



Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida, Inc.

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| <u>Subject:</u> Parental Choice for School Readiness and VPK Services | | |
| <u>Policy #:</u> ELCSWF-EL0005A-08 | <u>Category:</u> Program Quality and Standards | <u>Reference #</u> OEL-EL-220 |
| <u>Approval:</u> Updated 9/27/08 | <u>Effective Date:</u> Sept. 27, 2008 | <u>Replaces (policy # and date):</u> ELCSWF-0005-05 approved March 17, 2005 ELCSWF-EL0005A-06 updated 7/26/06 |

- I. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this policy is to clarify the method and manner in which parents will be provided a choice of eligible child care providers for their children.
- II. **REVIEW HISTORY:** This policy replaces any previous written or verbal directives on this subject.
- III. **CONTACT:** Chief Executive Officer.
- IV. **PERSONS AFFECTED:** Resource and Referral/Eligibility staff.
- V. **POLICY:** It is the policy of the Coalition to ensure all parents are provided a full choice of child care providers and the opportunity to make an informed decision when selecting the provider to care for their child.

RATIONALE: Federal law mandates that parents have a right to select the child care provider of their choice. Coalitions have an obligation to educate parents about the types of child care and how to recognize quality in a child care program.

- VI. **CROSS REFERENCES:** Cite 45CFR98.30, Chapters 402.302-319, 411.01 5 (d) 3 b, and 411.01 (7) Florida Statutes, Chapter 60BB-4.100, F.A.C.

VII. **DEFINITIONS:**

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

"Child care" means the care, protection, and supervision of a child, for a period of less than 24 hours a day on a regular basis, which supplements parental care, enrichment, and health supervision for the child, in accordance with his or her individual needs, and for which a payment, fee, or grant is made for care.

"Child Care facility" includes any child care center or child care arrangement which provides child care for more than five children unrelated to the operator and which receives a payment, fee, or grant for any of the children receiving care, wherever operated, and whether or not operated for profit. The following are not included:

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- (a) Public schools and nonpublic schools and their integral programs, except as provided in s. [402.3025](#);
- (b) Summer camps having children in full-time residence;
- (c) Summer day camps;
- (d) Bible schools normally conducted during vacation periods; and
- (e) Operators of transient establishments, as defined in chapter 509, which provide child care services solely for the guests of their establishment or resort, provided that all child care personnel of the establishment are screened according to the level 2 screening requirements of chapter 435. {cite 402.302 (1) and (2) FS}

“Child care providers” means any child care facility or family day care home, licensed or registered under Chapter 402.302-319, Florida Statutes; Religiously exempt child care facility pursuant to ss 402.316, F.S., or public and non-public school program pursuant to ss 402.3025, Florida Statutes.

Contractor refers to “Community Coordinated Care for Children, Inc. (4C), the agency contracted by the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida, to carry out the daily responsibilities for families and providers served by the Early Learning Coalition.

“Department” means the Florida Department of Children and Families.

“Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida, Inc. (ELC-SWF) means the coalition responsible for Collier, Hendry, Glades and Lee counties.

“In loco parentis” – acting as the temporary guardian of a child.

“Parent” means a parent by blood, marriage or adoption, legal guardian or person standing in loco parentis.

“Provider” means the individual or facility responsible for the provision of child care services for children.

“Purchase Service Order” is the child care authorization which assures the child care provider that they will be reimbursed for child care provided to the eligible child(ren).

IX. PROCEDURES:

1. The Contractor shall provide parental choice through a purchase service order that ensures, to the maximum extent possible, flexibility in school readiness programs and payment arrangements. {Cite 411.01 (7) F.S.}
2. Parents applying for school readiness or VPK services for their children shall be offered a choice of settings and locations of eligible child care providers. For school readiness, parents

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may also choose a relative if they meet the requirements as an informal child care provider and are able and willing to meet the responsibilities of the school readiness program.

3. All parents shall be provided information about the characteristics of the different types of child care, things to look for when choosing a child care program, the benefits of licensure and how to identify quality child care.
4. Parents will be advised of the names of early learning child care providers who have signed a provider agreement with the coalition, and are willing to provide either school readiness and/or VPK services.
5. Proof that the parent was provided a full choice of providers for the school readiness program will be determined by their signature on the Family's Rights and Responsibilities form. The signed form must be filed in the client's file.
6. Copies of Family's Rights and Responsibilities form must be provided to each parent along with other pertinent information by receiving a Parent Packet each year.
7. Parents or caregivers of "At Risk" children, under the supervision of the Department of Children and Families, or their contracted providers, may only select licensed child care programs or those owned and operated by the public school system, pursuant to Chapter 409.175 F.S. and Rule 65C-13 of the Florida Administrative Code.

XI. **EXHIBITS:** Family's Rights and Responsibilities Form



Family's Rights and Responsibilities When Receiving School Readiness Services

Important Information for Parents and Guardians

What are School Readiness Services? This federal and state government program funds subsidized child care services for low income families who are working or attending school. It also helps children at risk of abuse or neglect, those with special needs or those at risk of school failure. Although the program can serve children up to 13 years of age, it specifically targets children from birth to five years of age in need of child care programs, and helps them to learn skills necessary for future success in school. The program helps children to develop physically, emotionally and socially. Health and developmental screenings are provided to ensure children get all the services they need to learn.

Information Parents Should Know and Understand:

_____ I understand that School Readiness Services are strictly based on the client's eligibility, availability of funds, and enrollment priorities established by the Early Learning Coalition. These services are not an entitlement.

_____ I understand I must provide proof of my identity.

_____ I understand I must provide proof of my child's age.

_____ I understand I must supply information about my job and income.

_____ I understand that my Social Security Number will be requested but I am not obligated to give it. If I voluntarily provide my SSN, it will be held confidential and used only to collect data and as a unique identifier.

_____ I understand that I must show that my child is a U.S. citizen or legal immigrant.

Your Rights

_____ I understand that I have a right to a translator at no cost - Right to free translator.

_____ I understand I have a right to a choice of child care provider: The child care provider must be a legally operating child care provider, (licensed, faith-based, public or non-public schools; licensed or registered family day care homes or informal related providers), who have signed, and agreed to comply with, the Coalition Provider Agreement.

_____ I understand that children referred by the Department of Children and Families or their contracted providers, are restricted to licensed or school based programs only.

_____ I understand that I have the right to visit my child while they are in the care of the child care provider.

_____ I understand that I have the right to look at my child's records and get a copy of I want.

_____ I understand I have a right to be notified of any funding changes which might affect my services. I understand that if I have questions, I have a right to request information or clarification from 4C or the Coalition at any time.

_____ I understand that discrimination is illegal. I may not be turned down because of race, color, national origin, age, sex, disability, religion or political beliefs.

_____ I understand I may appeal if my services are denied, terminated, suspended, or reduced. I must first follow the Complaint Resolution Process. If I am not satisfied, I can request the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida to review my case. If I am still not satisfied, I can ask the Coalition to provide me a hearing before the Executive Board. I must make a request within 10 days of the last action against me by contacting:

The Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida,
5256 Summerlin Blvd., Suite 201, Fort Myers, Florida 33907.
Telephone: (239)-267-4105 FAX: (239) 267-4109

Responsibilities

Parent Responsibilities In Obtaining and Maintaining Child Care Subsidy:

_____ I understand that to accurately determine my eligibility for benefits, I must cooperate with providing all required information and documentation requested by the eligibility counselor. It is also my responsibility to conduct myself in an appropriate and responsible manner while in the agency's offices.

_____ I understand I must report changes affecting my eligibility within 10 days of the change. Changes in address, income, wages, employment status or location, work hours, marital status, household members, family size or child care arrangements must be reported within 10 days of the change. This is very important!

_____ I understand that Parents are required to work a minimum of 25 hours per week to receive full time care for children, or 20 hours a week for Part-time care for children.

_____ I understand that parents and guardians must make required co-payments to the child care provider. I also understand that the provider may charge me for additional costs such as registration, snacks or the difference between the provider's normal rate and the reimbursement rate paid by 4C. I understand it is my responsibility to find out from the provider what additional fees I may be expected to pay.

_____ I understand that my child(ren) is expected to attend the child care program every day. If my child does not attend for five (5) days in a row without an excuse, my child must be dismissed from the child care subsidy program. It is my responsibility to advise the child care program if my child is ill or unable to attend.

Penalties

How Parents Could Lose Their Child Care Subsidy Benefits:

_____ I understand that I can lose or be denied services if I do any of the following:

- Refuse or do not cooperate in providing all the required information and documentation requested by the eligibility counselor.
- Give false, inaccurate or incomplete information.
- Do not report changes to employment, income, household members within 10 days.
- Stop working or going to school for more than 30 days.
- Fail to maintain a minimum for at least 20 hours a week working or attending school.
- Do not make the required daily co-payments to the child care provider.

_____ I understand that if I knowingly give wrong or misleading information or do not promptly report changes in my status, the following may occur:

- I may be prosecuted for fraud pursuant to Chapter 414.39, Florida Statutes.
- I may have to repay the money paid to the child care provider on behalf of my family.
- I may have benefits reduced.
- I may be disqualified from receiving benefits in the future.

_____ I understand that I may not knowingly fail to tell the truth, hide information, pretend to be someone else, withhold information needed about myself, my family or others, for purposes of receiving or increasing child care benefits or other services to which I or my family are not entitled. I also understand that if I knowingly provide false information, omit requested information, sign inaccurate attendance documents or fail to promptly report changes, then I can be required to pay back money paid to others on behalf of my family; and/or I can be denied services and referred to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Public Assistance Fraud Division for further investigation per ss.414.39, F.S.

_____ I agree and confirm, by my signature below, that all information contained in this form is complete and truthful to the best of my knowledge. I understand that any misrepresentation or failure to disclose requested information could result in administrative and/or criminal sanctions as described above.

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Signature of Eligibility Specialist

Print Name: _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Date _____