



Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida, Inc.

The Early Learning Coalition will work in coordination with our communities to develop successful learners and to support those in school for continued success.

Subject:		
Eligibility Prioritization of School Readiness		
Policy #: ELCSWF-SR0002A-06	CATEGORY: Eligibility	Reference #: OEL-SR-404
Approval: Modification approval pending Sept. 27, 2006	Effective Date:	Replaces (policy # and date): ELCSWF-SR0002-05 1/20/05

- I. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this policy is to establish the same eligibility priorities for Lee, Collier, Hendry and Glades counties, in order to provide continuity in enrollment and eligibility across the region.
- II. **REVIEW HISTORY:** This policy supersedes the preceding policy of January 20, 2005, and replaces any previous written or verbal directives issued in any of the four counties.
- III. **CONTACT:** Barbara Saunders, Executive Director.
- IV. **PERSONS AFFECTED:** Eligibility Staff.
- V. **POLICY:** This policy prioritizes the order in which the various eligibility group categories will be served, but will not supersede any priorities established by federal or state laws subsequent to this policy approval.
- VI. **RATIONALE:** Federal and State law require school readiness coalitions to comply with certain identified priorities in the provision of services and to set the priority for families eligible in other categories. Additionally, the 2006 Community Needs assessment has determined the greatest need for services.
- VII. **CROSS REFERENCES:** Cite: 45CFR98, Sec. 98.20; Chapter 411.01, ss. 411.01 (5) (d) 3 d and (6), Florida Statutes; and Rule 60BB-4, Florida Administrative Code.
- VIII. **DEFINITIONS:**

“At Risk” refers to children at risk of abuse, neglect, abandonment and/or exploitation.

Child Care Purchasing Pool refers to a pool of donated money to support the availability of child care slots for children not otherwise eligible for services due to limited funding.

“Handicapped Child” means a preschool child who is developmentally disabled, mentally handicapped, speech impaired, language impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, blind or partially sighted, physically handicapped, health impaired, or emotionally handicapped; a preschool child who has a specific learning disability; or any other child who has been classified under rules of the State Board of Education as eligible for preschool special education services, with the exception of those who are classified solely as gifted. [411.202 (8), F.S.]

“Infant or Toddler” refers to any child from birth to 36 months of age.

“Family” means the assistance group or the individuals whose needs, resources, and income are considered when determining eligibility for temporary assistance. The family for purposes of temporary assistance includes the minor child, custodial parent, or caretaker relative who resides in the same house or living unit. The family may also include individuals whose income and resources are considered in whole or in part in determining eligibility for temporary assistance but whose needs, due to federal or state restrictions, are not considered. These individuals include, but are not limited to, ineligible non-citizens or sanctioned individuals. [Cite: ss 414.0252 (5) F.S.]

“Preschool child” means a child from birth to 5 years of age, including a child who attains 5 years of age before September 1. [ss 411.202 (17) FS]

“Prekindergarten Child with Disabilities” is a child who is below five (5) years of age on or before September 1 and has a sensory, physical, mental, or emotional condition which significantly affects the attainment of normal developmental milestones. {Chapter 6A-6.03026 (1) F.A.C.}

“Priority Category” refers to child ages birth to school age. Those are children from birth to their eligibility to enter the public school system. Any child who turns 5 years of age after September 1 of the current year would be included in the eligibility priority.

“School age” refers to children who are at least 5 years of age on or before September 1 of the current year and eligible to attend school in the fall. This category incorporates children up to the age of 13 years or older only if qualified as a “special needs” child.

“Special needs” child refers to the following:

A preschool child defined as a “Prekindergarten Child with Disabilities” or “Handicapped” as described on page 2 of this policy, with supporting documentation.

A child birth through 2 years of age who have been determined eligible by Department of Health/Children’s Medical Services Early Intervention Program or any other recognized community resource which serves infants and toddlers with disabilities, or

Children ages 3 through 17 years who have a physical or mental disability as certified by State Board of Education Rules, Chapter 6A-6, or are eligible clients of the Department of Children and Families Developmental Disabilities Program (now Agency for Persons with Disabilities), or children diagnosed with mild to moderate emotional problems as certified by a licensed psychiatrist, psychologist or licensed mental health professional.

“TANF” is an acronym for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, a category of federal funds which has the following four purposes to:

- (a) Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives;
- (b) End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;
- (c) Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and
- (d) Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. [Cite: 64 FR 17878 sec. 260.20]

“Temporary cash assistance” means cash assistance provided under the state program certified under Title IV-A of the Social Security Act, as amended. [Cite: ss. 414.0252, (12) F.S.]

IX. **PROCEDURES:**

1. The following identifies the categories of families who are eligible for school readiness services, in the order in which they should be served. Families referred by the Florida Department of Children and Families or their contracted providers (Priority 1 and 2), shall be served first and will not be required to be placed on the waiting list.
2. Families in other eligibility groups will be served as funds are available. If no funds are available at the time of application, the

family will be placed on a waiting list and served in the order of the date they applied.

3. It should be noted that any subsequent federal or state law changes to eligibility prioritization, will automatically supersede those identified in this policy.
4. Due to the nature of the program, Children and Families receiving services through the Child Care Executive Partnership are not subject this policy.
5. The following outlines the priority categories of families applying for school readiness funding. Applicants will be given priority for services based on their priority status. Applicants in Priority 1 and 2 are treated equally. Priorities 3, 4 and 5 are served in order of listing.

Priority 1. TANF (All Categories) Ages 0-13

- Workforce Development Participants
- Workforce Development Participants Diversion Program
- TANF Refugee
- Transitional Child Care Diversion (TCCD)
- Transitional Child Care (TCC)
- Transitional Child Care/Transitional Education (TCC/TED)
- TANF Child Only
- TANF Respite Child Care
- TANF At-Risk (Relative Care Giver Program)

Priority 2. At-Risk (Protective Services) Ages 0-13

- Protective Services (PS)
- Out of Home Placements (i.e. Foster Care)
- Infant/toddler children of teen parents (birth to 36 months)

Priority 3. At Risk of Future School Failure

1. Special Needs -Ages 0-5 - (Income eligible families with child(ren) in this category may also receive services for any preschool siblings.)
2. Children 0-5 (preschool age) of Migrant farm worker families who meet the financial eligibility guidelines.
3. Preschool Children of teen parents ages 3-5 years.
4. Special Needs – 5 to 17 years (School age).

Priority 4. Working Poor (WP) Ages 0-5

1. Income Eligible Families with income at or below 100% of the federal poverty level (FPL) Ages 0-36 months. (Income eligible families with children in this category may also receive services for any preschool siblings.)
2. Income Eligible Families with income at or below 100% of the federal poverty level (FPL) Ages 3-5 years.
3. Income Eligible Families with income between 100% and 150 % of the FPL Ages 0-36 months. (Income eligible families with children in this category may also receive services for any preschool siblings.)
4. Income Eligible Families with income between 100% and 150 % of the FPL ages 3-5 years.
5. Children age 0-5 (prioritizing 0-36 months population) from Child Care Purchasing Pool. (Eligible families with children in this category may also receive services for any preschool siblings.) Then 3-5 years (CCPP) with income below 200% of the FPL.
6. School age siblings, ages 5-8 years of School Readiness children ages 0-5 years.
7. School age siblings, ages 8-13 years of School Readiness children ages 0-5 years.

Priority 5. Additional Eligibility Groups

The Early Learning Coalition of SWF has approved the following additional eligibility groups if all eligible clients in the above categories have been served:

1. Migrant families who do not meet financial eligibility guidelines;
2. Children with disabilities who do not meet financial eligibility guidelines;
3. Two parent families whose income is below 150% of poverty but where only one parent works.
4. Child Care Purchasing Pool (CCPP ages 5-13 years.)
5. School age children ages 5-8 years with no siblings in school readiness program.
6. School age children ages 8-13 years with no siblings in school readiness program.

Priority 6. Non-Federally Funded Groups

The Coalition can develop guidelines for eligibility of this group if funds are available and all eligible clients in the above categories have been served. This can be a catchall grouping for those who do not meet eligibility requirements of any other group however, income guidelines must be met, and 4 year-old children will have first priority. For purposes of federal reporting and requesting payment from the Coalition for services rendered, a unit of child care is a day of child care services, as defined in the Coalition's approved plan.