



SCHOOL READINESS PROVIDER

REFERENCE GUIDE



Our Mission:

Our mission is to enhance the quality of children's lives by providing families, early childhood educators, caregivers and community partners in Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee Counties, with opportunities to positively impact the future.

Our Vision:

All children in Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee communities will be healthy, eager, and successful learners, supported by well-informed parents, involved citizens, and collaborative community partners. Early Learning Programs will have high quality standards, comprehensive services, seamless delivery system within diverse settings, and well-educated, competent, and adequately compensated staff.

Our Motto

“Nurturing young children of Southwest Florida and those who care for them!”

Our Goals

- I. Enroll children in child care and pre-school options where they are safe and where they interact with trained staff members who are committed to continuous quality improvement;
- II. Increase the availability of quality early learning programs to meet the demonstrated needs of families, particularly families who are working toward economic self-sufficiency;
- III. Work to support children's emotional, intellectual, physical, and social well-being;
- IV. Provide professional development opportunities for those engaged in early learning services;
- V. Collaborate with community organizations critical to the realization of the Coalition's mission;
- VI. Secure funding sufficient to support the mission of the Coalition;
- VII. Maintain fiscal responsibility and direct resources to achieve intended outcomes.
- VIII. Implement accountability measures that are accessible to the Coalition's stakeholders.
- IX. Develop a plan to assist the Board in educating the community on early learning issues and to determine strategies that will assist the Board in securing support for the mission.

Authority: The Florida Legislature designated the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI), Office of Early Learning, as the Lead Agency for Child Care Development Funds provided through federal 45 CFR98, which includes funds for School Readiness Programs. The legislature authorized the Early Learning Coalitions, through Chapters 411.01 and 1002.55-79 of the Florida Statutes, to administer the School Readiness and VPK programs to serve their local communities. Effective October 1, 2011, the “Office of Early Learning” transfers to the Department of Education.

The Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida (“Coalition”) is the authorized entity for the administration of School Readiness and VPK services in Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee Counties. Such authorization requires the Coalition to follow all rules and regulations required by law and to ensure that Child Care Providers receiving funding also comply with the requirements of the respective programs.

Right of Revision: The following reference guide is developed to assist child care providers in the provision of School Readiness services. The Coalition reserves the right to revise the terms and conditions of the administration of this program in the event of any legislative or funding changes.

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The “School Readiness” Program (SR) is a federally funded program primarily for low income families and high risk children, including those children who have been the victims of abuse and neglect. Child care services are offered to families in need of full or part-time child care services due to employment, disability, or educational responsibilities. It can also help children who need child care services to promote their developmental milestones, learning level or socialization.



Besides supporting the family, the School Readiness (SR) program aims to prepare children for kindergarten and build the foundation for their educational success. It is designed to help Florida’s children develop the skills they need to become good readers and successful students. It includes high literacy standards, strict accountability, appropriate curricula, substantial instruction periods, manageable class sizes, and qualified instructors

- The Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida receives state and federal funding to administer the School Readiness and VPK program in Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee counties.
- The Coalition contracts with Community Coordinated Care for Children, Inc. (4C) to determine eligibility of clients and to maintain the Resource and Referral Network.
- Eligible child care providers are strongly encouraged to become School Readiness Providers and participate in this very important program.



BENEFITS OF BEING A SCHOOL READINESS PROVIDER!

1. **School Readiness/and or VPK providers are identified through 4C Resource and Referral and the DCF website- provides free advertising!**
2. **A Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum** called “Creative Curriculum” is offered by the Coalition for Infant/Toddler, Preschool and Family Child Care settings. This helps fulfill a requirement of the School Readiness and/or the VPK contract. A big help for new child care providers or those in need of a curriculum. (If you already have a curriculum it may qualify - see page 17).

3. **Developmental Screening** supports children with the help of the Screening and Inclusion Coordinators. Children with learning problems or possible developmental disabilities are identified early and parents can find help!
4. **“Teaching Strategies Gold” Assessment** materials and training are provided through the Coalition, plus individual support! This helps to determine the growth of children’s learning at your facility. This fulfills another requirement of the School Readiness contract and provides you feedback on how to strengthen your teaching strategies.
5. **Training** is provided at no charge for Challenging Behavior, Health, Safety, Child Development, Creative Curriculum, Teaching Strategies Gold and Environment Rating Scales trainings. These can provide the 10 in-service credits required by DCF or in-service hours required for accreditation, or needed CEUs at a nominal charge.
6. **Job listings** are posted on our website for those who seek employees or those who are seeking jobs. Potential employers provide access to potential employees at no charge.
7. **Listings of Other Agencies’ Training** offerings are posted on ELC website to allow for maximum exposure to what is available in the area.
8. **National CDA accreditation packets** are provided upon request to applicants. This saves applicants money and time needed to order packets from Council for Professional Recognition.
9. **Technical Assistance** is offered at no charge to providers for support with program quality, room arrangement, and other program questions to help improve the quality of family child care homes and child care centers.
10. **Environment Rating Scale Assessment** helps providers understand the strengths and weaknesses of their facilities and programs.
11. **Professional Development** for an individualized approach to understand DCF training and documentation requirements. The path to achieving credentialing can be difficult to navigate and the Coalition has knowledgeable personnel who can help.
12. **Access** to current and timely updates on health and safety issues, legislative mandates, Department of Children and Families rules and regulations through our Constant Contact system of e-mails.
13. **Health Consultations** with RN child care health consultant - available to all providers by telephone or e-mail. Training and support to develop individualized, site specific emergency/disaster plans to help prepare for any possible event.

14. **Support of Inclusion Specialist** for help with children with challenging behavior or special needs. You will have the ability to ask for on-site assistance to refer a child for evaluation of their need for assistance (FDLRS or Early Steps), meeting with parents and teachers to help them understand how best to deal with a child's special needs and offering support for environmental change to help improve challenging behavior.
15. **Consultations with the ELC-SWFL health and safety monitor** at no charge to help you in understanding DCF regulations, compliance and how to know when to report to DCF.
16. **TEACH Scholarships** - The Coalition staff will assist and encourage an awareness of FAFSA and other possible sources of funding for schooling, and to encourage further education in the field of Early Childhood Education.
17. **The Coalition Helps Support Partner Organizations** in the ability to apply for CEUs for their trainings, thus providing more classes that offer CEUs for practitioners.
18. **Scholarships to Teachers** are provided, as funding is available, to increase the staff's educational growth of School Readiness contracted facilities.
19. **Hearing and Vision Screenings** are provided for children. This can help identify early problems with vision and hearing.
20. **Requests for Volunteers and Materials** can be posted on the Coalition website.

PROVIDER APPLICATION PROCESS

- a. To be a School Readiness Provider, the following documents must be submitted each year:
 - SR Application
 - Rate Verification
 - Holiday Schedule
 - Acknowledgement of Understanding
 - Provider Contract
 - Liability Insurance
- b. The application and provider contract are subject to Coalition approval each time an application is submitted.
- c. Providers are also required to complete and return Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) provider update forms at least annually and when requested by the Coalition or designee.

- d. If you are interested in becoming a School Readiness Provider you must submit an application with required supporting documentation to the Coalition at:

Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida

Attn: Melanie Holaway, Director of Provider Services Telephone: 239-210- 6866

5256 Summerlin Commons Way, Suite 201

Fax: 239-267-4109

Fort Myers, Florida 33907

- Mail or hand deliver the completed application to the Coalition with all required documents.
- Upon successful completion of all requirements, you will receive a signed provider contract authorizing your participation in the SR program.
- You may use the attached checklist to help you. Forms are also available on our website at: www.elcofswfl.org.
- SR services may not begin before the Provider and staff have met all requirements.
- Providers will not be reimbursed for child care services prior to being approved by the Coalition as an SR Provider.

PROVIDER ELIGIBILITY

1. Provider Type

In order to participate in the SR program, providers must be **one** of the following:

- a. Licensed child care facility,
- b. Licensed family day care home,
- c. Licensed large family child care home,
- d. Nonpublic school that is exempt from licensure pursuant to 402.3025, F.S.
- e. Faith-based Provider that is exempt from licensure pursuant to 402.316, F.S.,
- f. Public school district-operated school.
- g. Approved In-home or relative.



2. Provider Qualifications

School Readiness providers must meet and maintain the following criteria:

- a. Annually complete and submit a "School Readiness Child Care Provider Application" (Form SR-1001), Provider Contract for School Readiness Services (Form SR-1004), and all required forms.
- b. Be in good standing with the Department of Children and Families Child Care Licensing Unit, the Coalition and/or the current or previous applicable accrediting agency. "Good standing" means that within the past (12) twelve months, the prospective School Readiness provider (owner/management) has been free of the following specific administrative actions:
 - Probation Status, Suspension, Denial or Revocation of facility license registration or accreditation,
 - Termination by any other Coalition based on past poor performance, misrepresentation or fraud,
 - More than one (1) Class I violation,
 - Disbarment from receiving federal or state funding.

- c. Have implemented or be willing to implement a Coalition approved developmentally appropriate curriculum.
- d. Must meet the requirements of Chapter 402.302-319, F.S., and Rule 65C-22 FAC for child care facilities and Rule 65C-20 FAC for family child care homes, as demonstrated by a fully compliant Health and Safety Inspection by DCF (if licensed) or the Coalition (if registered, license-exempt or non-public school).
- e. Meet and maintain an initial average combined ERS score of 2.5* or higher, except “school age only” programs, which are not subject to ERS assessments. (*Required score increases to 3.0 in July 2012).
- f. Have a history of compliance with the ELCSWF Coalition, if a previous participating provider. Approval with a history of non-compliance will be subject to approval by the Coalition CEO.

BACKGROUND SCREENING

Volunteer Employee Criminal History System (VECHS) screenings are not acceptable for staff within the SR program. They are required to be screened under Chapter 435 F.S. which requires that the fingerprint results go through the Department of Children and Families (DCF). For more information on background criminal checks can be found at: www.fdle.state.fl.us/BackgroundChecks/.

BACKGROUND SCREENING OF STAFF, SUBSTITUTES AND VOLUNTEERS

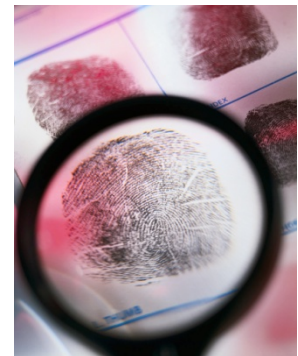
1. All Directors, child care staff and volunteers must have a completed and satisfactory Level 2 Background screening (pursuant to Chapter 435, F.S.) BEFORE beginning employment.

2. All Directors, child care staff and volunteers must be rescreened at least once every 5 years. This means successful clearance from disqualifying offenses listed on the Affidavit of Good Moral Character which each individual must sign. Clearances must come from the following sources:

- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE)
- Local County Sheriff’s and City Police (if applicable) for county and city of residence.
- Affidavit of Good Moral Character

3. If previously screened: Fingerprinting and subsequent screening clearance from DCF must be completed prior to beginning employment with the current SR Provider. If the employee was screened with the current or former child care facility within five years and there was no more than a 90 day break in service, than it can be considered and rescreening may not be required. Any other form of background screening is unacceptable and new screening will be required.

4. **Affidavit of Good Moral Character:** This document is also required for all directors, child care and VPK personnel and substitutes upon employment, and must be signed and notarized.



5. **Break in Child Care Employment:** An employee, with greater than a 90 day break of employment in child care, requires a new and complete background screening. Providers are responsible for securing written proof from the former employer when a staff person has less than a 90 day break in employment.



EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

A. EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR CENTERS

Providers are expected to comply in early education related staff development initiatives as required by law according to 402.302-402.319, F.S. and Rule 65C-22. Requirements can be found at website <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/childcare/about.shtml> new child care regulation site.

1. DIRECTOR'S CREDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS:

a.) All Providers (except for public schools) must have a Director with a Director's Credential as verified on their DCF transcript (www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/childcare).

b.) Rule 65C-22.003 (8) (a) (2) F.A.C. requires a credentialed director to be on-site a majority of hours, excluding weekends and evening hours that the facility is in operation. This means at a minimum, the Director must be present 51% of the time the facility is open and operational.

2. STAFF CREDENTIAL:

a.) Any child care facility operating 8 or more hours a week, and serving 20 or more children must have one or more credentialed teachers, as verified on their DCF transcript, working on site a minimum of 20 hours a week. The total number of credentialed teachers required for each facility is determined by the number of children enrolled. All credentialed staff must be verified on the DCF transcript.

b.) See DCF website at <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/childcare/laws.shtml> for more information.

3. CHILD CARE PERSONNEL:

a.) Child care personnel are required to have the 40 hour required Child Care Training. This training must be initiated within 90 days of employment and completed within the first year of employment.

Following completion of the 40 hour training, child care personnel must obtain 10 hours of in-service training annually thereafter. The guidelines for the training requirements can be found in Rule 65C-22, F.A.C. and on the DCF website.

B. EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS -FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES

Providers are expected to comply in early education related staff development initiatives as required by law according to 402.302-402.319, F.S. and Rule 65C-20 F.A.C. Requirements can be found at website <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/childcare/about.shtml> new child care regulation site.

1. Large Family Child Care Home

Operator must complete:

- a. 30-clock-hour **Family Child Care Home Training**, prior to licensure.
- b. Staff Credential (excluding Employment History Recognition), 1 year prior to licensure.
- c. 5-clock-hour (or .5 Continuing Education Units) **Early Literacy and Language Development**, prior to licensure.
- d. 10-clock-hour **Part II** module, within 6 months of licensure.
- e. First Aid Training, prior to licensure.
- f. Infant and Child Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)*, prior to licensure.
- g. 10-clock-hour **Annual In-service** training during licensure year.

Large Family Child Care Home Employee must complete prior to caring for children:

- a. 30-clock-hour **Family Child Care Home Training**, begin within 90 days of employment and **complete** within one (1) year from the date which training began.
- b. 5-clock-hour (or .5 Continuing Education Units) **Early Literacy and Language Development** within 12 months of employment.
- c. 10-clock-hours of **Annual In-service** training during licensure year.

Substitutes complete all of the following prior to caring for children:

- a. 30-clock-hour Family Child Care Home Training.
- b. 5-clock-hour (or .5 Continuing Education Units) **Early Literacy and Language Development**.
- c. First Aid Training.
- d. Infant and Child Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). (Online CPR courses are not acceptable).
- e. Substitute who works LESS THAN 40 Hours per Month need only complete 6-clock-hour Family Child Care Rules and Regulations or 3-clock-hour Fundamentals of Family Child Care.

2. Licensed/Registered Family Child Care Homes

A. Operator must complete prior to caring for children:

1. 30-clock-hour **Family Child Care Home Training**, prior to licensure
2. 5-clock-hour (or .5 Continuing Education Units) **Early Literacy and Language Development**, prior to licensure
3. 10-clock-hours **Annual In-service** training during licensure year
4. First Aid Training, prior to licensure
5. Infant and Child Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), prior to licensure

B. Substitute who works LESS THAN 40 Hours per month to complete all of the following prior to caring for children:

1. 6-clock-hour Family Child Care Rules and Regulations or 3-clock-hour Fundamentals of Family Child Care
2. First Aid Training
3. Infant and Child Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)

C. Substitute who works MORE THAN 40 Hours per month must complete all of the following prior to caring for children:

1. 30-clock-hour **Family Child Care Home Training**
2. 5-clock-hour (or .5 Continuing Education Units) **Early Literacy and Language Development**
3. First Aid Training
4. Infant and Child Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)

PROVIDER RESPONSIBILITIES

Prior to being authorized to provide SR services, every applicant must enter into a contractual agreement with the Coalition by signing a SR Provider Contract. This document outlines the following established requirements of each SR Provider and the Provider's commitment to comply with those requirements:

1. **Legal Requirements: Providers must meet and maintain state and local health and safety requirements in accordance with federal, state, and local requirements, statutes, and rules including but not limited to Chapter 402.302-319 and Section 411.01 of the Florida Statutes.** Such requirements include, but are not limited to, background screening, prevention and control of infectious diseases, childhood immunizations, building and physical premises safety, and minimum health and safety training. These requirements for a "healthy and safe environment" are applicable to all SR Providers, including unlicensed or license-exempt Providers. In addition, licensed and license exempt child care programs, who advertise as "summer camps" during the summer months, are still subject to all the conditions of the program as long as they receive, and/or are identified to receive, school readiness funding.

2. **Coalition Policies:** The Provider must agree to comply with all local Coalition policies previously approved by the Coalition Board of Directors and those approved during the term of this contract. Policies are available on the Coalition website at elcofswfl.org.
3. **Prohibition of Starting SR Program before approval:** Providers must have a fully executed Provider Contract for the current fiscal year prior to beginning their SR program. Fully executed means it must be signed by ALL parties.
4. **Placement of Children:** The Provider Contract does not guarantee the placement of children. Children are placed in programs based on parental choice and availability of funding. To be eligible for reimbursement, the SR Provider may only enroll a child who has a SR certificate issued by 4C.
5. **Payment Limits:** Authorization for payment is based on the issuance of a valid, current child care certificate which provides specific dates of approval. Any child care services provided prior to, or after, the authorized dates, remain the responsibility of the parent or legal guardian. The Coalition is not responsible for payment of any child who is not approved by the Coalition or designee to receive SR services. Furthermore, the Coalition is not authorized to pay for registration fees, provider supply fees, field trips, late fees or any other fees other than the daily Provider designated reimbursement rate.
6. **Family Involvement and Cultural Continuity:** The Provider is expected to provide programs that respect the cultural heritage and beliefs of children and their families; and utilize a variety of methods to communicate with families, such as newsletters, notes, or bulletin boards. The provider is also expected to provide every family with a parent handbook or informational materials that include, at a minimum, an attendance policy and a discipline policy.
7. **Documentation of Daily Attendance by Provider:** SR Providers must maintain attendance documentation on each child through one of the following methods:
 - A daily sign in/sign out record that documents the date, the child's name, arrival time, departure time and the signature of the child's parent or other designee.
 - An electronic system that records attendance through assigned pin number or fingerprint recognition.
8. **Classroom Safety:** The Provider is responsible for ensuring each classroom teacher has a daily, current and "real-time" attendance list at all time.
9. **Unexcused Absences:** The Provider is required to promptly notify the Coalition or designee if a child is absent for five (5) consecutive days with no contact from the parent, pursuant to Rule 60BB-4.500 (2) (c), FAC. In addition, the Provider is to notify the Coalition of any child who has ten (10) unexcused absences throughout the month.



10. **Conflicts of interest:** Since Providers or their employees are in a position to make decisions which affect their personal financial interest or the interest of a friend, relative or business associate, Providers and their employees are required to immediately reveal to the Coalition or designee any such circumstances or situations which could be construed or perceived as a conflict of interest. (For example: receiving school readiness funds for children related to provider, employees, business associates or personal friendships.)
11. **Obtain and Maintain child care liability insurance:** Providers are required to secure sufficient Child Care Liability Insurance coverage, including coverage of transportation of children (if SR children are transported by the program), and an endorsement to the policy or policies naming the Coalition as an additional insured and requiring a minimum of 30 days advance notice to the Coalition of cancellation or termination of the policy or policies. Required liability thresholds are set by the Coalition.
12. **Notification of Changes:** SR Providers are required to notify the Coalition as follows:
- a. **Change in ownership, corporate structure or location:** Provider will report any change of location or ownership to the Coalition or designee a minimum **of fourteen (14) calendar days BEFORE the change.**
- b. **Other changes:** Any change must be reported to the Coalition within twenty four (24)* hours of the following circumstances:
- Loss or change of Director
 - Loss or change in accreditation or licensure status;
 - Any other changes to information previously provided to the Coalition on required forms.
 - Changes that directly affect the operation of their program (i.e. emergency closure) or the ability to be contacted (i.e. telephone numbers, mailing address, etc.)
 - Notice of dismissal of one or more students. (Such notice must be followed in writing within 14 calendar days and must specify the reasons for the child's removal from the class.)
- (*The 24 - Hour time frame does not apply to Public School districts who have internal procedures based on their responsibility for monitoring the schools operated within the school district.)
13. **Reporting unusual incidents:** School Readiness Providers are required to report unusual incidents to a Coalition director at 1-866-863-1366 (toll free) within one (1) hour of learning of the incident and to submit a written report to the Coalition within three (3) working days. An unusual incident is any event involving the health and safety of children or any event that is likely to place the provider or the Coalition at risk or cause negative public reaction. Examples of unusual incidents include, but are not limited to: accusations of abuse or neglect against the Provider or Provider's staff; serious accidents involving children or staff at the Provider's facility or any events that may result in negative publicity for the Provider or the Coalition.
14. **Working email address:** Providers are required to provide for open and continuous access to an email address for communication from the Coalition, and to check it at least weekly.

15. Maintenance of Records:

- a) SR child enrollment records are confidential and must be kept by the Provider for at least five (5) years after the child's last day of attendance. Additionally, child attendance records must be kept by the Provider for at least five (5) years after the child's last day of attendance. Records of the SR director and the SR instructors must be kept for at least five (5) years after the employee's last day of attendance. In the event that the Provider closes its business, SR records must be maintained for five (5) years for future audit purposes. Parents must be given access and copies of their children's records upon request.
- b) The Provider is required to maintain records for audit purposes for five (5) years and allow Coalition staff and/or representatives access to SR records upon request.

16. Parent Rights and Responsibilities

- **Parental Access:** Parents have the legal right to visit or access their child in person or by telephone at any time the child is in the care of the Provider.
- **Parent's Right to get a copy of records:** The Provider must comply with the parent's right to see their child's records and receive a copy of their child's record upon request.
- **Parental Notification:** The Coalition may exercise the right to notify families if the Provider has not met the standards set forth by the Coalition or been the subject of administrative sanctions by the Coalition, Department of Children and Families or overseeing agency responsible for the Provider's child care standing.
- **Parental Choice:** Parents have a choice of child care providers. If the parent chooses to move to a different child care provider, it is their choice to do so.
- **Parent Co-Payment:** The Provider is responsible for the collection of the daily parent co-payment. Should the parent fail or refuse to comply with their financial responsibility, the Provider must report the matter to the Coalition or designee within 30 business days of the parent's failure to pay.
- **Parent Request to Transfer:** The Parent has a right to transfer their child to another child care provider. When the parent requests a transfer, the Coalition or designee will seek confirmation from the current provider that the parent has complied with their co-payments and does not have any outstanding payments within the last 30 days. Only the assigned parent fees are considered for purpose of transfer approval. Any fees imposed by the child care provider to the parent other than the assigned parent fee, (such as registration, supplies, or late fees) are the responsibility of the child care provider to independently seek recoupment from the parent or legal guardian.
- **Dismissal from Child Care:** The Provider is expected to utilize the services of the Coalition's Inclusion Coordinator prior to dismissing any child from their program based on challenging behaviors.

17. **Healthful and Safe Environment:** In addition to complying with the health and safety standards of licensed child care programs found in Chapter 402.302-319, F.S., the following requirements apply:

- **USDA Food Program:** If the Provider is a participant in the USDA Child Care Food Program, the Provider must comply with all requirements. Copies of these requirements may be found at website: <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/ccfp/>.



- **Child Immunizations and Health Exam:** The Provider is required to obtain a current, complete and properly executed Student Health Examination form (DH 3040) and a Florida Certification of Immunization form (DH 680 or 681) within 30 days of enrollment and as required pursuant to ss. 411.01 (4) (j), Florida Statutes.

- **License Exempt Programs:** Any child care center exempt from licensure and under the auspices of a religious or educational organization will provide the Coalition with a copy of all inspections conducted by the overseeing religious or educational entity, county environmental health unit and local Fire Marshall. In addition, exempt child care centers are required to have an annual fire inspection. All inspection results will be submitted to the Coalition within 30 days of completion. In addition, the Coalition will conduct a minimum of one Health and Safety monitoring per year. (Does not apply to DCF licensed programs and Public Schools as all inspection information is currently available as public record.)

- **Emergency/Disasters:** The Provider is required to maintain a site specific Disaster Plan which identifies the steps to be taken in the event of an emergency or natural disaster that may affect the safety of children and staff. The Coalition will provide compensation for closure due to natural disasters as approved by the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI).
- **Working corded landline telephone:** Providers must maintain a working landline telephone available to make and/or receive telephone calls at all times children are in care.
- **Abuse and Neglect:** Provider understands they are mandated reporters of suspected abuse and/or neglect. Provider agrees to fully cooperate with DCF child protective investigators when investigating any allegation of abuse or neglect.
- **Child Abuse Acknowledgement:** The Provider acknowledges the importance of promptly reporting suspicions of abuse, neglect or exploitation of children. In accordance with Rule 65C.006 (4) (e) F.A.C. , the Provider must ensure all staff annually sign the “DCF Child Abuse and Neglect Mandated Reporter Requirements,” statement ELC-1032 or equivalent form approved by the Coalition.

SERVING CHILDREN AT RISK OF ABUSE/NEGLECT

The Coalition partners with Department of Children and Families, Children's Network of Southwest Florida and Community Coordinated Care for Children (4C) to support families under the court's supervision of the child welfare system, or are cooperating with intervention services to help keep their children safe.



All "at risk" children must be placed in licensed child care programs.

Providers are responsible to notify the child welfare case manager of the child's abrupt removal from child care, frequent and/or unexplained absences, unexplained injuries, or other signs of mistreatment or insufficient supervision.

Providers will be notified by 4C when an "at risk" child(ren), under supervision of DCF or Children's Network, plans to attend their child care facility. Contact information of the child(ren)'s child welfare case manager will be given to the Provider on Form SR-1026, "Notice of At Risk Placement" which the Provider is to sign and return promptly to 4C.

Any Provider caring for a child under court supervision must immediately (within 24 hours) notify the local designated staff of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or community-based care agency, (i.e. Lutheran Services or Family Preservation Services) of any unexcused absence or seven (7) consecutive days of excused absences.

The following are also some reasons to contact the caseworker immediately:

- Child's unexplained bruises, welts, cuts or injuries inconsistent with explanation
- Child lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, etc.
- Frequent and/or unexplained absences
- Family moves or abruptly removes child
- Child begs or steals food
- Child's hygiene is unusually poor
- Child comments indicate abuse or neglect may be occurring.
- Child's behavior is unusually fearful, excessively shy, withdrawn, depressed, angry or aggressive.
- Child's parent/caregiver seems unusually harsh, critical, belittling or angry in front of others.
- Any other observation or occurrence you believe affects the child health, safety or well-being.
(Please Remember – Your obligation is first to the child. Contact the DCF abuse hotline if you have a reasonable suspicion that abuse or neglect has occurred in addition to contacting the child welfare case manager.)

Requirements of Rilya Wilson Act (Section 39.604 Florida Statutes)

- The Children's Network of Southwest Florida or the Department of Children and Families are required to notify the operator of a licensed childcare program whenever a child who is subject to this law is enrolled in the program. Children who are subject to this law cannot be withdrawn from the child care program without the prior written approval of the responsible agency.

- Each child subject to this law (age 0-5) must participate in a licensed early education or childcare services at least 5 days a week, unless exempted by the court. It is recommended that at-risk children referred for school readiness services are in care at least 6 hours per day.
- For children subject to this law who are absent from the program on a day when he or she is expected to be present, the parent or legal custodian with whom the child resides must report the absence to the child care program by the end of the business day. If the parent or caregiver fails to report the absence in a timely manner, the absence is considered unexcused.
- The Provider is required to notify the responsible Child Welfare Case Manager of the unexcused absence of any child who is under their supervision. It must be reported by the close of business the day following the child's absence.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

1. Curriculum

All School Readiness Child Care Providers are required to use a developmentally appropriate curriculum and character development program to enhance the children's cognitive, physical, social- emotional development and basic values, pursuant to ss. 411.01 (5) (c) 2 a & b, Florida Statutes.

The curriculum must be developmentally appropriate, designed to prepare a student for early literacy, enhance the age-appropriate progress of students in attaining the state-adopted performance standards, and prepare students to be ready for kindergarten as determined by the statewide kindergarten screening. The Coalition has a list of curricula that meet this requirement.

A. Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum: - To meet this requirement, Providers may choose one of two options:

Option 1: Use a Coalition pre-approved curriculum from one of the following:

Serving children 3 to 5 years of age:

- Beyond Centers and Circle Time
- Creative Curriculum
- High Scope
- Montessori
- Wee Learn



Serving infant and toddlers:

- Beyond Cribs and Rattles
- Creative Curriculum for Infants/Toddlers
- High Scope Infant/Toddler

Option 2: Providers may choose a different curriculum from the approved list and complete all required steps by the Coalition. The Coalition is responsible for determining if Provider's selected curriculum is developmentally appropriate pursuant to 411.01 F.S. Any Provider wishing to have a curriculum approved by the Coalition must contact the Director of Provider Services for a copy of the procedures to follow.

B. Character Development Program – To meet this requirement, Providers may choose one of two options:

Option 1: Use a Coalition approved curricula with a character development component (i.e.) High Scope, Creative Curriculum), the provider may use that component to meet the requirement.

Option 2: Choose to use "The Values Book" by Pam Schiller and Tamara Bryant to implement a character development program in conjunction with their curriculum.

2. Assessments and Screening of Children Birth To Five

a.) ASQ Screening – Providers are required to utilize the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) screening tool on all children ages 0 to 5, on a regular basis and submit the results to the ASQ Coordinator at the Coalition. Providers are expected to share the results with the child's parents. Training and information on the use of the tool is provided by the Coalition. For more information, the provider should contact the Early Intervention Coordinator for the Coalition, Isabel Santiago, at 239-210-6878. In addition, it is expected that for children who are identified in need of additional support services, the Provider will assist in securing additional supportive services as needed.

b.) Child Assessments: The Provider is expected to assess all school readiness children between the ages of 0-5 before using Teaching Strategies Gold. Training and information on the use of the tool will be provided by the Coalition or designee. For more information contact the Assessment Coordinator, Jill Corbett, at 239-210-6867.

c.) Vision and Hearing: The Provider is expected to participate and support the provision of vision and hearing screening and follow-up for children ages 3-5 years of age, which are offered through the Coalition or designee. The Provider is expected to assist the parent with any child identified as needing follow-up services.



NON- DISCLOSURE AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- The Provider will be exposed to certain confidential information which has been made available by their capacity as a child care provider. This information is confidential and may not be disclosure except to those permitted by law. Confidential information may include, but is not limited to, social security numbers of parents and/or children, or information related to family, health, payments, household demographics, etc.
- The Provider must abide by the standards for the receipt and handling of confidential record information. It is the Provider's responsibility to have employees and/or substitutes honor this agreement as well.
- The Provider is required to protect the confidentiality of child and family information by having staff complete confidentiality agreements and have processes in place to protect the privacy of child and family information. Confidential information associated with the SR Program should only be available to the Provider, the parent/guardian, the Coalition or its representative, the Office of Early Learning, law enforcement and federal and state agencies as required for audit and research information.

NONDISCRIMINATION

- SR Provider may not discriminate against any child which includes refusing to admit a child for enrollment. Children may not be turned down because of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, age, sex, disability, religion or political beliefs.
- In addition, it is against the law for a SR Provider to charge parents or the Coalition a fee higher than what is required of any other private pay parent.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The Provider is required to tell the truth on all information. Provider acknowledges that providing information in order to obtain benefits, payments or reimbursement to which they are not entitled, or to increase the benefits, payments or reimbursements, is unlawful. Provider understands that if they knowingly provide false information, omit requested information, sign inaccurate attendance documents or fail to promptly report changes which could directly affect eligibility as a school readiness provider, the following could occur: (a) Provider may be required to pay back unauthorized payments and/or denied further participation in the program; and (b) Provider may be referred to the Department of Finance, Public Assistance Fraud Division for further investigation.



Engaging in misrepresentation: The Provider shall not use their position as a SR Provider to engage in any activity, or be a party to, any form of deception, misrepresentation, falsification, fraudulent or unlawful behavior in order to affect a personal gain, or the personal gain of any relative, friend or business associate.

If after investigation the Provider has intentionally misrepresented enrollment or attendance for funds related to the SR programs, the Coalition shall permanently disengage services of that Provider.

The Coalition and its representatives are required to report to appropriate law enforcement agency for further investigation cases where there is sufficient reason to believe that a Provider has knowingly provided or submitted any fraudulent information.

Coalition Right to Terminate Agreement: The Coalition has the right to terminate the Contract at any time for Cause. "Cause" is defined as: (a) Action, or lack of action, which threatens or potentially threatens the health, safety or welfare of children; (b) The failure to comply with the terms of the Contract or policies, laws, rules, or regulations referenced therein, or the violation of any laws, rules, or regulations regarding SR promulgated by the State of Florida; (c) Acts of fraud or other forms of misconduct that threaten the integrity of the SR Program or Coalition; and/or (d) any other issue that the Coalition deems inconsistent with Coalition policies. Termination for cause as identified as (a) (Action, or lack of action, which threatens or potentially threatens the health, safety or welfare of children) may be made with 24 hour notice. Termination for other cause (b-d) may be made with 10 days notice.

ATTENDANCE AND PAYMENT

1. Child Eligibility, Enrollment and Attendance

- **Upon Enrollment**, the SR Provider will promptly notify 4C that the child has been admitted into your program by signing and faxing a copy of the Child Care Certificate to the 4C Eligibility department. Unless you notify 4C, they will not know the child is in your program and you will not be paid.

Child Care Certificates are only valid for 10 days from the date of issuance. If the child does not enroll within the 10 day window, the Provider must notify the Coalition or 4C by email or fax that the parent and child never enrolled. This is very important.

- **If a Child Leaves**, you must contact 4C no later than 14 days to explain why the child was dismissed. You may use the SR Delete Form to communicate this action.
- **Daily Attendance:** SR Providers must maintain attendance documentation on each child through one of the following methods:
 - A daily sign in/sign out record that documents the date, the child's name, arrival time, departure time and the signature of the child's parent or other designee.
 - An electronic system that records attendance through assigned pin number or fingerprint recognition.

- **Absences:** Providers are permitted up to three (3) absences per calendar month per child. Absences may be for any reason.
- **Unexcused Absences:** Any absence beyond the allowable three (3) are not payable except in the event of extraordinary circumstances based on written documentation provided by the parent justifying the excessive absence for up to an additional seven (7) days. Examples of extraordinary circumstances include the following:
 1. Hospitalization of the child or parent with appropriate documentation;
 2. Illness requiring home-stay as documented;
 3. Death in the immediate family with appropriate documentation (i.e., obituary, death certificate);
 4. Court ordered visitation with appropriate documentation (i.e., court order);
 5. Unforeseen documented military deployment or exercise of the parent(s); or
 6. An unexpected event or unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of the parent.

Parents must provide written documentation and proof supporting the extraordinary circumstance. This documentation must be submitted with requests for reimbursement. For absences beyond the allowable 3 days, the parent must submit written documentation verifying the reason for the additional child absences. Depending on the nature of the extraordinary circumstance, documentation could include a physician's statement, court order, proof of hospitalization, death notice of family members, or a documented note by the parent explaining the reason for the absence. For illnesses a doctor's statement is needed if absences were unusually frequent or for extended periods of time based on illness. Otherwise a parent's note will suffice to support absences for illnesses requiring a home stay.

NOTE: Any questionable absences beyond the three allowable are determined payable only by the Coalition. Under no circumstances will payment be made beyond 10 absences in a month.

- **Attendance Reports** – Each month, the Provider is responsible for downloading their personal attendance sheets from the 4C website. The forms are a part of the **Electronic Provider Payment System (EPPS)** program by 4C. This system enables Providers to be paid in an expedient manner following the date of services. Providers will be given a personal ID number and password. By the 20th of each month, the attendance records for the previous month will be posted for download.



- **Submitting Information for Payment:**

- The Provider must submit their original signed student attendance roster by the **3rd day** of each month.
- Absence documentation beyond the 3 allowable absences must have supporting documentation from the parent.
- The Provider is responsible for complying with submission of attendance records and other required information in order to be paid promptly.
- All attendance documentation intended for reimbursement must be submitted no later than 30 days after the last day of service the preceding month.

NOTE: Any request for reimbursement submitted more than 30 days after the last day of the previous month of service, will NOT be honored.

2. Compensation and Funding:

- **Direct Deposit:** Providers are required to comply with direct deposit of all child care reimbursements made to the Provider on behalf of the Coalition. Any exceptions must be approved by the Coalition.
- **Reimbursement Rate:** The amount of child care reimbursement paid for each child is limited and may differ for individual children. The maximum actual amount of reimbursement paid for a specific child will be based on the provider's rate schedule for each fiscal year, minus the assigned parent co-payment. The Coalition Provider reimbursement rates are submitted each fiscal year on Form SR-1002. Reimbursement rates are subject to funding availability and may be increased or decreased by the Coalition. Rate verifications forms may only be submitted by the Provider once during the fiscal year.

Example: *Jumping Jacks Preschool charges all parents with infants \$28 a day. The Coalition's maximum rate of payment is \$28 a day for infant care. The Parent has a daily co-payment of \$2.50.*

Based on this combination, the Coalition will pay directly to the Provider \$25.50 for the infant's care, and the parent is required to pay the Provider \$2.50 a day which equals the maximum rate of \$28.00.

- Providers are responsible for keeping track of any change in reimbursement rates affecting them for any child receiving care. The reimbursement rate change could occur in any given month because of a child's birthday and moving up a year in age.
- **Rate Restrictions:** The Provider is expected to provide the Coalition or designee information of their normal child care rates charged to all parents, regardless of the child's status. This rate is what the Coalition considered for reimbursement. It is against the law for a Provider to charge the Coalition, designee or the parent of the child receiving school readiness, a higher rate than charged to other parents. Providers may charge parents a differential rate if the normal rate charged to private families is higher than the reimbursement rate paid by the Coalition or designee. The Coalition cannot pay for registration fees, late pick-up fees, supplies or other supplemental fees; however these fees may be applied to all parents.

- **Funding Not Transferable:** Reimbursement for child care is not transferable and non-assignable to any other person or business. New owners of an existing child care facility must be approved by the Coalition BEFORE they are eligible to be paid for any service.



- **Holidays and Closings:** Providers are permitted to identify up to twelve (12) scheduled holidays in which child care will not be provided. The holiday schedule will be completed on Form SR-1003 and submitted each fiscal year. The Coalition provides compensation on those days for qualified children.

- **Fee Collection:** Parent fees are defined as the daily amount assigned by the Coalition or designee to be paid by the parent to the Provider. Providers are responsible for collecting and reporting any fee that is designated to be paid by the parent. Providers are required to give the parent a receipt, including the dates of services covered, for fees as they are paid.

If a parent does not pay his/her parent fee; it is the Provider's responsibility to notify the Coalition or designee within 30 days. Provider has the option to request services be immediately terminated by Coalition or designee. If a parent leaves the Provider's program owing a parent fee, the parent and Provider may mutually agree to a payment schedule. If this is not an option, then it is up to the Provider to take other action as deemed appropriate or necessary. The Provider should apprise the Coalition or designee of the parent's compliance with this requirement and any subsequent arrangements.

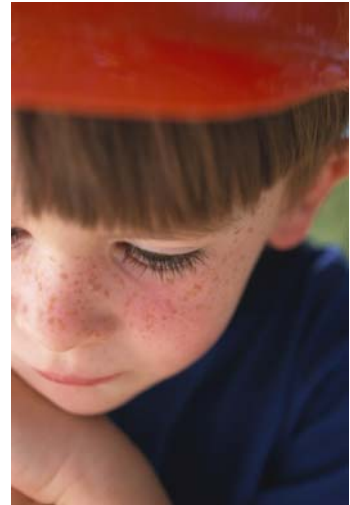
- **Reimbursement Report:** Provider is responsible for ensuring that all attendance documentation submitted for reimbursement are accurate, truthful and supported by the parent's signature on the sign in sheets or electronic attendance record.
- **Reconciling Reimbursement Payments:** The Provider is responsible for reviewing the reimbursement summary provided by the Coalition or designee fiscal staff each month with the reimbursement check. The Provider must report any discrepancy or underpayment within 30 days from the date the reimbursement was deposited or mailed. Any underpayments reported after 30 days will not be honored.
- **Overpayments:** The Provider is required by law to return any funds received as a result of error or overpayment to the Coalition. Provider is expected to review the reimbursement summary provided with the monthly reimbursement statement and immediately report any discrepancy, overpayment, or underpayment.
- **Attendance Audits:** SR Providers must be audited a minimum of one time during the fiscal year. The Coalition or designee may audit attendance records at any time. Records that fail to substantiate the reimbursement claim files will automatically result in a disallowed subsidy payment. Disallowed payments may be deducted from any future reimbursement payment.

COMPLIANCE VERIFICATION

- **Monitoring:** The Coalition has an ongoing duty to evaluate and verify a SR Provider’s compliance with Florida Statutes, state rules; Provider Contract, Coalition and Office of Early Learning (OEL) policies and procedures. Providers are required to allow the Coalition to enter the SR site at any time for this purpose.
- **Unannounced Inspections:** The Provider may receive unannounced inspections and re-inspections as deemed appropriate by DCF, the Coalition or designee. The Provider is expected to cooperate with technical assistance and comply with corrective action.

The Coalition or designee may enter the Provider’s facility during hours of operation to verify the Provider’s compliance. Coalition staff or its designee are permitted to inspect and copy the records maintained by the provider and/or take photographs as needed to determine compliance with the school readiness requirements.

If the Coalition staff or designee is unable to conduct an inspection or visit due to refused entry or no one on the premises during normal business hours, the Provider could be subject to sanctions by the Coalition.



- **Program Compliance:** The Provider is evaluated through the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) assessments which include the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS), Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale (FCCERS). The ERS assessments require a minimum of 3 hours of observation for each scale administered by the Coalition or designee.
- **Technical Assistance:** The Coalition supports Providers by offering technical assistance. Following the Program Compliance visits, Coalition staff will provide opportunities to discuss ways in which the provider may improve the quality of their services. Providers may also request technical assistance as they deem appropriate.
- **Non-Compliances:** Technical assistance is offered by the Coalition to assist Providers in understanding the requirements and helpful ways to meet those requirements. If the Provider fails to comply with the requirements of the School Readiness program, Coalition policies and/or directives of the Office of Early Learning, the Coalition notifies the Provider in writing and if applicable, gives the Provider a specific period of time to comply. The Provider must submit corrective action plans for any non-compliance documented during a SR monitoring inspection.

If the Provider does not comply within the period given, a final notice of non-compliance may be given before the Coalition withholds payment or terminates the Contract. Repeated failure to meet SR requirements could result in termination of the Provider's SR contract. For serious violations, the Coalition may immediately withhold or deny payment, or terminate the SR Provider agreement if the Provider fails to comply with the requirements of the statute, rule, corrective action or Contract.

- **Reinstatement:** Upon resolution, the Provider may reapply after 12 months if in good standing and a decision will be made by the Coalition regarding continued participation in the Early Learning program. The Provider understands that any suspension of payment imposed by the Coalition for non-compliance with requirements set forth in law or by this agreement, is considered disciplinary and may not be passed on to the parent.
- **Submitting Information for Payment:** The Provider must submit their original signed student attendance roster by the **3rd day** of each month. Absence documentation beyond the 3 allowable absences must have supporting documentation from the parent. The Provider is responsible for complying with submission of attendance records and other required information in order to be paid promptly. All attendance documentation intended for reimbursement must be submitted no later than 30 days after the last day of service the preceding month. **NOTE: Any request for reimbursement submitted more than 30 days after the last day of the previous month of service, will NOT be honored.**

COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The Provider has the right to appeal any issues of dispute. They must first attempt resolution with the designated staff and/or supervisory and managers. If the outcome does not resolve the matter, the Provider may appeal to the Coalition CEO by following the procedures outlined in Coalition policies.

In cases concerning SR Providers who are in disagreement with any terms of their contractual agreement with the Coalition, the Provider must submit their dispute in writing directly to the Coalition Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The Coalition CEO will respond in writing within 5 business days from receiving the dispute, and propose a method of resolution within 15 business days.

