

# School Readiness Provider Manual

## Pinellas County

*Revised  
June 2014*



Sponsorship by Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas County, Inc.  
and Office of Early Learning



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# INTRODUCTION

The Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas County, Inc. would like to thank you for providing School Readiness services in Pinellas County. Your commitment to the children in your community is an admirable and important one. Research has proven how crucial a quality early learning environment is to young children's later school success. Your participation in School Readiness demonstrates your shared belief in giving young children a good solid foundation to their educational experience.

The Coalition is the primary funder of the program and administers Provider Reimbursement along with most Quality Services including provider certification, technical assistance, professional development, vision and hearing screenings, developmental screening, CCR&R provider updates. In addition, the Coalition administers Family Services which include child eligibility and CCR&R in partnership with 2-1-1 to provide child care listings.

There will be on-going changes as policies are developed and updated. You will be notified by e-mail when revisions are available to help you keep your manual current. Revisions will also be available for review on the Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas, Inc. website at [www.elcpinellas.net](http://www.elcpinellas.net).

The staff of the Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas, Inc. looks forward to working with you. We hope this manual will be instrumental in assisting you with understanding the policies and procedures of School Readiness. In the event that you come across a situation that is not discussed in the manual, please contact the Early Learning Coalition for guidance.

The School Readiness program is designed to prepare children for school and assist working families. Recognizing that work hours of many families include the evenings and weekends, Providers may offer extended care.



# **ABOUT THE COALITION**

## **Mission Statement**

To provide a comprehensive, high quality system of school readiness programs that enhances the emotional, social, cognitive, and physical development of children through collaboration with families, providers and the community early care providers and families.

## **Vision Statement**

To unite the community in the development and delivery of a high quality integrated school readiness system and family support services in order to maximize each child's School Readiness potential and promote the economic self-sufficiency of families.

### **Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas County, Inc.**

Lobby Hours:

Monday - Friday

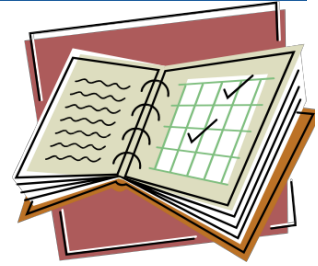
8:30am - 4:30pm

Appointments are required to meet with a Certification or Program Support Specialist.

# SCHOOL READINESS REQUIREMENTS

## Formal Provider - Health and Safety

The Coalition must ensure that School Readiness Providers maintain a healthy and safe environment and appropriate staff-to-child ratios. Therefore, all School Readiness Providers must demonstrate compliance with requirements during onsite observations by the Child Care License Program and Coalition staff.



## Informal/FFN (Family Friends Neighbors) Providers - Health and Safety

The Informal/FFN Provider will self-administer a health and safety inspection to ensure the environment meets Coalition expectations. Please see *Health and Safety Checklist* ([SR-61F-7](#)).

All Informal/FFN School Readiness Providers must operate in compliance with the Health and Safety Checklist. Provider shall annually complete the health and safety checklist required and posts the checklist prominently at the provider's premises in plain sight for visitors and parents, and submit it annually to the Coalition. See *Health and Safety Requirements for Informal/FFN School Readiness Providers* policy ([ELCPC-61.1.7b](#)).

In the event that the provider does not satisfy the Coalition requirement, sanctions could apply. See *Health and Safety Requirements for Informal/FFN School Readiness Providers* policy ([ELCPC-61.1.7b](#)).

## Formal Providers – Child Care Licensing Fines and Enforcement

### Actions

School Readiness Providers are required to notify the Coalition of any fines issued by the Child Care License Program. All School Readiness Providers are required to maintain a healthy and safe environment. Health & Safety standards are enforced in accordance with the *Health and Safety Requirements for Formal Providers* ([ELCPC-61.1.7a](#)). Providers sanctioned with a state Class 1 fines may be at risk of Gold Seal Designation removal.

## Informal/FFN Providers – ONLY

Provider and Household Member Screenings

- The Informal/FFN provider and all household members age 18 years or older must complete an annual *Local Police Background Check* ([SR-61F-34](#)).



- The Informal/FFN provider and all household members over 13 years of age must have an annual Department of Children and Families [Abuse Background Check](#).
- The Informal/FFN provider and all household members over 18 years of age must submit an [Affidavit of Good Moral Character](#).
- In the absence of the provider, there must be a screened substitute who meets the definition of Affidavit of Good Moral Character, complete a level 1 background screening and is at least 21 years of age.

## **Unusual Incidents**

All School Readiness Providers must report any “unusual incidents” via phone within one (1) hour of the “conclusion” of incident. Additionally, the Provider must submit a *Child Accident or Unusual Incident Report* ([SR-61F-19](#)) within three (3) business days of the incident. Unusual incidents should be reported to the Provider’s assigned Program Support Specialist. Forms must be faxed to 727-400-4485, Attn: (Program Support Specialist), re: Unusual Incident.

## **Ratios**

All School Readiness Programs are required to maintain ratios required by the Child Care License Program.

## **Holidays**

School Readiness Providers may be reimbursed for up to ten (10) recognized holidays approved by the Coalition. Two (2) additional days may be used as personal days totaling up to 12 paid days. Providers who serve School Readiness children on these holidays in an effort to provide service and support to the families they serve who are required to work on these holidays may request a modified date to allow them to observe the holiday on an alternative holiday subject to approval by the Coalition. These requests are documented on the School Readiness Holiday Schedule Form submitted to the ELC annually.

## **Discipline**

School Readiness children may never be subjected to discipline that is severe, humiliating, frightening or associated with food, rest, toileting, spanking or any other form of physical punishment. Examples of inappropriate discipline may include, but are not limited to taping a child’s mouth, tying a child to a chair, or requiring a child to stand with their arms out.

Discipline (Section 1002.88(k), Florida Statue), Implement minimum standards for child discipline practices that are age-appropriate and consistent with the requirements in s. 402.305(12). Such standards must provide that children not be

subjected to discipline that is associated with food, rest, or toileting. Spanking or any other form of physical punishment is prohibited.

## Curriculum

### Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum

All School Readiness Providers serving children age's birth to five (5) years old are required to offer a developmentally appropriate curriculum. Providers may choose from the following options:

1. Providers may choose to use a curriculum from the ELC approved list and complete the self-assessment study(ies) to verify implementation of the curriculum is developmentally appropriate. (See list below).



**OR**

2. Providers using a curriculum not on this list must submit a Self-Assessment Study for each applicable age group (Infant, Toddler, Two's and/or Preschool). Providers should use the *Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards* as reference to help them through the process. (*Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards Birth to Four Years* **OR** *Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for Four-Year-Olds.*)

Providers may select or design their own curriculum. The curriculum must be developmentally appropriate and align with the Florida Developmental Standards. During the application process, Providers will be asked to declare what curriculum is being used and show evidence that the standards are addressed in the curriculum.

#### List of approved developmentally appropriate curricula:

- Beyond Cribs and Rattles
- The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & Twos, 2nd edition
- High Scope Infant Toddler
- DLM Early Childhood Program
- High Scope
- Scholastic Early Childhood Program
- Creative Curriculum 4th Edition
- Kaplan Planning Guide to the Preschool Curriculum
- Doors to Discovery
- Let's Begin with Letter People
- Beyond Centers and Circle Time
- Links to Literacy
- Houghton Mifflin Pre-K
- Montessori
- Read Together, Talk Together
- Curiosity Corner
- Investigator Club Pre- Kindergarten Learning System
- We Can!
- Opening the World of Learning Ready, Set, Leap!
- Opening the World of Learning
- Saxon Early Learning

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wee Learn</li> <li>• Literacy Express</li> <li>• Early Literacy and Learning Model/Plus</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ready, Set, Leap!</li> <li>• Wright Skills/Growing with Mathematics</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

## Character Education Program

All School Readiness Providers are required to offer a character education program with activities documented on lesson plans. The Coalition does not require the use of a specific program. Providers may choose from the following options:

1. Providers may choose to use the *Commitment to Character* program.

**OR**

3. Providers may incorporate character development throughout the day. For example, the Provider may discuss using gentle hands, read books that teach character values, teach conflict resolution when two children are arguing over a toy or responsibility during clean-up time, etc. Review and complete the self- assessment study for character development.

## Ages and Stages Questionnaire-3 (ASQ-3) Developmental Screenings

ASQ's are mandatory for children ages birth to five (5) years who are enrolled in an Early Learning Coalition School Readiness program. The ASQ screening is an observation of the child's skills through play and/or an activity. Skills addressed using the ASQ are *communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving and personal-social*.

The results are used to identify possible areas of concern, communicate these concerns with families, caregivers and teachers and may be used for program planning and implementation.



The Early Learning Coalition tracks all due dates for children in care needing a developmental screening. Providers will receive the necessary screening paperwork in the mail whenever a child is due for a screening, which is defined by law as being within 45 days of the child's first enrollment in the SR program and each year thereafter on the child's birthday. Providers will be given instructions on how to complete and return the screening documentation to the Coalition with due dates.

## Monitoring

School Readiness Providers acknowledge that the Coalition, the Office of Early Learning, and other local, state and federal officials have the right to examine any documents and records that contain information about the School Readiness program. These agencies and the Coalition may conduct onsite monitoring and document reviews. In signing the School Readiness Provider Agreement, you are granting access to the site during posted business hours.

Monitoring of the School Readiness Agreement can take place on-site or via desk audit.

## **Enforcement**

It is the goal of the Coalition to provide the necessary technical assistance and resources to support Providers in providing high quality School Readiness programs and maintaining compliance with the School Readiness Agreement and Coalition policies.

Developmental Screening requirements are enforced. Failure to administer the ASQ could result in a loss of funding.

Trainings are also available for conducting classroom observations using the ASQ screening tool. Parental input is suggested in accomplishing screenings as the parent is the child's first teacher and knows the child best.

General information about the Ages and Stages program is available at [www.agesandstages.com](http://www.agesandstages.com)

## **School Readiness Certification Process New Formal Child Care Providers**

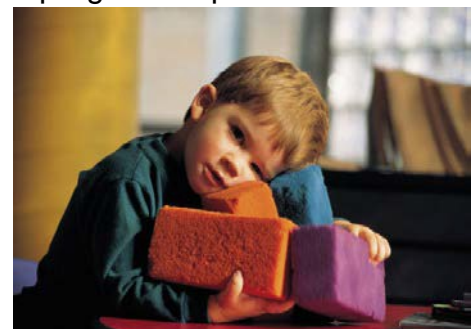
The Coalition has two (2) designated periods per year in which potential new Providers can become certified to offer School Readiness (SR) services. These "Open Certification" periods for new Providers are from:

January 1 – March 31 August 1 - September 30
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### **New Formal Provider Orientation Session**

During the Open Certification period, the Coalition hosts mandatory orientation sessions for potential new Providers. Providers are required to register for a session and attend the orientation prior to any site visits or paperwork being completed. Sessions provide an overview of the School Readiness program requirements and answer all new Provider questions.

New Providers are required to have completed an orientation session and submit completed packets to the Coalition for review within the Open Certification periods. Inquiries received after September 30 will be



referred to the next Open Certification Period which will begin January 1 and to watch the Coalition website for more information.

Providers interested in offering a School Readiness Program should contact the Program Services Department at 727-400-4462 or check the Coalition website [www.elcpinellas.net](http://www.elcpinellas.net) for more information.

### **New Formal Provider Owner Review Tool**

If a Provider Applicant is interested in pursuing a School Readiness Agreement after completing the Orientation, the Provider Applicant will be contacted by a Mentor (an established FCCH/Center Provider) within 48 hours of the orientation to schedule a visit to observe the Mentor's FCCH/Center. After the visit, the Mentor will contact the Coalition and the Provider Applicant will be assigned a Coalition Program Support Specialist who will initiate contact within 48 hours to schedule a School Readiness New Provider/Owner Review, a tool utilized for technical assistance. The Review will include an evaluation of the program's curriculum and child interaction.

### **New Formal School Readiness Provider Application**

A School Readiness Provider Agreement Package will be provided once the Provider has successfully completed the School Readiness Provider Orientation process. Prior to the end of the Open Certification Period, the completed SR Provider Agreement Package must be submitted with the following required documents and attachments:

- One completed School Readiness Provider Agreement
- Certificate of General Liability Insurance with proper limits and the ELC named as the additional insured
- Copy of current license issued by Pinellas County Child Care License Program
- IRS W-9 form completed and signed as reflected on your Social Security Card or Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN)
- A copy of your Social Security Card/Federal Employer Identification Notice (EIN). (147C Employer Identification Number Verification Letter or Form SS-4)
- Survey of Services and Proposed Rates and Fees ([SR-61F-54](#))
- Holiday Schedule ([SR-61F-4](#))
- Finance Department Agreement for Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) for Child Care Provider Payments ([SR-61F-9](#)) to include a voided check or deposit slip
- Infant Toddler, Two's ([SR-61F-23](#)) and Preschool Curriculum ([SR-61F-24](#)) - if you do not use a purchased curriculum, please complete as applicable. Once Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum Self-Assessment Studies have been submitted, they do not need to be updated yearly unless there are curriculum changes
- Character Education Curriculum ([SR-61F-25](#)) - if you checked "Other," complete-Character Development Program Self-Assessment Study. Once the

Character Development Program Self-Assessment Study has been submitted, it does not need to be updated yearly unless there are curriculum changes

- Child Care Resource and Referral Annual Provider Update (APU)

## **School Readiness Certification Process New Informal/FFN Child Care Providers**

The Coalition has two (2) designated periods per year in which potential new Providers can become certified to offer School Readiness (SR) services. These “Open Certification” periods for new Providers are from:

January 1 – March 31 August 1 - September 30
---

### **New Informal Provider Orientation Session**

During the Open Certification period, the Coalition hosts mandatory orientation sessions for potential new Providers. Providers are required to register for a session and attend the orientation prior to any site visits or paperwork being completed. Sessions provide an overview of the School Readiness program requirements and answer all new Provider questions.

New Providers are required to have completed an orientation session and submit completed packets to the Coalition for review within the Open Certification periods. Inquiries received after September 30 will be referred to the next Open Certification Period which will begin January 1 and to watch the Coalition website for more information.

Providers interested in offering a School Readiness Program should contact the Program Services Department at 727-400-4462 or check the Coalition website [www.elcpinellas.net](http://www.elcpinellas.net) for more information.

### **New Informal Provider Owner Review Tool**

If a Provider Applicant is interested in pursuing a School Readiness Agreement after completing the Orientation, the Provider Applicant will be contacted by a Mentor (an established FCCH/Center Provider) within 48 hours of the orientation to schedule a visit to observe the Mentor’s FCCH/Center. After the visit, the Mentor will contact the Coalition and the Provider Applicant will be assigned a Coalition Program Support Specialist who will initiate contact within 48 hours to schedule a School Readiness New Provider/Owner Review, a tool utilized for technical assistance. The Review will include an evaluation of the program’s curriculum and child interaction.

## **New Informal School Readiness Provider Application**

A School Readiness Provider Agreement Package will be provided once the Provider has successfully completed the School Readiness Provider Orientation process. Prior to the end of the Open Certification Period, the completed SR Provider Agreement Package must be submitted with the following required documents and attachments:

- One completed School Readiness Informal/FFN Provider Agreement
- Certificate of General Liability Insurance with proper limits and the ELC named as the additional insured
- IRS W-9 form completed and signed as reflected on your Social Security Card or Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN)
- A copy of your Social Security Card/Federal Employer Identification Notice (EIN). (147C Employer Identification Number Verification Letter or Form SS-4)
- Holiday Schedule ([SR-61F-4](#))
- Finance Department Agreement for Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) for Child Care Provider Payments ([SR-61F-9](#)) to include a voided check or deposit slip
- Relative/Non-Relative Affidavit ([SR-61F-12](#)) is required for each caregiver and family member

## **Health and Safety**

The Coalition must ensure that School Readiness providers maintain a healthy and safe environment and appropriate staff-to-child ratios. Informal/FFN providers may have no more than 5 children. There may be one family member with up to 5 children or there may be one friend with up to 5 children. This would be either/or but not both.

Therefore, all Informal/FFN School Readiness providers must demonstrate compliance with requirements during onsite observations by the Coalition staff.

## **Health and Safety Checklist**

The Provider will self-administer a Health and Safety Checklist, please see Informal Health and Safety Checklist [SR-61F-7](#). All Informal/FFN School Readiness Providers must operate in compliance with the Health and Safety Checklist. Provider shall annually complete the health and safety checklist required and posts the checklist prominently at the provider's premises in plain sight for visitors and parents, and submit it annually to the Coalition. See *Health and Safety Requirements for Informal School Readiness Providers* policy [ELCPC-61.1.7b](#).

## Provider and Household Member Screenings

- The Informal/FFN provider and all household members age 18 years or older must complete an annual local background check.
- The Informal provider and all household members over 13 years of age must have an annual Child Abuse & Neglect Registry check.
- The Informal/FFN provider and all household members over 18 years of age must submit an Affidavit of Good Moral Character.
- In the absence of the provider, there must be a screened substitute who meets the definition of Affidavit of Good Moral Character, complete a level 1 background screening and is at least 21 years of age.

**Completed forms for both Formal and Informal Child Care Providers can be mailed or hand delivered to:**

### **MAIL**

Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas County, Inc.  
Attention: Program Services  
P.O. Box 17329  
Clearwater, FL 33762

### **HAND DELIVER**

Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas County, Inc.  
Attention: Program Services  
5735 Rio Vista Drive  
Clearwater, FL 33760

### **Approval for both Formal and Informal Child Care Provider**

The Coalition will review the application within two (2) business days. You will be contacted if additional information is required.

Incomplete packages will be returned to the Provider. A letter will accompany the package stating what needs to be completed and the application process will stop.

Once the complete application package is approved, a fully executed copy of the SR Provider Agreement will be mailed to you. The SR Provider Agreement must be signed by the Chief Executive Officer of the Early Learning Coalition **before** your program may begin. The Coalition will not authorize payment to a Provider without an SR Agreement.



# School Readiness Provider Renewal Process

## Renewal of Agreement

Existing School Readiness Providers must renew their Agreement annually in accordance with the terms of the Agreement. The Coalition will hold provider renewal meetings as necessary per changes in requirements. The table below illustrates the typical timeline for renewal. **It is very important** to submit your complete renewal packet by the due date in order to ensure there is no disruption in payment.

The renewal agreement can be submitted online at [www.elcpinellas.net](http://www.elcpinellas.net).

Provider Type	Agreement Period	Renewal Packet Available Online @ elcpinellas.net	Complete Renewal Packet Due
Centers	July 1 – June 30	April 1	May 15
FCCH	November 1 – October 31	August 1	September 15
School Age	April 1 – March 31	January 1	February 15
Informal/FFN	April 1 – March 31	January 1	February 15
Summer Only	Varies per program	March 1	May 15

**\*\*Note:** These dates are subject to change\*\*

### 1. School Readiness Provider Agreement Renewal Documents

Providers must submit the complete renewal package with the following required document and attachment:

- One completed School Readiness Provider Agreement

Note: The following forms are due May 1 annually, regardless of the terms of Agreement.

- Survey of Services and Proposed Rates and Fees ([SR-61F-54](#))
- Holiday Schedule ([SR-61F-4](#))

### 2. Completed forms can be mailed or hand delivered to:

<b><u>MAIL</u></b>	<b><u>HAND DELIVER</u></b>
Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas County, Inc. Attention: Program Services P.O. Box 17329 Clearwater, FL 33762	Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas County, Inc. Attention: Program Services 5735 Rio Vista Drive Clearwater, FL 33760

### 3. **Approval**

The Coalition will review the documents/paperwork within ten (10) business days. You will be contacted if additional information is required.

Incomplete packages will be returned to the Provider. A letter will accompany the package stating what needs to be completed and the application process will stop.

Once the complete application package is approved, a fully executed copy of the SR Provider Agreement will be mailed to you. The renewal SR Provider Agreement must be signed by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Early Learning Coalition **before** your current SR Agreement expiration date. The Coalition will not authorize payment to a Provider without an SR Agreement.

### 4. **Summer Only School Readiness Providers**

The Coalition will execute Summer Only SR Provider Agreements for programs that have short-term summer camp schedules (typically do not exceed 10 weeks). Summer Only Agreements will have specified dates not to exceed the summer camp session. For more information please call (727) 400-4462.

## **Reporting Changes to Your School Readiness Program**

### **Change in Owner**

Prior to a change in ownership, the New Owner will be asked to meet with Coalition staff to discuss requirements and complete paperwork needed to execute the new Agreement. Provider will receive a site visit by Coalition Staff.

A minimum of **ten (10) days** before the change occurs the following documents must be signed by the new owner and submitted to ELC Provider Services Department for approval:

- Completed SR Provider Change Notification Form ([SR-61-F-2](#))

The following documentation is required upon completion of the sale:

- Change of Ownership Form from Child Care Licensing
- Completed School Readiness Provider Agreement
- Certificate of General Liability Insurance
- Copy of current license issued by Pinellas County Child Care License Program
- Completed [W-9](#) form
- A copy of your Employer Identification Notice (EIN). (147C Employer Identification Number Verification Letter or Form SS-4)
- Survey of Services and Proposed Rates and Fees ([SR-61F-54](#))

- Holiday Schedule ([SR-61F-4](#))
- Finance Department Agreement for Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) for Child Care Provider Payments ([SR-61F-9](#)) to include a voided check or deposit slip
- Child Care Resource and Referral Annual Provider Update (APU)

### **Change in Site Director**

If there is a change in Director, the Provider must notify the Coalition in writing and submit the following at least **ten (10) days before** the change occurs:

- Completed SR Provider Change Notification Form ([SR-61-F-2](#))
- A letter from the “Owner” on letterhead, stating that there has been a director change and that the new director has authority to make decisions on behalf of the center

### **Change in Physical Address**

A minimum of **ten (10) days** before the change occurs the following documents must be signed by the Provider and submitted to ELC for approval:

- SR Provider Change Notification Form ([SR-61F-2](#))
- Copy of Pinellas County Child Care License
- Certificate of General Liability Insurance with new address
- [W-9](#)
- Survey of Rates ([SR-61F-54](#)) (if rates will be changed based on new location)
- One (1) completed School Readiness Provider Agreement

### **Change in Teacher**

The Coalition does not track individual teacher data. Providers are not required to notify the Coalition of any staff changes other than the owner or director. (This is different than VPK).

### **Contact Information Changes**

The Coalition’s primary method for communicating with Providers is electronically (email). The Provider is required to maintain and monitor a working email address for sending and receiving communications from the Coalition.

In the event a Provider’s email is found to be invalid, the Provider will be notified and required to provide a valid email address within three (3) business days.

If there will be a change in the landline telephone number, mailing address (that does not constitute a physical move), or email address, the Provider must notify the Coalition in writing and submit the following at **least ten (10) days before the change occurs.**

- SR Provider Change Notification Form ([SR-61F-2](#))

### **Calendar Changes**

Temporary closure affecting scheduled hours of care that are within the control of the Provider such as unplanned vacations, will not receive reimbursement for the instructional time disrupted by the closure. Notification of such closures must be submitted to the ELC Program Services Department in writing within 24 hours.

Temporary closure due to circumstances outside the control of the Provider such as hurricanes or break in a waterline may be reimbursed. Notification of such closures must be submitted to the ELC Program Services Department in writing within 24 hours.

### **General Liability Insurance**

All Providers are required to maintain and furnish written evidence of sufficient General Liability Insurance as indicated in the School Readiness Provider Agreement and *Provider Insurances Policy* ([ELCP-10.16](#)).

Providers must procure and maintain General Liability Insurance in the minimum amounts of \$100,000 per incident/\$300,000 general aggregate, including coverage of transportation of children (if SR children are transported by the program). The Provider is required to list the Coalition as an “Additional Insured,” also referred to as “Certificate Holder” in order to verify proper coverage. Any disruption and/or lapse in the insurance coverage could result in loss of funding and/or termination of the School Readiness Provider Agreement.

# SCHOOL READINESS REIMBURSEMENT

The information included in this section is provided as a tool in understanding the reimbursement policies and procedures for childcare providers. Please review the manual as it contains valuable information and necessary forms. These forms are supplied by the Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas County, Inc. (Coalition) and are to be completed at the time of application and/or renewal. The Reimbursement Department of Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas, Inc. (ELC) and the Program Services Department work together to ensure that these required forms are received and completed correctly to ensure that providers receive timely reimbursement for childcare services. Many forms must be returned to the Coalition prior to receiving reimbursement for services provided to families receiving School Readiness scholarships.

## School Readiness Provider Agreement

A School Readiness Agreement Provider can be a center, a family childcare home, or a legally exempt program that provides childcare in Pinellas County and participates in agreement care/improvement process as stipulated in a signed agreement with the Coalition for children accessing services out of county. The provider must be licensed per the regulations of that county.

## Provider Rates for School Readiness Agreement Providers

Reimbursement for School Readiness services will be based upon a proposed rate per child/per day, but will not exceed the maximum Coalition approved rate or the provider's current published rate schedule for the general public, whichever is lower.

The reimbursement rate is based on the rates submitted on the *Survey of Rates (SR-61F-54)*. Published rates must be supported by the actual rate charged to the general public or full fee-paying families. It is the provider's responsibility to collect the parent fee from the client.

The Coalition will pay up to the Maximum Allowable Rates, minus the state-mandated parent fee. It is the provider's responsibility to collect the parent fee from the client.

## Gold Seal Providers

For providers that have obtained and submitted their Gold Seal certificate and acknowledgement notice from the Department of Children and Families (i.e., APPLE, NAEYC, NAFCC, etc.) documentation to the Coalition, currently a 20% higher differential rate may be paid, as Funder policy allows and funding is available.

## Holidays for School Readiness Agreement Providers

Effective July 1, 2013 funded programs may be reimbursed for up to ten (10) designated holidays and two (2) floating personal days per year (July 1 – June 30).

Providers must complete and return the *Holiday Schedule* (SR-61F-4) in order to be paid for holidays.

## Required Reimbursement Forms

All forms must be completed and submitted to the Coalition prior to receiving reimbursement for child care services.

## New School Readiness Provider Application

The forms required when a new provider agreement is submitted are the same as item #4 on page 6.

## Annual Renewals

All forms are due May 15 each year, regardless of when the provider agreement is renewed.

Survey of Rates and Holiday Schedule forms will be available to all providers on the ELC website April 1 annually for the upcoming year (July 1- June 30).

- Survey of Rates ([SR-61F-54](#))
  - Please see [Provider Max Rate Sheet and Gold Seal Differentials](#) for rates.
- Holiday Schedule ([SR-61F-4](#))

The following forms are not required annually unless there are changes:

- IRS [W-9](#) form completed and signed as reflected on the provider's Social Security Card or Taxpayer Identification Number
- A copy of the provider's Social Security Card/Federal Employer Identification Notice. (147C Employer Identification Number Verification Letter or Form SS-4 from the IRS)
- Finance Department Agreement for Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) for Child Care Provider Payments ([SR-61F-9](#)) to include a voided check or deposit slip

## Available Funding Groups for Licensed School Readiness Agreement Providers

BG1	CCPP
BG3	BG3R
BG5	BG8

## Informal/FFN Provider

Informal/FFN providers are relatives or a nanny in a child's home or the caregiver's home. An Informal/FFN provider is not required to be licensed.

### Provider Rates for Informal/FFN Providers

The Coalition will pay Informal/FFN providers up to 50% of the Coalition Maximum Allowable Rates for Home Providers, minus the state-mandated parent fee. It is the provider's responsibility to collect the parent fee from the client.

### Required Reimbursement Forms

All forms for Informal/FFN Providers must be completed and submitted to the Coalition prior to receiving reimbursement for child care services.

### New Informal/FFN School Readiness Provider Applications

The forms required when a new Informal/FFN provider agreement is submitted are the same as item #4 on page 6.

### Annual Renewals

Refer to Annual Renewals on page 26.

### Available Funding Groups for Informal/FFN Providers

BG3	BG5	BG8	BG3R	CCPP
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### Funding Groups Not Available for Informal/FFN Providers

Informal/FFN Providers **WILL NOT BE REIMBURSED** for children funded by the following funding groups due to Funder requirements:

BG1	SAFETY NET	STP
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# Child Care Enrollment Process

## Child Care Scholarship

The [Certificate/Voucher for Child Care Scholarship](#) is issued when a client has not yet selected a childcare provider at the time of eligibility determination.

When childcare eligibility determination is completed, the client will be given a *Certificate/Voucher for Child Care Scholarship* for each child. The client must present the *Certificate/Voucher for Child Care Scholarship* to the childcare provider of their choice. The certificate must be completed by the provider and signed by the parent and provider, then submitted to ELC Reimbursement on the child's first physical day of care. A separate *Notice of Child Care Enrollment* is issued for each child in the family needing childcare services.

Note: Providers must have a current School Readiness Agreement to accept new enrollments. Contact the Coalition to begin the process. Please allow up to 30 days to complete the process.

## Child Care Transfers

A client must complete a *Child Request Transfer* ([SR-60F-60](#)) request form signed by their current provider indicating all parent fees are paid and turn it in to the Family Services Department in order to initiate a transfer. A parent may also provide the Family Services Department current, verifiable receipts showing all parent fees have been paid in full. The Coalition holds all clients responsible for 30 days of past due parent fees. Clients will not be issued a transfer until all 30 days of past due parent fees are paid in full. The certificate must be completed by the provider and signed by the parent and provider, then submitted to ELC Reimbursement on the child's first physical day of care. A separate *Notice of Child Care Enrollment* is issued for each child in the family needing childcare services.

Note: Providers must have a current School Readiness Agreement to accept new enrollments or transfers. Contact the Coalition to begin the process.

## Child Care Terminations

If a child is terminated on the [Enrollment/Attendance Certification](#) form (attendance roster), the provider will receive a *Notice of Childcare Scholarship Termination Due to Non-Attendance* correspondence from the Reimbursement Department stating that we have terminated the child, per the provider's information.

When ELC terminates a child due to ineligibility, the provider will receive a *Provider Notice of Change in Childcare Scholarship Status* termination notice from the Family



Services Department notifying the provider of the termination and a phone call if the family's eligibility terminates earlier than the date stated on the notice.

## Procedures Submitting Enrollment/Attendance Certification Form

### Enrollment/Attendance Certification

[Enrollment/Attendance Certification](#) forms (Attendance Rosters) must be submitted and received in the Reimbursement Department by the second (2nd) of each month.

If the 2nd falls on a weekend, the attendance rosters are due on ELC's first business day following the weekend. Attendance received after the second (2nd) of the month is considered late and will result in a delayed payment.

You may begin to submit attendance rosters as soon as the last business day of the month. If an *attendance roster* form is submitted more than one reimbursement cycle late, ELC may not be able to make payment for the care provided. A final reconciliation for fiscal year (July 1 through June 30) must be submitted by August 1. This means any child the provider is requesting payment for must be submitted by August 1. Reimbursement after August 1 will not be allowed.

### Confirmation of Receipt of Enrollment/Attendance Certification Forms

During the reimbursement period, once we receive the *attendance roster* forms, an email is sent to the providers confirming receipt of their enrollment/attendance certificates. If the provider has submitted their attendance rosters and does not receive a confirmation email, the provider should contact their reimbursement specialist immediately.

### Process for Completing the Enrollment/Attendance Certification Form

- Use either **blue** or **black ink** (no pencil or red ink).
- **DO NOT WRITE** the number of days in the Days Attended column.
- Mail or fax the attendance – do not do both.
- In the top left corner of the roster, if it is not pre-printed, write the provider's name, address, phone number, and identification number.
- Write the child(ren)'s name in the space provided in the corresponding columns, if it is not pre-printed. This information will be pre-printed on the *attendance roster* once the child's enrollment is entered into the database.
- Follow the instructions for completing the attendance using the **key** at the bottom left corner of the attendance roster.
- When enrolling a new child – put an **"S"** (Start Date) on the first day that the child physically attends the provider's site. Add any other attendance

after the “S” (Start Date) including “E’s” for Absences or “No Exception” if the child was in attendance all month.

- If a child is absent during the month, mark those days with an “E” (Excused Absence) on the attendance roster. If a child is attending with a special schedule, i.e., child only attends Monday, Wednesday, and Friday only mark the absences to the normal scheduled attendance days with an “E”. Do not mark anything on the Tuesday and Thursday fields.
- If the provider is unavailable or closed and cannot provide childcare during the month mark an “N” (Enrolled, Non-Reimbursable) on the attendance roster.
- If a child has no absences during the month and attends every day, please write on the attendance line “**no exceptions.**” This includes children who begin (S) and end (T) care in the same month. Any child with an empty attendance line for the month will not be reimbursed during that current month and will be reimbursed the following month with submission of a corrected attendance roster.
- Attendance rosters that are re-printed with an “H” (Holiday) will need to be marked with the words “**No Exceptions**” if the child does not miss any other reimbursable days or “E’s” for any absences other than the Holiday.
- Termination of care during the current month should be marked with a “T” (Termination) on the day **following** the last day of care and include any applicable attendance before the T (i.e., “No Exceptions” or “E” for absences). If a child was terminated during the previous month, write a “T” on the first day of current month’s attendance roster.
- Attendance roster forms will not be accepted and will be returned to the provider’s site if they appear to be altered in any way – this includes the use of **white-out**.

In order to receive payment by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month, attendance must be submitted to and received by the Reimbursement Department by the second (2nd) of each month. Attendance Roster forms received without signatures will be returned for signature. Attendance received without proper supporting documentation will also result in delayed payment.

**Reminder:** Recertification dates are printed on the provider’s attendance certification form. To confirm this information, the provider may contact the Family Services Call Center at (727) 400-4411 to verify re-determination and termination updates. Continued care to a non-certified ineligible child will not be reimbursed.

### **Request for Justification of Excessive Absences**

The [Request for Justification of Excessive Absences](#) form is **required** when a child is absent more than three days. **This form must be submitted with current month’s attendance roster in order to be considered for reimbursement.** Reimbursement shall be authorized for no more than three (3) absences per calendar month/per child except in the event of extraordinary circumstances, in

which case, ELC shall provide written approval for payment based on written documentation provided by the parent/guardian from the provider justifying the excessive absence for up to an additional seven (7) days.

Late submission of this form and supporting documents will affect payment.

### **State Approved Justifications of Excessive Absences**

- Hospitalization of the child or parent with appropriate documentation
- Illness requiring home-stay; days 4 and 5 as documented by a parent or medical provider; days 6 through 10 as documented by a medical provider
- Death in the immediate family with appropriate documentation (i.e. obituary, death certificate)
- Court order visitation with appropriate documentation (i.e. court order)
- Unforeseen documented military deployment or exercise of the parents with copies of order

Total monthly-reimbursed absences shall not exceed ten (10) calendar days. In the event that child is absent for five (5) consecutive days with no contact from the parent/guardian, the provider shall notify ELC who shall determine the need for continued childcare scholarships.

### **Provider Reimbursement Report**

A [Provider Reimbursement Report](#) will be included with the provider's statement each month. The *Provider Reimbursement Report* will provide information regarding the number of days reimbursed, parent fee amount, provider rate, child's name, child's identifier number, child's care level, and the funding source for this payment.

Upon receipt of the [Provider Reimbursement Report](#), the provider will have a limited time (30 days) to report any discrepancies in payment. Timely verification of the reimbursement information may avoid denial of payments for discrepancies. Payment questions or disputes should be reported by the first day of the month following the payment date.

Failure to comply with this timeline will result in delayed reimbursement if a discrepancy is confirmed in the provider's reimbursement.

### **Attendance Monitoring**

The Coalition is responsible for monitoring the provider's attendance roster forms for accuracy. The Attendance Monitor will be specifically reviewing the client's validation of the attendance claimed. Attendance Monitoring will be conducted during the year to compare attendance records and Sign-in/Sign-out sheets and

assist with any problems, questions, or concerns regarding the reimbursement process.

## Sign In/Out Sheets

All providers serving School Readiness children must maintain a daily [Sign-in/Sign-out](#) sheet for each child in their care. The Sign-in/Sign-out sheet must include the site name, child name, month, day/date, time child entered and left care for the day, and the client's **full signature** verifying the information for each day. The provider must ensure that the client signs the Sign-in/Sign-out sheet daily to verify the attendance is correct as shown. Providers will not be reimbursed for children whose attendance cannot be verified by Sign-in/Sign-out sheets. Providers that utilize roll books as Sign-in/Sign-out sheets must have the client write the time in and out of care as well as sign next to their child's name in order to be accepted. Please contact the Coalition Quality Assurance Department at (727) 400-4448 for assistance with any questions or concerns regarding the attendance monitoring process.

## Child Attendance Monitoring Process

Providers are randomly selected for Attendance Monitoring visits and desk audits. Providers are also selected for attendance monitoring based on identified risk indicators. Providers selected for desk audit will be notified in writing to submit sign-in/sign-out sheets and attendance rosters. Site visits can be conducted during normal business hours which would be whenever School Readiness children are in care.

The request for records can be for one month, more than one month, once per year or more than once per year and may extend up to five years prior at the Coalition's discretion.

- Attendance records (Sign-in/Sign-out sheets) are reviewed along with the attendance roster that was submitted to ELC for payment.
- Sign-in/Sign-out sheets are verified for accuracy.
- Reimbursement discrepancies are recorded and payments are adjusted if necessary.

Technical assistance is provided upon request and in conjunction with errors and payment adjustments.

Evidence of false or misleading documentation, action, omission or statement made by individual client recipient or provider will result in the termination of the School Readiness Agreement in accordance with the *Possible Provider-Client Fraud and/or Misrepresentation Policy* ([ELCPC-50.1](#)). Cases of suspected fraud will be reported to the Florida Department of Financial Services Public Assistance Fraud Unit and the Office of Early Learning (OEL) as required by OEL.

# SCHOOL READINESS RESOURCES

## Professional Development and Training

The Professional Development department's main goal is to bring trainings into the community that will not only benefit the Early Childcare Practitioner but also the children that are in their care. Professional Development brings new information into the community providing early childcare practitioners the latest information on what makes children successful in their programs.

Trainings are categorized into Core Knowledge Areas. Core Knowledge is defined as the specific knowledge, competencies, and characteristics needed by early care and education practitioners to work effectively with young children and their families. Each subject area describes the knowledge and skills that practitioners need in order to work with children birth through age five (5) and their families. These areas include:

- Health, Safety, and Nutrition
- Child Development and Learning
- Building Family and Community Relationships
- Teaching and Learning Environments and Interactions
- Curriculum
- Observing, Documenting, Screening, and Assessing to Support Young Children and Their Families
- Professionalism

Trainings offered through the Early Learning Coalition, the Department of Education, the Department of Children and Families, as well as other local agencies are listed in [Pinellas County's Training Times](#) found on the Early Learning Coalition website [www.elcpinellas.net](http://www.elcpinellas.net).

### How to register for Early Learning Coalition (ELC) trainings

**Step 1** - Go to [www.elcpinellas.net/registration](http://www.elcpinellas.net/registration) and choose the training you want to attend.

**Step 2** - You will be connected to a new page with the training information that you have chosen and a login section. Login with your last name and email address.

**NOTE:** If you are registering someone other than yourself be sure to use that person's last name and email address.

**NOTE:** The instructions below are for people who have NEVER created a login or have forgotten their login information.

\*\*If you have **never** logged in before then you will click on the **Create Login** button to set up a login account and continue your registration.

If you **forgot** your login information click the blue **forgot login** info link.

Then enter your First Name and Center Name and click continue.  
Your login and password information will appear on your computer screen.

**Step 3** - Enter **your** information in the following fields, see the screen shot below:

- First Name
- Last Name
- Email Address
- Confirm Email

Enter the **Site** information in the following fields:

- Center Name
- Address
- City
- State
- Zip code
- Phone Number

Choose an Attendee Type, either **Attendee Registration** or **Attendee Registration and CEU's**. Then click **Next**

**Step 4 - Confirm** that the information you have entered is correct and click **continue**

**Step 5** - You must click on the **Charge my credit card button**, then enter your credit card information and click **Next**

**Step 6 - If your billing address is different from your center address please enter your billing address information.**

**Step 7** - Your confirmation page will display. Please Print this page out from the **Printable View** link in the upper right corner of the page and keep for your records. Your card will only be charged if you are confirmed into this event. You will receive written notification after payment has been completed.

## **STEP UP Scholarship**

The Early Learning Coalition believes that helping Early Childhood practitioners reach their educational goals is of paramount importance to ensuring that our preschool children are ready for kindergarten. To assist practitioners in reaching

these educational goals, the Early Learning Coalition has partnered with the St. Petersburg College in the [STEP UP](#) Scholarship program.

STEP UP Scholarships are designed to provide financial assistance for early childhood practitioners who are currently employed in a child care center or family child care home in Pinellas County and who are actively pursuing an Associate's degree in Early Childhood Education through St. Petersburg College.

Requirements:

Eligible candidates must:

- have a high school diploma/GED and reside in Florida for at least one year
- work in a child care center or family child care home for at least six months
- have a signed School Readiness Agreement with the Early Learning Coalition and have SR children in care in Pinellas County
- be working directly with children in the capacity of teacher or director

Note: Candidates receiving any other scholarship assistance such as TEACH will not be considered.

Scholarship Application Packets

Application packets are posted to the ELC website three times a year.

Spring Session	Posted in November before the session begins
Summer Session	Posted in March before the session begins
Fall Session	Posted in July before the session begins

**Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards**

The *Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards* describe skills typically demonstrated by children at the end of the respective year.

These standards are grouped around areas of development including:

- Physical Development
- Approaches to Learning
- Social and Emotional Development
- Language and Communication
- Cognitive Development and General Knowledge



The standards are most helpful when used to optimize the daily experiences of children. Training on the Education Standards is available through the Early Learning Coalition.

For training opportunities, visit [www.elcpinellas.net](http://www.elcpinellas.net) and click on the [Training Times](#).

## Local Training Opportunities

The Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas County publishes the [Training Times](#). This online catalog of training is updated regularly to offer the most current information on training opportunities. Visit the website at: [www.elcpinellas.net](http://www.elcpinellas.net). Registration for trainings is easy, just click on the hyperlink within the [Training Times](#).

Printed copies of the [Training Times](#) are available for \$2 each or \$8 per year. To order a printed copy, call 727-400-4431.

## Professional Development for Informal/FFN Providers ONLY

Informal/FFN Providers are required to:

1. Complete the six (6) hour Family Child Care Rules and Regulation either online or instructor lead.
2. Pass the Family Child Care Rules & Regulations competency exam
3. Successfully complete CPR and First Aid Training (Pediatric/Child) and keep current
4. These must be obtained before becoming an Informal/FFN Provider.

### Did You Know?

The Florida Department of Education (DOE) has defined curricula as written materials that:

- Can be reproduced.
- Address the use of materials, scheduling, arranging the environment, and interaction between children and adults.
- Includes more than activity suggestions and theory.
- Aligns with the Florida Education Standards.

## Technical Assistance

We also offer Technical Assistance to help Providers reach their curriculum and quality goals. Technical assistance is available upon request to any School Readiness Provider to help improve home/classroom curriculum and quality. This can take many forms i.e.: (templates, samples, coaching, email, and telephone conversation).

## Training and Coaching Programs

The Early Learning Coalition offers opportunities for early learning educators to become proficient in the use of Positive Behavior Supports and other ideas current



in the field of social emotional development. Providers can also access a similar service for incorporating literacy initiatives into their programs. The Coalition is committed to the goal of promoting inclusive environments for every child in Pinellas County, thus promoting school readiness for all children. Through a focus on social-emotional education and literacy coupled with the mentorship of our teachers and directors, schools are better prepared to meet the various needs of today's child. Services to providers include training blended with on-site coaching and mentoring to incorporate what was learned in class. Coalition Specialists develop goals with teachers and help them reach those goals through continued on-site and telephone support, as well as linking them to other resources. They also offer technical assistance and mentor early educators to address issues such as challenging behaviors, social emotional competency, literacy, and overall quality programming.

### **Assessment Programs**

The Coalition offers support and technical assistance for early learning educators to access the proper assessment tools and resources for the children in their classrooms or home programs.

### **Teaching Strategies GOLD**

As an online assessment, Teaching Strategies GOLD is a tool that is used by Early Learning Coalitions all throughout the state to assess children in School Readiness Programs. This tool allows providers to complete pre and post assessments online and have access to various reports on results for individual children, groups, and areas identified as concerns. The program also allows providers to access ideas and activities for lesson plans as part of intentional planning and developing curriculum. Trained Specialists at the Coalition can offer training labs at the ELC offices or can provide onsite technical support to providers in their own centers or homes. Reports can be generated by the ELC for the provider and technical assistance and support is offered.

### **Vision and Hearing Screenings**

Vision and Hearing Screenings are provided through a partnership with the local Lions Club, to children ages two (2) months to five (5) years who are enrolled in Early Learning Coalition School Readiness Programs. These screenings are useful in detecting early signs of seeing or hearing difficulties. The screenings are conducted by trained vision and hearing screeners through the Lions Club or by trained staff from the Coalition on site at the child's place of enrollment. If no concern is indicated by the screening, the parents and providers are informed that the child passed.



If a concern is determined by the screenings, a full evaluation by the child's pediatrician is recommended in writing to the parents and child care providers. Further assistance is provided to parents on how to access additional vision medical services and how to interpret results by Coalition screening staff.

School Readiness Providers must allow the Coalition or its designee access to children to administer vision and hearing screenings. Failure to cooperate with the vision and hearing screening program or allow access to children for screening could result in a loss of funding.

## Supportive Intervention Services

### Service Overview

All children in Pinellas County who are enrolled in the School Readiness Program through the Coalition are screened using an Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) by their early learning educator.



Children whose scores indicate the need for intervention may be considered for Supportive Intervention Services (SIS), along with referrals to other services in the community; i.e., *FDLRS*, *Early Steps*, mental health services, other behavior support services, etc.

If further information indicates that a child could use Supportive Intervention Services, a Supportive Intervention Specialist (SIS) will:

1. Provide an individual case to provide 1:1 services to the child to overcome developmental delays and reach milestones or address specific behavior challenges in the classroom
2. Provide a site case to provide the teacher with training and coaching on how to implement new teaching strategies, use materials, and address behavior challenges using the Positive Behavior Support Model
3. Offer developmental activities and refer for other services.

Services are provided based on need (of the child AND the early learning educator) and typically last three – four (3-4) months. At any time during the service, a child can be referred for other services.

# Inclusion Specialist - Warm Line

## Overview

Each regional Warm-Line provides assistance and consultation to child care centers and family child care homes regarding health, developmental delays, disabilities, and special needs issues of the children they are serving. The Regional Warm-Line Inclusion Specialist provides onsite technical assistance, when requested, to assist child centers and family day care homes with inquiries relative to:

- Curriculum issues
- Strategies for Managing Behavior
- Child Development Concerns
- Health
- Environmental Adaptations
- Laws and Regulations (i.e. The Americans with Disabilities Act)



## The Warm-Line

The Warm Line's Inclusion Specialist is available by phone consultation (727 545-7536) or onsite, as needed, for screening, observation, staff conferences, community resource referral information, room and furniture adaptation, curriculum adaptations, IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) & ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act), and as a resource to help you to communicate with families.

## Inclusion Library

There are a variety of videos and print materials available, which can be checked out.

## Infant Toddler Program

The Infant/Toddler Program is a quality initiative of the Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas, Inc. The program has been in place since 1999 and is staffed by a full-time Infant/Toddler Specialist.

Recognizing the importance of the first three years of life, the Infant/Toddler program is committed to enhancing the professional development of infant and toddler teachers and improving the quality of care in infant and toddler programs.

The Infant/Toddler staff is available by phone (727-400-4435) or onsite for individualized consultation to address concerns or questions providers may have regarding the care of infants and toddlers. Some topics they can assist with are how infants and toddlers learn, developing language skills, guidance and discipline,

working with families, understanding cultural differences, room arrangement, setting up the environment, appropriate learning activities, health and safety concerns, and more.

The Infant and Toddler Specialist also offer playgroups to children in contracted sites around the county. Depending on capacity and need in a site, a playgroup can be organized for a short time to teach children similar skills in small groups such as language building, how to play, identifying feelings, and improving challenging behavior.

## **Toy Lending Library & Resource Room**

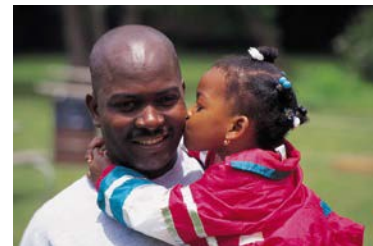
The Mary K. Bennett Infant/Toddler lending library includes a wide variety of age appropriate materials such as toys, puzzles, children's books, music, resource books for teachers, etc. Materials may be checked out for up to two (2) months at a time.

The Resource room includes a variety of tools to use for professional looking teacher-made learning materials. These tools include a laminator, Ellison machine with several dies, a book binder, etc.

## **Parent Involvement**

Providers are expected to demonstrate that they are involving parents as their child's first teacher and supporting family education. Suggestions for meeting these criteria include:

- Parent education bulletin board
- Regular parent newsletters with suggested activities to do at home with the children and why the activities are important
- Parent meetings where school policies are discussed
- Parenting education meetings/activities
- Information available for parents on child development issues
- Information available for parents on adult educational opportunities in the community
- Regular meetings with parents to discuss the ongoing monitoring of their child's progress through the Provider's curriculum
- Specialized intervention services for children in SR programs in coordination with parents and the child's provider
- Referral services for children in need of additional evaluation or other family services



# SERVICES FOR FAMILIES

## School Readiness Scholarships

Children under Protective Services or receiving TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), from birth through 12 years of age are eligible for School Readiness (SR) funding. Economically disadvantaged children from birth through 12 years of age are also eligible for School Readiness funding.

If a family meets the following eligibility criteria, they may qualify for child care funding either through a referring agency or by applying to our wait list.

- Parents or guardians who receive cash assistance for the family or for their relative children
- At risk children under Protective Services or in foster care – regardless of income
- Children living in an economically disadvantaged family where a parent/guardian works, attends school, or completes a combination of both work and school that totals at least 20 hours per week.

## Wait List

Based upon funding priorities, families not immediately eligible for care must apply to the wait list. In order to be eligible for the wait list, families must be:

1. employed at least 20 hours per week, or
2. attending a technical/vocational school at least 20 hours per week, or
3. attending 12 credit hours at an accredited college/university or
4. employed and attending school for a combination of 20 hours per week.

Families can apply for the wait list at [www.elcpinellas.net](http://www.elcpinellas.net). Families **must** contact the Early Learning Coalition every six (6) months to update their wait list status. Failure by the parent to keep their information up to date results in termination from the wait list. Unborn children or children who are receiving school readiness funding cannot be on the waitlist.

**IMPORTANT:** The ending date for care is based upon the parent's current status. For example: working, attending school, income. If any of these factors change then the end date of care can also change.

Providers should always report to ELC any changes they are aware of regarding parents of children in their care. Parents will be required to provide subsequent documentation based on the provider report of changes. Failure to report will result in loss of care, non-payment for care days, and termination of the child's scholarship. If you are uncertain about a family please call ELC to verify their eligibility status.

Parents may also be contacted at random during their eligibility period to ensure they are:

- still employed,
- employed by the same employer,
- income has not increased, or
- they are still attending school,
- marital status the same and
- any other changes to income such as child support or Social Security benefits

Paperwork is sent directly to the Provider, by mail. DO NOT accept children without the appropriate paperwork, regardless of billing group. Please contact ELC if a parent shows up and you have no paperwork. Care provided to children who are not funded by the ELC will not be paid. The Coalition does not authorize back payments.

<b>ELIGIBILITY PRIORITIES</b>	
1	Priority shall be given first to a child younger than 13 years of age from a family that includes a parent who is receiving temporary cash assistance under chapter 414 and subject to the federal work requirements.
2	Priority shall be given next to an at-risk child younger than 9 years of age.
3	Priority shall be given next to a child from birth to the beginning of the school year for which the child is eligible for admission to kindergarten in a public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2 who is from a working family that is economically disadvantaged. However, a child eligible under this paragraph ceases to be eligible if his or her family income exceeds 200 percent of the federal poverty level.
4	Priority shall be given next to a child of a parent who transitions from the work program into employment as described in s. 445.032 from birth to the beginning of the school year for which the child is eligible for admission to kindergarten in a public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2.
5	Priority shall be given next to an at-risk child who is at least 9 years of age but younger than 13 years of age. An at-risk child whose sibling is enrolled in the school readiness program within an eligibility priority category listed in paragraphs (a)-(c) shall be given priority over other children who are eligible under this paragraph.
6	Priority shall be given next to a child who is younger than 13 years of age from a working family that is economically disadvantaged. A child who is eligible under this paragraph whose sibling is enrolled in the school readiness program under paragraph (c) shall be given priority over other children who are eligible under this paragraph. However, a child eligible under this paragraph ceases to be eligible if his or her family income exceeds 200 percent of the federal poverty level.
7	Priority shall be given next to a child of a parent who transitions from the work program into employment as described in s. 445.032 who is younger than 13 years of age.

8	Priority shall be given next to a child who has special needs, has been determined eligible as a student with a disability, has a current individual education plan with a Florida school district, and is not younger than 3 years of age. A special needs child eligible under this paragraph remains eligible until the child is eligible for admission to kindergarten in a public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2.
9	Notwithstanding paragraphs (1)-(4), priority shall be given last to a child who otherwise meets one of the eligibility criteria in paragraphs (1)-(4) but who is also enrolled concurrently in the federal Head Start Program and the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program.

### **Recertification**

Families receiving a child care scholarship are required to recertify regularly by submitting a recertification packet and all required paperwork 10 (ten) calendar days prior to their recertification date. Failure to recertify in a timely manner (defined as 10 (ten) calendar days prior to the redetermination date) may result in private pay days for the family. The parent is responsible for total payment of child care services on private pay days. The provider must document this in writing as a policy of the program (center/home) and provide it to the parent upon registration.

Providers will be notified in writing of the parent's eligibility status, including the funding group, assessed parent fees, authorized hours of care (full time or part time) and next recertification date. (Note: eligibility end date can change.)

Both the parent and Provider are notified of child care funding terminations that may occur. All families are recertified by mail.

It is extremely important that families notify ELC of any changes within 10 (ten) days of the change. Providers can also report family changes to ELC (loss of job, school, move, etc.), however, parents will still be required to provide documentation regarding those changes. Unreported changes will result in a loss of child care funding and/or recovery of funds.

Parents that are terminated with outstanding dollar amounts owed (parent fees for the last 30 days or restitution) will not be re-instated until all funds are re-paid to the Coalition or provider.

Parents terminated due to intentional misrepresentation or fraud may be subjected to:

**Referral to a state fraud investigation unit and possible prosecution or permanently terminated from Coalition scholarship dollars.**

## **Transfers**

Once fees have been verified through the transfer request form or current verifiable receipts a Certificate of Eligibility will be issued to the parent either in person at an ELC office or sent to them via mail. They can only begin attending with a new provider once they have this form available to give to their new provider. Any attendance with a new provider prior to this form being issued will not be reimbursed. Providers should not refuse to verify fees for any reason and only the last 30 days of parent fees are required to be paid for transfer to be approved.

## **Parent Fees**

All parents/caregivers are assessed fees. In rare instances, a parent may have their fee waived for a temporary period. The ELC does not get involved in fees the Provider charges above and beyond the parent fee. (For example, registration fees or field trip fees). The ELC will not hold a parent responsible for more than 30 days of past due parent fees. Providers are encouraged to issue receipts to parents clearly indicating the amount of parent fees paid and the amount of other fees paid separately with care dates noted. *Best practice is to collect your parent fees on Friday for the upcoming week.* Additionally, any payment plans or arrangements you make with a parent that are different than what is assessed should be in writing and signed by both parties.

## **At Risk Children (Rilya Wilson Act)**

Providers who care for children funded under the Rilya Wilson Act must notify the Eckerd Youth Alternatives RWA Hotline at 727-456-0600 (option 6) of all absences, excused or unexcused. These children are indicated with billing group 1 (BG1) on paperwork and attendance sheets. A Rilya Wilson child is a child receiving services due to an abuse and neglect referral. Reporting at risk absences on a DAILY basis is extremely important for the safety of these children.

## **Terms and Conditions**

All parents are required to get a new Certificate of Eligibility in order to transfer providers. Do not accept a new child into care without the certificate or you will not be reimbursed for those days prior to the certificate being obtained.

## **Sign In/Out**

All parents/caregivers (or anyone approved to drop off/pick up) MUST sign their child/ren in and out each day. They must sign using their full name as well as the exact time they are dropping off or picking up the child/ren. Failure to sign in and out could result in an adjustment to payments made to you for child care provided. You have the right to bill the parent for any days not covered by the ELC due to not signing their child in and/or out. However, the Coalition cannot hold the parent/caregiver responsible to pay these days – only if you have an agreement in place prior to billing their parent fee.



# CCR&R (Child Care Resource & Referral)

## Program Overview

The Early Learning Coalition maintains a database of all Pinellas County childcare providers. For parents looking for child care in Pinellas County, The Early Learning Coalition offers free, unbiased, personalized information on child care programs and providers in the area. Families who contact us for provider information are given child care referrals customized to the criteria they submit. Services include:

- A customized search for child care based on criteria selected such as location, schedule, curriculum, environment, special needs, and more
- Information on rates, fees, hours, and credentials of providers
- Information regarding financial assistance for child care programs
- Educational materials and support for parents with questions on early childhood development
- Tips on identifying quality child care
- Referrals to other community resources such as clothing, food, counseling, etc.

Customized child care search results are requested through our online form, by calling us, or by visiting our office. Face-to-face consultation is available, but not required for this service. To see the criteria from which families select, please view our [Child Care Referral Request](#) form online.

Families are educated on identifying quality within a program and encouraged to screen providers by phone, drop in unannounced, and research licensing reports. Once families receive the referrals, it is up to them to make this important personal decision. They are encouraged to monitor for quality even after their child has been placed in a program.

The information we circulate to families comes directly from information that providers report to us. Therefore it is essential that providers notify us when there are changes to their programs.

## Update Your Provider Information with Us

The provider information in our resource and referral database is solely self-reported. This means that the information we make available to families is only as good as the information you give us.

We are required to update your entire profile once annually; however, changes can occur within a program at any time. It is extremely important that the information given is accurate so that it can reflect what your program has to offer the families in Pinellas County. This is very important for the families that are searching for

childcare options in the community. CCR&R strives to inform the community of its services as well as inform parents of available resources.

Providers have the right to request that their name not be referred to families searching for childcare in Pinellas County. Family Child Care Home Providers may also indicate they do not wish to have their address print out on the child care listings. Providers may contact the CCR&R department at any time to find out how many referrals have been given to families for their program within a given time period. Note: Provider marketing of any kind at our office, inside or outside, is prohibited.

We request current copies of the following items:

### **Annual Provider Update Form**

This update form is requested of all providers, with the exception of Informal/FFN providers, on an annual basis by OEL. Careful consideration should be given to the responses on this form as this is what is used to create provider profiles in the database. Please review it thoroughly and ensure we receive notification if there are changes in:

- Hours/Schedule
- Rates
- Fees
- Location
- Phone/Fax Number
- Contact Email Address
- Staff Credentials
- Transportation services

**A copy of your license/registration/exemption letter** - each time it is renewed or changed

**Copies of any accreditation certificates** (if applicable) - each time it is renewed or changed

**Gold Seal certificate** (if applicable) - each time it is renewed or changed

### **To Submit Provider Information Changes**

CALL	Resource and Referral Department	727-400-4419
FAX	Attn: CCR&R Provider Updates	727 400-4485
MAIL	Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas County Attn: CCR&R Provider Updates P.O. Box 17329 Clearwater, FL 33762	

# RESOURCES

Additional Websites

[http://elcpinellas.net/provider-sr\\_additional-resources.php](http://elcpinellas.net/provider-sr_additional-resources.php)

Commonly Used Acronyms

<http://elcpinellas.net/downloads/sr/Commonly%20Used%20Acronyms.pdf>

ELC [Policies](#)

ELC Provider [Forms](#)

FAQ's (Frequently Asked Questions)

<http://elcpinellas.net/downloads/sr/FAQ.pdf>

Where Do I Send?

<http://elcpinellas.net/downloads/sr/Where%20Do%20I%20Send.pdf>

Who Do I Contact?

<http://elcpinellas.net/downloads/sr/SR%20Who%20Do%20I%20Contact.pdf>

