The Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County is closely following information from state and local officials concerning the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak and monitoring its impact on the families and child care providers that we serve.

We are committed to providing helpful information to you in order to address some of the questions you may have regarding your child and the provider in which they are enrolled in VPK or School Readiness services. We have a page dedicated to information about COVID-19, families and providers: www.elchc.org/COVID-19.

Starting on Wednesday, April 1, parents do not need to pay their copayments and providers will not collect parent copayments. Your provider will be reimbursed for these copayments. If your provider charges an amount over the School Readiness rate, you will need to speak with your provider about what you owe.

Here are a few questions and answers to guide you:

1. I would like to keep my child out of their current child care provider as a precaution. Will I lose my School Readiness (SR)?

You will not be terminated from SR for keeping your child home during the COVID-19 outbreak. If you would like to keep your child home, please notify your provider in writing (an email or note) that your child will not be attending for now.

The Office of Early Learning (OEL) sets the governing policies for Early Learning Coalitions, School Readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten. OEL has ruled that no SR families will be terminated at this time, including families undergoing redetermination or job status changes.

However, you should speak with your provider about their absence policy. Children who are not in attendance can be removed from the child care provider’s roster — they are not obligated to save your child’s space in their classroom.

2. Will I have to pay my SR co-pay requirement when my child is absent?

Effective Wednesday, April 1, 2020, the Early Learning Coalition will reimburse providers for the entire School Readiness rate, meaning parents do not pay their copay to providers. If your provider charges an amount above the School Readiness rate or any other fees, you will need to speak with your provider about what you owe while your child is not in attendance.

3. Why are some child care businesses open and others are closed?

At this time, child care providers who contract with us to provider School Readiness and/or VPK are privately-owned businesses. The Early Learning Coalition does not have the ability to mandate
that child care businesses remain open or close. Until mandated by local, state or national government, the decision to remain open or to close lies with the business owner. While we provide guidance to our providers during an emergency, your child care provider should be communicating with you about their business decisions.

4. What if I want to suspend my School Readiness child care for now?

A parent’s School Readiness can be placed on “suspension” (or on hold) until the client re-enters the program. During this time, co-payments are not paid to the provider and the provider is not reimbursed for the child. If you decide this is the option you’d like to take, contact the ELCHC at 813-515-2340, press 0 when prompted and request that we unlock your OEL Family Portal account. You may be requested to upload additional documentation to the OEL Family Portal. An example would be a current paystub or loss of employment information. You will receive an email from the ELCHC and from the OEL Portal when the request has been processed with information on any further steps. **It is your responsibility to notify the child care provider.**
To end the suspension, you would call the ELCHC again for access to the portal.

5. Will SR families’ eligibility and their redetermination of eligibility continue?

ALL terminations of SR families’ eligibility have been suspended effective March 15. Redeterminations of eligibility is extended an additional 60 days. No families should be removed from the program.

6. If my child does not finish all of VPK instructional hours, can my child apply for Summer VPK to finish the hours?

Once a child has started the fall program, they cannot be enrolled in the summer program unless granted an extreme hardship reenrollment. At this point in the year, many children have already completed a substantial portion of the VPK program (70%) and therefore do not qualify for a reenrollment.

7. What if I have a question that was not addressed?

Please contact us at 813-515-2340 and press 0 when prompted. We will provide you guidance so that you can make the best decision for your family in regards to VPK and School Readiness services. Our hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

8. What if I need further assistance with the OEL Family Portal or with scanning necessary documents?
The lobbies at both of our locations are closed to the public at this time. Please call 813-515-2340 and one of our Family Services Specialists will assist you.

9. What if I have concerns about my child’s kindergarten, elementary, middle or high school situation?

Please contact Hillsborough County Public Schools or your child’s school for information.