



Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida, Inc.

Subject: Sliding Fee and Parent Co-Payments for School Readiness		
Policy #: ELCSWF-SR0010A-08	Category: Child Eligibility	Reference # OEL-SR-404
Approval: Sept. 26, 2008	Effective Date: Sept. 27, 2008	Replaces (policy # and date): ELCSWF-SR0010-05 4/21/05 ELCSWF-SR0010A-06 (5/06)

I. PURPOSE: To establish a standardized policy for assessing parental fees.

II. REVIEW HISTORY: This policy replaces any previous written or verbal directives issued in any of the four counties.

III. CONTACT: Chief Executive Officer

IV. PERSONS AFFECTED: Eligibility Staff; Parents and Child Care Providers.

V. POLICY: This policy sets the process for selecting a sliding fee schedule and determining when fee reductions are permissible.

VI. RATIONALE: All parents have a right and obligation to share in the cost of the child care and to be shown leniency when circumstances warrant a reduction of those fees.

VII. CROSS REFERENCES: 45CFR 98.42, ss. 411.01 (5) (d) 3.a, Florida Statutes and Rule 60BB-4.400 (1), Florida Administrative Code.

VIII. DEFINITIONS:

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

"Co-payment" means the sum of money the parent or caregiver, based on their ability, pays daily which is subtracted from the reimbursement rate, and paid directly to the provider of child care.

"Coalition" refers to the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida, Inc. (ELC-SWF) which is responsible for Collier, Hendry, Glades and Lee counties.

"Foster Parent" means an individual or couple who possess a license under the Florida Department of Children and Families pursuant to Chapter 409.175, F.S. and Rule 65C-13 of the Florida Administrative Code and caring for children in their home who meet the definition of "at risk".

"Initial Child" means the youngest child receiving School Readiness Services in a family unit.

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“Parent” refers to the identified parent, guardian or responsible adult for the child being served.

“Qualified Contractor” or “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.

Sliding fee scale means a system of cost sharing by a family based on income and family size.

IX. PROCEDURES:

1. Sliding Fee and Parent Co-payments apply only to School Readiness Programs. The sliding fee scale establishes a co-payment for parents based upon their ability to pay.
2. Parents are required to share in the cost of the child care by making a co-payment on either a daily, weekly or monthly basis as arranged with the child care provider.
3. Sliding Fee options are developed by the Office of Early Learning annually, based on the most recent report of the Federal Poverty Levels.
4. When the new sliding fee schedule is released by the Office of Early Learning, the Coalition must adopt a new sliding fee schedule. The Coalition will consider the utilization of the existing budget and the least disruption to the families when making their selection.
5. Following the annual adoption of a new fee schedule, the Coalition has established July 1 as the date to begin implementation.
6. The Coalition or Contractor will ensure that the child’s parent and child care provider are notified of any changes to the respective co-payment the next time the child’s eligibility status is re-evaluated.
7. Providers are responsible for collecting and documenting the receipt of the parent co-payment.
8. If a parent wishes to transfer their child from one child care provider to another, they must be in good standing with the existing provider with respect to the parent co-payment.
9. If a child care provider terminates the child care arrangement based on the parent’s failure to comply with their co-payment, the child may not be placed in another school readiness program until the parent and provider have come to a satisfactory payment arrangement.
10. Parents who are in arrears in their parent co-payment, as documented by the child care provider, will be notified in writing by the Coalition or Contractor of their non-compliance and provided a deadline date, not to exceed 30 days in which to either pay or develop a satisfactory payment plan with the child care provider.
11. The written notice will also advise the parent that failure to comply with the deadline date will result in suspension or termination from the School Readiness program.
12. If payment has still not been resolved after 30 days, the family is terminated from the program.
13. Temporary reduction of parental fees may be granted by the Qualified Contractor or Coalition under the following documented circumstances:

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- a.) Parent(s) are in prison.
- b.) Parent(s) are in the hospital or residential treatment facility.
- c.) Parent(s) are unemployed.
- d.) Parent(s) are unable to work due to illness or incapacitation.
- e.) Death of a parent.
- f.) Parent(s) are homeless or living in a shelter.
- g.) Parent(s) are over-extended or type of financial hardship.
- h.) Parent(s) experienced an emergency (i.e. natural disaster, fire, etc.)

- i.) Whereabouts of parent(s) are unknown.

14. Unless circumstances otherwise warrant, parents must make a verbal or written request to the Qualified Contractor or Coalition for a reduction in fees as soon as the need exists. Proof of the need for reduction or waiver may be required.

15. The reduction in fee is limited to the time period the parent is unable to make the required payment. A beginning and ending date will be assigned by the Qualified Contractor or Coalition at which time the co-payment will be resumed.

16. **Co-payment for siblings:** In the case of siblings, the youngest child is considered the initial child for School Readiness services and a full parent co-payment is required. All subsequent siblings are assessed at one half (1/2) of the initial child's fee if full time, and one half sibling's fee if part time.

17. **Co-payment for Foster Parents:** Fees for licensed foster parents may be waived, providing the child's parents meet the criteria above. The information must be documented on the foster parent waiver form (attached) and placed in the eligibility file.

18. The Contractor or Coalition should make a minimum of one attempt to contact the child's biological parents or guardians to assess their ability to cost share in the provision of child care services. If the biological family is available for a interview, then they should be assessed the co-payment for the child based on their own income. Contact attempts must be documented.

I **EXHIBITS:**

- Sliding fee schedule (most recently adopted)
- Co-Payment Waiver for Licensed Foster Parent.



Co-Payment Authorization for Reduction or Waiver of At Risk Children

Child(ren) 's Name: _____

Caregiver Name: _____

Relationship to child:

- Parent

 Relative

 Licensed Foster Parent

 Non-Relative

Rule 60BB-4.400 FAC states that for "at risk" children in placement within their own home, or in a relative/non-relative placement where there is no TANF, relative caregiver or other income, that co-payments can be temporarily reduced to the minimum fee on a case by case basis during an event that limits a parent's ability to pay, such as those identified below.

In addition, it also authorizes a temporary waiver on a case by case basis for licensed foster parents during an event that limits a parent's ability to pay. The foster parent co-payment may be temporarily waived if one of the following criteria is met as it relates to the child's family:

- Parent(s) are in prison.
- Parent(s) are in the hospital or residential treatment facility.
- 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.

Information based on: _____

Action Type: Fee waived Fee Reduced New Fee amount _____

Authorization granted for time period from _____ to _____.

4C Counselor _____ Date: _____

Supervisory Approval: _____