



Empower Your Classroom: Learn How to Access Special Needs Funding

Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County (ELCHC)

Rebecca, Marci, Kristalyn & Ruth



EARLY LEARNING
COALITION OF HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Our purpose



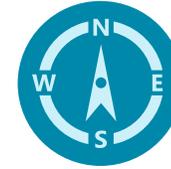
Our mission

The Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County provides children, birth to 5 years, high quality, equitable and inclusive early learning experiences preparing them for success in school and life through the collaboration of families, educators and the community.



Our vision

A thriving community where every child has what they need to succeed from the moment they are born



Core values

- Integrity
- Collaboration
- Equity
- Accountability
- Innovation
- Consistency
- Transparency
- Benevolence

Introductions: Meet the Team



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Objectives

1

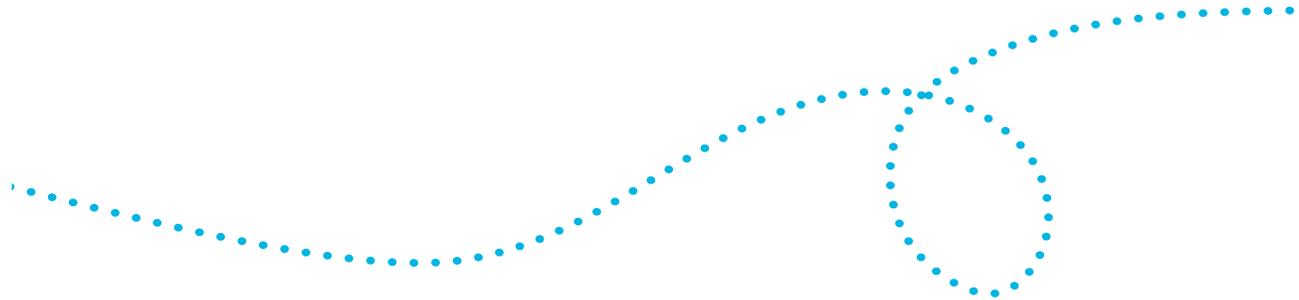
Showcase ELCHC's impactful implementation of the Special Needs Rate (SNR)
Increased SNR awareness, applications, and provider participation.

2

Inspire other Coalitions to replicate the model
Share proven strategies and tools that others can adopt

3

Promote Statewide Collaboration for Inclusive Early Learning
Encourage alignment and shared learning across ELCS in Florida



Why This Matters?

“Every child deserves a chance to thrive.”

- The Special Needs Rate (SNR) supports children with special needs enrolled in School Readiness programs.
- Provides up to a **20% higher reimbursement** over the standard Infant Rate.
- Enables providers to offer more inclusive, supportive care environments.
- ELCs statewide return funds in this line item. This results in a \$5 million reduction in funding for the 2025–26 fiscal year.

Who is Eligible/Can apply?

- School Readiness providers request the rate for a School Readiness child in their care
- All ages (birth through 12 y/o) and all schedules (part-time, holiday-only, etc.)

Eligible children have at least one of the following:

- IFSP (Early Steps, birth to 3 y/o)
 - IEP (Child Find, ages 3+)
 - Therapy services report/evaluation report
- Documented diagnosis (physical, mental, emotional, or behavioral)

Please note: Parent permission required!



The SNR differential...

- Is reimbursement for the provider only
- Is not requested by the family
- Is not a type of eligibility to receive School Readiness
- Does not change family copay amounts
- Does not apply to VPK-only children
- Is not the same as Billing Code (*Priority 5*) eligibility for School Readiness
- Is not used to cover the family's copays, fees, etc.
- Does not follow children when transferring to a new provider

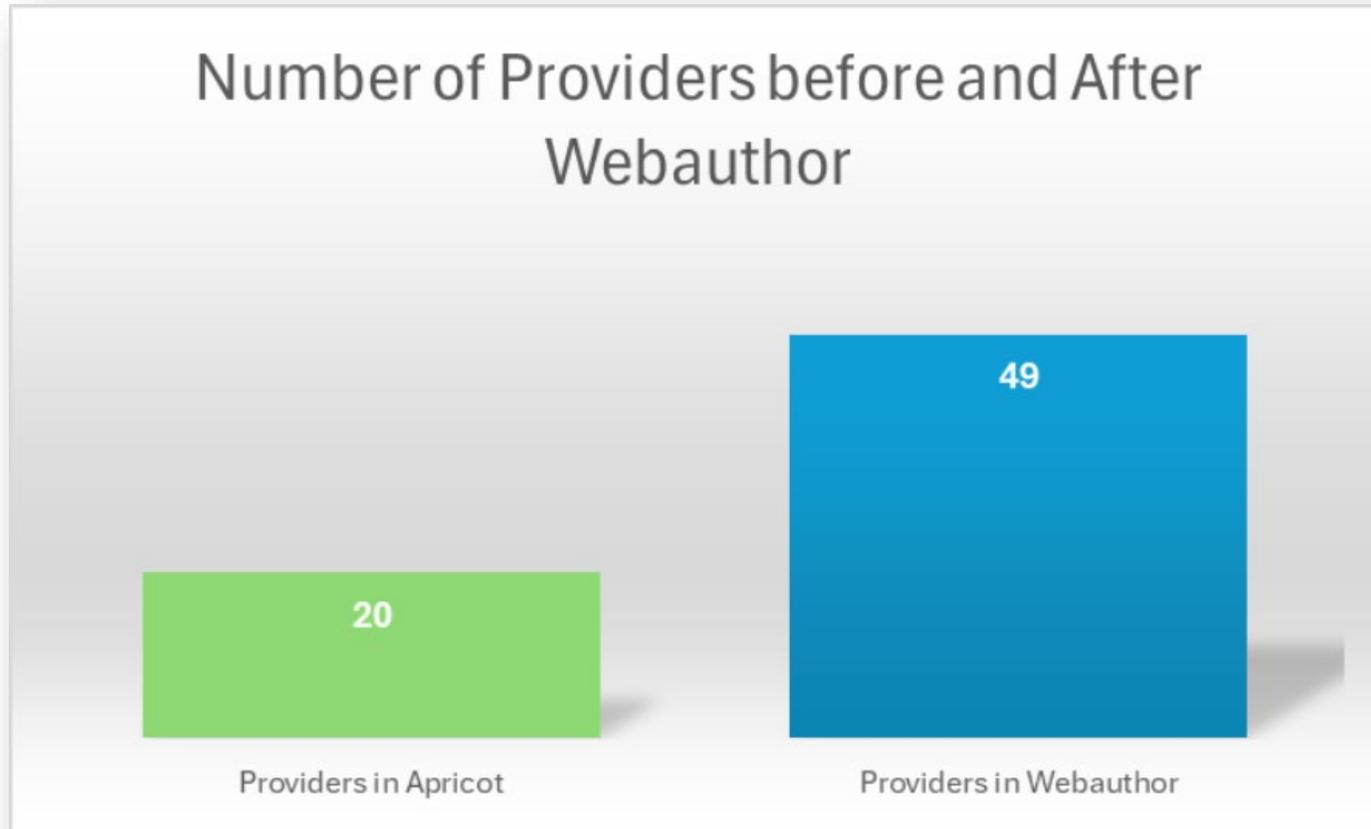
Testimonials- Taymir Family Home Daycare



Testimonials- Temple Terrace Presbyterian, Ms. Carrie

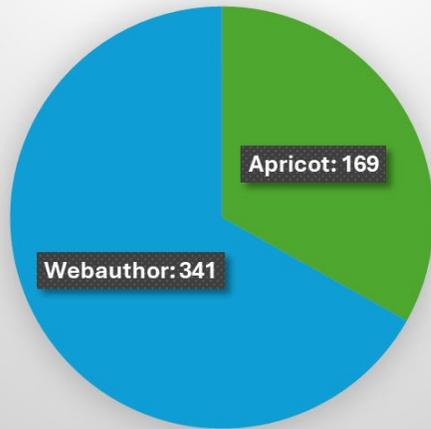


Number of Providers Receiving SNR in Apricot Vs Webauthor

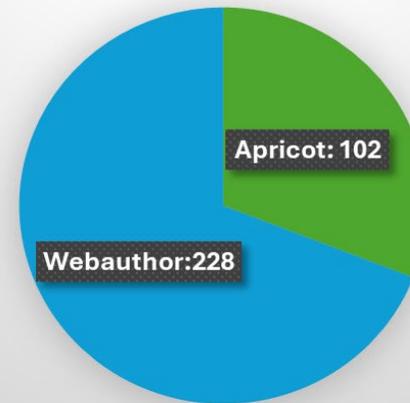


Applications for SNR in Apricot Vs Webauthor

Special Needs Rate Applications (including redeterminations)

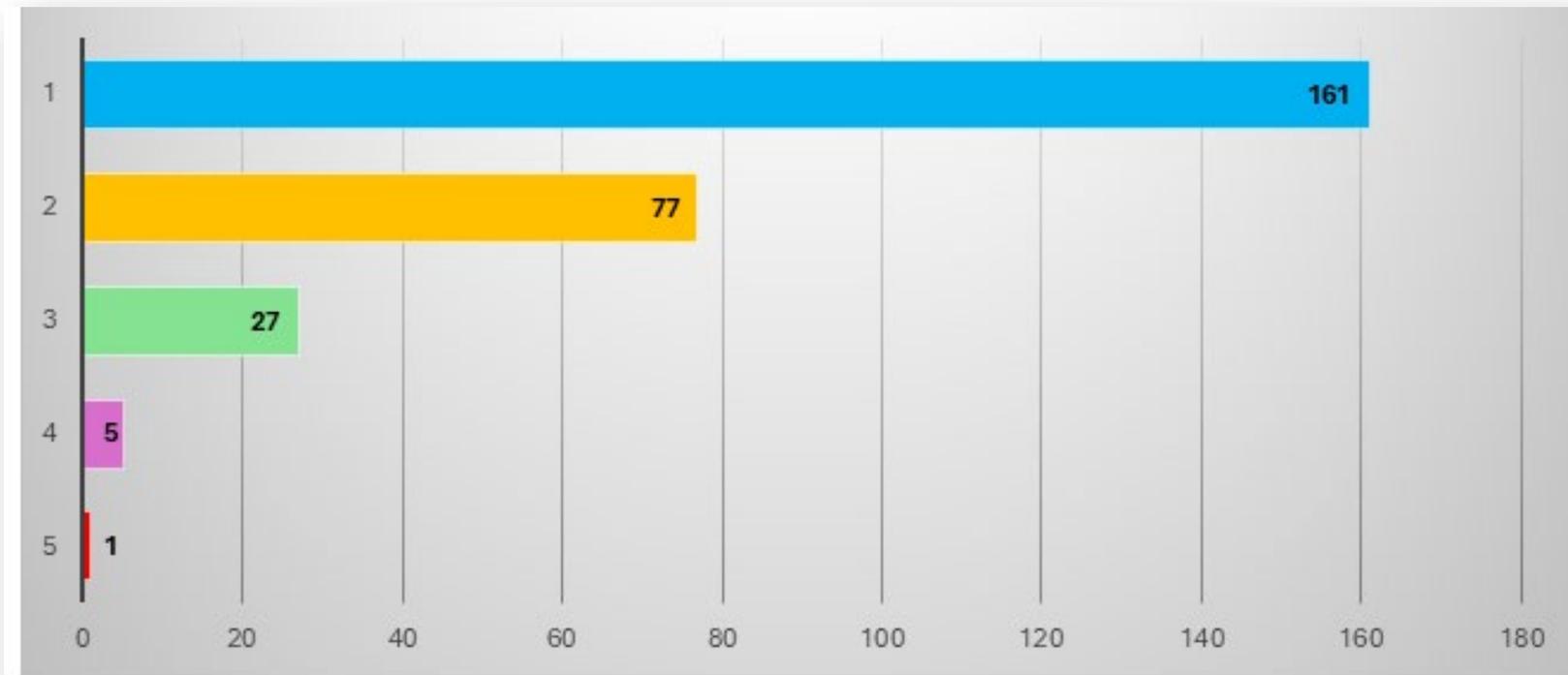


Special Needs Rate Applications (Without redeterminations)



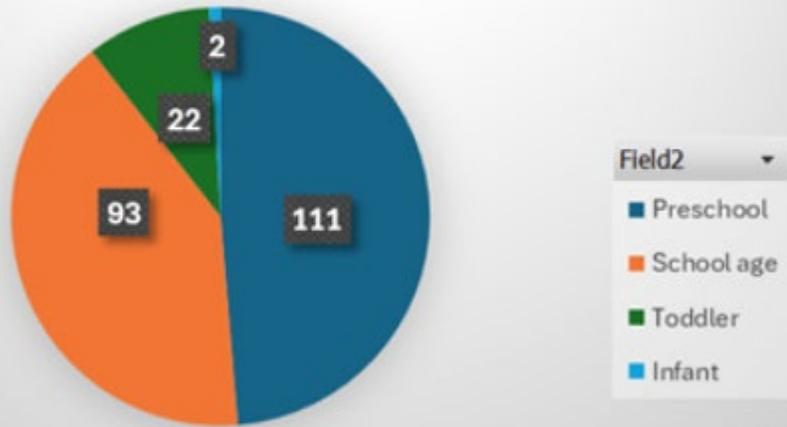
Since Moving to Webauthor

Number of children who have received multiple SNR redeterminations

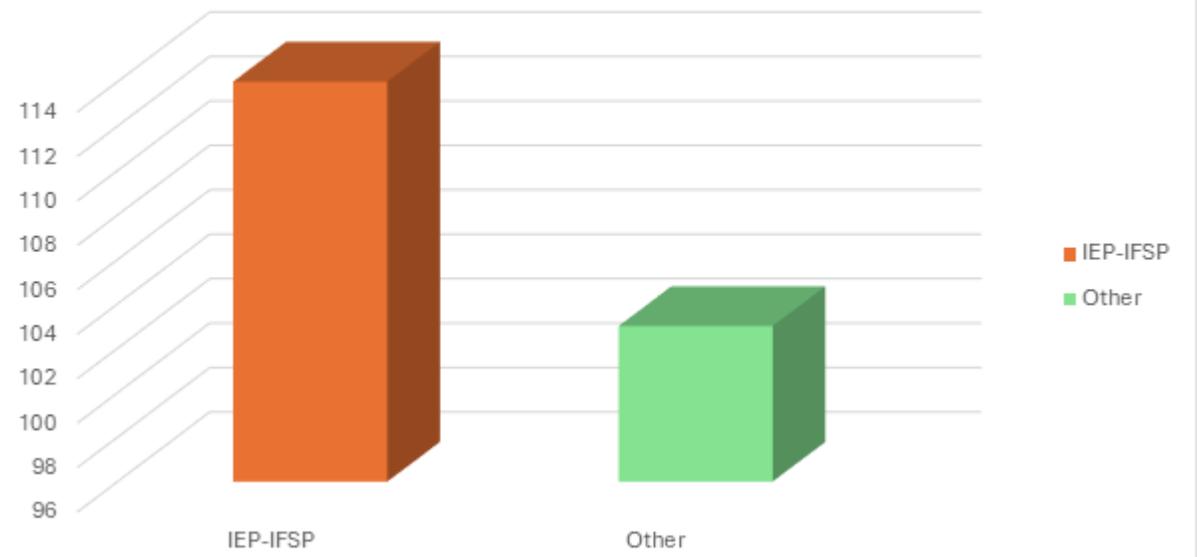


Since Moving to Webauthor

Children by ages receiving Special Needs Rate on 10/22/25



SNR- Documents received





How did we get here?

[SPNR Form Steps 1 4 Oct '25.docx](#)



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Provider

SR Providers

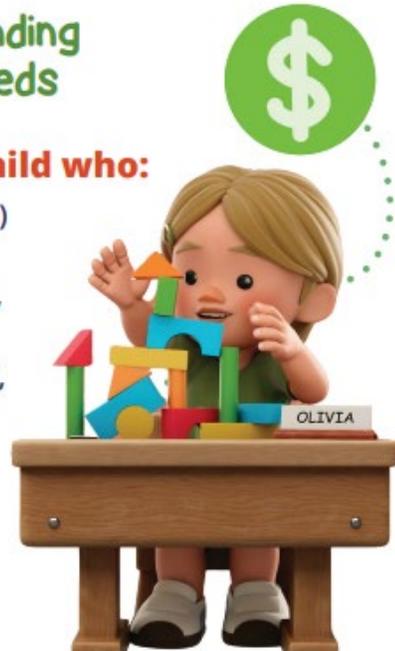


You May Qualify for Additional Funding to Support a Child with Special Needs

If you serve a School Readiness (SR) child who:

- Has an Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP)
- Has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Has a medical diagnosis (such as autism, ADHD, developmental delay), or
- Receives therapy (such as speech, occupational, physical, or behavioral therapy)

You may be eligible to request a Special Needs Rate from the Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County (ELCHC) to better support the child's needs in your program.



What is the Special Needs Rate?

A **Special Needs Rate (SNR)** provides up to 20% additional funding above the infant rate for approved children. The request is based on how your program is providing individualized accommodations for the child.

This additional funding may be used for:

- Lower classroom ratios
- Sensory tools and visual supports
- Adaptive equipment
- Staff training or certifications
- Other accommodations that directly support the child's development and inclusion

Important:

You must obtain parent/caregiver consent before submitting a Special Needs Rate request. The funding is intended to help you provide a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.



Need help or have questions?
Contact:
earlyintervention@elchc.org

6302 E. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Blvd.
Suite 100 Tampa, FL 33619
(813) 515-2340 | elchc.org



SNR Proveedores

Proveedores de SR

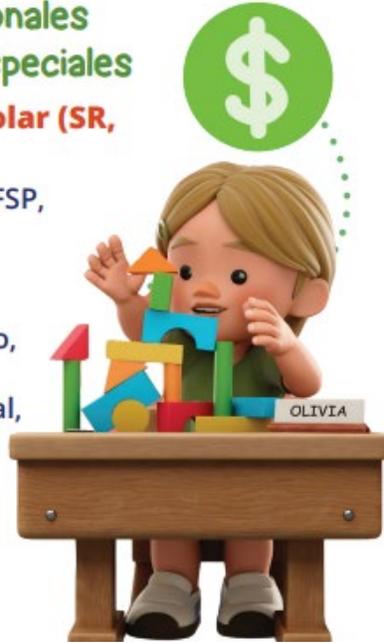


Es posible que califique para fondos adicionales para apoyar a un niño con necesidades especiales

Si usted atiende a un niño de Preparación Escolar (SR, por sus siglas en inglés) que:

- Tiene un Plan de Apoyo Familiar Individualizado (IFSP, por sus siglas en inglés)
- Tiene un Plan de Educación Individualizado (IEP, por sus siglas en inglés)
- Tiene un diagnóstico médico (por ejemplo, autismo, TDAH, retraso en el desarrollo)
- Recibe terapia (p. ej., terapia del habla, ocupacional, física o conductual)

Usted puede ser elegible para solicitar una Tarifa de Necesidades Especiales de la Coalición de Aprendizaje Temprano del Condado de Hillsborough (ELCHC) para apoyar mejor las necesidades del niño en su programa.



¿Qué es la Tarifa para Necesidades Especiales?

Una **Tasa de Necesidades Especiales** (SNR, por sus siglas en inglés) proporciona hasta un 20% de fondos adicionales por encima de la tarifa infantil para niños aprobados. La solicitud se basa en la forma en que su programa proporciona adaptaciones individualizadas para el niño.

Estos fondos adicionales se pueden utilizar para:

- Tasas de aula más bajas
- Herramientas sensoriales y soportes visuales
- Equipos de adaptación
- Capacitación o certificaciones del personal
- Otras adaptaciones que apoyan directamente el desarrollo y la inclusión del niño

Importante:

Debe obtener el consentimiento de los padres/cuidadores antes de presentar una solicitud de tarifa para necesidades especiales. La financiación está destinada a ayudarle a proporcionar un entorno de aprendizaje más inclusivo y de apoyo.



¿Preguntas?

¿Listo para solicitar?

Contáctatenos:

earlyintervention@elhc.org

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Suite 100 Tampa, FL 33619
(813) 515-2340 | elhc.org



SNR Family

Families



Your Child May Qualify for Extra Support Through a Special Needs Rate

If your School Readiness child:

- Has an Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP)
- Has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Has a medical diagnosis (such as autism, ADHD, developmental delay), or
- Receives therapy (such as speech, occupational, physical, or behavioral therapy)

Your childcare provider can request additional funding from the Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County (ELCHC) to help support your child's individual needs in the classroom.



What does this mean?

This is called a **Special Needs Rate**, and it provides extra funds to your provider.

Providers may use this funding to:

- Reduce classroom ratios
- Purchase sensory tools or adaptive equipment
- Implement visual supports
- Provide staff training or certifications related to your child's needs

Your School Readiness copay fee will not change. Your provider must first inform you and receive your consent before requesting this support from ELCHC.



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SNR Familias

Familias



Su hijo puede calificar para apoyo adicional a través de una tarifa para necesidades especiales



Si su hijo de Preparación Escolar:

- Tiene un Plan de Apoyo Familiar Individualizado (IFSP, por sus siglas en inglés)
- Tiene un Plan de Educación Individualizado (IEP, por sus siglas en inglés)
- Tiene un diagnóstico médico (como autismo, TDAH, retraso en el desarrollo), o
- Recibe terapia (como terapia del habla, ocupacional, física o conductual)

Su proveedor de cuidado infantil puede solicitar fondos adicionales de la Coalición de Aprendizaje Temprano del Condado de Hillsborough (ELCHC, por sus siglas en inglés) para ayudar a apoyar las necesidades individuales de su hijo en el aula.

¿Qué significa esto?

Esto se llama **Tasa de Necesidades Especiales** y proporciona fondos adicionales a su proveedor.

Los proveedores pueden usar estos fondos para:

- Reducir la proporción de aulas
- Comprar herramientas sensoriales o equipos de adaptación
- Implementar soportes visuales
- Proporcionar capacitación al personal o certificaciones relacionadas con las necesidades de su hijo

Su cargo de copago de Preparación Escolar no cambiará. Su proveedor debe informarle primero y recibir su consentimiento antes de solicitar este apoyo de ELCHC.



¿Necesita ayuda o tiene preguntas?

Contacta:
earlyintervention@elchc.org

elchc.org
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CF-SN (Child Find - Special Needs) VS. Special Need Rate

CF-SN (Priority 5)

Who is eligible?

- A student with a disability who has a current Individual Education Plan (IEP) from Hillsborough County School District
- Child is between 3 years of age – admission to Kindergarten

* Eligibility is not based on household income

What is needed to apply?

- Current Individual Education Plan (IEP) from Hillsborough County School District

What happens after I apply?

- Once waiting list application is approved, a funding notification will be sent
- Family will have 30 days from funding notice to provide all documentation for eligibility determination using the family portal
- [SR Eligibility Checklist Eng-Spa](#)

Who to contact for information on CF - SN eligibility?

- Waiting List Team or kvaldes@elhc.org / nhernandez@elhc.org



Special Needs Rate

Who is eligible?

- Any School Readiness - eligible child
- Ages 0 – 12 years of age, with any care schedule

Who can apply?

- Any School Readiness-approved Provider who cares for a child that required individualized accommodations

What is needed to apply?

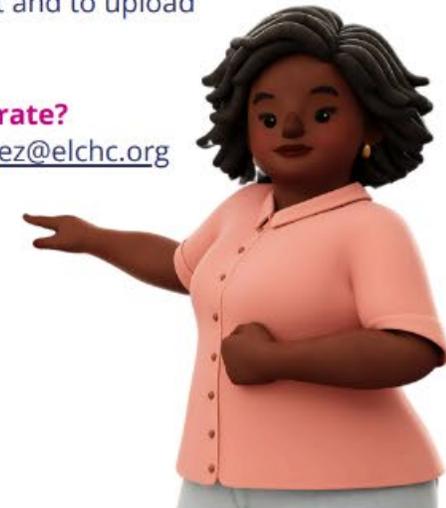
- IFSP (Early Steps) age birth – 3 years of age
- IEP (FDLRS Child Find) ages 3 and up
- Medical or diagnostic report
- Therapy evaluation report

How to apply and what happens after I apply?

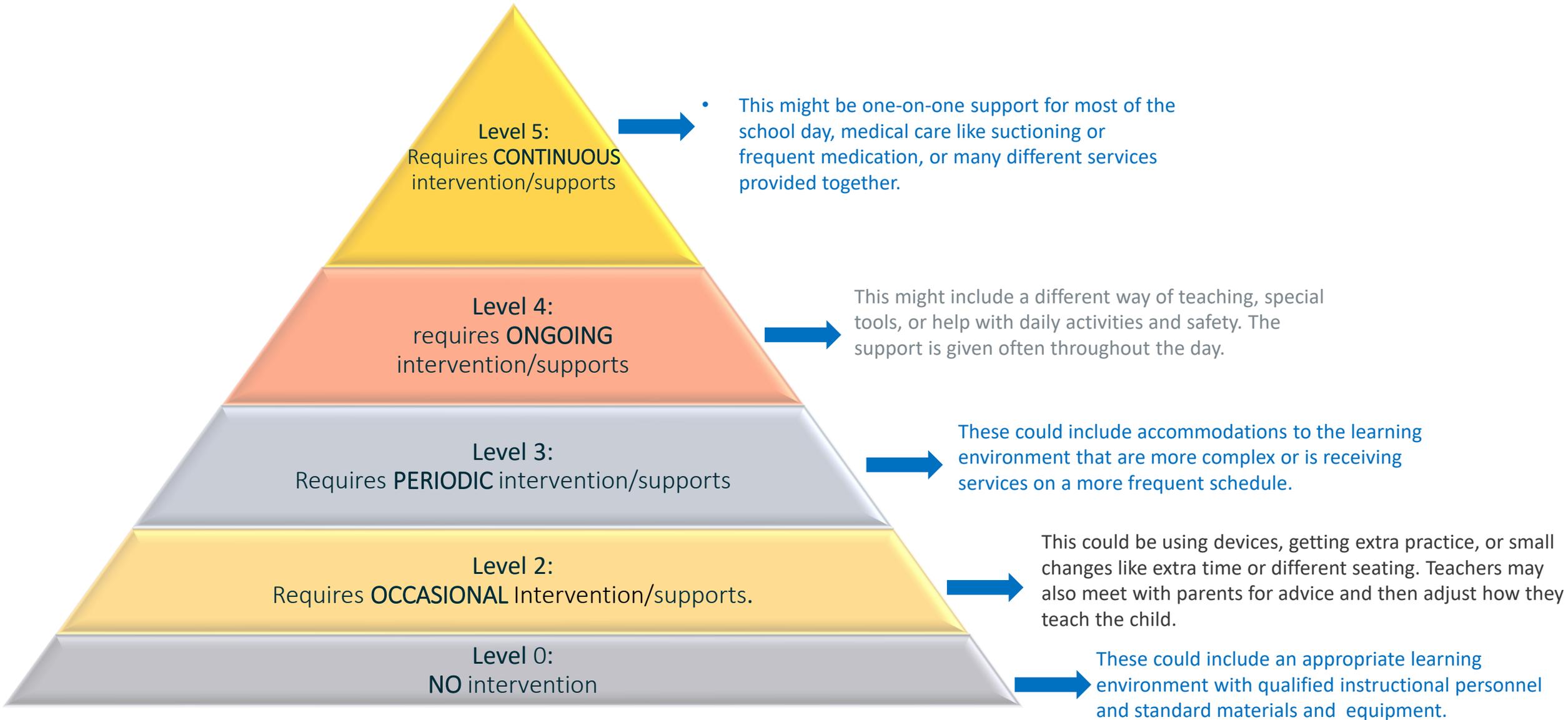
- Email early.intervention@elhc.org to request the rate
- Send the first 3 letters of the child's First and Last name with date of birth (i.e. John Smith: Joh%Smi% DOB: xx/xx/xxxx)
- Private email link will be sent to begin the request and to upload supporting documentation

Who to contact for information on Special Needs rate?

- Regional Early Intervention Specialist or kfernandez@elhc.org



SNR Checklist- Levels



A child *won't* always need assistance in all areas

Outreach Strategies that Worked

Flexible Scheduling:

- Lunch & evening options
- In-person and virtual (Zoom, Teams)

Real Stories:

- Video testimonials from families and providers

Simplified Tools:

- Clear checklists
- Developmental domain examples



Provider Empowerment in Action



- **Success Stories:**
- A provider hires a behavior specialist after receiving SNR funds.
- A center converts a quiet room into a sensory-friendly space.
- Teachers complete inclusive care training that transforms their classroom

Testimonial from a Childcare Center Owner

This has been a life saver! With the few we have so far, I've been able to bring on 2 additional full time employees as aides in the classes with behaviors.

Navigating SNR: Tools Tips and Support



Making the process easy:

- Live demonstrations of how to apply for SNR
- Document review and guidance
- Application materials uploaded to Webauthor
- Gathering/Informational sessions via ZOOM (English/Spanish)
- Ongoing technical support via TEAMS and/or in person
- Presenting at different events
 - COP
 - FCCH Association

Replicating the Model- Key Takeaways for Other ELCs

Scalable Strategies for Greater Impact

- Use multiple outreach channels
- Leverage real-life testimonials to build trust and relevance
- Provide support resources proactively to encourage engagement

Tips for Success:

- Build and maintain a strong collaboration network
 - Host quarterly meetings to share updates and ideas
- Engage providers by meeting them where they are
- Tailor support to various learning styles for better outcomes

Statewide Impact- Why Collaboration is Key



Imagine a Florida where:

- Every provider feels equipped
- Every family finds support
- Every child is welcomed and prepared to succeed

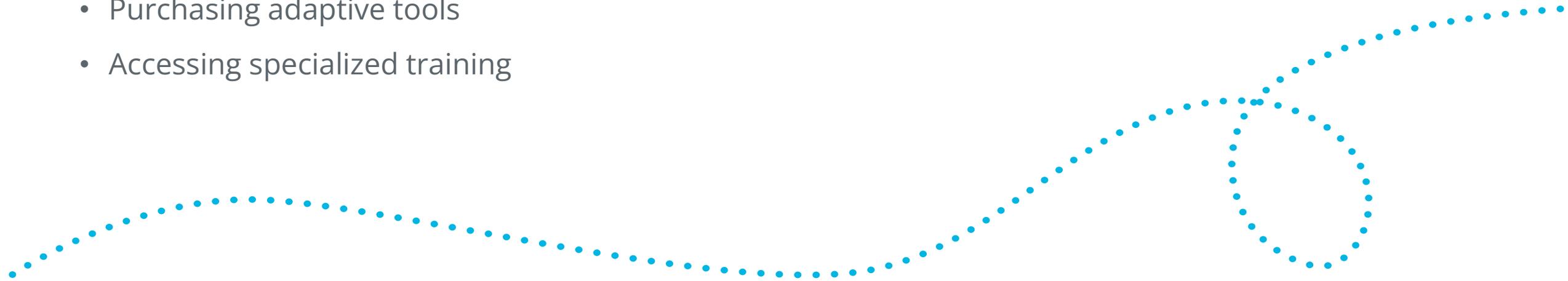
Call to Action:

- Share best practices
 - Advocate for more inclusive funding
 - Build a stronger ELC network
-
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ELCHC's SNR Initiative- The Impact

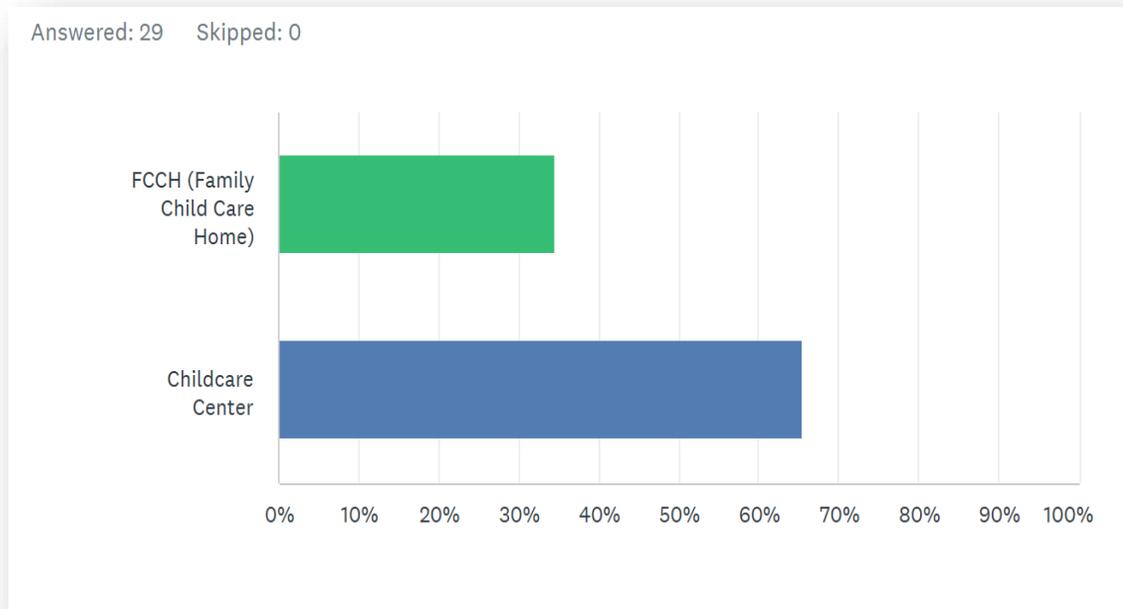


- Applications increased from <100 to 300+
- Providers enrolled grew from 18 to 49+
- Funding used for:
 - Hiring classroom aides
 - Creating sensory-friendly spaces
 - Purchasing adaptive tools
 - Accessing specialized training

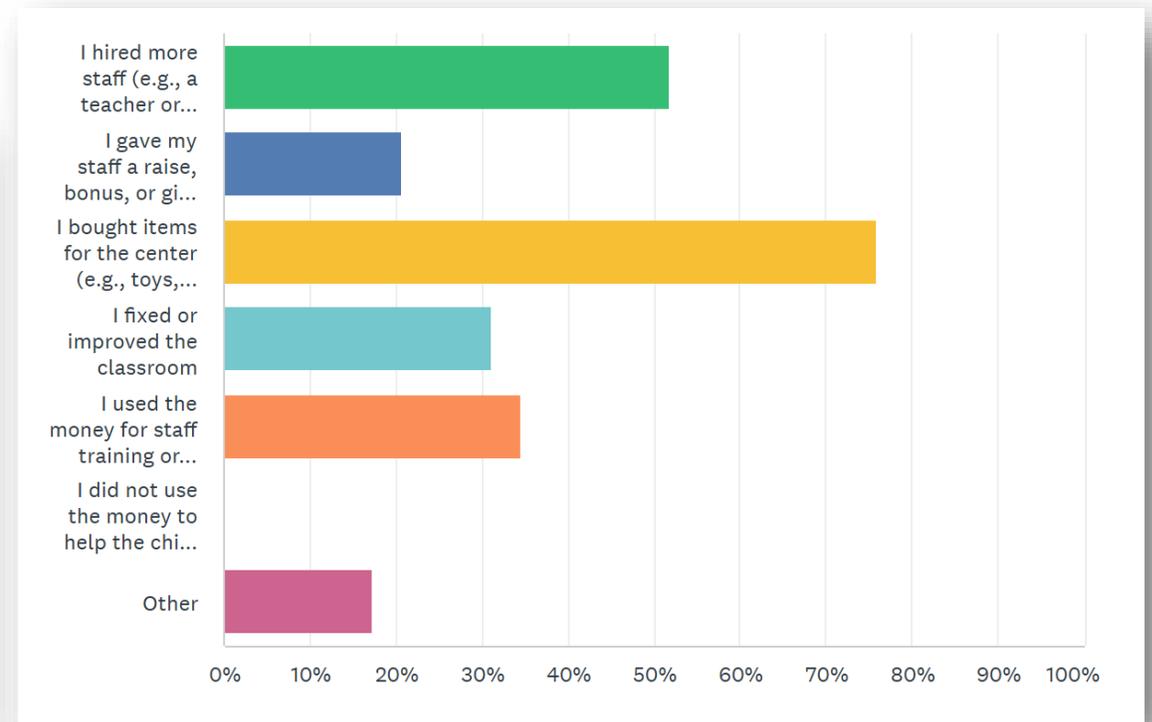


ELCHC's SNR Initiative- The Impact

Are you a FCCH (Family Child Care Home) or a Childcare Center?

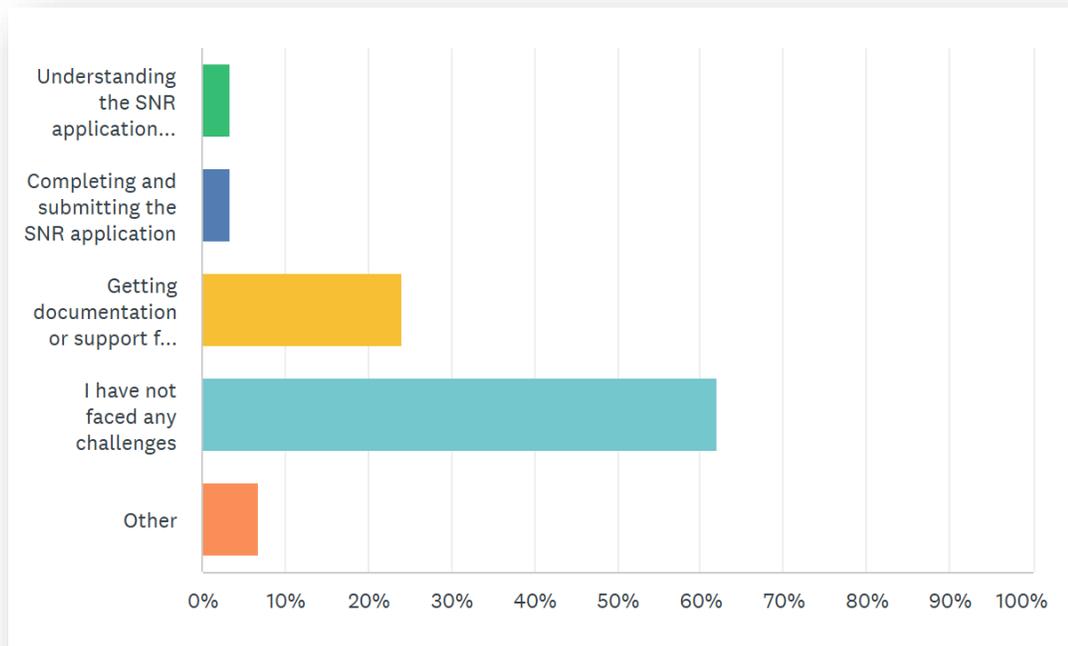


How have you used the Special Needs Funds?

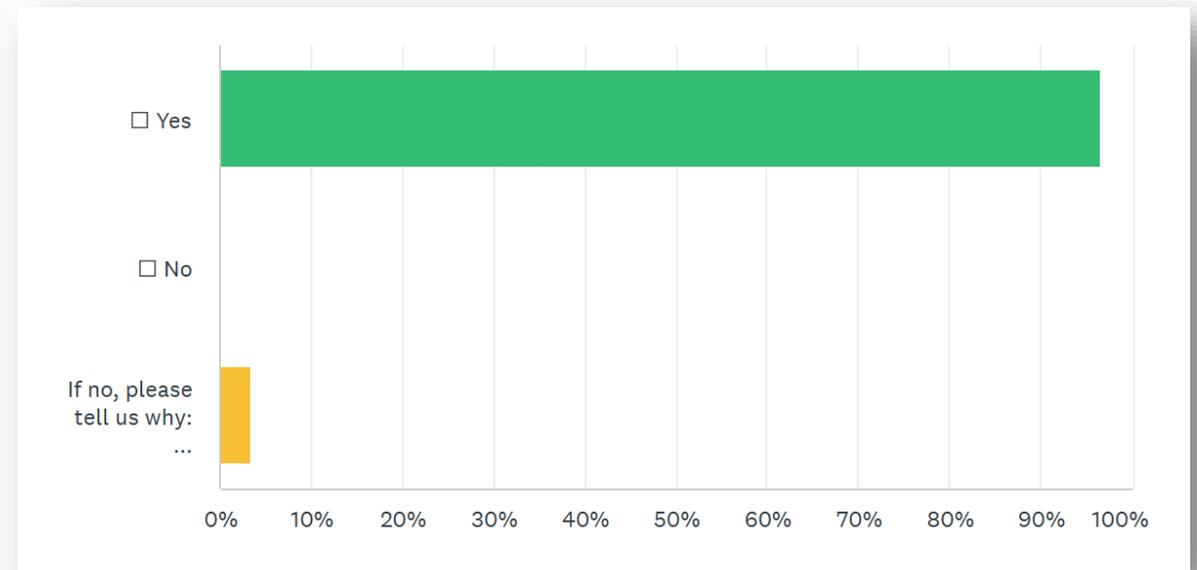


ELCHC's SNR Initiative- The Impact

Have you faced any challenges with the Special Needs Rate (SNR) process? If so, what has been the most difficult step?



Do you think the SNR helped the child (or children) with their development, behavior, or medical needs?



Testimonials – written

"My child was so behind in his language development and that was affecting his development. Now, he is using sentences to communicate, and he is even translating from Spanish to English to his siblings! If I ask him go and tell your siblings the food is ready in Spanish, he goes and tell them in English. He loves going to school and has positive interactions with others."

Parent

Parent Testimonial- Ms. Fabiola



and I am the mother of a child with special needs who has been diagnosed with autism

 **Special Needs Funding Impact**

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COALITION OF HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY



The image shows a video player interface. On the left, a woman with long dark hair, wearing a blue shirt and a black jacket, is speaking. Behind her is a large paper cutout of a tree with green leaves. To the right of the woman is a large white circle containing a green play button icon and the text "Click to Play". Below the video frame, there are two logos: "Special Needs Funding Impact" with a cartoon girl and boy icon, and "EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY" with a cluster of white circles icon. A purple text box at the bottom of the video frame contains the text "and I am the mother of a child with special needs who has been diagnosed with autism".



Questions?

[Early Intervention Support Services - The Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County](#)

