



Joint Subcommittee on Mandatory Licensure of School
Readiness Providers

Friday, February 22, 2008

Attendees:

Dan England	Lee Mental Health	ELC Board of Directors
Elaine Schaeffer	Edison College	ELC Board of Directors
Alice Parrish	Dept Children/Fam Svcs - Licensing	ELC Board of Directors
Ellen Blake	APPLE Program Accreditation	Community
Melanie Holaway	Dir School Readiness Services	ELC Staff
Ashley Houk	Comm Coord Care for Children-4C	ELC – Central Agency
Shirley Losch	Dir Health/Developmental Services	ELC Staff
Darline Pinhero	Child Care of Southwest Florida	Community
Suzette Reese (by phone)	Hendry County Health Department	ELC - Contracted RN
Nancy Starr	Director Program Policy	ELC Staff
Gayla Thompson	Dir of Professional Development	ELC Staff

Purpose of Meeting: ELC-SWFL currently offers School Readiness (SR) services for children 0-5 years of age throughout 4 counties (Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee). SR services can be chosen by the parent from any provider who has a signed agreement with the ELC-SWFL – whether the facility is licensed for care by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or not. A significant number of facilities are unlicensed -- either Religious-exempt child care centers or Registered Family Child Care Homes.

At the current time, unlicensed SR facilities are monitored annually for minimum health and safety standards by a Provider Consultant from the ELC-SWFL’s contracted entity – Community Coordinated Care for Children (4C). Concerns have arisen in this second year of monitoring that significant health and safety issues continue to be present during these visits at some of the unlicensed facilities. In fact, steps have begun to officially inform a few providers that they must take action to comply with these basic standards or be withdrawn from the SR program.

Two ELC-SWFL Board Committees (Health / Developmental Services and Quality/Professional Development Services) had discussions on this topic at their last meetings and decided to form a joint subcommittee to review the option of requiring all SR facilities to be licensed.

This subcommittee is to make recommendations back to each of the Committees, who will then bring a recommendation to the full Board of Directors of the ELC-SWFL.



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Issue	Discussion Points	Action Plan
<p>Identify providers who would be impacted; and number of children served by those providers</p>	<p>A list of unlicensed SR providers was distributed to the group that notes the number of SR children currently enrolled in each site; it was noted that this list is not complete, for it does not note the SR provider who has a signed agreement with the Coalition, but does not currently have any SR children</p> <p>The list contained 30 religious exempt centers and 84 registered family child care providers; several of these would not be included in this initiative as they are school based &/or before and after school programs.</p> <p>Group felt strongly that the focus of our efforts should be with the SR providers</p>	<p>Obtain accurate list of Exempt centers and RFCCH (Shirley/Melanie)</p> <p>Obtain accurate list of numbers of children potentially impacted by decision (Shirley/Melanie)</p>
<p>Review of provider licensing and program requirements</p>	<p>Nancy Starr and Alice Parrish reviewed the Florida Statute 402.301 -319 which defines licensing standards</p>	
<p>Why would a provider choose not to become licensed?</p>	<p>Anecdotal information discussed by the group: * provider may fear they would need to surrender their faith-based curriculum (fear unfounded – we have many faith based licensed programs at present); * provider unwilling to follow <i>minimum</i> health and safety standards required by licensing (if true, there is concern about the welfare of SR children in these facilities)</p> <p>Group supported the idea of including questions about this process in the annual provider survey that will be given at 7 provider meetings this spring.</p>	<p>Annual ELC-SWFL Provider Survey to be adapted to include questions/concerns about becoming a licensed SR provider (Shirley/ Melanie)</p>
<p>Impact on DCF Licensing department</p>	<p>Alice reported that a normal caseload for a DCF licensing counselor is 100 FCCH or 50 centers. Based on current numbers of unlicensed facilities, the impact would require one additional counselor.</p> <p>Current fiscal restraints at the state level may not</p>	<p>Explore possible funding options between ELC-SWFL and DCF (Shirley/Melanie/Peter Escayg – ELC Dir of Operations)</p>



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	<p>support the increased staffing. ELC-SWFL is currently contracting with 4C to provide minimum H/S monitoring. Group discussed possibility of contracting with DCF for those services.</p>	
<p>General Discussion Points</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Health and Safety concerns that are persisting in this second year of monitoring necessitate action *ELC-SWFL Board of Directors charged to assure on-site welfare of SR children and to be good stewards of fiscal resources * If this change were made, it would be effective for the 09-10 FY. During the 08-08 FY supports and funding would be available to assist providers to become licensed. * Parents would need education and involvement as the year progressed; if a provider chose not to become licensed, the parent would be assisted to find an alternative placement. * It would be important to explore this plan with other coalitions who have successfully (or not) implemented mandatory SR licensing – identify challenges. * Information/planning needs to be public and emphasize positive impact i.e., if facility licensed, liability insurance would decrease; able to join USDA food program; can note such in marketing materials, etc. * Public Schools, Charter Schools and School-Age Programs would be excluded from this initiative. *Private Schools (non-public) with pre-school programs would be included in this initiative. * When licensed, DCF visits: child care centers 3X per year, Family Child Care Homes 2X per year – Additional visits if needed for complaints or re-inspections. 	



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<p>Action Plan</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bring discussion back to the two main committees for review and formal recommendations and then bring their recommendations to Executive Committee meeting in March <p><i>If approved,</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Plan an information session for the Circles of Care Conference in May that would share information about supports and process; feature currently licensed Faith-based center director, Licensed Family Child Care Home owner, licensing and ELC-SWFL reps. 3. Sub-committee would develop strategies for the upcoming year – to encourage and support providers in the licensing process – and recognize their efforts i.e. produce a window cling to be posted at licensed facilities 4. Committee would contact other coalitions who have taken this step to gain insight into pitfalls and rewards of process 5. Media outreach could include a piece in the Eye on Education section of the News-Press and other press releases, etc. 6. Develop a list of Frequently Asked Questions and post answers on ELC website and distribute at provider meetings 7. Look into producing a GPS map of all licensed facilities in our 4 county area 8. Technical Assistance and support would be emphasized in all aspects of plan 	<p>Dan England offered to present the recommendations of the committees to the ELC Executive Committee at their next meeting, March 17th.</p> <p>Alice Parrish and Elaine Schaeffer are also members of this committee.</p> <p>Subcommittee will meet again if plan approved by Executive Committee/Board of Directors of ELC-SWFL</p>
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