



## Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida, Inc.

<b>Subject:</b> Children at Risk of Abuse, Neglect, Abandonment or Exploitation		
<b>Policy #:</b> ELCSWF-SR-0006-08	<b>Category:</b> Child Eligibility	<b>Reference #:</b> OEL – SR- 404
<b>Approval:</b> Updated 9/27/08	<b>Effective Date:</b> 9-27-08	<b>Replaces (policy # and date):</b> ELCSWF-SR0006-05 - 3/17/05 ELCSWF-SR0006A-06A – 7-26-06, 9/25/07

- I. **PURPOSE:** To provide a process to serve children at risk of abuse or neglect when referred for child care services by the Florida Department of Children and Families or their contracted providers.
- II. **REVIEW HISTORY:** This policy replaces any previous written or verbal directives on this subject.
- III. **CONTACT:** Chief Executive Officer.
- IV. **PERSONS AFFECTED:** Enrollment and Eligibility staff.
- V. **POLICY:** It is the policy of the Coalition to work in partnership with agencies authorized by the State of Florida as responsible for the investigation and/or case management services of children at risk of abuse, neglect, abandonment or exploitation.
- VI. **RATIONALE:** Clients served by the coalition and child welfare organizations have unique needs, which require agencies to cooperate in order to maximize the provision of services, support and protection.
- VII. **CROSS REFERENCES:** Cite 45CFR98; Chapters 39, 411.01 402.27,, 402.301-319 409.175 Florida Statutes; Rules 60BB-4.201, 65C-13, 65C-22.008, Florida Administrative Codes. #ELCSWF-SR0011A-07 "Eligibility and Enrollment for School Readiness Services"
- VIII. **DEFINITIONS:**

**Case Management Organization (CMO)** means a contracted provider of the Community Based Lead Agency who performs all child welfare functions previously done by the Department.

**"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. {ss.402.302 (1), F.S.}

**Child Protective Investigator (CPI)** refers to the individual employed with the Department of Children and Families; and charged with the responsibility to investigate allegations of abuse, neglect, exploitation or abandonment pursuant to Chapter 39, F.S.

**Child Welfare Case Manager (CWCM)** refers to the individual employed by the Community Based Lead Agency or their Case Management Organization to oversee the child's case management while in the care of, or under their agencies supervision.

**“Children at Risk of Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation”** includes the following children referred by the Department of Children and Families:

- a) Children who are in families under investigation by the Department of Children and Families or a designated local sheriff’s office for abuse, neglect, abandonment or exploitation.
- b) Children who are in families under the supervision of the Department of Children and Families or its contracted provider for abuse, neglect, abandonment or exploitation.
- c) Children in the court ordered long term custody or under the guardianship of a relative or non-relative following the termination of supervision by the Department of Children and Families or its contracted provider.
- d) Children in court-ordered long-term licensed custody.”  
{Cite: Rule 60BB-4.100 FAC.}

**“Community-Based Lead Agency”** (CBC) means a contracted community provider whose has responsibility for the child welfare functions previously performed by the Department.

**“Date of Issuance”** is the date the referral is actually received by the Coalition or their designee.

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

**“Migrant Agricultural Worker or Seasonal Farmworker”** means:

- (a) A migrant agricultural worker or migrant fisher, as defined by 34 CFR § 200.40(c) and (e), or
- (b) An agricultural worker who is employed by more than one agricultural employer during the course of a year, and whose income varies according to weather conditions and market stability. (cite Rule 60BB-4.100 (16) FAC)

#### IX. ELIGIBILITY:

Children eligible for services under this category must meet the definition of “Children at Risk of Abuse, Neglect, Abandonment or Exploitation”; be the subject of an active open case with the Department of Children and Families or their contracted Community Based Care Lead agency through a sub-contracted Case Management Organization; and have a current child care referral from one of those organizations

#### X. PROCEDURES:

##### GENERAL

- (1) Eligibility under this category is not dependent on family income or work requirements. Eligibility is based on a documented referral from the Department of Children and Family Services, or its contracted provider.
- (2) Each referral for this category is valid up to six (6) months.
- (3) A child may continue to maintain eligibility under this category if there is a current and valid referral from the Department of Children and Family Services or its contracted provider.

- (4) Prior to disenrolling any child under this category, the coalition or its designee shall contact the referral agency to verify continued eligibility.
- (5) All contacts or attempted contacts must be documented. All documentation, referral forms and supporting materials will be filed in the child's file.
- (6) The Coalition and their designee will comply with the working agreement developed between the Coalition, The Department of Children and Families, and The Children's Network of Southwest Florida.
- (7) Legal verification of the child(ren)'s age must be provided to the Coalition or designee within 90 days of enrollment. Requests for this documentation should be made to the parent, caregiver and/or Child Welfare Case Manager immediately upon enrollment.
  - a. One of the following identifies acceptable documentation:
    - A duly attested transcript of the child's birth record filed according to law with a public officer charged with the duty of recording births;
    - A duly attested transcript of a certificate of baptism showing the date of birth and place of baptism of the child, accompanied by an affidavit sworn to by the parent;
    - An insurance policy on the child's life that has been in force for at least 2 years;
    - A bona fide contemporary religious record of the child's birth accompanied by an affidavit sworn to by the parent;
    - A passport or certificate of arrival in the United States showing the age of the child;
    - A transcript of record of age shown in the child's school record of a least 4 years prior to application, stating date of birth; or
    - An immunization record indicating the date of birth, signed by a public health officer or a licensed practicing physician, or
    - A court order or judgment specifying the child's age or date of birth, or
    - A valid military dependent identification card.
    - If none of these evidences can be produced, an affidavit of age sworn to by the parent, accompanied by a certificate of age signed by a public health officer or, by a licensed practicing physician which certificate states that the physician has examined the child and believes that the age as stated in the affidavit is substantially correct.
    - Any one of the above sources is acceptable and families should not be limited to just one option. A copy of the provided source must be kept in the client files and be readily available for audit or monitoring purposes.
  - b. Birth verification in one of the above categories must be present in the child's file a maximum of 90 days from the child's enrollment. If not received within 80 days, the Coalition or their designee must send a 10 day notice of termination to the child's parent/caregiver and Child Welfare Case

- (8) Each preschool "at risk" child, (under the age of 5 years as of September 1), must have an "Ages and Stages developmental screening" (ASQ) within 30 days of initial entry into the school readiness program, to establish the developmental level of the child.
  - a. For "at risk" children residing with their parents or relatives, completion of the initial ASQ completion are requested through their interaction with their parent or relative.
  - b. For children in foster homes or other residential programs, the ASQ should be completed by the individual most likely to observe the developmental levels of the child. This could be the Child Welfare Case Manager, the foster parent or a residential caregiver.
  - c. The score results of the ASQ must be shared with the Child Welfare Case Manager by 4C staff, along with recommendations for follow-up services if warranted.

## REFERRALS

- (9) At the time of referral, the At Risk children may be living with their biological parents, a relative, a non-relative, a licensed foster parent,
- (10) Referrals received from Child Protective Investigators (CPI) of the Department or the Case Management Organizations (CMO) must be filled out completely and have all requested information answered and appropriate signatures from the referring counselor and their supervisor.
- (11) Incomplete or backdated referrals are not acceptable. The referral will be returned to sender and will not be processed until completed. Each referral may only authorize care for up to 6 months and cannot be extended without submitting a new referral.
- (12) All referrals must be submitted with supporting documentation in the form of either a copy of the custody letter, Intake, Triage and Referral (ITR) form, or court order. **The referral process is not considered complete without the supporting documentation.**
- (13) Once receiving a completed referral, the Coalition or designee will attempt contact with the parent or caregiver within 24 hours to arrange an appointment.
- (14) In order to ensure that children are not left in vulnerable situations, the Coalition or their designee will advise the referring Child Welfare Case Manager, within three (3) business days by email, fax, letter or documented telephone contact of receipt of a complete referral, of the status of contact with the child's caregiver.
- (15) Each referral is valid for 10 business days from date of issuance. If the caregiver does not contact the Coalition or designee within this time period, the referral is considered void. A new referral from a Child Protective Investigator or Child Welfare Case Manager will need to be submitted if services are still needed.
- (16) By the 10<sup>th</sup> business day, the Coalition or their designee will notify the Child Welfare Case Manager that the child(ren) is either enrolled and receiving services, or the Coalition or designee staff have determined that services were refused. Failure of the parent or guardian to respond within 10 business days to repeated contact attempts by letter and/or telephone messages constitutes refusal of services. **The Coalition or their designee must clearly document all contacts and/or attempted contacts.**

PLEASE NOTE: Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA) receives money specifically to serve the Migrant agricultural and seasonal farmworker populations (please see definitions). Any "at risk" children who fall into that category should be referred directly to RCMA for child care services.

All other families are to be referred through the Coalition's contracted provider, Coordinated Community Care for Children (4C). All "at-risk" families will be provided a choice of licensed child care programs which will also include the child care programs operated by RCMA.

## ELIGIBILITY

*(See policy #ELCSWF-SR0011A-07 "Eligibility and Enrollment for School Readiness Services" for more detailed requirements.)*

(17) Family income is not a criterion for enrollment under the "at risk" category. However, the following applies to the caregivers depending on the child's living arrangement:

- a. If the child(ren) resides with their biological parent, the parent's work schedule and household income will be taken into consideration to determine the hours of authorized care and the amount of parent co-payment. If their income exceeds 200% of the FPL, then the maximum parent co-payment will be applied.
- b. If the child(ren) reside with relatives, the relatives work schedule and household income will be taken into consideration to determine the hours of care and the appropriate co-payment. However, if relatives receive TANF funding through the Department of Children and Families "Relative Caregiver Program" or TANF "Child Only", then only the income received for the child is considered when calculating the co-payment for a family size of one (1) "child only",
- c. If the child resides within a non-relative placement, the non-relative's work schedule and household income must be taken into consideration to determine the hours of authorized care and the co-payment.
- d. If the child resides in the care of a licensed foster family or licensed residential child care facility, income is not considered and parent fees are waived if the child's biological family meets the following circumstances:

- Parent(s) are in the hospital or residential treatment facility.
- Parent(s) in prison
- Parent(s) are unemployed.
- Parent(s) are unable to work due to illness or incapacitation.
- Death of a parent.
- Parent(s) are homeless or living in a shelter.
- Parent(s) are over-extended or type of financial hardship.
- Parent(s) experienced an emergency (i.e. natural disaster, fire, etc.)
- Whereabouts of parents are unknown
- Biological family is making the co-payment for the child.

- e. If biological parents of the foster child are available and working towards reunification, then efforts are to be made to conduct an interview and assess their income for purposes of a parent co-payment.
- (18) Once the child(ren) has been enrolled in a child care program, staff of the Coalition or designee will complete the pertinent information on the bottom of the referral form and fax it back to the Child Welfare Case Manager.

#### **REDETERMINATIONS AND CHANGES**

- (19) The Coalition or designee must notify the Child Welfare Case Manager, the child's caregiver and child care provider, at least 30 days prior to the redetermination date. If the updated referral is not completed timely, there will be a lapse in service.
- (20) Once enrolled, the child may continue to receive services as long as a new referral is completed by the Child Welfare Case Manager and submitted prior to the expiration of the last referral.
- (21) The Coalition or designee is responsible for promptly notifying the Child Welfare Case Manager in the event the child changes child care providers, or if the family wishes to withdraw the child from child care

#### **CASE CLOSURES**

- (22) When the child welfare case is closed, the Coalition or their designee may re-assess the family for continued services under other funding categories if funding is available and the child(ren) are preschool age.
- (23) School age siblings will be referred to available school age programs. However they are not automatically eligible for school readiness funding. Families of school-age children seeking services will be referred to the wait list.

XI. **EXHIBITS:** The working agreement with attachments.

**WORKING AGREEMENT  
BETWEEN  
THE CHILDREN'S NETWORK OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA, INC.  
THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA, INC.  
EARLY LEARNING COALITIONS OF FLORIDA'S HEARTLAND INC.**

This working agreement is entered into between The Children's Network of Southwest Florida, a community-based care division of Camelot Community Care, Inc.; the Florida Department of Children and Families, Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida; and the Early Learning Coalitions of Florida's Heartland Inc. Counties Charlotte, DeSoto, Highlands, Hardee. The agreement will be effective from February 1, 2006 to February 1, 2009, and may be renewed thereafter by mutual consent of the parties hereto.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this agreement is to outline the responsibilities for the Children's Network of Southwest Florida, the Florida Department of Children and Families, Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida, and the Early Learning Coalitions of Florida's Heartland Inc. (Charlotte), as it pertains to services for children at risk of abuse, neglect, abandonment or exploitation, as well as, those children adjudicated dependent and living in "out of home" care with relative/non-relatives or foster care.

These agencies have agreed to come together in partnership in support of families and for the protection of children.

**Roles:**

**The Florida Department of Children and Families** maintains responsibility for the investigation of all reports of child abuse, neglect or exploitation for the five county area. Such responsibility includes the protection of children and appropriately referring the family for ongoing services.

**Children's Network of Southwest Florida** is a community-based care division of Camelot Community Care, Inc. Under contract with the Florida Department of Children and Families, Children's Network of Southwest Florida serves as the lead agency and is responsible for managing the service delivery system within Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Hendry and Glades counties. As lead agency, the Children's Network of Southwest Florida contracts with case management organizations for the actual provision of child welfare services for the five county areas. Such responsibility includes the protection of children and appropriately referring the family for services.

**The Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida**, through their contracted provider, is responsible for the coordination of child care services in Lee, Collier, Hendry and Glades counties for families with an economic need for child care, children at risk of abuse or neglect, children with special needs, and those children at risk of school failure. Families are supported through a variety of services which focus on quality child care, child development, parent awareness, health screenings and parent education.

**The Early Learning Coalitions of Florida's Heartland Inc.** is responsible for the coordination of child care services in the remaining county area, Charlotte, for families with an economic need for child care, children at risk of abuse or neglect, children with special needs, and those children at risk of school

failure. Families are also supported through a variety of services which focus on quality child care, child development, parent awareness, health screenings and parent education.

These organizations are committed to working together and agree to mutually support each other's role through collaborative planning.

**Referrals:**

The attached document, "Procedures for Referrals of At Risk Children for Child Care services in Charlotte, Collier, Lee, Hendry and Glades Counties", identifies the method and manner in which referrals will be addressed. The Florida Department of Children and Families, and the Children's Network of Southwest Florida through their case management organizations will refer clients to the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida's contracted provider, Coordinated Community Care for Children (4C) Inc., and the Early Learning Coalitions of Florida's Heartland Inc. (Charlotte) based on the child's county location.

All referral information will be considered confidential and shall not be shared with anyone outside these respective agencies and their contract providers.

**Shared Responsibilities:**

- The agencies will promote collaboration and provide training as necessary for improving communication and understanding of the responsibilities of each agency. In addition, each agency will share training opportunities to enhance the knowledge and skills of staff.
- The agencies shall work collaboratively to resolve problems or issues of concern.
- Each agency agrees to respect the confidentiality of the family. Client information shall be held confidential by Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida, their contracted provider, Coordinated Community Care for Children (4C), and the Early Learning Coalitions of Florida's Heartland Inc. (Charlotte). Information will be shared solely for purposes of determining the client's eligibility for services and the provision of said services.
- Coordinated Community Care for Children (4C) and the Early Learning Coalitions of Florida's Heartland Inc. (Charlotte) will only refer eligible clients, under the supervision of the Department of Children and Families, to licensed child care providers pursuant to Chapter 39 and 409 of the Florida Statutes.

**Agreement Terms:**

All terms of this agreement are fully understood and accepted by the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida; the Early Learning Coalitions of Florida's Heartland Inc. (Charlotte); the Department of Children and Families and; the Children's Network of Southwest Florida, as represented by the signers of this agreement. Any modifications to this agreement will be made in writing with the consent of all parties.

/signed by H. Propper  
Harry Propper, CEO  
Children's Network of Southwest Florida, Inc.

1/31/06  
Date

/signed Barbara Saunders  
Barbara L. Saunders, Executive Director  
Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida, Inc.

1-12-06  
Date

/signed Anna Brookbank  
Anna Brookbank, Chief Financial Officer  
Early Learning Coalitions of Florida's Heartland Inc. (Charlotte)

1-17-06  
Date

/signed Mike Murphy  
Mike Murphy, District 8 Administrator  
Florida Department of Children and Families

1-30-06  
Date

## **Procedures for Referrals of At Risk Children for Child Care services in Charlotte, Collier, Lee, Hendry and Glades Counties**

### **Premise:**

The Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida (ELC-SWF) and the Early Learning Coalitions of Florida's Heartland Inc. Counties Charlotte, DeSoto, Highlands, Hardee (ELC-HD), are responsible for the coordination of child care services for children at risk of abuse and neglect, as well as, children of families with an economic need for child care. Because the need for child care is greater than the funding available, the Coalition must ensure that referrals received from the Department of Children and Families, or their contracted providers, meet the legislative intent of the law.

### **Criteria\*:**

Children at risk of abuse or neglect eligible for services must be:

1. The subject of a child protective investigation warranting a "safety plan" or being referred for ongoing services, **OR**
2. The subjects in an active child welfare case, **AND**
  - a) At risk of abuse, neglect, abandonment or exploitation **OR**
  - b) In "out of home" care where child care services are needed to maintain the placement.

\*Families in need of child care services for financial or employment reasons, and NOT at risk of abuse, neglect, abandonment or exploitation, do not need a referral, but should be referred directly to Coordinated Community Care for Children (4C) (for Lee, Collier, Hendry and Glades) or (for Charlotte) Early Learning Coalitions of Florida's Heartland Inc. Counties (Charlotte).

### **Procedures:**

#### **Child Protective Investigations (DCF)**

Depending on the county of origin, children under a child protection investigation with the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF), and whose family is in need of child care services to protect them from abuse or neglect ("safety plan"), may be referred to the ELC-SWF's contracted provider, Coordinated Community Care for Children (4C, Inc. or Early Learning Coalitions of Florida's Heartland Inc. (Charlotte) (ELC-FH), for child care services, as an "at risk" child if court ordered protection is initiated.

PLEASE NOTE: Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA) receives money specifically to serve the "Migrant agricultural and Seasonal farmworker populations". Any "at risk" children of families who fall into that category should be referred directly to RCMA for child care services. All other families must be referred through the Coalition of SWF, although they will be provided a choice of licensed child care programs which will include those child care facilities owned and operated by RCMA.

- Families referred by DCF to the court for ongoing services will be transferred to a Case Management Organization (CMO). The CMO will be responsible for initial referrals for child care and redeterminations.

### **Referrals from Case Management Organizations**

1. In case situations in which children and their families are being referred for ongoing services to a Case Management Organization (CMO), an Intake, Triage and Referral (ITR) staffing is held to determine appropriate services.
2. If the need for child care is identified at the ITR staffing, then within 3 working days, the assigned Child Welfare Case Manager will refer the child(ren) to the appropriate school readiness provider (either Early Learning Coalitions of Florida's Heartland Inc. (Charlotte) (ELC-FH) or Coordinated Community Care for Children, Inc. (4C), for services. A copy of the custody letter, ITR staffing form or court order, must accompany referrals. Verification of the child's age will follow within 90 days.
3. Only completed referral forms (Exhibit A and B) will be accepted by the school readiness provider for processing. The school readiness provider will attempt contact with the client within 24 hours to arrange and appointment. Each referral for this category is valid for up to six (6) months from the date received by the Coalition or their designee.
4. The Child Welfare Case Manager is responsible for notifying 4C or ELC-FH of any special circumstances, court directives or other mandated requirements, including the Rilya Wilson Act, connected to the provision of child care services for any particular child.
5. In order to ensure that children are not left in vulnerable situations, the school readiness provider will advise the referring Child Welfare Case Manager, within 3 days of receipt of a complete referral, of the status of said referral. Such notification will continue up to 10 working days thereafter until the child(ren) are enrolled and receiving services, or the Coordinated Community Care for Children, Inc. (4C) central agency determines services are refused. All notifications must be documented.
6. The Child Welfare Case Manager is responsible for ensuring that birth verification or acceptable equivalent documentation of foster children is provided to the central agency within 30 days of enrollment.
7. Once the child(ren) has been enrolled in a child care program, the central agency counselor will provide the pertinent information on the bottom of the referral form and fax back to the Child Welfare Case Manager.
8. The Child Welfare Case Manager is responsible for notifying the child care provider of their legal responsibilities and contact information, for any child subject to the Rilya Wilson Act, as described in the Children's Network pending Operating Procedure #QM-005.
9. When the child's legal status and/or placement changes, the Child Welfare Case Manager will promptly notify the school readiness provider by faxing a "Child Care Change Form" (Exhibit C).
10. The 4C counselor will promptly notify the Child Welfare Case Manager in the event the child changes child care providers, or if the family wishes to withdraw the child from child care.

11. Within 3 days of the Judicial Review Hearing, the Child Welfare Case Manager must submit an updated referral to4C or ELC-FH if they determine child care services should be continued.
12. When the child welfare case is closed, the Child Welfare Case Manager must promptly notify the Coalition or their designee and the child's school readiness provider. The families of the children will be re-assessed by the school readiness provider for continued services under other funding categories, providing funding is available.