



School Readiness Program Provider Orientation

Understanding Your Responsibilities & Requirements



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About the School Readiness (SR) Program

- Child Care financial assistance for eligible low-income families
- Early learning services for children birth to school age
- Primarily funded by the Child Care and Development Fund and administered by the Division of Early Learning



What is Program Integrity

- Ensures the appropriate use of federal and state funding including
 - Serving eligible families
 - Contracting with eligible providers
 - Minimizing waste, fraud and abuse
- Encompasses both intentional and unintentional errors

How to Assure Program Integrity

- Fiscal management
 - Have processes for sound fiscal management
- Fraud detection and prevention
 - Identify and address fraud
- Improper payment reduction
 - Reduce these types of payments
- Eligibility verification
 - Document and verify eligible children, providers, services and payments

How to Assure Program Integrity (continued)

- Monitoring and oversight
 - Local – Early learning coalitions monitor providers
 - State – The Division of Early Learning monitors coalitions
 - Federal – The Department of Health and Human Services monitors the Division of Early Learning

Purpose of the SR Contract

- Agreement between the provider and its local early learning coalition (ELC)
- Ensures eligibility to participate in the School Readiness (SR) and SR Plus Programs
- Valid for one fiscal year
- Covers the delivery of SR services to eligible children

Provider Responsibilities in the SR Program

- Deliver high-quality early learning services that support child development
- Partner with families, early learning coalitions and the Division of Early Learning to support child growth and development
- Maintain program integrity and compliance with SR Program requirements outlined in the contract

Governing Laws & Rules

- 45 Code of Federal Regulations Parts 98 and 99
- Chapter 1002, Florida Statutes, Part VI
- Chapters 6M-4 and 6M-9, Florida Administrative Code



SR Eligible Providers

Private Providers	Public School Providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed child care facility • Licensed or registered family child care home • Licensed large family child care home • License-exempt nonpublic school • License-exempt faith-based child care provider • Licensed or license-exempt before- or after-school program • Accredited child development program certified by the U.S. Department of Defense operating on a military installation • Informal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public schools (including charter schools)

Additional Eligibility Requirements

- Cannot have a public assistance fraud conviction within the last 5 years
- Cannot be on the USDA National Disqualified List
- Comply with any outstanding corrective action from a previous contract
- Complete a pre-contractual and an annual health and safety inspection
- Provide an E-Verify affidavit
- Have a program assessment score of at least a 4.0 (on a 7-point scale) or QIP, if applicable

Core Provider Responsibilities Overview

- Child Enrollment
- Child Assessment
- Developmental Screening
- Program Assessment
- Instruction
- Health and Safety
 - Ratio/group size
 - Active credential
 - Training for child care personnel
- Documentation
- Reporting

Child Enrollment

- Enroll only authorized children
- Serve children at approved location(s) on the payment certificate
- No reimbursement for unauthorized care

Child Assessment (Optional)

- Administer the assessment during the three assessment periods
- Assess all eligible children age birth to five years who have been enrolled at the provider for at least 60 days
- Maintain 75% teacher reliability
- Notify the coalition within 5 business days of not meeting this threshold
- Return to 75% reliability within 60 days

Developmental Screenings

- Screen children 6 weeks to 60 months
- Encourage parents to complete screenings within 20 calendar days
- Complete screening within provider's 45 calendar days, excluding state observed holidays, when parents do not complete the screenings
- Enter results into the statewide system
- Participate in intervention practices when needed

Program Assessment

- Earn a minimum composite score of 4.00
- Request another observation at your own expense if you score below 4.00
- If your new score is still below 4.00:
 - You might be placed on a quality improvement plan (QIP) if you meet all requirements or
 - Your current contract will be terminated, and your eligibility may be revoked

Instruction

- Provide developmentally appropriate activities
- Use state-approved curriculum
- Support Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards
- Implement a character development program

Health and Safety

- Maintain staff-to-child ratios and maximum group size
- Complete all required training timely
- Adhere to active credential requirements
- Conduct Level 2 background screenings for child care personnel
- Ensure a safe, smoke-free environment
- Allow health and safety inspections
- Comply with SR health and safety standards

Prohibited Child Discipline

- No physical punishment
- No humiliating or frightening discipline
- No withholding of food, rest or toileting
- No denial of active play as a consequence of misbehavior

Documentation

Attendance

- Maintain required daily sign-in/sign-out
- Submit monthly attendance reports
- Collect absence documentation from the parent
- Notify coalition after 1 unexcused absence for at-risk child
- Notify coalition after 5 consecutive or 10 unexplained child absences in a calendar month with no contact from the parent

Documentation

Reimbursement Basics

- Based on approved reimbursement rates
- Includes eligible differential payments
 - Contracted slots
 - Special needs
 - Quality programs
 - Gold Seal
 - Quality Performance Incentive
 - Child Assessment
- May be paid for temporary closures caused by a declared state of emergency
- Provider contract shows the rates and differentials

Documentation

Parent Fee Basics (Copayments)

- Cannot charge SR families more than private-pay families
- Collect the required family copayment from parents
- Document copayment collection with receipts
- Notify parents of outstanding SR copayment balances and establish repayment plans if needed

Documentation

Recordkeeping & Confidentiality

- Maintain SR child records for a minimum of 5 years
- Protect child/family data
- Provide access to records upon request to the –
 - Department of Children and Families or local child care licensing agency,
 - Division of Early Learning
 - United States Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Education and Comptroller General

Reporting

Event	Coalition Notification Required
Change in ownership	30 calendar days prior
Change in contact or program information (e.g., ages served, rate changes, operational hours, etc.)	Within 14 calendar days
Child transfer to another location (multiple locations)	Prior to changing location
Change in insurance	10 calendar days prior
Changes to information on SR application	Within 14 calendar days
Temporary emergency closure	Initial: 1 st closure day Resumption: within 2 business days
Permanent Closure	30 calendar days prior

Reporting (con't)

Event	Coalition Notification Required
Dismissal of SR children	Within 14 calendar days
Request for second program assessment	Within 30 calendar days
Unusual incidents	No later than COB the next day; Written report within 3 business days
Placed on the USDA disqualified list	Within 5 calendar days
Convicted of public assistance fraud	Within 5 calendar days
Child absences	By the 5 th absence day At-risk children/Rilya Wilson Act: immediately with any unexcused absence
Reimbursement discrepancy, overpayment or underpayment	Within 60 calendar days

Coalition Responsibilities & Monitoring

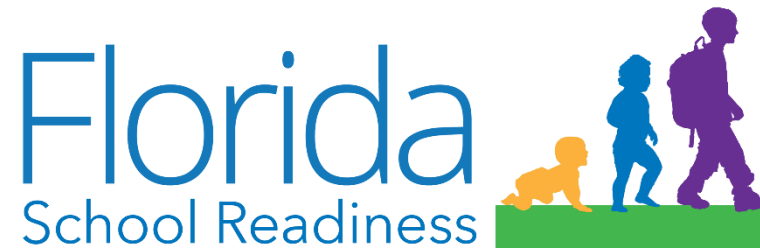
- Provides training and technical assistance
- Does not require more than what is in the contract
- Monitors for compliance
- Accesses sites and records during business hours

Noncompliance & Corrective Action Notice

Early learning coalition:

- Identifies the specific requirement(s) the provider failed to meet
- Describes in detail the required corrective action
- Sets a deadline for completion
- Informs the provider of its right to request a review

Questions





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