

Early Learning Coalition



of Pinellas County, Inc.

Policy: ELCPC-60.2.1	Title: Sliding Fee and Parent Co-Payments for School Readiness	
	Review Date: 8/1/2013	Next Review Date: 08/01/2014

References: F.S. 1002.84, F.S. 1002.87, F.S. 1002.88 and Rule 60M-4.400 Florida Administrative Code

Purpose: To establish a standardized policy for assessing parental fees.

Background: 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.

Policy:

Definitions:

“At Risk” refers to children at risk of abuse, neglect, abandonment and/or exploitation. This includes children under protective services, homeless or residing in a domestic violence shelter.

“Co-payment” means the sum of money the parent or caregiver, based on the Coalition sliding fee scale, 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 Pinellas County, Inc. (ELCP).

“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.

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

“Sliding Fee Scale” means a system of cost sharing by a family based on income and family size.

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, their family size and their family income.
- 2) The co-payment for parents will be in effect for the family's determined eligibility period unless:
 - a. A subsequent redetermination is conducted during the year; or
 - b. The referring case manager and/or parent(s)/guardian requests and is granted a reduction in the co-payment due to special circumstances; or
 - c. An incorrect co-payment was determined; or
 - d. If there is any change in marital status, employment status, income or family size.
- 3) Sliding fee options are established by the Florida Office of Early Learning-DOE annually, based on the most recent report of the Federal Poverty Levels.
- 4) When the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) is released by the Florida Office of Early Learning-DOE, the Coalition must adopt a new sliding fee schedule effective June 1. 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 will determine a date to begin implementation. Family Services 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.
- 6) Parents are required to share in the cost of the child care by making a co-payment as arranged with the child care provider. Providers are statutorily required to collect and document the receipt of the parent co-payment.
- 7) Parents who are in arrears, as documented by the child care provider, will be notified in writing of their non-compliance and provided a deadline, not to exceed two weeks, in which to either pay or develop a satisfactory payment plan with the child care provider. The written notice will also advise the parent that failure to comply with the deadline will result in suspension or termination from the program.
- 8) Parents may not transfer from one School Readiness Provider to another until the parent has submitted documentation in the form of current verifiable receipts or a signed form from the current School Readiness provider to the early learning coalition stating that the parent has satisfactorily fulfilled the copayment obligation for the most recent 30 days.
- 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) Requests for temporary reduction or waiver of parental fees completed by the referring case manager will be considered by the coalition on a case-by-case basis.
- 11) Temporary reduction of parental fees may be granted by the coalition under the following documented circumstances:
 - a. Parent(s)/guardians are in prison.
 - b. Parent(s)/guardians are in the hospital or residential treatment facility.
 - c. Parent(s)/guardians are unemployed.
 - d. Parent(s)/guardians are unable to work due to illness or incapacitation.
 - e. Death of a parent/guardian.

- f. Parents are homeless or living in a shelter.
 - g. Parent(s)/guardians are over-extended or a type of financial hardship.
 - h. Parent(s)/guardians experienced an emergency (i.e. natural disaster, fire, etc.)
 - i. Whereabouts of parent(s) are unknown.
- 12) Unless circumstances otherwise warrant, referring case managers must make a verbal or written request to the coalition for a reduction in fees as soon as the need exists. Proof of the need for reduction or waiver may be required.
- 13) 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 Coalition at which time the co-payment will be resumed.
- 14) The Coalition will document the fee waiver and send a letter to the provider and the parent with a statement of the fee waived.
- 15) 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. Co-payments for subsequent siblings are assessed at a 25% discount of the initial child's fee if full time, and one half sibling's fee if part time.

Exhibits:

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