



## Family's Rights and Responsibilities When Receiving School Readiness Services



### Important Information for Parents and Guardians

#### What are School Readiness Services?

Early Learning services help children from low income families do better in school. The program helps children from birth to five years in child care programs to learn skills and develop appropriately physically, emotionally and socially. The program provides health and developmental screenings to ensure children are receiving the services that they need to learn. The program helps school age children be safe and learn responsibility. Child care services help parents go to work. Parents help pay for services at reduced rates. The rates are reduced on a sliding scale based on income. Parents are required to work or attend school a minimum of 30 hours per week for full time care and 20 hours per week to receive part time child care benefits.

#### Who may be able to get services?

- Children in families with income less than 150 percent of the poverty level. That is about \$27,600 a year for a family of four.
- Children of parents in the welfare transition program.
- Children of migrant workers.
- Children of teen parents.
- Children with disabilities.
- Children cared for by relatives who get state payments.
- Children under 13 who are in the Department of Children and Families Family Safety Program.

**Fair Disclosure:** The provision of school readiness services is subject to the availability of funding and placement priorities. Families get priority if they are getting temporary cash help and meeting federal work rules.

**How do children get services?** Parents or guardians fill out an application. The application is confidential. The state must keep the information private. The program may only exchange records with government agencies and early learning program providers. They use the information to determine eligibility and provide services.

#### What information must parents provide?

- You must provide proof of your identity.
- You must provide proof of the child's age.
- In most cases, you will be asked questions about your job and income and required to provide documentation.
- The application requests a Social Security Number. The application does not require it. If you do not give one, you will be given another identification number.
- The application asks for race and sex. This information is not used to decide if your child can get services. It is only used for record keeping.
- Immigrants must show that their child is a U.S. citizen or legal immigrant. The parents do not have to show their own status.

### Your Rights

**Right to free translator:** If you do not understand, ask for a translator. We will give you one free.

**Right to a Choice of Child Care Provider:** You have the right to choose any legally operating child care provider, which includes licensed, faith-based, public or non-public school providers; licensed or registered family day care homes or informal providers, who have signed the Provider Agreement. Children considered "at risk", as documented by the Department of Children and Families or their contracted providers, are restricted to licensed or school based programs only.

**Right to visit children:** You have the right to visit your child while they are in the care of the child care provider. This right is protected by federal law.

**Right to get a copy of records:** You have the right to look at your child's records. You can also get copies of the records.

**Right not to be discriminated:** Discrimination is illegal. You may not be turned down because of race, color, nationality, age, sex, disability, religion or politics. If you think you have been the subject of discrimination, you may contact the state or federal government. The contact persons are:

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

Office for Civil Rights  
Atlanta Federal Center, Suite 3B70  
61 Forsyth Street, S.W.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303-8909  
Voice Phone: (404) 562-7886  
FAX: (404) 562-7881  
TDD: (404) 331-2867

**State of Florida**

Agency for Workforce Innovation/ Office for Civil Rights  
Peter de Haan / Equal Opportunity Officer  
Caldwell Building, MSC 150  
107 East Madison Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-4129  
Voice Phone: (850) 921-3205  
FAX: (850) 921-3122  
TTY: (via the Florida Relay Service) 711

**What happens if you are turned down?** A counselor can help parents find other kinds of affordable education or childcare. You can also request a supervisor to review your eligibility. If you are not satisfied, you may request the local Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida to provide you a hearing. You must make a request within 21 days of denial by contacting the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida at 12651 McGregor Blvd., Suite 4-402, Fort Myers, Florida 33919. Telephone (239)-267-4105.

**Responsibilities**

**What responsibilities do parents and guardians have?**

Parents and guardians must report accurate and complete information. If the information changes in the future, parents and guardians must report those changes within 10 days. Changes in address, income, wages, employment, work hours, marital status, household members, family size or child care arrangements must be reported. This is very important.

Parents and guardians must make the required co-payments. They may also have to pay for registration, snacks or materials charged by the provider. The provider is also allowed to charge the parents the difference between the provider's normal rate and the reimbursement rate.

**Penalties**

**Can parents or guardians lose services?**

Yes. Parents could lose services if:

- They give false, inaccurate or incomplete information.
- They don't report changes in the information on their application.
- They stop working or going to school.
- They go more than 30 days without working or going to school; at least 20 hours a week.
- They don't provide required information.
- They don't make co-payments.

If parents knowingly give wrong or misleading information or don't promptly report changes in status:

- They may be prosecuted for fraud pursuant to Chapter 414.39, Florida Statutes.
- They may have to repay benefits.
- They may have benefits reduced.
- They may be disqualified.

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Signature of Eligibility Determiner or Family Resource Counselor

Date

Date