty level. (s.1002.87(1)(f), F.S.)

7. Priority 7: a child of a parent who transitions from the work program into employment as described in s. 445.032, F.S., who is younger than 13 years of age. (s.1002.87(1)(g), F.S.)
8. Priority 8: A child, who has special needs, has been determined eligible as a student with a disability, has a current individual education plan with a Florida school district and is not younger than 3 years of age. A special needs child eligible under this paragraph remains eligible until the child is eligible for admission to kindergarten in a public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2, F.S. (s.1002.87(1)(h), F.S.)
9. Priority 9: Notwithstanding s. 1002.87(1)(a)-(d), F.S., a child who otherwise meets one of the eligibility criteria as described in priorities, who is also enrolled concurrently in the federal Head Start Program and the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program. (s. 1002.87(1)(i), F.S.).

This manual contains the policies and procedures that are to be used in determining eligibility. It is impossible to foresee and give examples for all situations. Therefore, staff determining eligibility for services are encouraged to use reason and apply good judgment in making eligibility decisions. A reasonable decision made based on the best information available using reason and logic, program knowledge, experience, and expertise in a particular situation is referred to as the "prudent person" principle.



# Chapter 2

## Waiting List

The Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County's waiting list for the School Readiness Program is the only waiting list for financial assistance. In general, applying for services via the waiting list is the first step of the process for low-income employed families to access the School Readiness Program.

**2.1 Parental Access to the Unified Wait List.** Families may access the wait list application by logging on to the Coalition's website: [www.elchc.org](http://www.elchc.org) or the Office of Early Learning's website: <https://familieservices.floridaearlylearning.com>. This Family Portal ensures the availability and accessibility of the wait list for families applying for School Readiness Financial Assistance by allowing parents to apply for services anywhere that a parent can access the internet. Children are enrolled from the wait list in accordance with the eligibility priority categories established in 6M-4.300, F.A.C.

Families must create an account on the Family Portal to apply for services and will need to establish their own email account to receive information regarding their application. To apply for services, families will complete an on-line application and upload required documents. Families will receive updates regarding the status of their application via email.

Families must complete the prequalifying questionnaire via OEL's Family Portal. Questions #3 and #4 are based on the current Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for the total number of family members reported in Question #2. If the results of the prequalifying questions indicate that the family may be potentially eligible for the School Readiness Program, the family will be directed to complete the School Readiness application (OEL-SR 01). To complete the application process the family must submit at least one required document such as a paystub, verification of employment statement, written statement from employer, school enrollment or class registration, or documentation of a temporary or permanent disability.

**2.2 Approval/Rejection of Application.** Staff is expected to review and approve or reject each family's application and supporting documents to determine if:

- 1) The family is eligible for the service requested;
- 2) The family is currently receiving services; or
- 3) The family is currently on the EFS wait list.

**A. Determination of Eligibility.** The determination of eligibility must take into account the family's statement of income, family size, type of service requested, disability if applicable, the family's eligibility priority and the need for care. An unborn child may not be included in the family size.

**B. Notification.** The family will be notified regarding their potential eligibility within twenty (20) calendar days of ELCHC's receipt of the completed application. Applicants that are



not eligible for services will be advised of the reason for the ineligibility. If determined ineligible for services, Applicants shall be offered Child Care Resource and Referral services and referred to other services which may be appropriate for their needs.

**C. Wait List Placement.** If funds are available at the time of application, staff will conduct an eligibility determination in accordance with Section 1002.87, F.S., and subsection 6M-4.200(2) or (3), F.A.C. Staff will notify the family of the documents needed to support eligibility as established in Rule 6M-4.208, F.A.C. Once the family's eligibility is established, the child can be enrolled with a provider that has an executed contract for the School Readiness Program.

If, funds are not available, all potentially eligible children will be placed on the wait list under the child's legal name, age, and probable eligibility category. In order to maintain the child's place on the wait list, the family must notify the Coalition of any changes to their address, telephone number or employment status.

**D. Maintenance of the Waiting List.** Families are placed on the waiting list on a first-come, first-serve basis, based on the date of the submitted application, the potential eligibility and priority categories specified in Section 1002.87(1) F.S., and the age of the child. If a parent requests school readiness services for an additional child following placement on the waiting list, the additional child shall be placed on the waiting list according to the in the additional child date the family was placed on the waiting list. The additional child will be placed on the waiting list according to the initial date the family was placed on the waiting list. Staff will assign a potential eligibility category and priority for the additional child as specified in Section 1002.87(1)F.S.

Parents can update information submitted in the School Readiness Application via the Family Portal. Staff should review the updated information to ensure continued potential eligibility. If the family is still potentially eligibility, the family will maintain its place on the waiting list.

If the family is no longer potentially eligible, staff shall notify the family and offer CCR&R services. Staff should review the wait list regularly to ensure there are no duplicate entries or names and that the number of children waiting for services is accurate. However, staff must not purge its waiting list by removing all children at one time.

If the parent is not called in for eligibility determination/enrollment, the parent must update his/her wait list application every six months from the date of initial placement on the waiting list or from the last revalidation date.. The Family Portal will generate notifications to the parent based on due dates for revalidation and set time frames for the parent to submit information. The Family Portal will send parents notification regarding revalidating their application 150 days after their last submission/update. The system will automatically terminate the application on day 181 if the parent does not update the waitlist application.



Staff will review the updated information and determine the family's continued eligibility for the wait list. If the family is no longer eligible, or the need for service no longer exists, the family will be inactivated from the Family Portal Wait List.

Once a family is inactivated from the wait list, any subsequent applications for services will be treated as an initial application. The family's prior position will not be reinstated.

**2.3 Exceptions to Wait List Placement.** Children in the following eligibility categories **are not** placed on the wait list.

- A. Priority 1 Children:** BG3-TCAN, BG3W-TCAW, and WRC-RC1 from birth to 13. Families received a referral and must be enrolled for service within ten (10) days of the referral.
- B. Priority 2 Children:** BG1-11D, HOME, DOM, 11, 14R, IN, OUT, BG3R-RCG from birth to age 9 are served immediately and are not placed on the wait list.

**2.4 Placement from the Wait List.** When funds become available families are called from the wait list based on the priorities for service established in 6M-4.300 F.A.C. Staff should use multiple methods to contact the family such as email, mail, text, and/or phone to notify them that funding is available. The family will be given ten (10) business days to respond. If the family does not respond within the ten (10) period, the family will be terminated from the wait list. Documentation should be maintained in EFS of all attempts to contact the family.

Parents must meet a purpose for care when they are called off the waitlist. Families who are experiencing an interruption in employment or education as defined in 6M-4.200 F.A.C. should be enrolled in School Readiness and services suspended until the parent resumes employment or education activity. At the time of enrollment, the parent must be given a date by which to establish eligibility for placement into care. The date should be determined on a case by case basis and documented in the EFS. Parents must submit all required documentation to determine eligibility within thirty (30) calendar days from the date on the funding availability notification.

If however, the parent is out of work at the time the funding availability letter is received, then his/her wait list status should be terminated. The parent should reapply once employment/purpose for care is established.

**Note:** When the child's status is updated as the result of a funding availability letter, the system removes the child from the wait list. A parent should only be terminated from the wait list if they fail to respond within ten (10) business days or if during the eligibility interview they do not have a purpose for care.

**2.5 Removal from the Waiting List.** Staff shall notify parents of removal from the waiting list. The notification must include the reason the family was not placed on the waiting list or why the



family or child was removed from the waiting list. A family will be removed from the waiting list based on the following:

1. Failure to maintain accurate contact information;
2. Failure to meet school readiness eligibility requirements;
3. Failure to confirm information. (Parent does not validate information by the due date indicated on the notification);
4. A child in the household has obtained the age of 13;
5. The parent indicates that school readiness services are no longer needed;
6. The parent does not respond to the notification for available funding by the due date;
7. The family no longer resides in Hillsborough County; or
8. Funding becomes available and the child is already enrolled in the school readiness program.

**2.6 Reapplication.** Families removed from the waiting list must reapply for school readiness services and be screened for eligibility to be placed back on the waiting list and receive a new waiting list date. If the family on the waiting list moves out of Hillsborough County, the family must reapply for eligibility with the coalition operating in the family's new location. The family will receive a new waiting list date with the coalition offering services in the new location.



## Chapter 3

# Role of the Family Service Specialist

*The primary function of the Family Service Specialist is to determine initial eligibility and to re-determine eligibility of families and children for School Readiness services, to assist with appropriate placement for eligible children, and determine the parent/guardian co-payment.*

*The Family Service Specialist should have basic knowledge about the School Readiness Program, the steps for applying for services, including eligibility categories, the age range of children served, various program options and potential hours of operation, basic eligibility requirements, parent co-payment determination process and be able to articulate these details to all prospective applicants.*

**3.1 General Information.** The final authority on eligibility for the School Readiness Program rests with the Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County. The person making the determination of eligibility for School Readiness Service is responsible for applying the eligibility regulations as set forth in 6M-4.200 F.A.C, the Coalition Plan and any policies adopted by the Coalition.

- A. Confidentiality of Information.** Any information related to a family or individual's participation in the School Readiness Program shall not be disclosed, shared or made available to any person, organization, or provider without the prior written consent of the participant(s) or applicant(s). Any such information will only be shared or disclosed in accordance with all confidentiality and privacy protections as afforded by all applicable federal, state, and local laws.
- B. Non-discrimination Policy.** All services shall be provided to applicants without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, familial status, family responsibility, matriculation, political affiliation, disability or source of income.
- C. Interview.** The Family Service Specialist must conduct a personal interview with the applicant at intake to obtain a thorough understanding of and apply all relevant eligibility factors, including family status, residence, income, hours and location of employment and/or training as well as other factors that will enable the Family Service Specialist to reach a decision about eligibility. Exceptions to the interview requirement are made in the case of referrals for which all transactions may be handled by the referring worker. These include applicants under the Foster Care and Child Protective Services programs.
- D. Placement and Parent/Guardian Choice.** The Family Service Specialist shall assess, with the applicant or recipient, the service needs related to child care. The Family Service Specialist must assure parent/guardian choice by explaining the various placement options, which include licensed child care centers, licensed home providers, and relative and in-home care.



Applicants for School Readiness services must select from the providers that have executed an agreement with the Coalition.

- E. Documentation Requirements.** The Family Service Specialist shall review all documents closely to ensure they are authentic and that they match the applicant's verbal statements and application.

The Family Service Specialist shall ensure families understand reasons and are properly notified when they do not qualify for the School Readiness Program or services must be terminated.

All eligibility documents must be in place **before** a child is placed in the School Readiness Program. Exceptions to this requirement shall be made for "at-risk" children that receive a referral from the Department of Children and Families or its contracted providers, DCF-designated Lead Homeless Coalition Continuum of Care Agency or Certified Domestic Violence Center.

For redetermination reviews, all documents must be in place by the close of business of the final date of eligibility. Failure of the parent/guardian to supply all required eligibility information will result in termination of the School Readiness services. Under no circumstances can the can School Readiness services be provided beyond the authorized eligibility dates.

- F. Case Record Requirements.** Family Service Specialist shall establish and maintain case records for each applicant receiving School Readiness services. The case file should be labeled with the applicant's (adult's) name and should contain individual eligibility information for all children in the family.

The eligibility record must be properly secured and available at all times and is subject to review by Coalition staff, the Office of Early Learning, the Auditor General of the State of Florida, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and outside auditors. Closed case records must be maintained for a minimum of five (5) years.

Documents must be organized chronologically in the family case record with the most recent dated documents on top. History notes must be kept in the OEL State-Wide Database (EFS) for capturing all work related to the applicant and case.

- G. EFS Management Information System.** The Office of Early Learning (OEL) uses a state-wide management information system to store data for all children in the School Readiness Program. Family Support Specialists are required to set up a new applicant's case and are expected to maintain and update case information for each family who is determined eligible for services throughout the family's period of service.

In addition to completing all required fields in EFS, the Family Service Specialist is expected to maintain case history notes. These notes tell a story to support the decision(s) made by the Family Service Specialist. Case notes must be clear, concise, and to the point. There must be enough information so anyone reviewing the case can determine the reason, logic and accuracy of the Family Service Specialist's





decisions/actions. After every contact with the client and/or an action taken on the case, case notes must be made in the EFS system.

History notes should meet the following standards to ensure concise, easy to follow information that can stand alone upon review:

- Pertinent information regarding action taken with the case answering the following questions: who, what, where, when and why.
- Referral information if applicable – type of referral, dates of authorization, hours authorized, referring agency (address and phone of referring agency is not needed in history notes).
- All placement or redetermination appointments should include – funding, authorization dates, parent fees, changes if determined at time of processing.
- All correspondence regarding the case – phone, walk in, scheduled appointments, faxes received, should be noted and a brief synopsis of any processes, actions taken or requests made on the case should be explained.
- All notes should be factual and not personal.

As a general rule of thumb – every time anything is done regarding the case, a history note is made no matter how small or insignificant it might seem. Examples of actions to be documented in EFS system are (not all inclusive):

- Approval of benefits
- Denial of benefits listing the denial reason
- Updates to the case which result in an increase or decrease of benefits
- Termination of benefits listing the reason the case is being terminated
- Changes reported by the client or any other source
- Details of conferences and/or hearing results
- Client contacts (concerns of complaints from the client)
- Appointment dates and times scheduled
- Client no-show for appointments

Other information pertaining to the case may also be documented in the case notes as long as it is factual and not the opinion of the Family Service Specialist. The Family Service Specialist must document the actual date of the activity within the narrative if it is different than the date of entry.

Information reported by phone must be case noted in the EFS system and contain the following information:

- The reported change;
- The date the change occurred;
- Who reported the change; and
- The date the change was reported.



# Chapter 4

## Qualifying for School Readiness Services

*This chapter explains the general steps that parents need to take to receive School Readiness Program Services. Regulations regarding the School Readiness Program can be found in 6M-4.200 F.A.C et seq. and are located at:*

<https://www.flrules.org/gateway/ChapterHome.asp?Chapter=6m-4>.

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### 4.1 Application for School Readiness Financial Assistance

After receiving a funding availability letter or a referral from the Department of Children and Family Services or its contracted provider, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, or Careersource, parents may apply for the School Readiness Program by making an appointment, walking in to on the intake and eligibility offices, or submitting documents via fax.

- A. **Application.** Each parent/guardian must submit an application that has been completed, signed, and dated at initial eligibility determination, and at each subsequent redetermination. The Family Service Specialist shall ensure the application form is completed, dated, signed and all required documentation is submitted before determining eligibility.
- B. **Family Information.** All questions on the application should be completed by the parent/guardian. If the parent/guardian needs assistance completing the application, the Family Services Specialist should complete the document during the inter interview with the parent(s)/guardian(s). Changes added by anyone other than the applicant must be initialed and dated by the parent/guardian. This will show that the parent/guardian reviewed additions/changes.

The Family Service Specialist should include in the case notes the reason assistance was requested. This practice ensures that application is accurate representation of the household's circumstances and is attested to by the parent/guardian. Should the information later turn out to not be a complete and accurate representation of the household's circumstances, then the document will still be able to be used as evidence should a referral for benefit recovery/fraud prosecution be necessary.

- C. **Client File.** Every file must contain a completed Application for School Readiness services signed by the applicant and Family Service Specialist. The file must have supporting documentation for eligibility and calculations of the family income for



determination of the family's co-payment. Copies of any payment adjustment forms should be included in the record.

A client's formal interview is input into EFS and shall not be entered until all required documentation is attained and the client has chosen and enrolled their child with a child care provider. If any eligibility requirement is not met, the eligibility interview shall not be completed and the client shall not receive services. Documentation is to be returned to the prospective client at that time. Under no circumstances shall the Family Service Worker retain eligibility documentation without completing a School Readiness child file.

The Family Service Specialist must make sure that the completed application contains the following information:

- Parent name(s)
- Parent address(es)
- Name of child(ren) receiving authorization for care
- Child(ren)'s birth date
- Purpose of care (protection, employment, work activity, etc)
- Authorized billing group (BG8-ECON, BG1-11, etc.)
- Hours of care authorized (full-time/part-time)
- Authorizing Family Service Specialist's dated signature
- Parent's dated signature

D. **Accuracy of Application.** Parents/families should be advised that providing false or misleading information may result in termination of School Readiness Financial Assistance, ineligibility for any future financial assistance, and/or obligation to repay the cost of child care.

**4.2 Payment Certificate.** Once determined eligible for School Readiness Services, the Family Service Specialist issues a child care (payment) certificate. This certificate identifies the child(ren) for whom the Family Service Specialist authorized care, the provider the family selected, the assessed parent copayment for each eligible child, authorization for full- or part-time care, and the authorized beginning and end dates of care.

**A. Parental Choice.** Both state and federal regulation requires the Coalition to allow parental choice through a certificate that allows the parent flexibility in the types of child care programs that are available. Parents can choose to enroll their child in any legally operating child care program (center-based, family child care, faith-based, etc.)



**B. Provider Notification.** The payment certificate is notification to the child care provider that the child is enrolled in the statewide information system for payment, the authorized period of the child's enrollment, the payment rate, the assessed parent copayment amount and the hours of care (full-time/part-time).

**4.3 Applications Causing a Conflict of Interest.** Family Service Specialists may not process applications that create a conflict of interest. Conflicts of interest may include employee/supervisor relationship, dating relationship, and or relationships in which the applicant for service is the Family Service Specialist's friend, roommate or relative.



# Chapter 5

## Documentation Requirements

*All documentation that verifies eligibility will be maintained in each family's file. All documents must be readily available at the time of initial application and any subsequent redetermination. Examples of acceptable documentation can be found throughout this guide.*

**5.1 Supporting Documentation.** Services cannot start or continue prior to receiving a completed application and all supporting documentation for establishing or continuing eligibility. A client shall not be determined eligible without all required documentation (as it pertains to their specific billing group requirements).

**A. Initial application.** Parents must submit documentation that verifies each of the following data elements, unless the regulations of the Office of Early Learning state or policies of the Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County identify an exception. Documentation of the following is required at the initial application:

- 1) Identity of the applicant(s);
- 2) Hillsborough County Residency;
- 3) Citizenship or immigration status of any child seeking School Readiness services
- 4) Child(ren)'s age; **AND**
- 5) Purpose of care for each parent on the application

**B. Redetermination.** Parents must submit documentation that verifies their continued eligibility for School Readiness services, unless regulations of the Office of Early Learning or policies of the Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County state an exception. The following documentation is required at redetermination:

- 1) Hillsborough County Residency;
- 2) Total gross household income; **AND**
- 3) Ongoing purpose of care for each parent on the redetermination application.

**5.2 Identity of Parent(s).** Family Service Specialists will verify the identity of each parent applying for School Readiness services. Documentation of identity must include original, valid, and unexpired documents, and only needs to be submitted once. Documentation should include a photo of the applicant.

**A. Definition of Parent.** Federal regulation provides the definition of a parent for the purpose of establishing a child's eligibility for School Readiness services. A parent means a parent by blood, marriage or adoption and also means a legal guardian or a person standing in loco parentis. In loco parentis is a person who acts in place of a parent, assuming care and custody of a child by a formal or informal agreement with the child's parent. Florida law states that a parent is either or both parents of a child, any guardian



of a child, any person in a parental relationship to a child or any person exercising supervisory or temporary authority over a child in place of the parent.

**B. Applicant Identify.** The parent will need to provide documentation to verify his/her identify. Acceptable documentation for verification include:

- 1) Florida Driver's License;
- 2) Florida Identification Card;
- 3) U.S. passports;
- 4) U.S. Military Cards; **OR**
- 5) Non-U.S. Passport

**NOTE:** If the documentation provided for applicant identity does not include a photo, the Family Service Specialist must obtain two forms of ID showing the parent's name (i.e. a Social Security card, voter registration card, birth record, military document, school record, paystub, employment record or insurance card.

**5.3 Family Composition and Relationship Requirements.** Parent applying for School Readiness services must list all family members residing in the household and attest to the accuracy of this list when they complete and sign an application. All applicants are subject to the general eligibility requirements regardless of whether they were referred or received a funding availability.

**A. Definition of Family.** Florida statute defines family or household members as "spouses, former spouses, persons related by blood or marriage, persons who are parents of a child in common regardless of whether they have been married and other persons who are currently residing together in the same dwelling. For purposes of determining eligibility for School Readiness services:

- 1) A family includes parent(s) living together, their minor children and any other children for whom the parents are legally responsible.
- 2) A family may also include any additional related adults who reside with the family (e.g. grandparents) if the family supports them financially.
- 3) If counted as part of the family, then each person's countable income must be included when determining household income.

**B. Parental Status.** Therefore, the parent will need to provide documentation to verify that he/she meets the definition of a parent. Acceptable documentation for verification includes:

- 1) Birth certificate that includes the parent's name or maiden name, if applicable;
- 2) A court order or other legal documentation that substantiates the adult's relationship to the child;



- 3) A valid DCF or Workforce Child Care Authorization Form that documents the name of the child(ren) and parent; or
- 4) Documentation that the applicant is receiving relative caregiver payment or TANF benefits on behalf of the child(ren)
- 5) An affidavit sworn to or affirmed by the child(ren)'s parent;
- 6) Official public or non-public school records; or
- 7) An affidavit from a medical professional

**NOTE:** If the documentation provided for applicant identity does not include a photo, the Family Service Specialist should obtain two forms of ID showing the parent's name (i.e. a Social Security card, voter registration card, birth record, military document, school record, paystub, employment record or insurance card).

- C. Family Size.** Family size includes the parent(s) and children currently residing together in the same dwelling unit (persons who are parents of a child in common regardless of whether they have been married and all children in their care) or persons standing in loco parentis.

Children with a child care authorization who are in licensed out-of-home placement or relative/non-relative placement should be listed as a child only in the statewide data system. A family unit shall be the individual child referred for service or related sibling group referred in a licensed out-of-home placement or relative/non-relative placement.

Family size for a family that includes a child(ren) in receipt of Relative Caregiver payment shall only include the child(ren) in receipt of the Relative Caregiver payment.

Family size for a family that includes a child(ren) in receipt of TANF child only benefits shall only include the child(ren) if the child(ren) reside with a guardian. If the children reside with a parent, the parent is included in the family size.

A teen parent will be considered a separate household unless the teen parent and his/her child(ren) are included in the teen's parent's application for school readiness.

The following documents must be included in the case file to document family size:

- A statewide information system generated form or locally developed form document the applicant's family size, with supporting documentation of each household member (e.g. birth certificate, or government issued ID)
- Family size for TANF cash assistance households and families transitioning from TANF may document family size by verifying the family size information on the child care authorization submitted by the referring agency
- Family size for children at risk of abuse or neglect may document family size by verifying the family size information on the child care authorization submitted by the referring agency.



**D. Additional Documentation Requests.** Family Service Specialists may request additional documentation if there are reason to believe that a parent has not accurately reported his/her family composition and size. Examples of situations where in a Family Service Specialist may request additional documentation include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 1) Marital status noted on supporting documentation, but no second parent reported on the application;
- 2) Contradictory family composition identified in data matches with other government agencies;
- 3) Reports of new births; **OR**
- 4) Data from child care program contradicts information reported on the parent's application.

**5.4 Citizenship and Immigration Status of Children.** To determine eligibility for School Readiness services, the citizenship and/or immigration status of each child for whom care is requested must be verified. These verifications are not required for the parent(s) and/or caretaker(s) because the child is considered the primary beneficiary of the School Readiness Program.

The Family Service Specialist shall ensure that each child considered for School Readiness services is a United States citizen or national of the United States, Puerto Rico, Guam, U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa or the Northern Mariana Islands or otherwise in the country legally.

**A. Acceptable Documentation.** All documents presented to verify legal status must be either an original or a copy certified by the issuing agency. Applicants who cannot provide verification of the child(ren)'s citizenship or legal status are not eligible to receive School Readiness assistance. Examples of acceptable documentation include:

- 1) Birth certificate showing that the child was born in the United States;
- 2) An original or certified copy of the child's U.S. birth record filed according to law with the appropriate public officer;
- 3) A U.S. passport;
- 4) Lawfully admitted alien documents\* (e.g., Forms I-94, I-94A, I-97), I551, and I7-66) with non-U.S. Passport
- 5) Religious documents recorded in the U.S. shortly after birth; Citizenship or naturalization certificate
- 6) Certificate of U.S. citizenship or naturalization;
- 7) TCA/TCC referral (Child Care Application and Authorization)
- 8) CF-FSP 5002 from DCF for "at-risk" clients. If the referring agency marked the Medicaid-eligible checkbox "yes" the agency has verified the child as a U.S. citizen





or qualified alien. If the box is not checked, the client must provide one of the documents listed above.

**NOTE:** Domestic violence/homeless referrals are not acceptable forms of citizenship verification.

**B. Temporary Residency.** An individual does not qualify for federally-funded benefits if he or she is in the U.S. for a limited time period, such as tourism or as a student, and he or she plans to return to his/her country of origin.

## 5.5 Child(ren)'s Age

**A. Effective August 1, 2013,** children must be under thirteen (13) years old to receive School Readiness services. Acceptable documents for age verification:

- 1) Original or certified copy of the child's birth record filed according to law with the appropriate public officer
- 2) Original or certified copy of the child's baptism certificate or other religious record of the child's birth, accompanied by an affidavit, that the child's parent swore to or affirmed, stating that the certificate is true and correct
- 3) Insurance policy on the child's life that has been in force for at least two years
- 4) Passport or certificate of the child's arrival in the United States.
- 5) Immunization record that signed by a public health officer or licensed practicing physician
- 6) Florida SHOTS documentation
- 7) Valid military dependent identification card
- 8) Official court documents
- 9) Protective services or TANF referrals if the referral includes age (NOTE - domestic violence/homeless referrals are not acceptable forms of age verification)

**NOTES:** If a child's parent is unable to submit any of the supporting documentation listed above the Family Service Specialist may accept an affidavit of the child's age sworn to or affirmed by the child's parent. A certificate of age, that a public health officer or licensed practicing physician signed, must accompany the affidavit and must state that the physician has examined the child and believes that the age shown on the affidavit is true and correct.

Safety is a priority for clients who have received a referral from DCF or its contracted community-based provider. A Family Service Specialist should not deny services if a child's age is not on the referral. However, the Family Service Specialist must obtain age verification within 30 days of initial eligibility determination. The Family Service Specialist should document due diligence and contact the referring agency for proof of age if unable to obtain such documentation from the parent.



## 5.6 Residency

**A. Household Residency.** Applicants must be residents of Hillsborough County. Documentation of residency must be updated annually or at each redetermination, whichever comes first. Acceptable proof of residency must show that the applicant's current primary address is located within Hillsborough County. Post Office Box addresses cannot be accepted as proof of residency.

There is no minimum length of time a person must reside in Florida to obtain benefits. The family may also be a temporary resident in a domestic violence or homeless shelter in Florida or authorized emergency management location. A client must be a Florida resident to receive TANF benefits, which the referring agency verifies during the TANF/TCA application process.

Examples of acceptable documentation to verify residency include:

- 1) Government-issued document (e.g. Florida driver's license, Florida identification card, property tax assessment for current calendar year showing a homestead exemption);
- 2) Military order showing that the child's parent is a service member in the United States Armed Forces assigned to duty in Florida;
- 3) Signed and dated rent receipt or lease agreement dated within the last 12 months of the date the child care application was submitted
- 4) Utility bill (electric, water, gas) cable, internet, or home phone bill dated within the last 12 months of the date the child care application was submitted;
- 5) Pay stub received dated within the last 12 months of the date the child care application was submitted; OR
- 6) Valid Child Care Application and Authorization (referral)

**NOTES:** If a homeless child does not have access to any of the supporting documents listed above, the Family Service Specialist may accept documentation from a homeless shelter, domestic violence shelter or authorized emergency management location stating that the child is homeless and resides in Florida.

The Family Service Specialist may accept an affidavit the child's parent swore to or affirmed by a letter a landlord or property owner wrote within 30 days of the affidavit that confirms that the child resides at the address shown in the affidavit.

**B. Location of Child Care.** Children may attend a provider in a county other than Hillsborough County. However, the Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County is responsible for eligibility determination and the issuance of a Child Care Payment Certificate.



**5.7 Purpose of Care.** Applicants for the School Readiness Program must have a verified need for School Readiness Program services in order to be determine eligible for financial assistance. To Be eligible, the client(s) must be participating in an approved activity or the parent/caretaker is disabled/incapacitated and unable to care for the child(ren)

**A. Priority Groups for Care.** Priority groups have been established for purposes of continuing to enroll children if a waiting list is in effect and for giving first opportunity for placement if there are more applicants than available slots. In order to qualify for School Readiness services, each family must have a documented need for care that meets one of the reasons listed below:

- 1) Child Protection (CP).** Valid referral from DCF or community –based care agency that states child protection as the purpose for care.
- 2) Employment (EM).** Any documentation that shows a single parent is working at least 20 hours per week. For a two-parent family, both parents must be employed or engaged in eligible work or education activities for a combined total of at least 40 hours per week.
- 3) Education & Training (ET).** Documentation that an official school schedule and proof of enrollment stating the number of classroom hours and any lab hours, date the semester/training period starts and the date it ends. Online courses are allowable. Screen prints showing the student’s enrollment status, hours and classes in which enrolled from the educational website are also forms of acceptable documentation. However, a coalition should consider the hours that a school-age child is in school. The parent must be able to document a combination of 20 hours of class/labs to meet the purpose of care.
- 4) Employment and Training/Education (TT).** Documentation that shows the client is participating in both employment and training/education for a combination of 20 hours per week.
- 5) Disability (DI).** A current award letter that shows individual claiming disability receives Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/SSA disability or a doctor’s statement that states the individual is permanently or temporarily disabled and, if temporarily disabled, the anticipated duration of the disability. If the parent requests and exemption from the work requirements due to age, then he or she must provide documentation of determination from a licensed physician or evidence of retirement benefits.
- 6) Job Search (JS).** Valid DCF or Workforce referral that states work activity is the purpose for care. Loss of employment verification for a break in employment for an economically disadvantaged family (limited to 90 days).



- 7) **Work Activity (WA).** Valid DCF or Workforce referral that states work activity is the purpose for care.
  - 8) **Migrant Employed (ME).** Employment documentation from a migrant industry job (e.g. farmworker and seasonal migrant/farmworker) at least 20 hours per week.
  - 9) **Special Needs (SN).** IEP from local school district.
  - 10) **Respite Services (WR).** Valid DCF/Workforce referral that states a TANF recipient is receiving respite services in an out-of-home residential treatment for alcoholism, drug addiction, alcohol abuse or a mental health disorder, with certification from a physician licensed under chapter 458 or chapter 459, instead of a work activity while participating in treatment.
  - 11) **Diversion.** Valid DCF referral that states diversion and protection/emergency is the purpose of care.
  - 12) **Relative Caregiver (RCG).** Child protection (CP) must be listed as the purpose of care. Case file must contain documentation of the current RCG payment.
- B.** When a parent is authorized for School Readiness Program and fails to report in timely manner that an adult household member is no longer participating in their approved purpose of care the case should be evaluated. The parent(s) will be given 90 days from the last day of participation in their approved purpose to care to reestablish purpose of care. If the parent(s) does not reestablish a purpose of care, the family's eligibility for services will be terminated.



# Chapter 6

## Verification of Family Income

*Each family (including at-risk clients) applying for School Readiness Services must complete the School Readiness Income Worksheet for Eligibility and Parent Copayment (SR-100) to establish the child's eligibility as well as the applicable parent fee based on the Coalition's sliding fee scale. Form SR-100 must be completed at the initial eligibility determination and at all subsequent redetermination.*

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**6.1 Calculating Family Income.** When the parents (legal or biological), married or unmarried, reside together in the home the Family Service Specialist must include any income both parent receive in the calculation of the total family income. If a parent lives in the same home with a roommate, friend or relative who is not the child's biological or legal parent, then these household members are optional and their income does not have to be reported as part of the total family income.

**6.2 Definition of Countable Income.** Countable income is the portion of the combine gross income from all sources of all members of the family unit who are 18 years or older. Income earned by a currently enrolled high school student who, since attaining the age of 18 years, or a student with a disability who, since attaining the age of 22 years, has not terminated school enrollment or received a high school diploma, high school equivalency diploma, special diploma, or certificate of high school completion is not included in the family unit's earned income.

**6.3 Supporting Documentation.** Parents must provide information regarding the house hold income in order to determine eligibility for services and/or establish the parent copayment. Acceptable forms of documentation are as follows:

**A. Employment income.** Four weeks of current and consecutive pay stubs, using gross income before any deductions, including pretax deductions. When the parent receives biweekly pay, the Family Service Specialist should request two current and consecutive pay stubs. For semi-monthly the Family Service Specialist should request two months of consecutive pay stubs. If paid monthly, the parent is required to submit 1 pay stub. If paid on a weekly basis, the parent must submit 4 consecutive pay stubs.

When the parent's employment has not been long enough to meet the standard above or when the provided pay stubs do not reflect the parent's current pay status, the Family Service Specialist must give the parent an income verification form for the parent's employer to complete and sign. The specialist will then use hours worked times pay rate to calculate future earnings.

If neither of the above sources is available, the Family Service Specialist may accept a signed statement from the employer dated within 4 weeks of the parent's application for



school readiness funding or a signed contract for employment that has a termination date of not less than 9 months from the date of application for school readiness funding.

- B. Income from Bonuses.** If the Family Service Specialist verifies the parent received a bonus, the specialist must determine the frequency by contacting the parent's employer. If the specialist determine that the parent receives the bonus less frequently than month, the specialist should deduct the bonus from the pay amount, annualize the income and then add the bonus back into the annual calculation based on the frequency the parent receives the bonus.

*Example - The parent receives a \$200 quarterly bonus. The Family Service Specialist deducts \$200 from the pay stubs. The specialist annualizes the income which is \$1,000 per month (\$12,000). The specialist adds into the annual income the \$200 x four quarters, or \$800 per year.*

$$\$12,000 + 800 = 12,800$$

The Family Service Specialist counts in the annual average income calculation overtime pay the parent consistently receives. To get the gross annual income amount, the specialist should use the last six weeks of income and include the overtime pay listed on the pay stub.

**NOTE:** If the parent received overtime pay only once within the last six weeks or the parent does not expect overtime payment to recur, the specialist should calculate the annual income without including the overtime pay. If the specialist cannot determine the frequency by reviewing the pay stubs, the specialist must contact the employer to verify the income.

- C. Income from Tips.** Many employees (e.g. waiters/waitresses, hair stylists/barbers, hotel employees, cab drivers, etc.) receive tips as part of their compensation. The Family Service Specialist should contact the parent's employer to determine if the pay stubs fully represent income plus tips. If not, the specialist should ask the employer to estimate the parent's weekly average tip amount beyond what his/her pay stub declares as earning. Case notes should reflect whether the parent's pay stub declares all tips, who verifies that the information and when the verification occurred.

A parent's attestation stating the amount of tips he/she received under the penalty of perjury is acceptable. The case history notes must contain an explanation of why the preferred verification source was not available.

**NOTE:** Employer contact is the preferred method of verifying tips.

- D. Income from Self-Employment.** When an applicant for School Readiness Services is self-employed, the Family Service Specialist should make a determination whether the parent meets the purpose of care. A parent does not have to earn minimum wage in order to be



consider self-employed. If the business is new, it is reasonable to allow a startup period, which may vary from two to six months

For initial eligibility determination, eligibility shall not be denied solely because the applicant earns less than the minimum wage. If the applicant makes less than minimum wage through self-employment at the initial application, the authorized eligibility period will be twelve (12) months. However at subsequent eligibility determinations, the participant must be able to document that self-employment activities generate consistent business gains. Once minimum wage is established by self-employment activities, subsequent eligibility may continue to be authorized for twelve (12) months.

Sufficient documentation must be provided to validate that a minimum of 20 hours is worked per week. If, at the time of application or redetermination, the parent has been self-employed for a reasonable period (a guideline would be more than six (6) months) and is showing a consistent business loss, the specialist should ask additional questions, such as "How do you meet household expenses if the only income source in the home is operating at a loss?" Based on the response, the specialist should decide how to proceed. If the explanation is not adequate, the specialist may require additional documentation. Self-employment determinations vary, and must be handled on a case-by-case basis.

A self-employed individual must verify earned income at application and redetermination. In addition, these individuals must make all business records available to the Family Service Specialist. Family Service Specialists determine a self-employed parent's gross wages by deducting certain expenses from business, professional enterprise or partnership receipts. Examples of business records include:

- 1) Income tax records necessary to determine gross income and deductible expenses
- 2) Purchases
- 3) Sales
- 4) Salaries
- 5) Capital improvements
- 6) Utility, transportation and other operating costs
- 7) Work calendars for tips and recording pay as received
- 8) IRS Tax Schedule C from the most recent year, if reflective of current earning. The specialist should determine income from Schedule C by averaging it over the number of months of employment

If the parent filed no taxes or his/her business is new, the parent must provide his/her current ledger/books with receipts showing business expenses and the time the parent spent "on the job" (e.g. calendars). If using books, the specialist cannot allow deductions without receipts for expenses. The parent must keep a record of incurred expenses. Examples of allowable costs of producing self-employment income include, but are not limited to:



- 1) Identifiable costs of labor (e.g. salaries, employer's share of Social Security, insurance)
- 2) Stock, raw materials, seed fertilizer and feed for livestock
- 3) Rent and cost of building maintenance
- 4) Business telephone costs
- 5) Costs of operating a motor vehicle when necessary in connection with operating the business
- 6) Interest paid to purchase income-producing property
- 7) Cost of meals and equipment for children for whom the parent provides child care in the home
- 8) Travel and lodging away from home

To calculate income, take the gross receipts minus expenses. Gross receipts include the value of all goods sold or services rendered. Expenses include the cost of goods purchased as well as rent and utilities for the business property. Any income or expense recognized by the Internal Revenue Service is recognized as the same for School Readiness purposes.

The parent must be able to demonstrate income (receipts) derived from self-employment. However, the parent may incur an operating loss which would reduce his/her income to \$0.

- E. Income from Casual Labor.** Some individuals who are considered self-employed may only do lawn work or side jobs. Acceptable forms of documentation to establish income for such jobs could be written statements from each employer and a work calendar that shows dates the individual worked, for whom and amount of income received. The specialist can then use these calendars as verification but only when no documentation exists.

**NOTE:** Case notes should clearly explain why other types of earnings documentation are not available.

- F. Income from Child Support.** Verification from child support enforcement or clerk of the court website showing the gross amount the household receives on the child's behalf and the period over which the absent parent pays it. Use six weeks or two months based on payment schedule. Access child support verification: <https://www.myfloridacounty.com/cse/pub> or call 877-326-8689.

Written statement from the absent parent indicating what the absent parent paid over the last six weeks including the dates the absent parent made the payments. The parent can submit copies of checks or canceled checks to accompany written statement or in lieu of written documents. The parent can use a court order if the court order was recently issued.





If for any reason the first two types of documentation are not available, a parent's attestation under penalty of perjury stating the amount of child support he/she received or did not receive is acceptable.

**NOTE:** The case notes must explain why the first two sources of documentation were not available. The specialist must enter into the narrative the date, phone number and description of what occurred when attempting to contact an absent parent who is paying court-ordered or non-court ordered child support. The specialist must document a minimum of two attempts to reach the absent parent.

Additionally, the specialist should then discuss with the custodial parent what record-keeping the parent should use to establish child support payments in the future. For example, the absent sends a check two to three times per month. The specialist should request copies of two months of checks. If the absent parent is paying in cash, then the custodial parent should maintain a calendar showing dates and payment amounts.

- G. Income from Alimony.** Court order showing amount ordered and a written statement from the payee that the payee is receiving the amount as stipulated. The parent can also submit copies of payments for six weeks.

When the recipient states he/she is not receiving alimony as ordered, the Family Service Specialist must obtain proof of the last six weeks of payment (two months if paid monthly) from the source. This can include copies of pays stubs or payment receipts for the last six weeks. If the parent does not receive alimony weekly, the former spouse/partner should submit a written, signed and dated statement explaining what payments he/she has made and when. The statement should include the address and phone number of this person in case the specialist has additional questions. The former spouse must sign the statement.

- H. Income from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).** The Family Service Specialist must verify the parent's receipt of TANF funds with the case manager or by an award letter showing how much the recipient receives and who the grant includes. To verify TANF see: <http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida>.

Acceptable documents include the referral on which the referring caseworker includes income amount, award letter or ACCESS screen print the client initiates. TANF recipients can now obtain a benefit letter from ACCESS, which will include income counted and benefits authorized, from any computer with Internet access.

- I. Relative Caregiver (RCG) Funding.** The Family Service Specialist must verify the parent's receipt by contacting the case manager or an award letter/ACCESS printout showing how much the recipient receives and who the grant includes or a letter from DCF stating the individual is a relative caregiver.



**NOTE:** Grant amounts for Relative Caregiver are:

- Ages 0-5 - \$242 per child
- Ages 6-12 - \$249 per child

**J. Income from Social Security Administration (SSA).** This type of income is referred to as Social Security. In order to qualify for this benefit, the individual must have worked at least five years and paid into Social Security. This type of insurance is not means-tested but based on the amount of money paid in for a minimum of five years.

Once the beneficiary reaches retirement age, becomes permanently disabled or dies (after the period of pay-in) the individual, spouse or dependent children can receive benefits on the beneficiary's claim. In the event that the primary beneficiary dies, the surviving spouse and children can receive benefits under the primary beneficiary's claim. Child can receive benefits as a survivor until they turn 18 or complete undergraduate school (college). The amount the SSA recipient and his/her dependents receive depends on what the primary beneficiary paid in from his/her employment. Documentation of SSA income includes:

- 1) Award letter from the Social Security Administration (SSA). SSA updates this letter annually. The amount may change each January and the award letters are usually updated in November.
- 2) Written letter from the Social Security Administration showing current year of monthly gross payments before deductions, if any. If documenting a disability, the Family Service Specialist should determine from whose claim the SSA draws the benefit in order to verify the claimant is, in fact, disabled.

**NOTE:** The Family Service Specialist should not accept a check to verify the amount the parent receives, as this may not be a gross monthly payment amount.

**K. Supplemental Security Income (SSI).** The Social Security Administration pays SSI to disabled individuals. The SSA can pay SSI to children from birth or to a disabled adult. The SSA does not base SSI on work history but instead only on the individual's disability. This is a means-tested benefit and has income and asset limits.

Effective January 2014, the SSI benefit for an eligible individual is \$733 per month and \$1,100 for a couple. Family Service Specialists should consider SSI benefits received by an adult as income; benefits received by children are not counted as income. Additional information regarding SSI is available at: <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/EN-05-11015pdf>. Documentation of SSI includes the following:

- 1) Award letter from the SSA. This letter is updated annually in January.
- 2) Written letter from the SSA showing current year of monthly gross benefits before deductions. If the SSA withholds income from SSA/SSI to recover an overpayment, exclude the portion withheld from income.



**L. Reemployment compensation/worker's compensation.** If a family reports receiving reemployment compensation or worker's compensation, the Family Service Specialist must verify such income. Documentation includes:

- 1) Recent award letter showing gross amount of benefits an individual received
- 2) Written statement on letterhead from the employer paying worker's compensation, signed by authorized personnel

**Note:** Receiving this income often signals a loss of purpose for care. The Family Service Specialist serving a family receiving this income should review purpose of care and may need to initiate a change in eligibility. A parent can receive 90 days to seek employment after becoming unemployed.

**M. Income fluctuations.** For families that have irregular earnings (fluctuations) due to seasonal or other types of work schedules such as retail employment during the holidays or tourism during the summer, income should be calculated as follows:

Calculate the average income for the previous 12 months. The average must reflect income changes that occur during the eligibility period, including situations in which a family had monthly income above 85% of the state median income (SMI) for part of the year and lower income in other months. For situations where a family may not have 12 months of pay stubs, the family must submit an employer verification statement that affirms the average annual income.

**N. Other potentially countable income.** This may be earned or unearned income. However, the family must receive this income on a regular basis. If the family indicates that a family member receives any type of regularly recurring monies, the Family Service Specialist must verify the income from its source.

Documentation must also identify the frequency and the gross amount of income the individual receives. Any such monies should be included in the calculation of the total family income.

Examples of other countable income include:

- 1) Retirement benefits – Requires an award letter showing current monthly amount.
- 2) Veteran benefits – Requires current yearly award letter stating the benefit amount.
- 3) Cash gifts received regularly – Requires written statement from the source with the amount and how often the parent receives the gift(s).
- 4) Recurring cash contribution – Requires average of two months of payments.
- 5) Work release payments- requires monthly benefit amount
- 6) Money the parent received from an employer as an employee benefit for child care paid directly to employee -Requires amount paid per month.

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**6.4 Excluded Income.** The following sources of earned and unearned income are excluded when calculating the family's total gross income.



- 1) Adoption benefits/adoption subsidy payments – If a foster parent/legal guardian/relative adopts a child and he/she receives adoption benefits, this income is not counted in the family's total gross income. Requires a current monthly statement showing the adoption benefit amount.
- 2) Disaster relief or other forms of temporary assistance for families in natural disaster areas.
- 3) Alimony (paid out). In order to exclude alimony, a parent must submit a court order and proof of payment or pay stubs showing that the former spouse/partner is receiving the alimony payment. Deduct the amount paid out from the total family income.
- 4) Earned income tax credits or dependent care credits
- 5) Federal nutrition programs – Examples SNAP, WIC and school meals
- 6) Food stamp benefits – Specialists must include these benefits in EFS to meet federal reporting requirements. However, benefits are not included in income calculations.
- 7) Foster care payments
- 8) RCG payments – Current award letter showing the monthly amount received. This income must be verified before it is excluded.
- 9) Housing allotments, Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) or energy assistance
- 10) Foster parent and court ordered relative and non-relative caregiver income – individual receiving these payments should not be considered part of the family unit
- 11) Independent Living Grant
- 12) Lump Sum Payment
- 13) Military housing assistance or other military allotment/bonuses



# Chapter 7

## Determining Eligibility for Children at Risk of Welfare Dependency

*This chapter explains how a family can access School Readiness Services if the parent is receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).*

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### 7.1 Priority Access for TANF Families

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCF) and/or the local workforce board may authorize School Readiness Program services for a family receiving TANF that is subject to federal work requirements. These families are the first priority for service. Families must also maintain compliance with statutory welfare transition program requirements. Compliance shall be monitored by the referring agency.

Eligibility is based on a documented child care authorization issued by DCF or the local workforce agency. All children will be authorized for child care funding for the period indicated on the referral. The parent no longer maintains purpose for care under this eligibility category upon the expiration or termination of the child care referral.

The family shall be informed that when the child care authorization expires the parent will have three (3) months to establish a purpose for care under another eligibility category to continue to receive services for the remainder of the initial 12-month authorization period. Purpose for care must be reestablished no later than three (3) months after the child care authorization expires. A family will not be limited to a single three (3) month period to reestablish a purpose of care during the 12-month eligibility period.

**7.2 TANF Cash Assistance – Not Working (TCAN).** Child care for a child from a family that includes a parent (including an eligible TANF refugee), who is receiving temporary cash assistance (TCA) under chapter 414F.S., and subject to the federal work requirements, who is not working but is involved in activities assigned by the referring agency. In two parent families, both parents must have a purpose for care as documented on the authorizing referral.

- A. Purpose of Care.** Education & Training (ET), Job Search (JS) or Work Activity (WA).
- B. Work Requirements.** Based on the federal work requirement activity assigned by the referring agency.
- C. Child Age Requirement.** Birth to younger than 13 years.
- D. Referral.** From Welfare Transition Program/local workforce board
- E. Income Eligible.** Family must be at or below 185% of federal poverty level (FPL) as determined by DCF.



- F. Household Size.** The household size is based on all children younger than 18 years of age and household members who are 18 years of age or older who are included in the TANF assistance group.
- G. Countable Income.** Countable income is defined as unearned income from all household members who are included in the TANF assistance group. Employment income should not exist for this category. Exclude income earned by children including children currently enrolled in high school who has reached 18 years of age or a child 22 years of age with a disability who is enrolled in high school.
- H. Authorization Period: Referral based** – maximum eligibility period is 6 months. If the parent does not receive an additional referral, the parent shall be given 3 months from the expiration date of the referral to provide documentation to establish a purpose for care under another eligibility category to continue receiving services for the remainder of the initial 12-month authorization period.
- I. School Readiness Priority: 1, 9**

**7.3 Temporary Cash Assistance Working (TCAW).** Child care for a child from a family that includes a parent (including an eligible TANF refugee), who is employed and receiving temporary cash assistance (TCA) under chapter 414F.S., and subject to the federal work requirements. In two parent families, both parents must have a purpose for care as documented on the authorizing referral.

- A. Applicable Purpose of Care.** Education & Training (EM), Employment & Training, and/or Education (TT).
- B. Work Requirements.** Based on the federal work requirement activity assigned by the referring agency.
- C. Child Age Requirement.** Birth to younger than 13 years.
- D. Referral.** From Welfare Transition Program/local workforce board
- E. Income Eligible.** Family must be at or below 185% of federal poverty level (FPL) as determined by DCF.
- F. Household Size.** The household size is based on all children younger than 18 years of age and household members who are 18 years of age or older who are included in the TANF assistance group.
- G. Countable Income.** Countable income is defined as earned and unearned income from all household members who are included in the TANF assistance group. Exclude income earned by children including children currently enrolled in high school who has reached 18 years of age or a child 22 years of age with a disability who is enrolled in high school.
- J. Authorization Period: Referral based** – maximum eligibility period is 6 months. If the parent does not receive an additional referral, the parent shall be given 3 months from the expiration date of the referral to provide documentation to establish a purpose for care under another eligibility category to continue receiving services for the remainder of the initial 12-month authorization period.
- H. School Readiness Priority – 1,9**



**7.4 Temporary Cash Assistance Respite (RCI).** Child care for a child from a family that includes a parent who is receiving temporary cash assistance (TCA) under chapter 414F.S., and subject to the federal work requirements, who is not working but is involved in respite activities assigned by the referring agency. Participants may participate in an out-of-home residential treatment for alcoholism, drug addiction alcohol abuse, or a mental health disorder, as certified by a physician licensed under chapter 458 or chapter 459, instead of a work activity while participating while in treatment.

The participant will be required to comply with the course of treatment necessary for the individual to resume work activity participation. The treatment agency will be required to notify the referring agency with an initial estimate of when the participant will have completed the course of treatment and be ready to resume full participation in the Welfare Transition Temporary Cash Assistance Program. Care may be provided for up to 24 hours per day.

- A. Purpose of Care.** Respite Services (WR).
- B. Work Requirements.** Based on the federal work requirement activity assigned by the referring agency.
- C. Child Age Requirement.** Birth to younger than 13 years.
- D. Referral.** From Welfare Transition Program/local workforce board
- E. Income Eligible.** Family must be at or below 185% of federal poverty level (FPL) as determined by DCF.
- F. Household Size.** The household size is based on all children younger than 18 years of age and household members who are 18 years of age or older who are included in the TANF assistance group.
- G. Countable Income.** Countable income is defined as earned and unearned income from all household members who are included in the TANF assistance group. Exclude income earned by children including children currently enrolled in high school who has reached 18 years of age or a child 22 years of age with a disability who is enrolled in high school.
- K. Authorization Period:** Based on documented referral not to exceed 60 days. If the parent does not receive an additional referral, the parent shall be given 3 months from the expiration date of the referral to provide documentation to establish a purpose for care under another eligibility category to continue receiving services for the remainder of the initial 12-month authorization period.
- H. School Readiness Priority – 1, 9**

**7.5 TANF Child Only (BG3-28A).** Child care for a child who is a recipient of temporary cash assistance as a TANF “child only case” who has been placed with a relative permanently or on a short-term basis. Must have documentation from the Department of Children and Family Services showing TANF amount with the recipient’s name. Guardian(s) must meet the purpose of care requirement.

- A. Purpose of Care.** Employment (EM), Education & Training (ET), both Employment and Training and/or Education (TT) or Disability (DI).



- B. Work Requirements.** Guardians must be working or engaged in eligible education/training activities at least 20 hours per week or may be exempt from work requirements due to age or disability as determine and documented by a physician licensed under chapter 458 or chapter 459.
- C. Child Age Requirement.** Birth to younger than 13 years.
- D. Referral.** NO (verification of TANF child only payment)
- E. Income Eligible.** Yes – Child’s income at or below 150% of federal poverty level (FPL) for entry into program, at or below 200% of FPL for continued eligibility.
- F. Household Size.** Child(ren) only.
- G. Countable Income.** Child(ren)’s income only.
- L. Authorization Period:** 12 months or less. If the parent does not receive an additional referral, the parent shall be given 3 months from the expiration date of the referral to provide documentation to establish a purpose for care under another eligibility category to continue receiving services for the remainder of the initial 12-month authorization period.
- H. School Readiness Priority – 3, 6, 9**

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**7.5 At Risk Relative Care Giver (RCG).** Child care for a child who is a recipient of the Relative Caregiver payment and determined to be a court ordered dependent by a Florida court and placed in a relative's home by the DCF/contracted provider.

- A. Purpose for Care:** Child Protection (CP)
- B. Work Requirements:** N/A
- C. Child Age Requirements:** Birth to younger than 13.
- D. Referral:** No -- Verification of Eligible, current RCG payment is CCDF required.
- E. Income Eligible:** Eligibility is not dependent on income, but if available should be used to calculate parent fee.
- F. Household Size:** Related child(ren) only.
- G. Countable Income:** If available, count child(ren)'s income only.
- H. Authorization period:** The child may continue to maintain eligibility under the relative care giver category for up to 12-months, as long as the guardian is in receipt of relative caregiver payments. The guardian shall be informed that when receipt of relative care giver payment ends the guardian will have three (3) months to provide documentation to establish a purpose for care under another eligibility category to continue the remainder of the initial 12 month-authorization period.
- I. School Readiness Priority – 2, 5, 9**

**7.6 Temporary Child Care Assistance Applicant (APP).** Temporary child care for a child from a family that is economically disadvantaged who has applied for temporary cash assistance (TCA), including an up-front diversion payment in order to seek employment.

- A. Purpose of Care:** Employment (EM), Education & Training (ET), Employment and Education and/or Training (TT), Job Search (JS) or Work Activity (WA).
- B. Work Requirements:** Based on the federal work requirement activity assigned by the referring agency.





- C. Child Age Requirements:** Birth to younger than 13.
- D. Referral:** YES – Welfare Transition Program/local workforce board
- E. Income Eligible:**
- F. Household Size:** All children younger than 18 and household members who are 18 years of age or older who are currently residing in the same dwelling unit.
- G. Countable Income:** Earned and countable unearned income from all household members who are a part of the family unit. Exclude income earned by children, including a 18-year old child who is enrolled in high school and/or a 22-year old with a disability who is enrolled in high school
- M. Authorization Period:** One 30 day period. If the parent does not receive an additional referral, the parent shall be given 3 months from the expiration date of the referral to provide documentation to establish a purpose for care under another eligibility category to continue receiving services for the remainder of the initial 12-month authorization period.
- H. School Readiness Priority:** 3, 6, 9



# Chapter 8

## Determining Eligibility for Children at Risk of Abuse or Neglect

*This chapter outlines how families that are referred by the Department of Children and Family Services can access the care they need.*

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**8.1 Eligibility for Children at Risk of Abuse or Neglect.** Eligibility in this category is not dependent on family income or work requirements and is based on a documented referral from the Department of Children and Family Services or its contracted provider, DCF-designated Lead Homeless Coalition Continuum of Care agency or Certified Domestic Violence Center.

Child care authorization for at-risk and protective services categories shall be valid for the time period authorized by the referring agency. A child may continue to maintain eligibility under this category as long as there is a current and valid child care authorization. Child care shall be authorized for twelve (12) months. Each time a child care authorization is renewed during the 12-month authorization of child care funding, child care will continue in increments defined by the referring agency.

At the initial determination for at-risk child care authorizations, the parent shall be informed that when the referral expires or is terminated, the parent will have three (3) months to provide documentation to establish a purpose for care under another eligibility category to continue receiving services for the remainder of the initial 12-month authorization period. A purpose for care must be established no later than three (3) months after the initial referral expires. A family will not be limited to a single three (3) month period to reestablish a purpose of care during the 12-month eligibility period.

If an additional referral is granted to the parent that extends care beyond the initial 12-month eligibility period, care shall be authorized for an additional 12-month eligibility period if funding is available. The time period that extends beyond the initial authorization will be counted toward the subsequent authorization period.

Prior to dis-enrolling any child in this category, the Coalition or its designee must contact the referring agency to verify the child's continued eligibility.

**NOTE:** Effective August 1, 2013, priority is given to at-risk children younger than 9 years of age. Children ages 9 to 13-years old should be placed on the waitlist unless all children birth to school entry have been enrolled.



**8.2 Definition of “At-Risk” Child.** An “at-risk” child is:

- A. Abuse, Neglect, Abandonment or Exploitation.** A child from a family under investigation by the Department of Children and Family Services or a designated sheriff's department for child abuse, neglect, abandonment, or exploitation.
- B. Diversion.** A child in a diversion program provided by the Department of Children and Family Services or its contracted provider. The child's family must be actively participating and complying in department-prescribed activities including education, health services, or work.
- C. Supervision.** A child from a family that is under supervision by Department of Children and Family Services or a contracted service provider as a result of abuse, neglect, abandonment or exploitation.
- D. Out of Home Placement.** A child placed in court-ordered, long-term custody or under the guardianship of a relative or nonrelative.
- E. Domestic Violence.** A child in the custody of a parent who is a victim of domestic violence residing in a certified domestic violence center.
- F. Homeless.** A child in the custody of a parent who is considered homeless as verified by a Department of Children and Family Services certified homeless shelter.

**8.3 At Risk Diversion (11 D).** Child care for a child who is in a diversion program provided by DCF/contractor and who is from a family that is actively participating and complying in DCF-prescribed activities.

- A. Applicable Purpose for Care:** Child Protection (CP)
- B. Work Requirements:** N/A
- C. Child Age Requirements:** Birth to younger than 13.
- D. Referral:** Yes from DCF or contract community-based provider.
- E. Income Eligible:** Eligibility is not dependent on income, but if available should be used to calculate parent fee.
- F. Household Size:** All children younger than 18 years and household members who are 18 years of age or older who are currently residing in the same dwelling unit.
- G. Countable Income:** If available, count earned and countable unearned income from all household members who are part of the family unit. Exclude income earned by children including a concurrently enrolled high school student who has attained 18 years or a concurrently enrolled student who has attained 22 years.
- H. Authorization period:** Referrals are for 60 day increments but not to exceed 6 months in total. A new referral is required for each of the 60day increments. Child care shall continue in increments defined by the referring agency. Staff shall authorize child care funding for twelve (12) months from the date of the referral. If the parent does not receive an additional referral, the parent shall be given 3 months from the expiration or



termination date of the referral to provide documentation to establish a purpose for care under another eligibility category to continue receiving services for the remainder of the initial 12-month authorization period.

**I. School Readiness Priority:** 2, 5, 9

**8.4 At Risk Homeless (HOME).** Child care for a child from a family that is in the custody of a parent/guardian who is homeless as verified by a DCF designated-lead agency on homelessness and is participating with a DCF designated-lead agency's continuum of care services plan for homeless families.

**A. Purpose for Care:** Child Protection (CP)

**B. Work Requirements:** N/A

**C. Child Age Requirements:** Birth to younger than 13.

**D. Referral:** Yes from DCF or contract community-based provider

**E. Income Eligible:** Eligibility is not dependent on income, but if available should be used to calculate parent fee.

**F. Household Size:** All children younger than 18 years and household members who are 18 years of age or older who are currently residing in the same dwelling unit.

**G. Countable Income:** If available, count earned and countable unearned income from all household members who are part of the family unit. Exclude income earned by children including a concurrently enrolled high school student who has attained 18 years or a concurrently enrolled student who has attained 22 years.

**J. Authorization period:** 6 months. Child care shall continue in increments defined by the referring agency. Staff shall authorize child care funding for twelve (12) months from the date of the referral. If the parent does not receive an additional referral, the parent shall be given 3 months from the expiration or termination date of the referral to provide documentation to establish a purpose for care under another eligibility category to continue receiving services for the remainder of the initial 12-month authorization period.

**H. Additional Information.**

School Readiness Priority - 2, 5, 9

**8.5 At-Risk Domestic Violence (DOM).** Child care for a child from a family that is in the custody of a parent who is a victim of domestic violence and is residing in a certified domestic violence center.

**A. Purpose for Care:** Child Protection (CP)

**B. Work Requirements:** N/A

**C. Child Age Requirements:** Birth to younger than 13.

**D. Referral:** Yes from DCF or contract community-based provider.

**E. Income Eligible:** Eligibility is not dependent on income, but if available should be used to calculate parent fee.

**F. Household Size:** All children younger than 18 years and household members who are 18 years of age or older who are currently residing in the same dwelling unit.

**G. Countable Income:** If available, count earned and countable unearned income from all household members who are part of the family unit. Exclude income earned by children



including a concurrently enrolled high school student who has attained 18 years or a concurrently enrolled student who has attained 22 years.

- K. Authorization period:** 3 months. Child care shall continue in increments defined by the referring agency. Staff shall authorize child care funding for twelve (12) months from the date of the referral. If the parent does not receive an additional referral, the parent shall be given 3 months from the expiration or termination date of the referral to provide documentation to establish a purpose for care under another eligibility category to continue receiving services for the remainder of the initial 12-month authorization period.
- H. School Readiness Priority:** 2, 5, 9

**8.6 At-Risk In Home (11).** Description: Child care for a child from a family that is receiving in-home protective services and is under supervision by DCF/contracted provider for abuse, neglect abandonment and/or exploitation.

- A. Purpose for Care:** Child Protection (CP)
- B. Work Requirements:** N/A
- C. Child Age Requirements:** Birth to younger than 13.
- D. Referral:** Yes from DCF or contract community-based provider.
- E. Income Eligible:** Eligibility is not dependent on income, but if available should be used to calculate parent fee.
- F. Household Size:** All children younger than 18 years and household members who are 18 years of age or older who are currently residing in the same dwelling unit.
- G. Countable Income:** If available, count earned and countable unearned income from all household members who are part of the family unit. Exclude income earned by children including a concurrently enrolled high school student who has attained 18 years or a concurrently enrolled student who has attained 22 years.
- L. Authorization period:** 6 months. Child care shall continue in increments defined by the referring agency. Staff shall authorize child care funding for twelve (12) months from the date of the referral. If the parent does not receive an additional referral, the parent shall be given 3 months from the expiration or termination date of the referral to provide documentation to establish a purpose for care under another eligibility category to continue receiving services for the remainder of the initial 12-month authorization period.
- H. Additional Information.**  
School Readiness Priority - 2, 5, 9  
Billing Group – BG1

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**8.7 At-Risk Foster Care (13).** Child care for a child in foster care protective services under supervision by DCF/contracted provider for abuse, neglect abandonment, or exploitation.

- A. Purpose for Care:** Child Protection (CP)
- B. Work Requirements:** N/A
- C. Child Age Requirements:** Birth to younger than 13.
- D. Referral:** Yes from DCF or contract community-based provider.



- E. Income Eligible:** Eligibility is not dependent on income, but if available should be used to calculate parent fee.
- F. Household Size:** Related child(ren) on the referral only.
- G. Countable Income:** If available, count child(ren)'s income only.
- M. Authorization period:** 6 months. Child care shall continue in increments defined by the referring agency. Staff shall authorize child care funding for twelve (12) months from the date of the referral. If the parent does not receive an additional referral, the parent shall be given 3 months from the expiration or termination date of the referral to provide documentation to establish a purpose for care under another eligibility category to continue receiving services for the remainder of the initial 12-month authorization period.
- H. School Readiness Priority:** 2, 5, 9

**8.8 At-Risk Out of Home (14).** Child care for a child placed in court-ordered custody of a relative/non- relative by DCF/contracted provider and receiving out-of- home protective services.

- A. Purpose for Care:** Child Protection (CP)
- B. Work Requirements:** N/A
- C. Child Age Requirements:** Birth to younger than 13.
- D. Referral:** Yes from DCF or contract community-based provider.
- E. Income Eligible:** Eligibility is not dependent on income, but if available should be used to calculate parent fee.
- F. Household Size:** Related child(ren) on the referral only.
- G. Countable Income:** If available, count child(ren)'s income only.
- N. Authorization period:** 6 months. Child care shall continue in increments defined by the referring agency. Staff shall authorize child care funding for twelve (12) months from the date of the referral. If the parent does not receive an additional referral, the parent shall be given 3 months from the expiration or termination date of the referral to provide documentation to establish a purpose for care under another eligibility category to continue receiving services for the remainder of the initial 12-month authorization period.
- H. School Readiness Priority:** 2, 5, 9

**8.9 Protective Investigation In Home (IN).** Child care for a child from a family who has been referred for investigation by DCF/contracted provider for abuse, neglect abandonment and/or exploitation. Child remains in the home with the alleged perpetrator.

- A. Purpose for Care:** Child Protection (CP)
- B. Work Requirements:** N/A
- C. Child Age Requirements:** Birth to younger than 13.
- D. Referral:** Yes from DCF or contract community-based provider.
- E. Income Eligible:** Eligibility is not dependent on income, but if available should be used to calculate parent fee.
- F. Household Size:** All children younger than 18 years and household members who are 18 years of age or older who are currently residing in the same dwelling unit.



- G. Countable Income:** If available, count earned and countable unearned income from all household members who are part of the family unit. Exclude income earned by children including a concurrently enrolled high school student who has attained 18 years or a concurrently enrolled student who has attained 22 years.
- O. Authorization period:** 60 day increments but not to exceed 6 months in total. Child care shall continue in increments defined by the referring agency. Staff shall authorize child care funding for twelve (12) months from the date of the referral. If the parent does not receive an additional referral, the parent shall be given 3 months from the expiration or termination date of the referral to provide documentation to establish a purpose for care under another eligibility category to continue receiving services for the remainder of the initial 12-month authorization period.
- H. School Readiness Priority:** 2, 5, 9

**8.10 Protective Investigation Out of Home (OUT).** Child care for a child from a family who has been referred for investigation by DCF/contracted provider for abuse, neglect abandonment and/or exploitation. Child has been removed from the alleged perpetrator's home where the investigation is being conducted.

- A. Purpose for Care:** Child Protection (CP)
- B. Work Requirements:** N/A
- C. Child Age Requirements:** Birth to younger than 13.
- D. Referral:** Yes from DCF or contract community-based provider.
- E. Income Eligible:** Eligibility is not dependent on income, but if available should be used to calculate parent fee.
- F. Household Size:** Related child(ren) on the referral only.
- G. Countable Income:** If available, count child(ren)'s income only.
- P. Authorization period:** 60 day increments but not to exceed 6 months in total. Child care shall continue in increments defined by the referring agency. Staff shall authorize child care funding for twelve (12) months from the date of the referral. If the parent does not receive an additional referral, the parent shall be given 3 months from the expiration or termination date of the referral to provide documentation to establish a purpose for care under another eligibility category to continue receiving services for the remainder of the initial 12-month authorization period.
- I. School Readiness Priority:** 2, 5, 9

**8.11 Additional Information for Processing At-Risk Applications.**

- A.** Children with referrals that are marked under the custody area as "DCF Placement & Care/Custody" **MUST** attend a licensed child care provider or a school-based school readiness program. This includes children in foster care placements, licensed group homes or out-of-home relative or non-relative placements. A guardian may receive a waiver from DCF to attend a child care facility that is exempt from licensure.
- B.** Children should not be denied services while the Family Service Specialist tries to obtain the necessary documentation to support the child's age or the household income.



Documentation to support the efforts to obtain the necessary documentation should be maintained in the EFS history notes while awaiting receipt of the documents.

- C. Any corrections made to the referral must include: 1) initials of person making the change, 2) date of change/edit, 3) name of person who authorized the change/edits. This information should be recorded manually on the referral **AND** a history note must be entered in the client's EFS record. Signature dates cannot be edited under any circumstance. If there is an error involving the signature date, a new referral must be requested. All communication should be included in the case notes.





# Chapter 9

## Determining Eligibility for Transitional Child Care

*This chapter explains how a family that transitions from a workforce program to employment can access child care.*

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- 9.1 Eligibility for Transitional Child Care.** Eligibility for care under this category is based on a documented referral from the Department of Children and Family Services or the local workforce referral agency. Parents must maintain compliance with program requirements established by DCF or the workforce referral agency.
- 9.2 Transitional Child Care (TCC).** Child care for a child from a family that includes a parent or parents who transitions from a workforce program into employment as described in s. 445.032, F.S. In two parent families, both parents must have a purpose for care as documented on the authorizing referral.
- A. Purpose for Care:** Employment (EM), both employment and training and/or education (TT).
  - B. Work Requirements:** Employment or both employment and employment and training and/or education based on documented referral.
  - C. Child Age Requirements:** Birth to younger than 13.
  - D. Referral:** YES- Welfare Transition Program/local workforce board
  - E. Income Eligible:** Yes – at or below 200% of federal poverty level at initial entry and continued eligibility.
  - F. Household Size:** All children younger than 18 and household members who are 18 or older who are currently residing in the same dwelling unit.
  - G. Countable Income:** Earned and countable unearned income from all household members who are a part of the family unit. Exclude income earned by children 18 years of age enrolled in high school and/or a child who has reached 22 years of age who is has a disability and is enrolled in high school.
  - H. Authorization period:** 12 months or less. Child care shall continue in increments defined by the referring agency. Staff shall authorize child care funding for twelve (12) months from the date of the referral. If the parent does not receive an additional referral, the parent shall be given 3 months from the expiration or termination date of the referral to provide documentation to establish a purpose for care under another eligibility category to continue receiving services for the remainder of the initial 12-month authorization period.
  - I. School Readiness Priority:** 4, 7, 9
- 9.3 Continuity of Care.** Parents seeking to continue eligibility at the closure of the family's service under the Transitional Child Care category may continue to receive financial

assistance through the Economically Disadvantaged category if the family meets the income eligibility requirements.



# Chapter 10

## Determining Eligibility for Economically Disadvantaged Employed Families

*This chapter explains how economically disadvantaged, working families can access School Readiness financial assistance to help defray the cost of child care.*

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**10.1 Eligibility for Economically Disadvantaged Families (ECON).** Child care for a child including, but not limited to an agricultural worker a working migratory family that is economically disadvantaged or an agricultural worker who is employed by more than one agricultural employer during the course of a year, and whose income varies accord to weather conditions and market stability and/or for a family that is working or engaged in eligible educational activities.

Eligibility under this category is based on family income as defined in rule. Family income cannot exceed 150% of the federal poverty level (FPL) at initial eligibility or 85% of State Median Income (SMI) if SMI is less than 150% of FPL. Families determined eligible for Child Care Executive Partnership Funds must have household incomes less than 200% of FPL or 85% of SMI if SMI is less than 200% of F the FPL.

In a one parent family, the parent/guardian must be employed at least 20 hours per week or engage in eligible education activities unless exempt from work requirements due to age or disability. In two parent families, both parents must be working a combined total or 40 hours per week or engaged in eligible educational activities unless exempt from work requirements due to age or disability. Families can continue receiving services until they reach 200% of the federal poverty level.

Family assets cannot exceed one million dollars.

- A. Purpose for Care:** Employment (EM), both employment and training and/or education (TT), migrant employed (ME) or disability (DI).
- B. Work Requirements:** In a one parent family, the parent must be employed at least 20 hours per week or engaged ineligible educational activities unless exempt from work requirements due to age or disability. In a two parent family, both parents must be working a combined total of 40 hours per week or engaged in eligible educational activities unless exempt from work requirements due to age or disability. Parent(s) with whom the child resides can be exempt from work requirements due to age or disability, as determined and documented by a Physician licensed under chapter 458 or chapter 459.



- A. Child Age Requirements:** Birth to younger than 13. If the child's age exceeds the age limit during the 12-month authorization period, the child shall continue to receive services for the remainder of the 12-month authorization period.
- C. Referral:** No
- D. Income Eligible:** Yes – at or below 150% of federal poverty level at initial entry unless 85% of State Median Income is less. Family income must remain at or below 85% of the State Median Income (SMI) as the upper level for school readiness funding.
- E. Household Size:** All children younger than 18 and household members who are 18 or older who are currently residing in the same dwelling unit.
- F. Countable Income:** Earned and countable unearned income from all household members who are a part of the family unit. Exclude income earned by children 18 years of age enrolled in high school and/or a child who has reached 22 years of age who is has a disability and is enrolled in high school.
- G. Authorization period:** 12 months. If the parent loses purpose for care anytime during the initial 12-month eligibility period, the parent shall be given three (3) months to reestablish a purpose for care. The family will not be limited to a single three (3) month period to reestablish a purpose of care during the 12-month eligibility period.
- H. School Readiness Priority: 3, 6, 9**

**10.2 Child Care Executive Partnership (CCEP).** Child care for a family that is economically disadvantaged that requires a 1:1 match from local governments, employers, and/or other contributors. The CCEP program provides state, federal and local funds to offer financial assistance to families that do not exceed 200% of the federal poverty level.

- B. Purpose for Care:** Employment (EM), both employment and training and/or education (TT), migrant employed (ME) or disability (DI).
- C. Work Requirements:** In a one parent family, the parent must be employed at least 20 hours per week or engaged in eligible educational activities unless exempt from work requirements due to age or disability. In a two parent family, both parents must be working a combined total of 40 hours per week or engaged in eligible educational activities unless exempt from work requirements due to age or disability. Parent(s) with whom the child resides can be exempt from work requirements due to age or disability, as determined and documented by a Physician licensed under chapter 458 or chapter 459.
- D. Child Age Requirements:** Birth to younger than 13. If the child's age exceeds the age limit during the 12-month authorization period, the child shall continue to receive services for the remainder of the 12-month authorization period.
- E. Referral:** No
- F. Income Eligible:** Yes – at or below 200% of federal poverty level at initial entry and at or below 200% of federal poverty for continued eligibility. continued eligibility.
- G. Household Size:** All children younger than 18 and household members who are 18 or older who are currently residing in the same dwelling unit.



- H. **Countable Income:** Earned and countable unearned income from all household members who are a part of the family unit. Exclude income earned by children 18 years of age enrolled in high school and/or a child who has reached 22 years of age who is has a disability and is enrolled in high school.
- I. **Authorization period:** 12 months.
- J. **School Readiness Priority: 3, 6, 9**



# Chapter 11

## Maintaining Eligibility

*All families are responsible for reporting changes that might affect their eligibility. Changes should be reported immediately, but no later than ten (10) days after the change.*

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**11.1 Reporting Changes.** A family is responsible for reporting changes in the following within 10 days of the change:

- 1) Changes in income;
- 2) Change in purpose of care (i.e. job loss, new employer, change in work or school/training schedule);
- 3) Change in address;
- 4) Change in family size; OR
- 5) Any other change that might affect eligibility.

**11.2 Substantial Change.** Substantial changes are considered to be those that affect the family's income, purpose of care, or family size. If a family reports changes that may impact the family's income, household composition, or purpose for care prior to the expiration eligibility period, the Family Service Specialist will determine if the change requires a reassessment of eligibility or parent co-payment.

- A. Reporting method.** Changes and supporting documentation may be reported in-person, by mail, or fax.
- B. Documenting changes.** All changes must be documented, in writing in the case file and EFS, regardless of the need to conduct a reassessment or change the co-payment.
- C. Implementation date.** If the reported change results in an increase in the family's co-payment, the effective date of the new co-payment must be effective immediately upon redetermination or a change in income. Both the parent and the child care provider must be notified of all fee changes and finding begin/end dates.

**11.3 Break in Employment.** A parent authorized under ECON, CCEP or BG3-28 A may maintain eligibility during a break in employment. Eligibility during a break in employment is based on the following:

- A.** A family may maintain eligibility following a job loss as long as employment is re-established within 3 months from the last day at the previous employer. During this time, school readiness services will continue. Parent co-payments should be reassessed based on current income. Parents must reestablish a purpose of care within 3 months to remain eligible.



- B.** A family may maintain eligibility during a temporary break in employment for up to 3 months for leave in compliance with the Family Medical Leave Act. If the temporary interruption in employment exceeds three (3) months, services will be suspended and not reimbursed, until the parent's employment resumes. The child **shall not** be placed on the waiting list if the parent has verification that they are still employed and returning to employments. Care may be re-established for the remainder of the initial 12 -month authorization upon resumption of employment and reevaluation of the remaining eligibility factors.
- C.** A family may maintain eligibility during an interruption in employment, with an option to return to that employment, such as season employment or school system-related employment. If the temporary interruption in employment exceeds three (3) months, services will be suspended and not reimbursed, until the parent's employment resumes. The child **shall not** be placed on the waiting list if the parent has verification that they are still employed and returning to employments. Care may be re-established for the remainder of the initial 12 -month authorization upon resumption of employment and reevaluation of the remaining eligibility factors.

**NOTE:** A parent/guardian has up to three (3) months to re-establish a purpose for care provided the three (3) month period does not extend beyond the current eligibility period. Parents/guardians will have less than 3 months if the time between the loss of purpose for care and the end of the authorized eligibility period is less than 3 months. A case cannot be redetermined as eligible without a purpose for care.



# Chapter 12

## Re-determining Eligibility

*This chapter explains the redetermination process to ensure families continue to meet the eligibility requirements for the School Readiness Program.*

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**12.1 Eligibility Re-Determination.** Documentation of a family's income, family size, purpose for care, and residence must be updated at each re-determination. Families may schedule an appointment or may submit required information by mail. Redetermination by mail should be encouraged to facilitate access for families. Co-payments must be updated to reflect any income changes. Eligibility redetermination for Economically Disadvantaged, Special Needs and Child Care Executive Partnership children will be conducted every twelve (12) months.

Family income cannot exceed 200% of the federal poverty level or 85% of the State Median Income whichever is less. In addition, families must provide documentation that they continue to maintain a purpose for care.

**12.2 Notification of Re-Determination.** Parent/guardians must be notified at least thirty (30) days before their redetermination date to inform them that reassessment is required to verify continued eligibility for financial assistance. Parents must be notified that failure to submit documentation required to determine their continued eligibility will result in termination of services.

Parents and child care providers must be notified within 10 calendar days if a child is no longer eligible for financial assistance.

**12.3 Termination of School Readiness Services.** Services may be discontinued prior to the end of the 12-month eligibility period under limited circumstances. The family and provider will be notified of disenrollment at least two weeks prior to the termination of services. Qualifying events for termination include:

- Excessive unexplained absences that exceed 10 calendar days during a total month. Staff must make and document 3 attempts to contact the family and the provider regarding excessive absences prior to disenrollment.
- Substantiate fraud or intentional program violations
- A change in residency outside of the state of Florida
- Purpose of care not reestablished at the end of a three (3) month period
- Family income exceeds 85% of the current state median income.





# Chapter 13

## Parent Co-Payment

*This chapter explains the required assessment of a parent co-payment which is based on a sliding fee scale for each family receiving school readiness financial support.*

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**13.1 Assessing the Co-Payment.** Each family receiving school readiness financial assistance must be assessed a co-payment for each child receiving services. The co-payment is based on family size, the hours of care needed, and the family's income.

If a child is authorized for part-time care, the parent will be assessed a part-time co-payment. If the child is authorized for full-time care, the parent will be assessed a full-time co-payment. A parent with two or more children receiving school readiness services may receive a co-payment for the second and any subsequent child. When a discount is applied, the young child is assessed a full co-payment based on the approved sliding fee scale and hours of care needed.

For school age children who typically attends child care part-time during the school year, the parent shall be assessed a part-time co-payment for the school year and school holidays. If the child attends child care full-time during the summer break, the parent shall pay the full-time co-payment.

**13.2 Co-Payments for at-risk families.** Families shall be assessed a parent-co-payment at initial child care authorization. If information regarding the household income is not available at the initial authorization, the co-payment shall be assessed based on the family size and corresponding income level of 200% of federal poverty.

**13.2 Co-Payment waivers.** Coalition management staff may waive the parent co-payment on a case-by-case basis for the following circumstances:

- A. Parent/guardian is in prison.
- B. Parent/guardian is in the hospital or residential treatment facility.
- C. Parent/guardian is unemployed.
- D. Parent/guardian is unable to work due to illness or incapacitation.
- E. Death of a parent/
- F. Parent/guardian is homeless or living in a shelter.
- G. Parent/guardian experienced an emergency (i.e., natural disaster, fire, etc.)
- H. Whereabouts of parent/guardian is unknown.

**13.3 At-risk waivers.** A co-payment may be waived on a case-by-case basis for families of an at-risk child.

**13.4 Temporary co-payment waivers.** A co-payment may be waived on a case-by-case basis for families with income at or below 100% of federal poverty level during an event that limits a



parent's ability to pay as such as a natural disaster or an event that limits the parent's ability to pay, such as incarceration, placement in residential treatment, becoming homeless or an emergency situation such as a household fire or burglary, or while the parent is participating in parenting classes.

**13.5 Request for fee waiver.** Unless circumstances otherwise warrant, referring case managers must make a written request to the coalition for a reduction in parent fees as soon as the need exists. Proof of need for reduction must be submitted with the written request and must be approved by the coalition prior to implementation. The reduction in parent fees is limited to the time period the parent/guardian is unable to make the required payment. A beginning and end date will be assigned by staff. Staff will document the fee waiver in EFS and send a notice to the provider and the parent/guardian.

**13.6 Provider Transfers.** A parent may not transfer his/her child to another school readiness program until the parent has submitted documentation from the current school readiness program provider stating that the parent has satisfactorily fulfilled his/her co-payment obligations to the current provider. Satisfactorily fulfilling the co-payment obligations is defined as the immediate payment of the outstanding co-payment or establishment of a repayment plan for the outstanding co-payment.

If a parent of an at-risk child is unable to satisfactorily fulfill the co-payment obligation prior to transfer, the provider shall attempt to arrange a repayment schedule plan with the child's parent. If the provider is unable to arrange a payment plan with the at-risk child's parent, the provider shall document the repayment attempt and submit to the coalition.

**13.7 Co-Payment Changes.** A parent co-payment may not be increased during the initial 12-month eligibility authorization period. The co-payment assessed shall be in effect for the family's authorized eligibility period unless:

- The coalition grants a waiver of the parent co-payment; or
- An incorrect co-payment was assessed Family Service Specialist due to an error of the Family Service Specialist, the program participant, program participant fraud which results in a corrective action to reduce or increase the family's co-payment; or
- A change in family size, income or employment status results in a lower co-payment; or
- The authorized hours of care change.

Payments during graduated phase out may be increased or decreased based on the family's income and size.

**13.8 Coalition co-payment errors.** The coalition shall not take action to recover an incorrect co-payment made due to an error of the coalition or its contractor. If an error is discovered, the coalition must correct the error and apply the corrected co-payment. The parent must be notified within ten (10) calendar days of changes to the co-payment. Parent notification must be documented.

**13.9 Co-payment recovery.** If the incorrect co-payment is assessed as a result of parent error or parent fraud, the coalition or its contractor shall attempt to recover the reimbursement overpayment and document the attempts. If unable to recover the overpayment, the coalition



shall notify the Office of Early Learning and submit documentation as necessary in accordance with the coalition's approved anti-fraud plan.

