



*Child Care Resource and Referral*



## REFERENCE GUIDE



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# SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION TO CHILD CARE RESOURCES AND REFERRAL

## Welcome to Florida’s Child Care Resource and Referral Network

Florida’s Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) network office hopes you will find your position as a CCR&R specialist or coordinator rewarding. CCR&R staff provide a valuable service to families. You can make a difference in the lives of Florida’s families when you assist with finding early learning options and community resources that best meet their needs. As a CCR&R specialist or coordinator, you are an educator for all early learning options including the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program, child care centers, family child care homes, school readiness funded programs, faith-based programs, after-school programs, nanny/in-home care and more. You must be familiar with other resources available in your community for families, such as early intervention services for children with special needs or shelters that assist families who are experiencing homelessness. You must be well informed, have the ability to communicate information effectively and provide answers to questions that families may not realize they have.

In addition to being an educator and communicator, you must also be able to use and collect data. The information you receive from families and the information you collect and maintain on early care and education providers in your service area comprise the CCR&R database. This data provides critical information for Florida’s Office of Early Learning (OEL), early learning coalitions, local, state and federal planners and policy makers who must know the public’s early care and education needs and resources available to meet those needs.

Florida is a recognized leader in the CCR&R field. The training, evaluation and certification process provided by the state CCR&R network is unique and offers opportunities for continued professional growth. Upon completion of training, new CCR&R specialists and coordinators participate in an evaluation process that leads to CCR&R certification. This certification is evidence of your ability to provide essential services to Florida’s families.

This reference guide will serve as a helpful tool as you learn about your new role in the CCR&R network and will serve as an ongoing resource after you receive certification. Florida’s CCR&R network office hopes that you find the reference guide to be a valuable and helpful resource.

OEL is proud of the CCR&R network and knows it takes each of us, working together, to assist Florida’s families and providers. Visit the [OEL website](#) regularly for current information, activities and resources.

### CCR&R OVERVIEW

CCR&R serves as the “front door” to all services offered by a coalition or the coalition’s contracted service provider. In accordance with state and federal regulations, early learning coalitions and/or their contracted service provider must help all individuals requesting assistance with locating child care and provide them with information, consumer education and community resources that will help them make informed decisions regarding child care.

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## CCR&R Roles and Responsibilities

### CCR&R STATE NETWORK

Florida’s CCR&R network office is located in Tallahassee within OEL. It is the responsibility of the network to ensure that families in every community have knowledge of and access to high-quality and affordable child care. The network office provides national and statewide information and resources to coalitions, families, child care professionals, government entities and other individuals on quality early learning and child care, including the VPK and School Readiness programs. CCR&R network staff offer the following services and activities to early learning coalitions and CCR&R service providers:

- Statewide, regional and webinar training opportunities for coalitions and CCR&R staff.
- Technical assistance through telephone consultations, email, conference calls, Florida’s CCR&R network website, mail outs and onsite visits.
- Development of consumer education information and materials.
- Identification of best practices in CCR&R.
- Technical assistance for employer-sponsored and military CCR&R services.
- Report design, data collection and analysis.
- Facilitation of state and national collaborative efforts in early learning and child care services.
- Quality assurance reviews of local CCR&R services.

Coalitions are encouraged to visit the [OEL website](#) regularly for current information, activities and resources.

### EARLY LEARNING COALITIONS

OEL’s agreement with 30 early learning coalitions across the state of Florida provides CCR&R services directly or through a contracted service provider. This network of early learning coalitions and CCR&R contractors maintains a comprehensive database on the availability, quality and affordability of early learning and child care in Florida.

Each coalition handles the administration of CCR&R services in their respective service area and must ensure all requirements outlined in the CCR&R Grant Agreement are met. The local coalition or its CCR&R designee serves as the community’s early learning and child care expert.

Coalitions or their contracted CCR&R providers offer services including, but not limited to

- Maintaining a comprehensive database of all legally operating early learning and child care providers.
- Maintaining a comprehensive database of all requests for child care listings and requests for other community resources and consumer education.
- Helping child care providers with startup information and information on training and technical assistance.
- Maintaining a listing of community resources to assist families and providers.
- Offering consumer education to help families search for quality child care settings that best meet their needs.

Trained CCR&R staff provide parents and providers with information, materials and related assistance on

- Early learning and child care options.
- Community resources.

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- Consumer education.
- How to recognize characteristics and selection of a quality program.
- How to select and enroll in a VPK program.
- Accessing school readiness programs and other financial assistance options.
- Information on child health care, child welfare and services for children with special needs.

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## CCR&R Authority, Rules and Regulations

### FEDERAL LAW

Child Care Development Block Grant Reauthorization of 2014  
CCDF State Plan 2.2.3

### STATE STATUTES

#### **1002.84(3) Early learning coalitions; school readiness powers and duties.–**

Each early learning coalition shall:

(3) Establish a resource and referral network operating under s. 1002.92 to assist parents in making an informed choice and provide maximum parental choice of providers and to provide information on available community resources.

#### **1002.92 Child care and early childhood resource and referral.–**

(1) As a part of the school readiness program, the office shall establish a statewide child care resource and referral network that is unbiased and provides referrals to families for child care and information on available community resources. Preference shall be given to using early learning coalitions as the child care resource and referral agencies. If an early learning coalition cannot comply with the requirements to offer the resource information component or does not want to offer that service, the early learning coalition shall select the resource and referral agency for its county or multicounty region based upon the procurement requirements of s. 1002.84(12).

(2) At least one child care resource and referral agency must be established in each early learning coalition's county or multicounty region. The office shall adopt rules regarding accessibility of child care resource and referral services offered through child care resource and referral agencies in each county or multicounty region which include, at a minimum, required hours of operation, methods by which parents may request services, and child care resource and referral staff training requirements.

(3) Child care resource and referral agencies shall provide the following services:

(a) Identification of existing public and private child care and early childhood education services, including child care services by public and private employers, and the development of a resource file of those services through the single statewide information system developed by the office under s. 1002.82(2)(n). These services may include family day care, public and private child care programs, the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program, Head Start, the school readiness program, special education programs for prekindergarten children with disabilities, services for children with developmental disabilities, full-time and part-time programs, before-school and after-school programs, vacation care programs, parent education, the temporary cash assistance program, and related family support services. The resource file shall include, but not be limited to:

1. Type of program.
2. Hours of service.
3. Ages of children served.
4. Number of children served.
5. Program information.
6. Fees and eligibility for services.
7. Availability of transportation.

(b) Establishment of a referral process that responds to parental need for information and that is provided with full recognition of the confidentiality rights of parents. The resource and referral network shall make

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referrals to legally operating child care facilities. Referrals may not be made to a child care facility that is operating illegally.

(c) Maintenance of ongoing documentation of requests for service tabulated through the internal referral process through the single statewide information system. The following documentation of requests for service shall be maintained by the child care resource and referral network:

1. Number of calls and contacts to the child care resource information and referral network component by type of service requested.

2. Ages of children for whom service was requested.

3. Time category of child care requests for each child.

4. Special time category, such as nights, weekends, and swing shift.

5. Reason that the child care is needed.

6. Name of the employer and primary focus of the business for an employer-based child care program.

(d) Provision of technical assistance to existing and potential providers of child care services. This assistance may include:

1. Information on initiating new child care services, zoning, and program and budget development and assistance in finding such information from other sources.

2. Information and resources which help existing child care services providers to maximize their ability to serve children and parents in their community.

3. Information and incentives that may help existing or planned child care services offered by public or private employers seeking to maximize their ability to serve the children of their working parent employees in their community, through contractual or other funding arrangements with businesses.

(e) Assistance to families and employers in applying for various sources of subsidy, including, but not limited to, the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program, the school readiness program, Head Start, Project Independence, private scholarships, and the federal child and dependent care tax credit.

(f) Assistance to families to negotiate discounts or other special arrangements with child care providers.

(g) Assistance to families in identifying summer recreation camp and summer day camp programs to help families make informed choices. Contingent upon specific appropriation, a checklist of important health and safety qualities that parents can use to choose their summer camp programs shall be developed and distributed in a manner that will reach parents interested in such programs for their children.

(h) Assistance to families for accessing local community resources.

(4) A child care facility licensed under s. 402.305 and licensed and registered family day care homes must provide the statewide child care and resource and referral network with the following information annually:

(a) Type of program.

(b) Hours of service.

(c) Ages of children served.

(d) Fees and eligibility for services.

*History.—s. 17, ch. 2013-252.*

## AGENCY RULE

### **6M-9.300 Child Care Resource and Referral and Consumer Education.**

(1) The Office of Early Learning, Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) state network, shall ensure delivery of CCR&R services as defined in the Child Care Development Block Grant of 2014, Title 45 Part 98 Code of Federal Regulations, and section 1002.92, Florida Statutes (F.S.).

(2) Definitions.

(a) “Business hours” refers to the hours during which a CCR&R organization has staff available to provide services to customers via telephone, through email or in person.

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(b) “Child care listing” refers to the customized list of child care providers that best meet a family’s needs generated from the single statewide information system.

(c) “CCR&R organization” refers to any early learning coalition or other contracted entity providing CCR&R services to customers pursuant to section 1002.92, F.S.

(d) “Community resources” refers to financial assistance programs that a family may be eligible for, including School Readiness, Voluntary Prekindergarten, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children (WIC), Head Start and Early Head Start, as well as any organization or service that a family may qualify for that will support the family’s financial independence, assist with developmental concerns and help fill an unmet need.

(e) “Community outreach” refers to activities in the CCR&R service area that increase awareness of CCR&R services, this can include involvement in community events, establishing community partnerships, displaying program materials in public spaces, and marketing activities.

(f) “Consumer education” refers to information and resources that assist an individual or family in making informed decisions regarding quality child care.

(g) “Differential fee” refers to a child care fee charged by a provider to a parent who participates in the School Readiness Program or any other subsidized child care assistance program that is in addition to the parent copayment set by the early learning coalition.

(h) “Family engagement” refers to the systematic inclusion of families as partners in their child’s development, learning and wellness, enabled by positive relationships between families and staff in coalitions and early learning programs.

(i) “Legally operating provider” refers to any child care, early learning or school-age provider that is either licensed, registered, or has a qualifying exemption from licensure from the Florida Department of Children and Families, including before-school and after-school programs, summer recreation and summer day camp programs, and recreational facilities.

(j) “Quality child care” refers to child care programs that maintain a degree of excellence, going above and beyond minimum standards for health and safety and training, and maintain a high level of positive teacher-child interactions, promoting the health and well-being of all children physically, socially, emotionally and developmentally.

(k) “Registration fee” refers to a fee charged by a provider to a parent for enrollment of a child into a child care program.

(l) “Service area” refers to the county or multicounty region served by the CCR&R organization.

(m) “Standard business hours” refers to operating hours between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

(n) “Single statewide information system” refers to the statewide early learning data system used to capture and provide critical information to early learning coalitions, parents, partners and providers.

(3) Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Services.

CCR&R services shall be locally administered, coordinated, and overseen by early learning coalitions in accordance with section 1002.92, F.S. Early learning coalitions or their contracted CCR&R organizations shall:

(a) Offer CCR&R services including child care listings, consumer education, and information regarding community resources, as identified in paragraph (7), below, to each family applying for or requesting CCR&R, School Readiness or Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program services, without regard to age, level of income or individual circumstances.

(b) Provide CCR&R services without cost to the family applying for or requesting services within two (2) business days of the request.

(c) Attempt to contact and respond to families requesting services in an emergency situation within four (4) business hours of becoming aware of the request. Emergency situations may include:

1. Closure of a child care or early learning provider with less than forty-eight (48) hours of notice;
2. Declaration of a state of emergency by local, state, or federal officials that affects families and providers

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within the CCR&R organization's service area; and,

3. Family emergencies including the death or hospitalization of a parent or guardian, a change in custody of a child with less than forty-eight (48) hours of notice, or a change in employment or employment status with less than forty-eight (48) hours of notice.

(d) Notwithstanding paragraphs (3)(b) and (c) of this rule, the CCR&R organization is not required to provide services in emergency situations if the CCR&R organization is unable to operate as a result of a state of emergency as declared by local, state, or federal officials.

(4) Accessibility of Information and Services.

(a) Each CCR&R organization shall provide the Office of Early Learning with an annual accessibility report no later than the last business day in August, identifying how CCR&R services are made accessible to families within its service area, including families who have limited access to telephone services, internet services, or transportation. The report shall also outline the CCR&R organization's plan for family engagement and community outreach. The CCR&R organization shall coordinate with other community entities in order to expand the accessibility of services.

(b) Each CCR&R organization shall maintain a website and at least one other form of outreach and awareness within its service area that describes the services offered. The home page of the website for the early learning coalition and the contracted CCR&R organization, if applicable, shall clearly display CCR&R and family services contact information, as well as provider services contact information, including phone numbers, hours of operation and a brief description of services available for families and providers.

(5) Location and Hours of Service.

(a) At least one physical location for CCR&R services shall be available in each CCR&R organization's service area.

(b) Each CCR&R organization shall have staff members available to provide CCR&R services via telephone, email and in person for a minimum of forty (40) hours each week during the organization's set business hours.

(c) If the CCR&R organization is closed at any time during standard business hours, the CCR&R organization shall provide a message on their family services line with its hours of operation and contact information for an alternative organization that can assist families during emergency situations, such as those outlined in paragraph (3)(d), above.

(d) CCR&R organizations shall be permitted to reduce the number of weekly hours of in-person and telephone availability by a maximum of eight (8) hours for each local, state, or federal holiday and each business day during which a local, state, or federal emergency is declared that makes the CCR&R organization unable to operate.

(6) Customized Child Care Listings.

(a) CCR&R services, including listings, may be offered in person, via telephone or using other electronic means.

(b) Child care listings shall be generated using the single statewide information system maintained by the Office of Early Learning.

(c) CCR&R organizations shall provide or send each family requesting services a list of legally operating child care providers in their service area within two (2) business days and in the format requested by the family. Each list shall be customized according to information provided by the family requesting services, or at a minimum, by entering the following information:

1. Location;
2. Days/time care is needed;
3. Child's date of birth;
4. Type of early learning program or provider, if requested;
5. Child's special need, if applicable;
6. Family's primary language, if not English;
7. Reason for care; and

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8. Other services offered by providers, as requested by the family.

(d) Child care listings shall include a minimum of six (6) providers matching the criteria identified by the family requesting services unless fewer than six (6) providers match the criteria. Listings shall also include contact information for the CCR&R organization if additional listings or resources are needed by the family.

(e) The following consumer education information shall be included with each customized provider listing:

1. How to access each provider's licensing status, required health and safety standards, recent inspection reports and history of violations, as applicable.

2. How to access information regarding voluntary quality standards met by the provider, such as accreditation, Gold Seal, program assessment, child assessment, or participation in local quality initiatives.

3. Information on how to submit a complaint through the child care licensing agency.

4. Contact information for the state and local child care provider licensing agencies.

(f) Additional consumer education and community resources, as identified in subsection (7), shall be included with each customized listing, unless declined by the family.

(7) Consumer Education and Community Resources.

(a) CCR&R organizations shall offer information regarding and access to consumer education and community resources to all families applying for or requesting CCR&R services, unless declined by the family.

(b) Consumer education shall include:

1. Information and resources that enable parents to recognize quality indicators and to make informed choices on quality child care;

2. Information on the full range of child care provider types available, whether licensed or license-exempt, such as family child care homes, centers, before or after school programs, public or nonpublic schools, faith-based, and recreational facilities;

3. Child care licensing and inspection requirements for each type of provider;

4. Health and safety requirements, including background screening and disqualifying offenses;

5. Research and best practices regarding children's social-emotional, physical and cognitive development, developmentally appropriate practices and meaningful parent and family engagement;

6. State policies regarding the social emotional behavioral health of children; and

7. Information on where parents can receive a developmental screening for their child(ren).

(c) Each CCR&R organization shall maintain a current directory or access to community resources, which shall include:

1. Community services for each county within the CCR&R organization's service area;

2. Federal and state financial assistance programs;

3. Federal, state and local partners, including state agencies and social services organizations;

4. Child healthcare;

5. Child welfare and abuse;

6. Services for children with special needs or developmental disabilities, such as developmental screenings or assessments;

7. Resources provided by the Office of Early Learning or identified through collaboration with other entities; and

8. Other resources as needed and appropriate to the specific needs of the individual family.

(8) Provider Updates.

(a) Each CCR&R organization shall ensure that provider information for each legally operating child care, early learning or school-age provider, and each provider receiving state or federal funds within the CCR&R organization's service area, is updated and approved between January 1 and May 31 of each calendar year in the single statewide information system maintained by the Office of Early Learning.

(b) Provider information for providers with an active contract to provide School Readiness services or the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education program must be updated prior to contract renewal.

(c) At a minimum, the CCR&R organization shall ensure that the following information is updated for each provider:

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1. Contact information;
2. Gold Seal or accreditation status;
3. Quality rating, if available;
4. Program schedule;
5. Ages served;
6. Group sizes and ratios;
7. Enrollment information;
8. Private pay rates charged;
9. Registration fees charged, if applicable;
10. Differential fees charged, if applicable;
11. Environment;
12. Special services offered;
13. Languages other than English spoken fluently by the provider's staff;
14. Transportation; and,
15. Meal options.

(d) Notwithstanding paragraphs (8)(a) and (8)(b), above, the CCR&R organization shall ensure provider information updated outside of the provider update time period is approved within fifteen (15) calendar days of being submitted by the provider into the statewide information system.

(e) Legally operating providers shall be included in the provider update process upon request by the provider.

## (9) Technical Assistance.

(a) The CCR&R organization shall provide technical assistance to existing and potential providers, as requested. Technical assistance may include information and resources regarding:

1. Early learning program types and available services;
2. Health and safety requirements;
3. Available training and professional development opportunities;
4. Effective business practices to help providers maximize their ability to serve children and families; and
5. Initiating new child care services, including how to access information regarding zoning and local child care ordinances, program and budget development, becoming a licensed provider, and other resources as needed and appropriate to assist the provider.

## (10) Staff Training Requirements.

(a) The CCR&R organization shall ensure all CCR&R staff, including staff in blended positions who provide CCR&R services, are trained in customer service, consumer education, community resources, financial assistance programs for families, and available types of child care and early learning providers and programs, specific to their service area, and have successfully completed the CCR&R specialist evaluation within four (4) months of employment as a CCR&R specialist.

(b) Each CCR&R organization must have a designated CCR&R coordinator. The designated CCR&R coordinator must successfully complete the CCR&R specialist and coordinator evaluations within four (4) months of employment as the CCR&R designated coordinator.

(11) Early learning coalitions and CCR&R organizations are prohibited from charging a provider or other organization a fee for identifying the provider or other organization through the single statewide information system.

*Rulemaking Authority 1002.92 FS. Law Implemented 1002.92 FS. History—New 8-10-09, Formerly 60BB-9.300, Amended 9-1-15, 10-21-18.*

## CCR&R GRANT AGREEMENT

### State of Florida, Office of Early Learning Grant Agreement

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## Section 4 – Child Care Resource and Referral Network (pg. 33-35)

- 4.1. The ELC shall establish and maintain at least one CCR&R office in the ELC's county or multicounty region to provide information and access to child care, community resources and consumer information without showing preference or bias for or against any type of or individual child care provider. It shall assist parents on how to identify quality programs and in making informed choices. Additionally, the ELC shall provide training and technical assistance to current and potential child care providers and employers seeking to expand their employees' child care opportunities. CCR&R services shall comply with program requirements established by the state network office.
- 4.2. The ELC shall provide CCR&R office location(s) and hours of operation in Exhibit V. ELC CCR&R Office Locations and services shall comply with Rule 6M-9.300, F.A.C.
- 4.3. The ELC's CCR&R data shall identify all legally operating childcare and early childhood education service providers within its service area. These shall, if appropriate, include public and private employer child care, family child care home, large family child care home, public and private child care, VPK Education programs, SR services, special education programs for children with disabilities, full-time and part-time programs, and before- and after-school programs. The ELC shall also develop and maintain a directory of community resources that at minimum contains parent education programs, financial assistance programs including the temporary cash assistance program, and related community and social services resources. The directory may be maintained in a format that best meets the coalition's needs. The ELC shall develop and maintain a resource file of these programs and services through the SSIS. Resource file data elements shall include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - 4.3.1. Type of program.
  - 4.3.2. Hours of service.
  - 4.3.3. Ages of children served.
  - 4.3.4. Number of children served.
  - 4.3.5. Program information.
  - 4.3.6. Fees and eligibility for services.
  - 4.3.7. Availability of transportation.
- 4.4. The ELC shall, at minimum, annually certify that provider information housed in the SISS is updated and accurate. The request for updated information begins June 1. By the last business day in May, the ELC shall verify the provider profile information of all legally operating providers in its service area is up-to-date in the SSIS.
- 4.5. The ELC shall submit data, reports and staff evaluations for administering the CCR&R Program as OEL requires. The data and reports will conform to the timeline, content, and format OEL specifies.
- 4.6. The ELC shall designate an OEL-certified CCR&R coordinator to serve as the point of contact for the state CCR&R network. In accordance with OEL Program Guidance 600.0 – Child Care Resource and Referral Programs, the designated coordinator must be certified through successful completion of the CCR&R Coordinator Evaluation within four months of being designated or employed as the coordinator.
- 4.7. The ELC-designated coordinator or other CCR&R staff shall participate in OEL CCR&R conference calls and webinar trainings as scheduled. If the ELC-designated coordinator or other CCR&R staff cannot participate in a conference call or training, an ELC representative must review minutes from the conference call or training, as applicable. As ELC funds allow, designated CCR&R staff shall also attend OEL regional or statewide trainings.
- 4.8. The ELC shall offer all contracted child care providers and potential providers training and technical assistance. Technical assistance shall include, but not be limited to, information on

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initiating new child care services, information to maximize the provider's ability to serve children, financial assistance programs, zoning, program requirements and budget development.

- 4.9. The ELC shall offer training and technical assistance to employers to improve their community child care resources, consumer education knowledge, and their ability to support working families.
- 4.10. The ELC shall provide families and employers information and guidance on subsidy programs and other financial assistance including, but not limited to, the VPK Education Program, the SR Program, Head Start Programs, private funding programs, the federal child care and dependent care tax credit, and other statewide or local community resources.
- 4.11. The ELC will assist families with identifying local community resources, accessing consumer education, identifying summer camp programs and identifying creative child care options or other special arrangements with providers.
- 4.12. The ELC shall follow the OEL-established CCR&R process, as outlined in Rule 6M-9.300, F.A.C. and the CCR&R Reference Guide, for generating child care listings and providing consumer education and community resources to individuals requesting services. The ELC shall maintain documentation of requests for services and responses to requests for services. These include phone records, office visit sign-in logs, completed surveys and applications, referral documents, and accurately-completed personnel activity reports. The ELC shall compile CCR&R services requests data in the SSIS. Information recorded in the SSIS for CCR&R customer data shall include:
  - 4.12.1. The number of calls and contacts to the CCR&R by type of service requested.
  - 4.12.2. Age of children for whom services are requested.
  - 4.12.3. Location, day and time categories for needed child care services.
  - 4.12.4. Special time categories such as nights, weekends and swing shifts.
  - 4.12.5. Type of program requested such as child care center, family child care home, or after-school program.
- 4.13. The ELC shall provide, to all individuals requesting services and who do not decline, child care provider listings and consumer information within three (3) business days of the request date, and in the format requested by the individual. The consumer information shall consist of consumer education, community resources and other materials outlined in Rule 6M-9.300, (6) and (7), F.A.C.
- 4.14. Prior to the last business day in August, the ELC shall annually submit an accessibility report, pursuant to Rule 6M-9.300(4), identifying how CCR&R services are made available to all individuals within its service area, including individuals who have limited access to telephone services, internet services, or transportation. The report shall be submitted in the format designated annually by the Office.

## SECTION 2 – INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD CARE

### Child Care Regulation and Licensing Authority

[Florida's laws and requirements](#) that govern the operation of child care facilities and homes are found in [sections 402.26-402.319](#), Florida Statutes (F.S.) and [Chapters 65C-20, 65C-22 and 65C-25](#), Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.).

The [Office of Child Care Regulation and Background Screening](#) of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) is statutorily responsible for the statewide administration of the child care licensing program in 62 of 67 counties in Florida.

The following counties in Florida have elected to designate a local licensing agency to regulate child care licensing:

- **Broward:** [Broward County Child Care Licensing and Enforcement](#)
- **Hillsborough:** [Hillsborough County Child Care Licensing Program](#)
- **Palm Beach:** [Department of Health, Palm Beach County Child Care Licensing Program](#)
- **Pinellas:** [Department of Health, Pinellas County Child Care Licensing Program](#)
- **Sarasota:** [Department of Health, Sarasota County Group Care Services](#)

### CHILD CARE PROVIDER ONLINE COMPLAINT FORM

The [DCF Child Care Provider Online Complaint Form](#) can be used to submit health and safety complaint allegations such as

- Staff-to-child ratio.
- Inadequate supervision.
- Training requirements.
- Background screening.
- Nutrition and food safety.
- Record keeping.
- Physical environment.
- Transportation.
- Illegal child care operations.
- Accident/incident reporting.

*Note: Do not use this form to report any abuse, neglect or exploitation of any child or vulnerable adult. Florida law requires anyone with information to report abuse directly to the [Florida Abuse Hotline](#). See Section 3 for more information about the Florida Abuse Hotline.*

## SECTION 2 – INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD CARE

### TYPES OF EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

#### FAMILY DAY CARE HOMES (LICENSED OR REGISTERED)

Family day care takes place in a person's home for children from unrelated families. Group size may vary according to family day care provider preferences. Ages of children may often be mixed, although some providers serve only a particular age group, such as infants, toddlers or preschoolers. Different requirements apply to different programs, as some family day care homes are licensed and others are registered.

#### Registered Family Day Care Homes

A registered family day care home provider is required to meet minimal statutory requirements ([Section 402.313, F.S.](#)), such as

- Registering annually with DCF.
- Completing and providing an annual health and safety home inspection checklist to parents or guardians.
- Name an adult to provide substitute care in the event of an emergency.
- Providing proof of background screening clearance for all adults and juveniles (age 12-17 years of age) in the household.
- Completing 30 hours of introductory training.
- Completing additional in-service hours of training annually.
- Completing specific training in early literacy and language development.

#### Licensed Family Day Care Homes

A licensed family day care home is regulated by DCF and must meet all requirements for licensure pursuant to [Chapter 65C-20, F.A.C.](#) Licensing standards include:

- Following health, safety and nutrition guidelines.
- Maintaining enrollment and attendance records.
- Complying with licensing standards of local and state governments.
- Maintaining current pediatric CPR and First Aid certifications.
- Passing an inspection prior to receiving a child care operating license.
- Complying with one routine inspections and one renewal licensing inspection annually.
- Making reasonable accommodations for children with special needs.
- Complying with capacity requirements at all times.

#### Large Family Day Care Homes

Large family day care homes must first have operated as a licensed family day care home for 2 years with an operator who has had a child development associate (CDA) credential or its equivalent for 1 year before seeking licensure as a large family child care home and an employee. A large family day care home can provide care for one of the following groups of children, which includes household children under 13 years of age:

- A maximum of 8 children from birth to 24 months of age.
- A maximum of 12 children, with no more than 4 children under 24 months of age.

#### Adult-to-Child Ratios for Family Day Care Homes

A family day care home provider may care for one of the following groups of children, including the provider's own children younger than 13 years of age:

- Birth to 12 months of age. (1:4)
- No more than three children under 12 months of age. (1:6)
- A maximum of six pre-school age children, if all are over the age of 12 months.

## SECTION 2 – INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD CARE

- As long as at least five children are school age and no more than two are under 12 months of age. (1:10)

*Note: Some counties may have more restrictive requirements than those required by the state.*

### LICENSED OR LICENSE-EXEMPT CHILD CARE FACILITIES (EARLY LEARNING CENTERS)

Child care facilities/early learning centers may require a license to operate or operate under an exemption from licensure. Some types of facilities/centers available include stand-alone centers, operations located in businesses, apartment complexes, universities, public and non-public schools, hospitals or faith-based settings.

#### Licensed Child Care Facility

A licensed facility must pass an initial inspection to ensure all licensing standards are met as required by statute and rule ([Section 402, F.S.](#) and Chapter [65C-22 F.A.C.](#)). A licensed facility is inspected by the DCF for health and safety standards. Standards for a child care facility include, but are not limited to:

- Meeting physical facility requirements.
- Following health, safety and nutrition guidelines.
- Maintaining enrollment and attendance records.
- Allowing parents/guardians access to their children at all times.
- Complying with annual inspection schedules.
- Meeting staff and director training requirements.
- Conducting screening and background checks of all employees/teachers/substitutes and any volunteer that volunteers more than 10 hours a month or is left unsupervised with child in care.
- Documenting current immunization records and physical examinations for all children in care.
- Making reasonable accommodations for children with special needs.

#### Religious-Exempt Child Care Facilities

Religious child care facilities are exempt from child care licensing. These centers must be an integral part of and operated by a church or parochial school and must

- Be accredited by, or a member of, an organization that requires compliance with health and safety standards.
- Comply with state and federal background screening requirements.
- Meet local governing requirements for city or county health and safety regulations.

#### Adult-to-Child Ratios for Licensed Facilities

Ratios represent the number of children that one adult may supervise for each age group.

- Birth to 12 months. (1:4)
- 12 to 24 months. (1:6)
- 2-year-old children. (1:11)
- 3-year-old children. (1:15)
- 4- year-old children. (1:20)
- 5 years of age or older. (1:25)

*Note: Some counties may have more restrictive requirements than those required by the state.*

### SCHOOL-AGE CARE (LICENSED OR LICENSE-EXEMPT)

School-age children are at least 5 years old by Sept. 1 of that school year and are attending kindergarten through fifth grade. A school-age program is a licensed or license-exempt program that serves only school-

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age children. The setting for a school-age program may be a public or private school, private center, family child care home, faith-based facility or community/recreation program. School-age programs may be open before and after school including full days during teacher planning days, spring, winter and summer breaks.

### Licensed School-Age Child Care Facilities

A licensed facility must pass inspections to ensure all standards required by statute and rule ([Section 402, F.S.](#) and [65C-22.008, F.A.C.](#)) are met, including but not limited to:

- Meeting physical facility requirements.
- Following health, safety and nutrition guidelines.
- Maintaining enrollment and attendance records.
- Allowing parents access to their children in care at all times.
- Complying with annual inspection schedules.
- Receiving 45 hours of training initially, in addition to a minimum of 10 hours annual in service after completion.
- Submitting screening and background checks of all employees/caregivers/substitutes and volunteers that volunteer more than 10 hours a month or if left unsupervised with children.
- Complying with a ratio of one (1) adult for every twenty-five (25) children.
- Having a director who holds a Director Credential. Supervision by a director for multi-site school-age child care facilities is permitted under certain conditions.

### License-Exempt School-Age Child Care Facilities

A school-age child care program is not required to be licensed as long as the program complies with the minimum background screening requirements. The following types of programs may be exempt from school-age care licensure if they meet criteria specific to the type of program:

- Programs at public and non-public school sites operated and staffed directly by the school.
- Instruction or tutorial programs that have a single instructional purpose.
- Open access programs that do not assume responsibility for the supervision of children.
- Membership organizations operated by, or in affiliation with a national membership organization that certifies membership organizations.
- Programs for children sixth grade and above only

*Note: For an exemption determination, each program must obtain a letter from DCF prior to operating under one the above listed exemptions. License exempt child care facilities are not routinely inspected unless a complaint is received by licensing.*

### UNREGULATED CARE

Unregulated child care does not require licensure or compliance inspections by the state. Types of unregulated care include

- **Informal care:** Informal care takes place in a person's home where one adult cares for children from only one family. The person is often a relative, neighbor or friend. This type of care has no state guidelines or inspections. Informal providers may qualify to participate in the School Readiness Program after completing a six-hour health and safety course and by meeting early learning coalition requirements.
- **Au Pair/Nanny Care:** Au pairs provide families with intercultural, individualized, live-in child care. Most au pairs are members of one of 14 federally designated U.S. Au Pair Sponsor Agencies, which are regulated by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Exchange Visitor Program. Nannies may also be hired by families locally to care for the children of one family and may live in or out of the family's home.

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- **Summer Day Camp:** Recreational, educational and other enrichment programs operated during summer vacations for school-age children.
- **Summer 24-Hour Camp:** Recreational, educational and other enrichment programs operated on a 24-hour basis during summer vacation for school-age children that are not exclusively educational.
- **School Day Operation:**
  - Public school programs for children under 3 years of age who are eligible for participation in the programs under the existing or successor provisions of [P.L. No. 94-142](#) or Pub. L. No. 99-457, provided the programs are operated and staffed directly by the schools and provided the programs meet age-appropriate standards as adopted by the State Board of Education.
  - Non-public school programs for children who are at least 3 years of age, but under 5 years of age, shall not be deemed to be child provided the programs in the schools are operated and staffed directly by the schools, provided a majority of the children enrolled in the schools are 5 years of age or older, and provided there is compliance with the screening requirements for personnel pursuant to [Section 402.305 F.S.](#)

*Note: Some counties may have more restrictive requirements than those required by the state.*

### DCF PROVIDER SEARCH

The DCF website maintains a [child care provider search feature](#) that houses information on child care arrangements in Florida and their inspection reports, if applicable. Some information provided on the DCF provider search website includes

- Address and contact information.
- Accreditation, Gold Seal and types of programs offered.
- School Readiness Offered
- Voluntary Prekindergarten Program Offered
- Hours of operation.
- License number, status and expiration.
- Capacity.
- Services such as infant care, food served, drop-in care and more.
- Inspection reports.

### DCF FACT SHEETS AND PUBLICATIONS

The [DCF website](#) has child care fact sheets and other publications available in both English and Spanish.

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### The School Readiness Program

The [School Readiness](#) Program is a financial assistance program that helps income eligible and at-risk families pay for a portion of their child care costs. Families must meet established eligibility criteria to be eligible for the School Readiness Program. Eligibility requirements are defined in state and federal rules and laws. This program takes into account a child's physical, social-emotional and intellectual development, involves parents as their child's first teacher, prepares children to be ready for school and provides parents with information about child development and other topics of interest.

#### ELIGIBILITY

In accordance with [Rule 6M-4.200, F.A.C.](#), [Section 1002.87, F.S](#) and [45 CFR §98.20](#), the School Readiness Program offers financial assistance to eligible families who

- Are participating in the welfare transition program.
- Are economically disadvantaged. For economically disadvantaged families there are two basic eligibility requirements –
  - The Parent or guardian must be working or engaged in an educational activity for a minimum of 20 hours per week. If both parents are in the home, each parent must be working or engaged in an educational activity for a combined 40 hours per week.
  - The family must meet income guidelines based on the federal poverty level per family size and most recent income (gross income). For initial program eligibility, families must be at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level.
- Are served by the Family Safety Program Office of DCF, a homeless coalition or domestic violence shelter.
- Have children with disabilities or special needs.
- Have children concurrently enrolled in the federal Head Start Program and the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program.

#### AVAILABILITY OF SERVICES

Services include extended-day, extended-year and school-age care for children to support parents in becoming financially self-sufficient.

#### FEES

The parent co-payment fee is based on total gross income and family size. The parent fee is assessed according to a parent fee schedule, whether the children need full-time or part-time care and how many children are in care. The fee is collected by the child care provider and does not cover registration fees or other fees a provider may charge.

#### ADDITIONAL SERVICES

At the time of enrolling in the School Readiness Program, children up to the age of kindergarten entry are provided a developmental screening to ensure they are reaching appropriate developmental milestones. If any concerns about a child's development are found, referrals to specific health and educational specialists should be issued. At the time of enrollment, families are also given a needs assessment. Based on the family's needs, CCR&R specialists should direct them to other community resources that best meet their needs.

## SECTION 2 – INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD CARE

### APPLICATION PROCESS

Families can find out if they are eligible for the School Readiness Program by contacting their [local early learning coalition](#).

- Families must complete a set of prequalifying questions online through the [Family Portal](#). If the results of the prequalifying questions indicate the family may be potentially eligible, the family will be directed to complete a school readiness application in the Family Portal. If the family needs assistance with the online prequalifying questions or application, they should contact their local early learning coalition.
- If families meet the eligibility requirements, and funding is available, they will receive a payment certificate for school readiness child care assistance and will be able to enroll their child(ren) with a School Readiness provider. Families receiving assistance will be reviewed annually for continued eligibility.
- If families are eligible, and no funding is available, they will be placed on the waiting list for services.

### WAITING LIST PROCEDURES

If there are no available funds to enroll a child in the School Readiness Program, families will be placed on the waiting list.

- While on the waiting list, families are required to verify their information including contact information, proof of employment and family size every six months. If families do not verify their information every six months, they will be removed from the waiting list and will have to reapply. Families can verify their information by logging into the [Family Portal](#).
- Once funding becomes available, families are enrolled in the School Readiness Program from the waiting list based on priority category and on a first-come, first-served basis.
- The typical time spent on the waiting list varies by coalition.

### TERMINATION

Child care assistance may end if

- Families fail to recertify by the due date.
- Families lose purpose for care and do not re-establish purpose for care within three months.
- Families have an income greater than 85% of the State Median Income identified on the coalition's sliding fee scale.
- Families provide false information that rises to the level of substantiated fraud or an intentional program violation. This may include families that fail to abide by the early learning coalition's terms and conditions.

Families have the right to appeal a decision by contacting their county's early learning coalition.

### CHILD CARE ENROLLMENT

Families may enroll their children in any legally operating child care center or family child care home, such as a licensed center, large family child care home, family child care home, a license-exempt provider or a registered family child care home, that has a contract with their early learning coalition. All school readiness providers must maintain [health and safety requirements](#) as required by the Office of Early Learning. CCR&R specialists can generate a listing of school readiness child care providers that meets the needs of each family.

*Note: For more information about health and safety requirements of school readiness providers, see Section 4 – Information for Providers.*

## SECTION 2 – INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD CARE

### The Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program

Florida was one of the first states in the country to offer a free prekindergarten program regardless of family income. [VPK](#) builds a strong educational foundation for children, in preparation to enter kindergarten with the skills that lead to academic success. Parents can choose from different educational settings and various program options available from private and public providers. Early learning providers offering VPK must ensure staff and programs meet high-quality expectations. The program's curriculum must be developmentally appropriate, while enhancing age-appropriate student progress in attaining state-adopted performance standards, and class size must allow teachers to build close relationships with each child.

#### VPK ELIGIBILITY

There are two eligibility requirements for VPK.

- The child must live in Florida.
- The child must meet age requirements.
  - The child must be 4-years-old on or before Sept. 1 of the school year.
  - If the child's birthday is between Feb. 2 and Sept. 1 in a calendar year, parents can choose to postpone VPK enrollment until the age of 5.

*Note: The law extending VPK eligibility beyond 4 years of age took effect July 1, 2016.*

#### VPK PROGRAM OPTIONS

- **The School-Year Program:** Provides 540 instructional hours. Class sizes are not to exceed 11 students when there is a single lead instructor or up to 20 students with a lead instructor and an assistant. Instructors must have a minimum of a Florida Child Care Professional Credential. The school-year program typically runs from August to May and typically provides three hours of instruction per day.
- **The Summer Program:** Provides 300 instructional hours. Class sizes should not exceed 12 students with one lead instructor. Instructors must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree. If the summer program is chosen, the child will attend the program immediately before the school year for which the child is eligible for admission to kindergarten in a public school.
- **The VPK Specialized Instructional Services (SIS) Education Program:** Takes place outside a traditional classroom setting where certified or licensed professionals provide specialized services in individual or small group settings. SIS is for 4-year-olds with special needs who have current individualized educational plans (IEP) from their local school districts. Services offered must be consistent with the child's IEP.

*Note: A child may only enroll in one of the above VPK options, unless they meet reenrollment eligibility requirements under Florida law ([Rule 6M-8.210, F.A.C.](#)).*

#### VPK SIS

A child who has a disability, as evidenced by a current IEP, and is eligible for VPK may apply for VPK SIS instead of a traditional school-year or summer VPK program in order to receive intervention services consistent with the child's IEP. The Office of Early Learning (OEL) approves SIS providers whose services meet statutory standards, maintains a list of approved SIS providers and notifies each school district and early learning coalition of the approved SIS providers. Parents with questions about enrolling their child in a VPK SIS program should contact their [local early learning coalition](#).

## SECTION 2 – INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD CARE

### VPK PROVIDERS AND INSTRUCTORS

All VPK providers and instructors must meet high standards required by Florida law.

- Parents can choose the provider that meets their family's needs.
- Options for parents include public schools, private centers, private schools and licensed family child care homes.
- Providers have the flexibility to structure the hours per day and days per week of their VPK program. All VPK programs must meet the required number of instructional hours for a school-year or summer program.
- All VPK instructors must have at minimum a Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) or an [approved DCF CDA equivalent](#) for school-year programs or a bachelor's degree for summer programs.
- VPK programs must meet minimum and maximum teacher-child class ratios.
  - **School-Year Program:** One instructor for 4 to 11 children or an instructor and an assistant for 12 to 20 students. Class size may not exceed 20 students.
  - **Summer Program:** One instructor for 4 to 12 children. Class size may not exceed 12 students.

### VPK CURRICULUM

- Must be developmentally appropriate and focused on early literacy skills.
- Must be age-appropriate and prepare children to be ready for kindergarten based on performance standards adopted by the State Board of Education.

### TRANSPORTATION

- Parents are responsible for their children's transportation to and from the VPK program.

### HOW TO APPLY

- Families must apply for VPK through the [Family Portal](#).
- Families must upload proof of child's age and proof of Florida residency.

### VPK PROVIDER KINDERGARTEN READINESS RATE

OEL is required by law ([Section 1002.69\(5\), F.S.](#)) to calculate a kindergarten readiness rate each year for each private or public school VPK provider. Rule [6M-8.601 F.A.C.](#) describes the process for the calculation of the readiness rate. The kindergarten readiness rate measures how well a VPK provider prepares 4-year-olds to be ready for kindergarten based upon the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards: 4 Years Old to Kindergarten](#) (2017). The VPK Provider Kindergarten Readiness rate for individual providers are available on the [VPK Provider Kindergarten Readiness Rate website](#).

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### The Head Start Program

The [Head Start Program](#) refers to a group of federally funded programs promoting school readiness for children from low-income families. Head Start programs provide learning environments supporting children's growth in the following domains:

- Language and literacy.
- Cognition and general knowledge.
- Physical development and health.
- Social and emotional development.
- Approaches to learning.

Head Start programs provide comprehensive services for children, which include monitoring children's health, dental, nutrition, social-emotional and cognitive health and other services based on the family's needs and desires. In addition to education and developmental services, Head Start services are designed to be responsive to each child's and family's ethnic, cultural and linguistic heritage. Head Start emphasizes the role of parents as their children's first and most important teacher. Programs build relationships with families that support

- Family well-being and positive parent-child relationships.
- Families as learners and lifelong educators.
- Family engagement in transitions.
- Family connections to peers and the community.
- Families as advocates and leaders.

### HEAD START SERVICES IN FLORIDA

Head Start programs serve preschool-age children from age 3 to school age and is offered in all 67 counties in Florida. Early Head Start programs serve infants, toddlers and pregnant women, and provide services in 54 counties. Florida is also host to two Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs – East Coast Migrant Head Start and Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA). These two programs serve the unique needs of Florida's migrant families who have children ages 6 weeks to school age. Florida is home to new Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships in eight locations serving working families with infants and toddlers.

Head Start programs offer a variety of service models, depending on the local community's needs. Programs may be based in centers or schools that children attend for part-day or full-day services, family child care homes, or children's own homes where a staff person visits once a week to provide services to the child and family. Children and families who receive home-based services gather periodically with other enrolled families for a group learning experience facilitated by Head Start staff.

Head Start programs provide services to children with disabilities or special health care needs and collaborate with local school districts, early learning coalitions, health professionals and other partners to assist the family in coordinating services. Head Start classrooms offer low teacher-to-child ratios, a research-based curriculum, teachers with bachelor degrees or CDAs, year-round services and most participate in VPK.

*Find more information and a listing by county of [local Head Start programs](#) in your area or contact the Head Start State Collaboration Office at 850-717-8648.*

## SECTION 2 – INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD CARE

### Early Learning Inclusion

*“We would not be able to accommodate her disability.”*

*“I just do not think we can meet his needs.”*

*“There are special programs in the community for kids like him.”*

Many parents hear these statements when trying to find care for a child with a disability or special health care need. Child care professionals give many reasons for not including children with disabilities, such as fear, liability concerns, difficult ratios, limited resources and lack of knowledge. However, many studies have proven inclusion is best for typically and atypically developing children and their families. Overcoming the challenges of inclusion requires patience, time, creative solutions, willingness to collaborate and commitment to a philosophy of caring for all children.

### EVERYONE CAN INCLUDE SOMEONE

Child care providers, including all types of center-based, family home and school-age care, can take initial steps toward promoting inclusion by assessing their strengths, characteristics and experiences, and connecting those to the needs of families of children with disabilities in their community. For example, a provider who worked as a certified nursing assistant or has cared for a parent with a colostomy, tracheotomy or feeding tube could meet the medical needs of children with those conditions. College students can gain a wealth of knowledge and experience in numerous programs of study by working with children with special needs in their part-time jobs at child care centers. Early learning and child care staff that are consistent can benefit children with autism, just as a flexible teacher can work with children who have behavioral challenges. The previous examples are not an exhaustive list, but are illustrations of possibilities for expanding inclusive opportunities for children, families and providers.

### WHICH PROGRAMS ACCEPT CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES?

Technically all programs should, with a few exceptions. According to the ADA, most child care facilities, including family child care homes, are public facilities and must be accessible to individuals with disabilities. The exception to this rule is programs operated exclusively by a religious organization. A child care facility that leases a building on church property, but is not controlled or funded by the church, must still comply with the ADA. The U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division Disability Rights Section states specifically

- Centers cannot exclude children with disabilities from their programs, unless their presence would pose a direct threat to the health or safety of others or require fundamental alteration of the program.
- Centers have to make reasonable modifications to their policies and practices to integrate children, parents and guardians with disabilities into their programs, unless doing so would constitute a fundamental alteration.
- Centers must provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services needed for effective communication with children or adults with disabilities, when doing so would not constitute an undue burden.
- Centers must generally make their facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. Existing facilities are subject to the readily achievable standard for barrier removal, while newly constructed facilities and any altered portions of existing facilities must be fully accessible.

### HELPING PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES SELECT A PROGRAM

When parents call CCR&R seeking child care and indicate their child has a disability, the CCR&R specialist can educate and empower parents to select a high-quality inclusive program. A parent’s first question may

## SECTION 2 – INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD CARE

be, “Which programs accept children with special needs?” Unless the parent is seeking a specialized or therapeutic program, your response will be, “All programs accept children with special needs.” It is very important to explain all available child care options. For instance, many people mistakenly believe family child care providers are more like “babysitters” than “teachers.” Clarify that these providers also comply with health, safety and training requirements. The differences are their classroom is their home and the ratios are much lower.

Customize the parent’s child care listing by searching for providers who have experience working with children who have special needs. Once you have informed parents of their options based on the selected criteria they are seeking in a program, share the “[Quality Checklist for Evaluating Early Learning Programs](#).” It is important parents understand they should be honest about their child’s disability when talking with staff and providers. The parent can often be the best “trainer” for providers when it comes to their child’s disability.

### INDICATORS OF QUALITY INCLUSIVE PROGRAMS

CCR&R specialists should be informed of some of the indicators of a quality inclusive early childhood program, including

- Adaptations of space and materials or equipment.
- Adult involvement in peer interactions.
- Adult guidance of children’s play.
- Positive interactions between adults and children.
- Support for communication between children.
- Adaptations for group activities.
- Support for transitions between activities.
- Collaboration with family-professional partnerships.
- Progress monitoring of children’s learning.

### UTILIZE RESOURCES AND COLLABORATE

Each early learning coalition has an inclusion specialist who works with early learning programs to meet the needs of all children. The inclusion specialist can share advice or information with providers who call the Warm Line number, as well as schedule onsite visits to make adaptation suggestions or model appropriate interactions and practices. Inclusion specialists may share the [Best Practices in Inclusive Early Care and Education \(BPIECE\)](#) self-assessment tool developed by OEL with providers. The BPIECE helps providers understand and identify best practices for inclusive services.

Collaboration has proven to be a key indicator of quality inclusive early learning and child care programs. Connections between families, CCR&R staff, child care providers and inclusion specialists are beneficial to meet needs of early learning programs, families and children.

*Note: For more information about the Warm Line, see Section 4 – Information for Providers.*

## SECTION 3 – CONSUMER EDUCATION AND RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

### Family Resources from the Office of Early Learning and Department of Children and Families

#### OEL'S FAMILY RESOURCES

Multiple resources are available on the [Parent Resources page](#) on the OEL website to equip families in making informed decisions regarding child care and early learning options. The “[Family Guide: Selecting Quality Programs for Children](#)” and the “[Quality Checklist for Evaluating Early Learning Programs](#)” are publications from the Office of Early Learning (OEL) aimed to educate parents on identifying quality child care. Choosing a child care provider and early learning program is a very difficult decision for any family.

The “[First Teacher: A Parent’s Guide to Growing and Learning](#)” books for birth through age four provide parents with information about child development and activities they can do to support their child’s learning during daily routines and play. The books address eight key areas of child development and are aligned with [Florida’s Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#). The [developmental standards families’ webpage](#) also provides families with resources and activity ideas to support their child’s development. [Parents’ Pages](#) is OEL’s monthly newsletter that provides information to encourage fun, learning and family bonding. Families may also find helpful resources and fun family activities on [OEL’s Pinterest](#) page.

The CCR&R network office also maintains an online library of consumer education resources, which is made available to local CCR&R programs. The [CCR&R Dropbox](#) is organized by topic and is updated regularly with new resources.

*Note: For information about community resources, see the [OEL Community Resource Flyer](#) in the Appendix.*

#### DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES (DCF) QUALITY CHILD CARE PUBLICATIONS

The [DCF website](#) has child care fact sheets and other publications available in both English and Spanish. These resources are intended to assist families in making informed decisions when choosing child care.

### Gold Seal

The [Gold Seal Quality Care Program](#) acknowledges child care facilities and family child care homes accredited by nationally recognized agencies, whose standards reflect quality in the level of care and supervision provided to children. Find more information and access the list of current DCF-approved agencies participating in the [Gold Seal Quality Care Program](#).

# SECTION 3 – CONSUMER EDUCATION AND RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

## Quality Indicators

### 10 COMPONENTS OF QUALITY

Research defines ten essential components of quality child care that produce meaningful outcomes for the young children they serve.

- 1. Safe & Healthy Program Practices:** Quality programs exceed minimum state and local standards for licensing to ensure the health and safety of children and adults in both indoor and outdoor environments. Attentive and knowledgeable teachers follow detailed procedures and standards for maintaining hygiene, preventing illness, minimizing infection, and dealing with health and safety emergencies. Nutritious meals and snacks are provided and accommodate special dietary needs. Teachers follow strict guidelines for proper diapering, toileting and hand washing. Infants are always placed on their backs for safe sleep.
- 2. Staff Well-Trained:** Teacher education in early childhood development and ongoing in-service training promotes the teacher’s ability to address the unique needs of infants and toddlers. Quality programs implement a system of observation, feedback and reflective practice. Staff at all levels are offered opportunities for professional development specific to infants, toddlers and families.
- 3. Environments for Learning:** Learning is an interactive process that involves continuous opportunities for exploration and interactions. Infants and toddlers should have developmentally appropriate equipment and both indoor and outdoor spaces that are separate from older children. Room arrangements should allow for both quiet and active play; dramatic and messy play; large group activities and individual care. Multiple sets of the same toys prevent conflicts. Toys and books should be available for access at the child’s level to promote independent choosing and use. High quality programs base the arrangement of classrooms on the facilitation of learning by young children rather than on the preferences of caregivers.
- 4. Small Groups with Optimal Ratios:** Group size and ratios determine the amount of time and attention that each caregiver can devote to each child. Small groups create a sense of intimacy and safety. A rich dialogue between caregivers and infants is possible in small groups because there are fewer individuals, less noise, and less activity to interfere with a child’s ability to learn. Small groups and more staff enable caregivers to build strong relationships with each child and to adapt activities to meet the changing interests and needs of the group.
- 5. Primary Caregiving & Continuity of Care:** Relationships between caregivers and children are crucial in quality child care. It is through close relationships with caring adults (including caregivers) that children flourish, discover their world, and learn who they are. Each child enrolled in group care should be assigned a primary caregiver. A primary caregiver has the principle responsibility for that child and helps build a positive, constant, intimate relationship with the child. The primary caregiver also offers family members a consistent contact who knows the child well. Having one primary caregiver for more than a year (optimally, from entry into child care until the child is three years of age or older) is important to a child’s emotional development. Each change from one caregiver to another takes a toll on the child. When young children are repeatedly changed from one caregiver to another, the process of grieving the loss of the previous caregiver and learning the new caregiver’s ways may slow their overall development and leave them reluctant to form new relationships.

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- 6. Active and Responsive Caregiving:** The active and responsive caregiver takes cues from each child to know when to expand on the child’s initiative, when to guide, when to teach, and when to intervene. Responsive caregivers are alert to signs of stress in each child’s behavior and respond with appropriate stress-reducing activities and techniques. The responsive caregiver continuously facilitates the development of self-esteem by respecting and accepting children, regardless of their behavior.
- 7. Curriculum & Individualization:** Learning is an interactive process with activities, materials, and opportunities for exploration and interaction. Quality programs utilize curricular resources to plan and prepare an environment where children can choose from a variety of activities. Caregivers also understand the temperaments, moods, and preferences of each child and adapt their care to meet individual needs. This means that young children sleep, eat, and play in regular routines rather than forcing rigid conformity. Special abilities, as well as disabilities, are continuously discovered as caregivers routinely observe and assess each child. Based on curriculum and observations, caregivers develop an overall plan for each day, individualizing activities, materials, and schedules according to the developmental stage of each child.
- 8. Support of Emerging Language and Literacy:** The path to literacy begins with the interactions between caregivers and young children. Caregivers expand on the sounds made by infants and toddlers and add words and ideas to what very young children express, feel, or say. Caregivers promote the development of language through the use of simple words and maintain a balance between listening and talking with the child. Staff create a learning environment that includes books and other print materials throughout the center. Opportunities for shared reading time are a part of each day and children are encouraged to enjoy books independently. The use of songs, nursery rhymes, and finger plays provide a context to promote the development of language and literacy.
- 9. Family Engagement and Cultural Continuity:** High quality programs incorporate practices reflecting the values and beliefs of the families and the cultures of their communities. Using the child’s home language, following cultural norms related to daily routines, and celebrating diverse cultures are examples of such practices. Caregivers should communicate each day with families, welcome parents into their child’s classroom, and organize special events that include the child’s family members.
- 10. Comprehensive Support Services:** High quality child care serves as a protective environment for the child and a source of support for the child’s family. Because child care cannot meet all the varied needs of young children and their families, linkages with community agencies are essential to provide a medical home, mental health and social services, and therapeutic interventions. Ongoing communication and team meetings can ensure continuity of care across multiple disciplines and promote holistic support services and treatment.

*Adapted from “[Ten Components of Quality Child Care](#)” from [The Florida State University Center for Prevention & Early Intervention Policy](#).*

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### First Time Selecting Care

*“Will my children be safe and happy in this program?”*

*“Will the teachers be responsive to their needs?”*

*“Will they have suitable playmates and activities?”*

*“Will my children adjust well to a new caregiver?”*

Many parents ask these questions when looking for child care for the first time. Parents may seek reassurance and support for what is often a very difficult decision. Help parents in this situation by assuring them that enrolling their children in a carefully chosen quality early learning and child care program can be a positive and rewarding experience for parents and children.

#### Before Choosing a Child Care Provider, Parents Should

- Think carefully about which child care option will best suit their needs.
- Consider quality indicators of early learning and child care, such as teacher/provider qualifications, staff turnover, accreditation, adult-to-child ratios, group size, physical environment, health and safety, philosophy, discipline policies, sick child policies and family involvement.
- Visit several potential early learning and child care programs and use the “[Quality Checklist for Evaluating Early Learning Programs](#)” to record their observations.
- Check the program’s references and review licensing and inspection history carefully located on [DCF’s child care search website](#).

#### Before Making a Final Decision, Parents Should Ask

- Is the center director or provider willing to discuss my questions and concerns?
- What are my children’s needs?
- What kind of program will my children do well in?
- How does the provider handle separation anxiety issues for parents and children beginning a new early learning and child care program?
- How can I contact other families who may have used this program?

#### After Choosing a Child Care Provider, Parents Should

- Talk to the provider about their children each day, either at pick up or drop off times.
- Occasionally drop in at different times of the day to monitor their children’s care.

*Adapted from [Child Care Aware® of America](#).*

## SECTION 3 – CONSUMER EDUCATION AND RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

### **Strengthening Families – The Protective Factors**

The protective factors are attributes of families typically associated with lower incidents of child abuse and neglect. Extensive research has shown when these protective factors are present and robust in a family, the likelihood of abuse and neglect diminishes and the family environment becomes healthy and optimal for the development of children.

#### **PARENTAL RESILIENCE – BE STRONG AND FLEXIBLE**

Parents who cope with the stresses of everyday life, as well as an occasional crisis, have resilience – the flexibility and inner strength to bounce back when life is not going well. Parents with resilience also know how to seek help in times of trouble. Their ability to deal with life's ups and downs serves as a model of coping behavior for their children.

Multiple life stressors, such as a family history of abuse or neglect, physical and mental health problems, marital conflict, substance abuse and domestic or community violence and financial stressors, such as unemployment, financial insecurity and homelessness, can reduce a parent's capacity to cope effectively with the typical day-to-day stresses of raising children.

All parents have inner strengths or resources that can serve as a foundation for building resilience. These may include faith, flexibility, humor, communication skills, problem-solving skills, mutually supportive caring relationships or the ability to identify and access outside resources and services when needed. All of these qualities strengthen their capacity to be effective parents and can be nurtured and developed through supportive interactions with others.

#### **SOCIAL CONNECTIONS – PARENTS NEED FRIENDS**

Parents with a network of emotionally supportive friends, family and neighbors often find it is easier to care for their children and themselves. Most parents need people they can call on when they need a sympathetic listener, advice or support, such as transportation or occasional child care. A parent's supportive relationships also model positive social interactions for children, while giving children access to other supportive adults. Research has shown that parents who are isolated and have few social connections are at higher risk for child abuse and neglect.

Being new to a community, recently divorced or a first-time parent makes a support network more important. Some parents may need to develop self-confidence and social skills to expand their social networks. Often, opportunities for social connections exist within faith-based organizations, schools, hospitals, community centers and other places where support groups or social groups meet.

#### **KNOWLEDGE OF PARENTING AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT – BEING A GREAT PARENT IS PART NATURAL AND PART LEARNED**

Parents who understand the usual course of child development are better prepared to provide their children with respectful communication, consistent rules and expectations and developmentally appropriate opportunities that promote independence. When parents are unaware of normal developmental milestones,

mistakenly interpret their child's behaviors in a negative way or do not know how to respond to and effectively manage a child's behavior, they can become frustrated and may resort to harsh discipline.

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As children grow and mature, parents must continue to learn and change how they respond to their children's needs. Interacting with other children of similar ages helps parents better understand their own children. Observing other caregivers who use positive techniques for managing children's behavior also provides an opportunity for parents to learn healthy alternatives.

Parenting styles need to be adjusted for each child's unique temperament and circumstances. Parents of children with special needs may benefit from additional coaching and support to reduce frustration and help them become the parents their children need.

### CONCRETE SUPPORTS FOR PARENTS – EVERYBODY NEEDS HELP SOMETIMES

A family's whose basic needs for food, clothing, housing and transportation are met will have more time and energy to devote to their children's safety and well-being. When parents do not have steady financial resources, lack health insurance or face a family crisis, such as a natural disaster or the incarceration of a parent, their ability to support their children's healthy development may be at risk. Some families may also need assistance connecting to social service supports, such as alcohol and drug treatment, domestic violence counseling or public benefits.

Parents who identify and access resources in their community can help prevent stress that may lead to child maltreatment. Finding concrete supports can also help prevent the unintended neglect that may occur when parents are unable to provide for their children.

### SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE OF CHILDREN – PARENTS NEED TO HELP THEIR CHILDREN COMMUNICATE

The emerging ability to interact positively with others, self-regulate behavior and effectively communicate feelings has a positive impact on children's relationships with their families, other adults and peers. Parents and caregivers grow more responsive to children's needs and are less likely to feel stressed or frustrated as children learn to tell their parents what they need and how parental actions make them feel, rather than "acting out" difficult feelings.

Children's challenging behaviors or delays in social-emotional development create extra stress for families. Parenting is more challenging when children do not, or cannot, respond positively to their parents' nurturing and affection. Identifying and working with children early to keep their development on track helps their parents facilitate healthy development.

*Note: Adapted from the [Strengthening Families Parent Brochure](#).*

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### Florida's Early Steps System

Each child grows at an individual pace, but research shows that a child's first three years are the most important time for learning. Getting help early puts children on the right path to learn and develop at their full potential.

[Early Steps](#) is Florida's early intervention system that offers services to eligible infants and toddlers (birth to 36 months) with significant delays or a condition likely to result in a developmental delay. Early intervention is provided to support families and caregivers in developing the competence and confidence to help their child learn and develop.

Early Steps services are based on evaluations and the family's concerns, resources and goals. Early Steps uses a team-based primary service provider approach aimed to empower each eligible family by providing a comprehensive team of professionals from the beginning of services through transition. The goal is for the family to receive strong support and for the family to have fewer appointments and more time to be a family. Services are provided to the family and child where they live, learn and play, to enable the family to implement developmentally appropriate learning opportunities during everyday activities and routines. Most services are early intervention home visits.

For most services, there is no charge or the services are covered by insurance or Medicaid, if applicable. These services are provided by contracted local Early Steps offices across the state of Florida.

### FEATURES OF EARLY STEPS

- Brings services into the child's life, rather than fitting the child into services.
- Maximizes each child's everyday natural learning opportunities.
- Enhances each child's development and participation in community life.
- Provides each child with a consistent team for evaluation and services.
- Encourages active partnerships and provides options in services decisions.
- Provides a primary service provider to work with the family, other caregivers and the team.

### ELIGIBILITY

To be enrolled in Early Steps, a child must be eligible. Through the screening process, Early Steps is able to determine if a child has significant delays or an established medical condition that will likely result in a delay. To determine if a child is eligible, he or she is evaluated in the following areas:

- **Physical:** Health, hearing and vision.
- **Cognitive:** Thinking, learning and problem-solving.
- **Gross and Fine Motor Skills:** Moving, walking, grasping and coordination.
- **Communication:** Babbling, languages, speech and conversation.
- **Social and Emotional:** Playing and interacting with others.
- **Adaptive Development:** Self-help skills, such as feeding, toileting and dressing.

Once a child is determined eligible, Early Steps combines a team of service providers to address the child's needs. This team develops a service plan based on family/caregivers outcomes and goals.

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### CONTACT INFORMATION

Florida's Early Steps Directory provides information and referral services to families of children with disabilities and special health care needs. Resource specialists provide answers and possible choices of services within the family's community, education on disability related services and provides advocacy roles for families. For more information or to make a referral to Early Steps, please call 1-800-218-0001 or visit the [Early Steps website](#).

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### The Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System

The [Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System](#) (FDLRS) provides diagnostic, instructional and technology support services to exceptional student education (ESE) programs and families of students with disabilities. FDLRS offers 19 service centers in Florida directly serving school districts in the areas of Child Find, Parent Services, Human Resource Development (HRD) and Technology. In addition, FDLRS includes six multi-disciplinary centers focusing on in-depth evaluations and several state-wide projects offering specialized services.

#### THE FOUR FUNCTIONS OF FDLRS

##### Child Find

FDLRS Child Find, in coordination with the school districts, locates children who are potentially eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and links them with needed services. Child Find helps to promote general public awareness of programs and services available for young children who have disabilities or are at risk of developing disabilities. Service coordination for diagnostic screening, placement, training and support is also provided.

##### Parent Services

FDLRS Parent Services provides information, training and support to districts and families to promote effective parent participation in the education of children who are exceptional and have special needs. Available services include assistance in the development of family-friendly programs, training and support for services for children with disabilities and the support of partnerships between schools and parents to support student achievement.

##### Human Resource Development

FDLRS HRD personnel provide professional learning opportunities to educators focused on refining teacher practices and increasing student achievement. Professional learning events are aligned to Florida's Professional Development Protocol Evaluation. FDLRS HRD specialists support educators in their study of effective learning and teaching practices by providing needs assessments, content and/or skill-based workshops, facilitating local learning communities, implementation/coaching sessions and providing follow-up support. The professional learning activities are offered as face-to-face and virtual settings, in addition to a variety of training levels including awareness, skill development and implementation.

##### Technology

FDLRS provides assistance and support in the appropriate use of a variety of technologies for students, teachers, professional staff and parents. Support services are available in the areas of assistive technology, instructional technology, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and more. For more information, visit the [FDLRS website](#).

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### The Gardiner Scholarship Program

The [Gardiner Scholarship Program](#) provides children with disabilities a scholarship that can be used to purchase approved services or products in order to design a customized educational program for the student. Scholarships can be used for specialized services such as speech or occupational therapy, instructional materials, tuition at an eligible private school, contributions to a college prepaid account and more. Scholarships may also be used to pay tuition and fees for any approved School Readiness or VPK provider. The program is directly administered by state-approved nonprofit scholarship funding organizations.

#### ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible to receive a scholarship a student must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Is a resident of this state;
- Is eligible to enroll in kindergarten through grade 12 in a public school in this state or will be 3 or 4 years old before September 1;
- Has a disability (specific to the list found [here](#));
- Is the subject of an IEP written in accordance with rules of the State Board of Education or has received a diagnosis of a disability from a physician.

#### SCHOLARSHIP AMOUNT

The amount of a child's scholarship is dependent on a number of different factors, including grade level, county of residence and a student's individual level of need. The average full scholarship amount is approximately \$10,000. The percentage of scholarship a student qualifies depends on the date eligibility is confirmed by the scholarship funding organization.

#### HOW TO APPLY

The Scholarship Funding Organizations (SFO) listed below are approved to administer the Gardiner Scholarship Program. Contact the SFO for instructions and deadlines for applying for a scholarship.

A.A.A. Scholarship Foundation  
Phone: 888-707-2465  
[info@aaascholarships.org](mailto:info@aaascholarships.org)

Step Up for Students  
Phone: 877-735-7837  
[info@stepupforstudents.org](mailto:info@stepupforstudents.org)

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### Tax Credits

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a benefit for working people who have low to moderate income. A tax credit means additional money back in the pockets of families. A tax credit reduces the amount of tax an individual owes and may also provide a refund.

To qualify, individuals must meet certain requirements and file a tax return, even if they do not owe tax or are not required to file. To [qualify for EITC](#), individuals must have earned income from working for someone or from running or owning a business or farm and meet basic rules. They must either meet additional rules for workers without a qualifying child or have a child that meets all the qualifying child rules.

#### EITC FACTS FOR FAMILIES:

- A parent could be new to EITC. Nearly one-third of the EITC eligible population turns over each year. Parents should continue to check their EITC eligibility.
- Four of five eligible workers claim and get an EITC.
- EITC is one of the nation's largest anti-poverty programs, annually lifting more than nine million people out of poverty each year; more than five million of them children.
- If parents qualify for EITC, they should see what other child-related tax credits they may be eligible to claim.
- If parents qualify for EITC, they must file a federal income tax return and claim the credit, even if they do not owe tax or are not required to file a return.

#### DEFINING TAX TALK

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has its own tax language. The following are standard tax words and phrases parents may see when reviewing tax information:

- **Deduction:** Any amount that can be subtracted from the total taxable income.
- **Credit:** An amount of money the IRS allows individuals to deduct for different situations. There are many different credits individuals can take as a deduction, if they are eligible. There are tax credits for having children, for earning under a certain amount of money, for the money paid to attend college and more.
- **Refund:** Money individuals will receive from the IRS if the total amount of deductions and credits is more than taxes owed on their earnings.
- **Dependent:** A child who lives with an individual or that an individual pays for more than half of the child's expenses during the year; or a spouse or parent unable to work or care for themselves.
- **Filing Status:** A category based on whether individuals are married or not and the total amount of household expenses. Individuals must choose a filing status on tax forms and are taxed according to which filing status is listed on their taxes. To take credits or deductions, individuals need to meet the requirements. For most tax credits, if an individual is married, he or she must file as married filing jointly to receive credits. The filing statuses individuals can choose from are
  - Single (not married).
  - Married filing jointly (filing with a spouse).
  - Married filing separately (married, but the spouse files a separate tax return).
  
  - Head of household (The individual has one or more children and could be married or single; if married, but the individual does not live with his or her spouse.).

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- Widower.

### RECEIVE HELP WITH TAXES

- Visit the [EITC website](#) for free information and forms. The interactive EITC assistant can show individuals if they qualify.
- Use [Free File](#) for free online filing through commercially-available tax preparation software.
- Find a qualified tax preparer.
- Call 1-800-TAX-3676 for free IRS publications and forms.
- Call 1-800-TAX-4059 if you have access to TTY/TDD equipment for the hearing impaired.

### Free or Low Cost Help with Taxes

Many working families do not use professional tax preparers because of high costs. There are many well-known tax preparation chains with offices everywhere, but they can charge up to \$300 or more per tax return. These fees are out of range for many families, especially many low-income families or elderly people on fixed incomes. Some families may use friends or coworkers who do taxes on the side and they may not be aware of the latest tax updates or requirements. Ensure individuals preparing to file taxes are getting them completed by someone who has enough experience and the latest information on tax laws.

- Visit a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, which is a free service created by the IRS to help low-income families with their taxes. To find a program call 1-800-906-9887.
- The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) has free tax preparation services for low income, non-English speaking, and senior citizens in many states. To find an office visit the [AARP website](#) or call toll-free at 1-888-OUR-AARP (687-2277).
- Other places that may offer free tax help are community colleges, law clinics and libraries.

### THE CHILD TAX CREDIT

The [Child Tax Credit](#) is an important tax credit that may be worth as much as \$1,000 per qualifying child depending upon income. The IRS urges people not to overlook the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit. Eligible taxpayers may be able claim it if they paid for someone to care for a child, dependent or spouse in the last year.

Families can use the IRS Interactive Tax Assistant tool, [Am I Eligible to Claim the Child and Dependent Care Credit?](#), to help determine if they are eligible to claim the credit for expenses paid for the care of an individual to allow the taxpayer to work or look for work.

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### **The Child Care Executive Partnership Program**

The Child Care Executive Partnership (CCEP) program is a public/private partnership program that helps employers meet the needs of a growing segment of their work force – working parents. Through the program, federal and state funding is “matched” with contributions from local governments, charitable foundations and/or private businesses on a dollar-for-dollar basis to provide child care services to participating families. The program helps communities expand child care funding for low-income working families and helps employers increase profits by providing valuable work life benefits for employees.

At the state level, OEL oversees funding authorized by the legislature and federal funding from the Child Care and Development Fund. The state CCEP board determines the program’s annual budget, distributes funds to local early learning coalitions and makes policy decisions about administering the program. OEL provides board staff support, marketing and technical assistance. At the local level, early learning coalitions make funding decisions, administer the program, manage contributions and determine eligibility for families who want to participate.

#### **FAMILY ELIGIBILITY**

Low to moderate wage-earning families, at or below 200 percent of poverty, may qualify for the program.

*Note: If CCEP is available in your service area, contact your [coalition’s](#) CCEP representative for more information.*

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## Florida KidCare

With [Florida KidCare](#), the state of Florida offers health insurance for children from birth through age 18, even if one or both parents are working. Services Florida KidCare covers are

- Doctor visits.
- Check-ups and shots.
- Hospital stays.
- Surgery.
- Prescriptions.
- Emergencies.
- Vision and hearing.
- Dental.
- Mental health.

## ELIGIBILITY

Florida KidCare is for children, not adults. To qualify for premium assistance, a child must

- Be under age 19.
- Be uninsured.
- Meet income eligibility requirements.
- Be a U.S. citizen or qualified non-citizen.
- Not be eligible for Medicaid.
- Not be in a public institution.

Families who are not eligible for premium assistance may buy Florida KidCare (MediKids or Healthy Kids) at the “full pay” premium rate.

## COST

- There is no charge for Medicaid for children (KidCare Medicaid).
- For other Florida KidCare programs, monthly premiums depend on the household’s size and income. Most families pay \$15 or \$20 a month. If families need to pay more, Florida KidCare will inform them.
- Families may have to pay small charges or co-payments for some services.
- A child who is a member of a federally recognized American Indian or Alaskan Native tribe may qualify for no-cost Florida KidCare coverage.

## HOW KIDCARE COVERS CHILDREN

Florida KidCare includes four different parts. When families apply for the insurance, Florida KidCare will check which part the child may qualify for based on age and family income.

- **Medikids:** For children ages 1 through 4.
- **Healthy Kids:** For children ages 5 through 18.
- **Children’s Medical Services Network:** For children with special health care needs from birth through 18.

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- **Medicaid:** For children birth through 18. A child who has other health insurance may still qualify for Medicaid.

### APPLYING FOR KIDCARE

- [Apply online](#) for Florida KidCare.
- Families who have previously applied must call 1-888-540-5437 to update their information.

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### The Florida Abuse Hotline

The [Florida Abuse Hotline](#) accepts reports 24 hours a day, 7 days a week of known or suspected child abuse, neglect or abandonment and reports of known or suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of a vulnerable adult. To make a report individuals can

- Report online through the [Abuse Reporting Portal](#).
- Call 1-800-962-2873.
- Use 711 for Florida Relay Services.
- Fax a report to 1-800-914-0004.

*If you suspect or know of a child or vulnerable adult in immediate danger, call 911.*

### ABOUT THE FLORIDA ABUSE HOTLINE

According to state child protective service agencies, more than 1 million children are victims of child abuse and neglect each year. Many victims do not receive help because they are not reported to the system. These abused and neglected children span all ages, races, religions and socio-economic backgrounds. Child maltreatment includes actions that result in imminent risk of serious harm, death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation of a child under age 18 by a parent or caretaker.

When parents cannot, do not or will not protect their children, DCF steps in to help, providing a full spectrum of services from parenting classes and respite care to transportation and child care. The goal of the department is to keep children safe and with their own families, when possible.

The Florida Abuse Hotline serves as the central reporting center for allegations of abuse, neglect and/or exploitation for all children and vulnerable adults in Florida. The Hotline receives calls, faxes and web-based reports from citizens and professionals with concerns of abuse, neglect or exploitation on children and vulnerable adults in Florida. The Hotline assesses the information provided and determines if the information meets statutory criteria for DCF to conduct an investigation.

### CHILD ABUSE

Abuse is any willful act or threatened act that results in any physical, mental or sexual injury or harm that causes, or is likely to cause, a child's physical, mental or emotional health to be significantly impaired. Abuse of a child includes acts or omissions. Corporal discipline of a child by a parent or legal custodian for disciplinary purposes does not in itself constitute abuse when it does not result in harm to the child.

### CHILD NEGLECT

Neglect occurs when a child is deprived of, or is allowed to be deprived of, necessary food, clothing, shelter or medical treatment. It is also considered neglect when a child is permitted to live in an environment that causes a child's physical, mental or emotional health to be significantly impaired or to be in danger of being significantly impaired.

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### MANDATED REPORTERS

Although every person has a responsibility to report suspected abuse or neglect, some occupations are required to do so as specified in Florida law. These occupations are considered “professionally mandatory reporters.” A professionally mandatory reporter of child abuse or neglect is required by Florida Statute (F.S.) to provide his or her name to the abuse hotline counselor when reporting. A professionally mandatory reporter’s name is entered into the record of the report, but is held confidential by 39.202, F.S. and 415.107, F.S. DCF maintains a [list of professionally mandated reporters](#).

### WHEN TO FILE A REPORT

Everyone, including professionally mandatory reporters, should contact the Florida Abuse Hotline when they know, or have reasonable cause to suspect, that a child or a vulnerable adult has been abused, abandoned, neglected or exploited. The abuse hotline counselor will determine if the information provided meets legal requirements to initiate an investigation. The Hotline has counselors available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE

- **Unexplained Injuries:** Visible signs of physical abuse may include unexplained burns or bruises in the shape of objects. You may also hear unconvincing explanations of a child’s injuries.
- **Changes in Behavior:** Abuse can lead to many changes in a child’s behavior. Abused children often appear scared, anxious, depressed, withdrawn or more aggressive.
- **Return to Earlier Behaviors:** Abused children may display behaviors shown at earlier ages, such as thumb-sucking, bed-wetting and fear of the dark or strangers. For some children, even loss of acquired language or memory problems may be an issue.
- **Fear of Going Home:** Abused children may express apprehension or anxiety about leaving school or about going places with the person who is abusing them.
- **Changes in Sleeping:** Abused children may have frequent nightmares or have difficulty falling asleep, and as a result, may appear tired or fatigued.
- **Changes in School Performance and Attendance:** Abused children may have difficulty concentrating in school or have excessive absences, sometimes due to adults trying to hide the children’s injuries from authorities.
- **Lack of Personal Care or Hygiene:** Abused and neglected children may appear uncared for. They may present as consistently dirty and have severe body odor or they may lack sufficient clothing for the weather.
- **Risk-Taking Behaviors:** Young people who are being abused may engage in high-risk activities, such as using drugs or drinking and carrying a weapon.
- **Inappropriate Sexual Behaviors:** Children who have been sexually abused may exhibit overly sexualized behavior or use explicit sexual language.

Signs that a child is experiencing violence or abuse can be more obvious than others. Trust your instincts. Suspected abuse is enough of a reason to contact the Florida Abuse Hotline.

*For more information, visit the [Florida Abuse Hotline website](#).*

## SECTION 4 – INFORMATION FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

### Becoming a Child Care Provider

#### SHOULD YOU BECOME A FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDER?

Becoming a family child care provider is not for everyone. The following are questions prospective providers should ask themselves before committing to opening a family child care home:

- Do you really like children? Will you have patience to work with children for extended times, usually without other adults around for conversation?
- Will your children and/or spouse accept having “outside” children in their home, sometimes invading their “private space” and sharing your attention?
- Are you self-motivated? Can you work without supervision and make tough decisions regarding the management of your business?
- Is there a need in your area for family child care homes?
- Will your neighbors support you and your business or frown upon having added noise and possible disturbances from your business? Some homeowners’ associations specifically prohibit home-based businesses. It is easier to obtain permission prior to starting your business, rather than after.
- Are you able and willing to attend classes and workshops necessary to develop your knowledge of appropriate management and child care practices?
- Can your home be set up to safely accommodate children? Will your home be appealing to clients? It may take time to establish your business. Are you able to be without income while you get started?
- Do you have the availability of funds to cover the initial expense of owning your own business? Initial set-up costs include, but are not limited to, toys, books, furniture, art supplies, fingerprinting, background checks, fire extinguishers and smoke detectors.

#### BENEFITS OF BECOMING A FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDER

There are many benefits of owning your own child care business

- Working with children and knowing you are making a significant impact on society’s future.
- Ability to implement policies and activities that are meaningful to you, while ensuring appropriate health and safety measures are maintained.
- No child care costs for your children and/or grandchildren.
- No mileage to work, and you can deduct any mileage associated with your business.
- Lower personal clothing expenses compared to working in a professional office atmosphere.
- Vacations when you want. Schedule with clients prior to vacationing, without waiting for supervisor approval.
- Great tax deductions. Family child care is unique because you can claim a percentage of your mortgage and mortgage interest (or rent payments), utilities, cable, home improvements, home repairs and direct expenses related to your business as tax deductions.
- Local association and group support. Most areas have either a family child care association or support group. Check with your local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency to find the closest one in your area.

If you do not have a local association or support group, the [Florida Family Child Care Home Association](#) will assist you in most areas concerning your business.

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## SECTION 4 – INFORMATION FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

### Opening a Child Care Center

#### LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The first step to opening a child care center is checking the [state licensing requirements and regulations website](#). State and local licensing regulations will outline many requirements for your business, including equipment needed and how many staff members you should hire. Ensure you are in compliance with local codes, ordinances and zoning requirements, which may include an occupancy permit and fire, health and safety inspections. Be sure you have appropriate liability insurance. Other steps may include establishing a fictitious name, getting a federal identification number and determining what type of business entity you are, such as a sole proprietor, partnership or corporate institution.

Contact the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) [Child Care Training Information Center](#) to determine what training is needed or call 1-888-352-2842.

#### COST

Expenses likely to incur include

- Equipment, furnishing and supplies.
- Licenses and permits.
- Employee absences, such as sick leave, vacation and professional days.
- Payroll, taxes, health insurance and business insurance.
- Accountant and/or legal fees.
- Advertising.
- Rent, utility bills, garbage removal and telephone.
- Maintenance, repairs and a fire alarm system.
- Food. The [United States Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) Child Care Food Program](#) may reduce this expense.

#### BUILDING ENROLLMENT

Before you go too far planning a center, ensure your business will be successful. Is there a need for your program? You can access this information by contacting your [local early learning coalition](#) or CCR&R office.

- Do some market research and learn what type of service or program is most needed in your community. Your local coalition is a great source for information about child care in your area.
- Choose your location carefully. Consider neighboring businesses, parking, etc. Your local chamber of commerce may be helpful.

#### DETERMINE RATES

Child care is not known as a business to make you rich. Many programs report not seeing profits for the first six months to a year. Even then, average profit margins are only 10 to 15 percent.

- Profits will vary and depend on the rates, size of your program, age ranges you care for and other services you provide. As a rule, infant care is the most expensive.
- In establishing your rates, learn what comparable rates exist for similar programs in your town.

## SECTION 4 – INFORMATION FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

### ESTABLISH POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Establish a mission statement or philosophy to help guide future decision making on curriculum, hiring of staff and other policies. Most of your health and safety policies will be governed by state licensing regulations. Set up a system for bookkeeping and record keeping and have a written contract of services with families.

It is often recommended you hire an attorney and an accountant. Many people who start a child care center have prior knowledge of child care and psychology, not tax laws or liability issues.

### STAFFING

Ultimately, the heart of your program will be staff members who are with the children daily. Qualifications and training requirements are usually outlined by state regulations. It is worthwhile to hire the highest quality staff you can afford.

### RESOURCES FOR NEW CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

#### DCF Resources

- [Opening a Licensed Child Care Facility.](#)
- [Basic Steps to Opening a Child Care Facility.](#)
- [What You Need to Know About Opening a Child Care Facility.](#)

#### Additional Resources

- [Florida Family Child Care Home Association.](#)
- [Child Care Aware.](#)

## SECTION 4 – INFORMATION FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

### **The Child Care Food Program**

Research shows well-nourished children are healthier, more attentive and have better mental performance than children who are under-nourished. Findings also indicate that children served by the Child Care Food Program (CCFP) eat healthier food than children who bring food from home. The CCFP helps child care facilities implement best practices to ensure children have access to a variety of nutritious foods for healthy growth and to reduce obesity risk.

The CCFP and two related programs, the Afterschool Meals Program and the Homeless Children Nutrition Program, are administered by the Bureau of Child Care Food Programs. These programs provide nutritious meals and snacks to children through public and private partnerships with organizations committed to caring for children. All three programs are funded by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service.

Visit [Florida Health](#) for information and fact sheets about the CCFP, including eligibility guidelines and how to find a participating CCFP provider

### **USDA NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT**

The USDA prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal and, where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation or if all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the department.

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program [Discrimination Complaint Form](#) online, at any USDA office or call 866-632-9992 to request the form.

*For more information, please visit the [Florida Health website](#).*

## SECTION 4 – INFORMATION FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

### After School Funding at a Glance

#### FUNDING AND SUSTAINABILITY

Receiving funding and long-term sustainability can feel daunting. You will find all the tools you need below to get started and plan for the future.

- **Tools**: Take an online tutorial to find new funding sources close to home, see tips on writing proposals and read funding publications that guide you through the funding process.
- **Funding Database**: Unsure where to find funding? Look at the database, which is searchable by agency, location or activity.
- **Expert Advice**: Learn from questions and answers with funders and your peers' success stories.
- **Sponsorship Tips**: Find tips for obtaining and sustaining sponsorship opportunities.
- **Connecting Business with Afterschool**: Collaborate with businesses or build community collaboration to support afterschool.
- **In-Kind Donations and Partnerships**: Expand your offerings through partnerships and access new resources by accessing in-kind donations.
- **Know Your Funders**: A guide to locating funding for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) for afterschool programs.

*For more information, visit the [After School Alliance website](#).*

## SECTION 4 – INFORMATION FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

### Florida’s Early Learning and Developmental Standards – Birth to Kindergarten

Standards and benchmarks reflect the knowledge and skills that a child on a developmental progression should know and be able to do at the end of an age-related timeframe. In 2017, the Office of Early Learning convened a group of national and state early learning content experts to review current standards and recommend revisions to ensure that standards are rich, interactive and lead to better preparation for children based on current research to support high-quality standards. [\*The Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards – Birth to Kindergarten \(2017\)\*](#) were adopted by the State Board of Education in December 2017. There are resources available on OEL’s website for child care providers, child care teachers and families to use to support children’s learning for each domain.

The revised standards address eight early learning and developmental domains reflecting a child’s expected age-appropriate progress. The developmental domains are

- Physical development.
- Approaches to learning.
- Social and emotional development.
- Language and literacy.
- Mathematical thinking.
- Scientific inquiry.
- Social studies.
- Creative expression through the arts.

#### Resources

- [The Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards interactive website.](#)
- [Educators Guide to Understanding the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards.](#)
- [Family resources.](#)

# SECTION 4 – INFORMATION FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

## Requirements for School Readiness Providers

### Health and Safety Inspections

All school readiness providers must meet minimum standards for health and safety and must also have an inspection for health and safety prior to initiating a School Readiness contract, as well as ongoing annual health and safety inspections. Inspections are performed by the child care licensing organization for each county.

### Preservice Training Requirements

All school readiness providers and their staff must meet pre-service training requirements within 90 days of employment. Staff who are within their 90 days of employment and have not yet completed the preservice training requirements must be supervised at all times by someone who has already completed their training. After the 90-day window, any staff who have not yet completed the training would be ineligible to be in a classroom until they have completed the training, regardless of supervision. There are two options available to meet this requirement.

Option 1 (DCF Courses, plus corresponding Exams)

- Health, Safety and Nutrition.
- Child Growth and Development.
- Behavioral Observation and Screening.
- Identifying and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect.

Option 2 (Early Learning Florida Health and Safety Modules)

- Health and Sanitation.
- Safety of the Environment.
- Precautions in Transporting Children (if applicable).
- Safe Sleep Practices (not required for school-age only programs).
- Child Safety and Prevention.
- Planning for Emergencies.
- Prevention of Child Abuse and Supporting Children in Trauma.
- One of the Supporting Social-Emotional Development Modules (Infant/Toddler, Preschool, Mixed-Age group).

### Expulsion and Suspension Policy

All school readiness providers must have a written Expulsion and Suspension Policy. Providers must provide the policy to parents and must obtain signatures from all parents indicating they have been provided the policy.

### Group Size and Active Credential

Effective October 25, 2018, all school readiness providers must maintain the following group size and active credential requirements:

Age Group	Ratios	Maximum Group Size	No Active Credential Required	1 Active Credential Required	2 Active Credentials Required
Birth to 12 months	1:4	12	1-4 children	5-8 children	9-12 children
One Year Olds	1:6	12	1-6 children	7-12 children	N/A
Two Year Olds	1:11	22	1-11 children	12-22 children	N/A
Three Year Olds	1:15	30	1-15 children	16-30 children	N/A
Four, Five, Six Year Olds	1:20	40	1-20 children	21-40 children	N/A
School-Age (>6)	1:25	50	1-25 children	26-50 children	N/A

## SECTION 4 – INFORMATION FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

### **Program Assessment**

Effective July 1, 2018, all school readiness providers must have a Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) observation and meet minimum quality thresholds. CLASS is an observation based program assessment tool that measures the quality of interactions between teachers and children and is recognized internationally for capturing elements within a classroom that improve child outcomes. Providers may be placed on a Quality Improvement Plan if minimum CLASS scores are not achieved.

Qualifying providers may receive a payment differential based on their CLASS scores up to 15% for each care level and unit of care based on their School Readiness reimbursement. In addition, providers implementing an approved child assessment may be eligible for a payment differential up to 5 percent. The total available payment differential for both CLASS scores and implementation of child assessments will not exceed 15 percent.

### **Resources**

All information and resources regarding school readiness health and safety requirements including preservice training requirements, expulsions and suspension policy guidance, the Health and Safety Handbook and Checklists and more are located on the [Health and Safety page](#) of the OEL website.

For more information about program assessment requirements and CLASS, visit the [School Readiness Program Assessment page](#) of the OEL website.

## SECTION 4 – INFORMATION FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

### The Warm Line and Inclusion Services

[Section 1002.82](#), Florida Statutes, mandates the provision of a toll-free number to provide assistance and consultation to child care personnel regarding the inclusion of children with disabilities and special health care needs. This number is known as the [Warm Line](#). The toll-free local Warm Line is available to early learning programs requesting information relating to the disability and special health care needs of children they are serving.

Child care personnel in your community should be informed this number is available to them when they have questions about children with disabilities. The Warm Line is answered by an inclusion specialist who can provide technical assistance to the provider. A child care provider might call the Warm Line with the following questions:

- What type of modifications must I make for a child that uses a wheelchair?
- How can I include a child with blindness, cerebral palsy, down syndrome, etc. in our program?
- Can you give me some behavior management strategies for a child that has frequent tantrums?

The [Best Practices in Inclusive Early Care and Education \(BPIECE\)](#) is a voluntary self-assessment tool developed for early learning practitioners and program directors. The purpose of the tool is to provide a framework that builds a bridge between research on inclusion and practices in early childhood education settings. The child care programs can utilize the BPIECE to identify areas of strength and areas for growth. Child care staff can complete the BPIECE alone or with the assistance of their local inclusion specialist.

If you are unsure how to contact your [local early learning coalition](#) inclusion specialist, contact OEL at 1-866-357-3239. Knowing where to refer providers and families can help minimize frustrations, increase awareness and create successful situations for all.

*Note: The Warm Line is not intended for child care listing purposes. Parents of children with disabilities should receive the same services as families of typically-developing children from CCR&R agencies. The Americans with Disabilities Act prevents businesses, including child care centers and homes, from discriminating on the basis of disability*

# SECTION 4 – INFORMATION FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

## Sample Welcome Letter for New Providers

Insert  
Coalition  
Logo

Insert Coalition/Contractor name here

Insert Contractor Logo  
(if different)

(Insert Date)

Dear Provider:

Congratulations on becoming a child care provider in \_\_\_\_\_ county! Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) welcomes you to the child care profession.

CCR&R offers free information and referral services to families looking for child care. We also provide technical assistance to child care providers and free child care listings to families searching for care. If you have not done so, please register your program in Florida's Early Learning Provider Services Portal at <https://providerservices.floridaearlylearning.com>. Registering your program will allow us to connect potential families and clients to your business. We perform these services for all legally operating child care providers. There are no charges or fees associated with using the provider portal and connecting families to your program. Once your program has been added to the provider portal, you should start receiving calls from families whose needs match the services offered by your program. *If you are ever asked to provide a payment for CCR&R services, please report this to the CCR&R State Network office at 1-866-357-3239.*

When someone calls CCR&R for assistance in locating child care, a CCR&R specialist gives them a variety of information including types of care available, what constitutes quality care, developmental needs of different age children, average child care cost, access to provider inspection reports and complaint history and more. The CCR&R specialist then enters the family's needs into the early learning portal where they are matched with providers who most closely meet those needs. An unbiased list of providers is generated from the early learning portal and is sent to the family along with additional information and community resources to help their various needs. You may also refer your families to us if you notice they may need community resources or supports to stabilize any personal and/or economic challenges they are experiencing.

Enclosed is a copy of the *Quality Checklist for Evaluating Early Learning Programs*. Parents are encouraged to use the checklist when interviewing potential providers. We have also enclosed information about Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) and School Readiness programs also located at <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/>. Many new providers are interested in offering these programs. If you have questions about VPK and/or School Readiness requirements and contracts, you may contact our organization at [insert local number](#).

CCR&R strives to provide families with the most current and accurate information possible about provider services. It is important that you update your information in the provider portal as changes occur. Our staff are available to assist you with registering your program in the provider portal and answering your questions.

We want to help you succeed in your new business of providing quality services for children and families. We have enclosed additional resource materials for you to review at your convenience. If you have any questions, comments, concerns or need assistance please call us.

Sincerely,

(Insert Specialist Name)

Child Care Resource and Referral Specialist

(Insert Coalition or Contractor Address, Local, Toll Free phone number, Fax – Website - funder logos)

# SECTION 5 – CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL SERVICE DELIVERY

## What Does it Take to be a Child Care Resource and Referral Specialist?

Providing high-quality Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) services is an opportunity to assist families in making informed choices. Knowledge of quality early learning and child care options is necessary to help families understand and learn how to make an informed choice of a provider or program. Choosing a provider is an important decision for a family to make.

### CCR&R SPECIALISTS SHOULD POSSESS

To provide high-quality CCR&R services, a CCR&R specialist must be knowledgeable, an excellent communicator and have positive interpersonal skills. An individual who possesses these characteristics, along with a professional attitude and genuine belief in the importance of high-quality early learning and child care for all children, will be a dedicated and valued member of Florida's CCR&R state network.

#### Knowledge

CCR&R specialists should be well informed on a wide range of topics including, but not limited to

- Early learning and child care options available to families.
- Tips on selecting a quality provider or program and regularly monitoring care.
- Quality indicators such as ratios, group sizes, accreditation, staff-child interactions, health and safety and staff education and qualifications.
- State and/or local licensing regulations, including background screening requirements.
- Financial assistance options.
- Local community resources.
- Child growth and development.

#### Communication Skills

Knowledge alone is not enough. The ability to listen and communicate information is critical for CCR&R specialists. Knowledge of any topic is only valuable when one can effectively communicate that knowledge to others. Skilled CCR&R specialist can identify questions and concerns their customers may find difficult to express. CCR&R specialists should also be conscientious of the following when assisting families:

- Attitude is often reflected in tone of voice and is as important as the content of words spoken.
- Talking too much, rather than actively listening, may discourage the customer from sharing information.
- Every conversation has an impact. Conversations with customers should not seem rushed.
- Specialists should communicate genuine interest in assisting families.
- Providing too much information may distract or overwhelm customers.
- Conversations should flow smoothly and not sound scripted or computer driven.

#### Interpersonal Skills

Sometimes referred to as “people skills,” a person uses interpersonal skills to relate to and interact with others. CCR&R specialists must be able to respond calmly and non-judgmentally when someone expresses intense frustration and emotions or opinions that differ from their own. All CCR&R specialists must be able to problem solve in a positive way and be responsive to the needs and concerns of each family.

# SECTION 5 – CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL SERVICE DELIVERY

## Conducting a CCR&R Interview and Provider Search

### REQUIRED ELEMENTS OF A CCR&R INTERVIEW

- CCR&R services must be provided to all individuals, including those applying for School Readiness and/or VPK, regardless of age, income or individual circumstance.
- CCR&R services must be offered to customers within two business days of the request. Many CCR&R requests will be made over the phone. When a customer leaves a voice message, the customer must be called back within two business days.
- CCR&R specialists must request, at a minimum, the following information from a customer requesting a child care listing:
  - Location of where care is needed.
  - Schedule of when care is needed.
  - Type of care requested.
  - Ages or date of birth of the children.
  - Reason for care.
  - Any special needs of the children, if applicable.
  - Family’s primary language spoken, if not English.
- CCR&R specialists must offer to provide a customized list of child care providers based on the specific needs of the customer.
  - The child care listing must include at least six child care providers, unless there are fewer than six providers available that meet the customer’s specific needs.
  - The child care listing must include:
    - Information to access provider licensing status.
    - How to access information regarding provider participation in quality standards (ex: Gold Seal, Program Assessment, etc.)
    - How to submit a complaint to child care licensing.
    - Contact information for the state and local child care provider licensing agencies.
- CCR&R specialists must offer information regarding the full range of available provider types, such as
  - Licensed and exempt child care centers.
  - Licensed and registered family child care homes.
  - Large family child care homes.
  - Head Start and Early Head Start programs.
  - School-age care.
  - The Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program.
- CCR&R specialists must offer to send a child care listing and applicable information to the customer by
  - Telephone.
  - Email.
  - Fax.
  - Mail.
  - In-person.
- CCR&R specialists must offer information regarding financial assistance options, such as
  - School Readiness.
  - VPK.

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- Head Start or Early Head Start programs.
- Provider discounts and scholarships.
- Tax credits.
- CCR&R specialists must offer community resources, such as
  - Federal and state agencies.
  - Social services organizations.
  - Child health care.
  - Child welfare and abuse.
  - Special needs resources.
- CCR&R specialists must offer consumer education resources, such as
  - The “[Family Guide: Selecting Quality Programs for Children.](#)”
  - The “[Quality Checklist for Evaluating Early Learning Programs.](#)”
  - Information about quality indicators.
  - Information about child development.
  - Information about developmental screenings.
  - Information about child care licensing and background checks of providers.
- The child care listing, information regarding the state and local child care licensing agency and any other information requested must be sent to the customer within two business days.

*Note: A customer can always decline any offered information.*

### CUSTOMER SERVICE BEST PRACTICES

- Greet the customer using a friendly tone of voice and provide your name and the name of your coalition or agency.
- Ask for the customer’s full name, address, county, phone number, email address and if he or she has used CCR&R services in the past.
- Search for the customer in the database to prevent entering duplicate records.
- Explain that CCR&R is a free and confidential service providing computer generated child care listings based on a match between the family’s needs and providers in the CCR&R database.
- Explain the child care listing you are providing is not a recommendation.
- Ask the customer, “Is this your first experience in selecting care for your child?” First time parents will be new to this process and generally more concerned about leaving their child in the care of another person. Be prepared to explain various types of care such as family child care homes, child care centers, school-age programs, faith-based providers, VPK and more. New parents may have assumptions, biases, questions or concerns about certain types of care based on news reports, friends or family input. These issues should be addressed and not dismissed or ignored.
- If a customer requests financial assistance, but is not eligible for school readiness services, always offer to generate a child care listing and offer information about other possible financial assistance options, such as provider scholarships and discounts, negotiated rates, Head Start and Early Head Start programs and other resources.
- It is your responsibility as a CCR&R specialist to provide information about all early learning and child care options accurately without expressing personal bias.
- Be alert to indications that a parent may have a child in need of special services, such as a disability or special health care need. Parents may be reluctant to discuss such issues since they may be concerned about discrimination affecting their ability to select a provider. The customer may provide clues by mentioning a frequent change of providers or frequent absences. Probing

## SECTION 5 – CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL SERVICE DELIVERY

for more information requires skill and sensitivity. Some parents may share that their child has a disability. A good response is, “Tell me more.” Never say, “What’s wrong with him or her?”

- When talking to the customer, explain that you must enter information into the computer to search for providers that most closely match the family’s preferences. If they express reluctance in answering some questions, explain that certain data is required by the state, which funds CCR&R and provides this free service to all Florida families. The information is used to help analyze the early learning and child care needs of families and improve availability of services. If they are still unwilling to answer, continue the interview filling in as much as you can and entering “refused” where appropriate.
- Tell customers they can call back if they have any questions or need additional help locating child care.

*Note: Check out the [CCR&R Best Practices Guide](#) for more best practices.*

### QUICK CUSTOMER SERVICE TIPS

- Smile when talking to customers, even over the phone. When you smile, your tone of voice is more welcoming.
- When providing services to a customer in person, be aware of your body language and nonverbal communication and make eye contact.
- Address customers by their name to build rapport and show courtesy.
- The customer interview should be conversational and not scripted.
- Remain calm when a customer is upset. Respond respectfully and courteously.
- Engage in active listening by re-stating or paraphrasing what the customer has said to confirm you understand what he or she has told you.
- Serve all customers with respect and dignity. CCR&R is here to serve families, not judge them. Follow the “Golden Rule” – “Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you.”
- While we want to inform and educate families on early learning and child care options, too much information can be overwhelming. Be considerate of how much information is being provided.
- Avoid jargon and acronyms to be sure the customer understands you.

## SECTION 5 – CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL SERVICE DELIVERY

### Sample Customer Call

*Note: This is a sample call only and should not be used as a script. Your CCR&R interview should be conversational and have a natural flow.*

- CCR&R Specialist:** Thank you for calling Child Care Resource and Referral. This is Mary. How may I help you?
- Caller:* I need help with child care.
- CCR&R Specialist:** You have called the right place! Is this your first time using our services?
- Caller:* Yes.
- CCR&R Specialist:** Can I please get your name?
- Caller:* My name is Ann Smith.
- CCR&R Specialist:** Okay Ann, what kind of help do you need with child care?
- Caller:* I need help finding someone to watch my baby and I am terrified! I have to return to work soon and I don't know anything about finding child care.
- CCR&R Specialist:** Choosing a child care provider is a very important decision. I can provide you with some information that will help you make an informed decision regarding care for your baby. Hopefully, this will help to ease your concerns. Would you like this information?
- Caller:* Yes! I just really need help.
- CCR&R Specialist:** Okay, great. I will need some information from you so I can generate a computerized list of providers that match your needs.
- Caller:* That sounds good, but how will I know which provider to choose?
- CCR&R Specialist:** I will provide you with some information on choosing quality child care. I will also provide you with the website to child care licensing so you are able to view the inspection reports of the providers that interest you before you make your final decision. Sound good?
- Caller:* Yes! Sounds good. That makes me feel better. Thank you.
- CCR&R Specialist:** I am happy to hear you are feeling better already. Before choosing a child care provider, try to make at least three visits, at different times of the day, to each provider you are considering. Make sure you meet your child's teacher. Does he or she pay attention to each child and seem pleasant, warm and nurturing? Do the children look happy? Is the facility clean and safe on the inside and outside? These are just a few questions you should ask yourself. I will include a complete checklist of questions to ask yourself and providers you are considering.
- Caller:* That is exactly what I need, a checklist.
- CCR&R Specialist:** The checklist helps many parents. Now, I am going to ask you some questions about your child and your schedule that will help in your search. Can you please tell me the name and age of your child?
- Caller:* His name is John and he is 5 months old.
- CCR&R Specialist:** And can you tell me about your schedule and when John will need to be in care? Also, where will you be looking for care? Would you like someplace close to home or work? I can narrow the search down to a specific zip code if you would prefer.
- Caller:* I will be going back to work full-time from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., so we will need a place that would be open at least from 7 in the morning to 6 in the evening. I live and work in the same area. Could you please do the search for 32311?
- CCR&R Specialist:** Absolutely, that is not a problem. Have you thought about what type of care you are interested in?

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- Caller:* What types of care are there?
- CCR&R Specialist:** There are different types. Child care centers are usually stand-alone centers, which can either be licensed or exempt from licensing requirements. Centers are considered license-exempt only if they are part of a church or parochial school. A family child care home is regulated care provided in the home of the caregiver. Group size will vary according to caregiver preference, county regulations and children's ages. Licensed or registered family child care homes may provide care for no more than 10 children. Licensed homes must pass an inspection prior to receiving a license.
- Caller:* I think I am interested in a licensed center.
- CCR&R Specialist:** Ok, I will perform a search for licensed child care centers only. Some of these centers may be Gold Seal accredited. Gold Seal accreditation indicates the center has gone through an accreditation process and made a commitment to provide quality care for children. I will include a brochure on Gold Seal accreditation in the packet I send to you. Does your child have any special needs you would like me to consider?
- Caller:* No, at least not any that I know of.
- CCR&R Specialist:** What about the cost of care? Will that be a factor for you?
- Caller:* No, my husband and I will both be working. We should be fine with the cost.
- CCR&R Specialist:** Okay, is there anything about the environment of the center you would like me to specify such as no pets, Spanish speaking or no swimming pool?
- Caller:* No, not really. He is so little. I just want someone good.
- CCR&R Specialist:** Would you like any information on other community resources that might benefit your family, such as information on health care options for your child or other social services available in our community?
- Caller:* No, thank you. We have health insurance through my husband's job and I do not think we are in need of any other social services.
- CCR&R Specialist:** If you don't have any other requests, I will search our database of child care providers with the information you have provided. Would you like the list and information by phone, mail or email?
- Caller:* I would like you to email the information, if possible. My email address is annsmith@gmail.com.
- CCR&R Specialist:** I will send you an email today that will include the child care listing, which will have detailed information on each provider. I will also include the information on how to access the child care licensing website to review inspection reports and the Quality Child Care Checklist that I mentioned earlier. Because it is your first time choosing child care, I will also include the Family Guide, which is a useful resource and includes more information on how to choose a quality provider. Do you have any questions?
- Caller:* No, not that I can think of.
- CCR&R Specialist:** When you receive the information, call the providers you're interested in to see if they have any openings for infants. After you've narrowed your choices to a couple of providers, check the complaint history and inspection reports. Remember, you know your child best and only you can make the best decision on which provider is right for you.
- Caller:* Thank you so much! You have been very helpful!
- CCR&R Specialist:** I am so glad I could help. Please feel free to call back if you have any other questions or you need additional child care listings.

## SECTION 5 – CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL SERVICE DELIVERY

*Caller:* *Thank you Mary!*

**CCR&R Specialist:** **You are welcome and good luck with your search!**

## SECTION 5 – CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL SERVICE DELIVERY

### Customized Child Care Listings

CCR&R organizations must provide a listing of legally operating child care providers in their service area to each individual requesting services. The listing must be provided within 2 business days and in the format requested by the individual.

The child care listing must include a minimum of 6 providers matching the criteria identified by the individual requesting services, unless fewer than 6 match the criteria. Along with the child care listing, the CCR&R specialist must include

- Information on how to access each provider’s licensing status, required health and safety standards, recent inspection reports and any history of violations.
- Information on how to access voluntary quality standards met by the provider, such as accreditation, Gold Seal, program assessment, child assessment or participation in local quality initiatives.
- Information on how to submit a complaint to the child care licensing agency.
- Contact information for the state and local child care provider licensing agencies.
- Any additional consumer education and community resources relevant to the customer’s requests.

The individual requesting services may decline some or all of the information offered. If any information is declined, the CCR&R specialist is not required to send that information. The individual requesting services may choose to pick up an informational packet in person or receive it by mail, email or fax.

## SECTION 5 – CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL SERVICE DELIVERY

### **Child Care for Non-Traditional Work Schedules**

Today's competitive job market may require parents to work non-traditional work schedules in industries such as customer service, hospitality and manufacturing. Many employers require employees to work hours outside the typical business day, which may include late nights, early mornings, overnight, rotating schedules or working on holidays. Such schedules can make it difficult for parents to find quality child care.

Most child care providers are open only during traditional work hours and may not be able to accommodate families with alternative schedules. It is important to help parents determine their earliest start time and latest end time so they can find a provider that covers those hours. Encourage parents to discuss their schedule changes and flexibility needs with their caregiver. Suggest that parents work out arrangements to tell the caregiver as far in advance as possible what their work schedules may be. Family child care homes usually have more schedule flexibility than centers. Centers near large companies that require alternative schedules, such as a hospital, may be open at non-traditional hours.

Informal care with a friend, neighbor or relative may also be an option. Suggest that parents consider someone reliable and dependable. If parents are taking their children to someone's home, they should ensure it is a safe environment. Encourage parents to ask co-workers what they do for child care. Are they using family, friends, a child care center or family home? A co-worker might be interested in a shared care option where he or she can share the caregiver and cost.

Suggest that parents talk to their employer about working alternate shifts. Parents may be able to work the night shift while their spouses or partners work the day. Be aware that this type of arrangement does not work for every couple and does not allow for much quality family time. Parents must make the decision that is right for their family. Parents may still have times during the day when their children need to be cared for, but these hours may fall into the normal working day and could be easier to cover.

When parents are interviewing child care centers they should ask if any of the teachers offer care outside of center hours. Parents should speak to teachers and arrange interviews outside of the center. Teachers may be able to watch children before or after the center closes and can transport children home. A variety of different care options may be required to cover all hours that care is needed. Combining care from a center or a family care home with an informal arrangement with friends or family may be the best arrangement for some families.

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### Financial Assistance Options

There are many families who need financial assistance for child care and are either on the waiting list or not eligible for services. Be sure to share financial assistance options with these families.

- Offer to search for child care providers who have discounts or scholarship rates.
- Offer to search for child care providers based on the maximum amount the family can afford to pay for child care.
- Encourage parents to consider bartering and negotiating with the child care provider. Parents may be able to receive a discount if they agree to provide a service to the provider, such as cleaning, administrative duties or sharing a special skill such as dance or music.
- Explain available tax benefits.
- Offer to search for different types of providers. Family child care homes or faith-based programs may have lower rates or may be more willing to work with parents.
- Explain VPK if a child is eligible.
- Explain Head Start or Early Head Start programs if a child may be eligible.
- Boys and Girls Club, YMCA or other membership organizations may offer scholarships or discounted services.
- Ask parents if they can talk with their employers about adjusting work hours or shifts for child care purposes.
- Encourage parents to reach out to family and friends who may be able to help in any way.
- Refer families to other community resources that may not directly alleviate the cost of child care, but may free up funds in other areas of their budget and allow more money to go toward the cost of child care such as
  - o Cash assistance.
  - o Food assistance
  - o Child support enforcement.
  - o Housing assistance.
  - o Reemployment assistance.
  - o SafeLink Wireless' free cellphone program.
  - o Social Security benefits for disability and/or survivor benefits.
  - o Local organizations, churches and charities that offer assistance to families.

## SECTION 5 – CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL SERVICE DELIVERY

### **How CCR&R Can Help with Difficult Situations**

As a CCR&R specialist, there will be many times you are challenged with a difficult, stressful family interview either in person or on the phone. There are no easy solutions for dealing effectively with these difficult situations.

All CCR&R specialists should have immediate access to emergency community resources and be able to refer callers with immediate needs, such as shelter, food, medical needs, child/spousal abuse and more to the appropriate resources. Staff should have access to a current resource guide for community services for all counties within the coalition's service area and also know how to access and utilize [2-1-1](#) by telephone and the internet.

Be clear about how you can help the customer and keep the conversation directed to his/her early learning and child care needs. You will be more helpful if you resist the temptation to get caught up with other problems and focus your attention on their early learning and child care needs. By referring the customer to other social service agencies for help with immediate problems, you show you empathize with their situation and there are other agencies and resources available to them.

Do not allow yourself to get drawn into an argument about child rearing or other sensitive issues. Maintain a neutral position and present the facts as objectively as you can. Place the responsibility for making the child care decision back with the family. If you are ever concerned about the safety of a child, try to talk further with the caller about his or her concerns for the child. Use this time to obtain additional information about the situation, share information and resources with the customer, as appropriate, and be ready to obtain assistance from a supervisor if needed.

## SECTION 5 – CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL SERVICE DELIVERY

### Defusing Hostile Situations and Difficult Scenarios

During the course of a CCR&R interview, a customer may become hostile and make racist, sexist or other insulting comments disturbing to you. This can make it challenging to remain respectful of the family and still keep your sense of integrity. Avoid overreacting or losing control and focus on defusing the situation. Some tips to defuse a difficult situation are

- Acknowledge the person’s feelings and the situation.
- Show empathy and be seen as caring.
- Use active listening.
- Suggest alternative solutions and offer choices.
- Know your triggers and watch your tone of voice.
- Think positive thoughts.
- Do not counterattack verbally or by using nonverbal intimidation.
- Focus on assisting the customer with their early learning and child care needs.

What works for one person, may not work for others. If you are faced with a situation you feel unable to handle, seek help from your supervisor. If you feel you are in danger, your safety and the safety of others around you is a top priority; therefore, refer to your internal safety procedures. Afterward, the CCR&R team should discuss the situation and brainstorm possible solutions for similar calls in the future.

The below scenarios are examples of difficult situations CCR&R specialists are frequently presented with. Under the scenarios, possible solutions and resources are provided. Each coalition service area has resources for families that may not be mentioned in the options. A good CCR&R specialist will research all community resources that meet the needs of families in difficult situations.

#### A GRANDPARENT CARING FOR A GRANDCHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

*A grandmother has just received custody of her 3-year-old grandson who has autism spectrum disorder and is seeking assistance. She has limited income and is unable to work, but is interested in placing her grandson in a program that will prepare him for school and give her some time to herself.*

- In addition to offering a child care listing and education on selecting a quality program, you could
- Refer to additional community agencies and resources, if necessary and/or available, that cater to grandparents raising grandchildren.
  - Refer to the Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System for referrals to assist families with children who have special needs and/or special health care needs.
  - Refer to 2-1-1.
  - Offer to search the database for providers who have training in providing care to children with special needs.
  - Screen the customer to see if she might be eligible for school readiness services.

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### WIDOWED MOTHER

*A mother of three children ages 2, 4 and 7 calls in a frantic state. Her husband died two weeks ago and she realizes she must go to work. She has not worked in 10 years and has no current income. She is requesting assistance finding child care and has no means of paying for the care.*

In addition to offering a child care listing and education on selecting a quality program, you could

- Refer to additional community agencies and resources to assist with food, cash assistance and/or clothing.
- Ask the customer if she has applied for social security survivors benefits.
- Refer to crisis assistance and counseling programs.
- Refer to 2-1-1.
- Screen the parent for school readiness services eligibility.
- Refer to Florida KidCare for assistance with the cost of health care.
- Refer to programs that provide grief counseling for families.
- Refer to the Department of Children and Families for food assistance and/or cash assistance.
- Refer to local job search assistance programs.
- Encourage her to let family and friends know about her situation, as they may be able to help.

### TEENAGE PARENT

*You receive a call from a teenage girl who just had a baby. She wishes to return to school, but cannot afford to pay for child care. She has no income and has been alienated by her family.*

In addition to offering a child care listing and education on selecting a quality program, you could

- Refer to a local teenage parent program offered through the school district.
- Refer to parenting classes and support groups for teenage parents.
- Refer to community agencies and resources to assist with food, cash assistance, clothing, diapers and more.
- Refer to crisis assistance organizations.
- Refer to 2-1-1.
- Screen the teenage parent for school readiness services eligibility or other financial assistance.
- Refer to Florida KidCare for assistance with the cost of health care.
- Refer to local job search assistance programs.
- Encourage her to let family and friends know about her situation.
- Encourage her to contact child support enforcement.

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## Helping Families Experiencing Homelessness

### DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness refers to a state in which individuals lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, including children who are sharing housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or similar reason. Families who are experiencing homelessness may be living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations or live in emergency or transitional shelters or abandoned in hospitals, cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations. Homelessness may apply to migrant children under certain circumstances.

### CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

Natural disasters (e.g., storms, hurricanes, mudslides, fires) have caused many families to experience homelessness. Domestic violence can also be a reason that families experience homelessness. According to the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, for women, domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness. The top causes of homelessness among families are lack of affordable housing, unemployment, poverty and low wages.

### IDENTIFYING AND ASSESSING NEED

1.2 million children under 6 years old in the United States experience homelessness every year. As a CCR&R organization, you may already be serving families with young children who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk for homelessness. You play an important role in identifying, supporting, and connecting these families to resources that can help keep them healthy. There are many resources to help your program in this process. Self-assessment tools such as this [one](#) developed by the Administration on Children and Families (ACF) can assist your organization in identifying families who are at risk for homelessness, to help support them and connect them with the resources they may need.

When working with children and families who are homeless it is important to keep in mind the following.

- The family may be eligible for a School Readiness Child Care Authorization (CCA) or referral from the homeless shelter or domestic violence shelter. Check with your local coalition about the referral process and to get a list of agencies in your county can provide referrals.
- Become familiar with regulations that provide flexibility or grace periods related to completing paperwork and meeting health requirement deadlines for families experiencing homelessness.
- Identify and connect with social service programs that can assist with obtaining stable housing or safe temporary housing and emergency funds for rent, utilities and support services.
- When working with families experiencing homelessness, use [strengths-based approaches](#) that include perspectives of different cultures.
- Connect with community health and wellness partners to maintain and promote healthy environments for children (e.g., park districts, museums, boy's and girl's clubs).
- Help families enroll in Medicaid, Florida KidCare or other health insurance.
- Connect families with health services including physical health, dental health, mental health and food and nutrition services.
- Become familiar with resources available to help prevent families from experiencing homelessness.
- Work collaboratively with families experiencing homelessness to help them access resources.

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- Become familiar with resources available to families with young children experiencing homelessness.
- Develop strong relationships with families experiencing homelessness to help build resilience and trust.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Supporting Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness](#) interactive learning modules from the Head Start Early Childhood and Knowledge Center.
- [Serving Young Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness](#) from Child Care Aware of America.
- [Expanding Early Care and Education of Children Experiencing Homelessness](#) from the Office of the Administration for Children and Families.

*Note: Adapted from the Head Start Early Childhood and Knowledge Center's [Caring for the Health and Wellness of Children Experiencing Homelessness](#).*

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## CCR&R and Trauma Informed Care

### WHAT IS TRAUMA?

Trauma can be described as an event that is extremely upsetting and temporarily overwhelms a person, interfering with the ability to process information or make rational decisions. Trauma has many different shapes and can be a single or reoccurring event, such as a death, divorce or abuse. During a traumatic experience, some type of violence or violation at the hands of an authority figure can occur. Staff must remember that although the events of trauma experiences are often in the past, the lasting effects can shape how individuals make decisions, behave and live their lives every day. In order to be effective, you must recognize that every person coming into the agency has experienced trauma in one form or another. Recognizing the existence of trauma will allow staff members to assist customers in the best possible manner, without accidentally re-traumatizing them.

### WHAT IS A TRAUMA INFORMED CARE APPROACH?

A trauma informed care (TIC) approach from a CCR&R prospective recognizes the potential for trauma exposure in each of its customers. TIC is an organizational approach to program operations that involves understanding, anticipating and responding to the behaviors and expectations of customers who have been traumatized. TIC services minimize the possibility of re-victimization by creating safe environments that foster partnership and support for customers. TIC is a cultural shift in the perception of someone seeking services from “What’s wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?”

### An Effective TIC Approach Consists of the Following Pieces:

- **Realization** about trauma and how trauma can affect families.
- **Recognizing** the signs of trauma, such as flashbacks, dissociation, avoidance, social withdrawal, increased arousal, anxiousness, inability to process information, defensiveness and inability to trust.
- **Respond** with an understanding that experience of traumatic events is life shaping.
  - This includes every level of staff fashioning their language, behaviors and policies to take into consideration the experience of trauma among their audience.
- **Resisting** re-traumatization of clients.

A person can be triggered when an interaction or experience reminds them of a traumatic occurrence or emotion that was present during a traumatic event. Often service providers can unintentionally trigger customers because of their position of authority defined by the approval or denial of a benefit.

Those in a position of authority must be extra mindful that their interactions and practices foster a neutral environment that supports, but does not enable. Communication must be offered in non-intimidating ways, while not portraying the role of an expert; however, the service provider must take the role of a valuable resource that families can come to rely on and seek out for guidance.

### TIC APPLICABLE STRATEGIES FOR CCR&R DELIVERY SERVICES

- Assume everyone you encounter has experienced some sort of trauma.

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- Always request to offer the individual privacy, such as shutting the door, and be sure to receive permission before doing so.
- Be intentional with your body language and posture to not appear intimidating.
- Guide the direction of conversation by establishing that you are here to help and that you enjoy helping.
- Build rapport for information exchange to be successful.
- Start the conversation with an intentional piece of affirmation, but avoid affirming materialistic and physical elements. Affirming physical and materialistic elements can be detrimental to the customer when those elements change or are no longer available.
  - When speaking with a customer use phrases, such as
    - “I am very excited to talk with you about child care options.”
    - “Your name is very pretty. Your child’s name is lovely.”
    - “It is great that you care about what your child experiences.”
    - “I can tell you are a hard worker. Let us see if we can get you what you need.”
  - When speaking with a customer avoid phrases, such as
    - “I like your shirt.”
    - “Your hair looks nice.”
    - “You have nice handwriting.”
    - “You know what I mean.”
- Avoid using agency lingo. Use applicable terminology and explanations.
- Use transactional social talk including informational exchange with social talk, joking and comments on the weather. This helps build trust and sets the tone of the atmosphere.
- Establish a position of service and support through attitude, body language and determination to assist customers.
- Simplify procedures. Building an efficient way to conduct business prevents customers from viewing dealings with the agency as a barrier to service.
- Share user-friendly materials for consumer education.
- Build partnerships within the community. Identify agencies that share customers with your agency first. This will help streamline the navigation of services in the community.
- Validate community resources so current information is available to customers.
- Visit community resources to see what is offered and what the customer experience is like.
- Ensure parental education is conducted in a way that people are left feeling empowered and edified, rather than deflated and defeated.
- Foster an impartial environment by not choosing sides and working towards a solution.

### THE INVESTMENT

We must invest in the future. A family-driven care approach allows for families to take charge of their own life and improve methods, while also helping others navigate the system. Service providers have a privilege of depositing protective factors into each interaction with families. All families can benefit from protective factors. Protective factors are positive attributes that strengthen all families without making them feel singled out or judged. When protective factors are shared effectively, parents adopt positive practices, individual lives are improved, trauma is reduced and ultimately the whole community benefits.

Trauma is scientifically proven to adversely affect a person for their entire life. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) questionnaire shows people with a higher rate of traumatic events are more likely to experience unfavorable health issues. Trauma-free experiences are considered the best practice to offer

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customers. Service care professionals have an advantage of daily exposure to those in need of the benefits that TIC has to offer. Easing stress factors families face should be considered an honor and result in better relationships between parents and children. When trauma is reduced, the future is better.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Adverse Childhood Experiences Study](#)
- [American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress](#)
- [Chadwick Center](#)
- [Community Charter School of Paterson](#)
- [FSU Center for Prevention and Early Intervention](#)
- [Childhood Violent Trauma Center](#)
- [National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder](#)
- [National Center for Trauma Informed Care](#)
- [National Center for Victims of Crime](#)
- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)

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### CCR&R Evaluations, Certification and Quality Assessments

Within four months of employment as a CCR&R specialist, CCR&R organizations must ensure that all specialists are trained in customer service, consumer education, community resources, financial assistance programs for families and available types of child care and early learning providers and programs specific to their service area.

The CCR&R evaluation is an open book evaluation and should be completed individually under the CCR&R coordinator's or designated trainer's supervision. The evaluation is not a group activity and may be completed at the specialist's work station. The CCR&R state network does not impose a specific time limit for this evaluation, as some may require more time than others; however, most are able to complete each evaluation in an average of two hours.

A CCR&R coordinator or designated trainer with coordinator certification must administer evaluations locally, in accordance with instructions from the CCR&R state network office. State CCR&R staff score each evaluation and issue certificates to those achieving certification. Certificates are mailed to the CCR&R Coordinator.

#### CCR&R SPECIALIST EVALUATION

CCR&R specialists including staff with blended responsibilities, such as CCR&R, School Readiness, VPK and inclusion, who provide CCR&R services to customers, must pass the CCR&R specialist evaluation prior to completion of their fourth month of training.

- Any CCR&R staff with more than a two year break in employment and/or work responsibilities in CCR&R must re-take the CCR&R specialist evaluation.
- CCR&R specialists who do not achieve certification on the evaluation must receive additional training and repeat the evaluation process within 90 calendar days from the date of the result letter.

#### CCR&R COORDINATOR EVALUATION

All CCR&R coordinators and designated trainers must achieve coordinator certification by completing both the CCR&R specialist and CCR&R coordinator evaluations within four months of assuming their position.

#### CCR&R QUALITY ASSURANCE ASSESSMENTS

The CCR&R coordinator or supervisor should observe each CCR&R staff member, including all blended staff, and conduct a complete family interview at least once a year. The CCR&R coordinator should use the current Quality Assurance Assessment Form developed by the CCR&R state network. The CCR&R coordinator should provide technical assistance and training to any staff that has not met the required CCR&R elements. Completed assessments should be retained on file locally and made available to the Office of Early Learning upon request.

## CONCLUSION

This reference guide will prove helpful as you begin or continue your training as a CCR&R specialist. CCR&R can be a very rewarding career because with your help, families will receive information and guidance to help them make important decisions about which child care setting is the right one.

This job can also be very challenging, as you will be confronted with difficult situations that may not always have an easy solution. CCR&R knows you will do all you can to help families that contact you for assistance. If you have questions or need technical assistance to help you find resources necessary for your job, please do not hesitate to contact us at 1-866-357-3239.

*Thank you for all you do for Florida's families!*



**Florida's Office of Early Learning**  
**Child Care Resource and Referral Network**

250 Marriott Drive  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Main Line: 850-717-8550  
Toll-Free: 1-866-357-3239  
Fax: 850-921-0028



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## CCR&R Reference Guide Links

Page 2:

- OEL Website – <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com>

Page 3:

- OEL Website – <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com>

Page 13:

- Florida’s laws and requirements – <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/child-care/laws-and-requirements>
- Florida Statutes Sections 402.26 - 402.319 –  
<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/childcare/docs/FloridaStatutes.pdf>
- Chapter 65C-20 F.A.C. – <http://ccrain.fl-dcf.org/documents/2/469.pdf>
- Chapter 65C-22 F.A.C. – <http://ccrain.fl-dcf.org/documents/2/470.pdf>
- Chapter 65C-25 F.A.C. – [http://ccrain.fl-dcf.org/\(X\(1\)\)/documents/2/27.pdf](http://ccrain.fl-dcf.org/(X(1))/documents/2/27.pdf)
- Office of Child Care Regulation and Background Screening –  
<http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/child-care>
- Broward County Child Care Licensing and Enforcement –  
<http://www.broward.org/Consumer/ChildcareLicensingEnforcement/Pages/Default.aspx>
- Hillsborough County Child Care Licensing Program –  
<http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/government/departments/childcare-licensing>
- Palm Beach County Child Care Licensing Program –  
<http://palmbeach.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/environmental-health/child-care-licensing/index.html>
- Pinellas County Child Care Licensing Program –  
<http://pinellas.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/environmental-health/pclb/>
- Sarasota County Group Care Services –  
<http://sarasota.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/environmental-health/group-care/index.html>
- DCF Child Care Provider Online Complaint Form -  
<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/childcare/complaint/>
- Florida Abuse Hotline - <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/abuse-hotline>

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- Section 402.313, F.S. -  
[http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&Search\\_String=&URL=0400-0499/0402/Sections/0402.313.html](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=0400-0499/0402/Sections/0402.313.html)
- Chapter 65C-20, F.A.C. - <https://www.flrules.org/gateway/ChapterHome.asp?Chapter=65C-20>

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- Section 402, F.S. -  
[http://leg.state.fl.us/STATUTES/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&URL=0400-0499/0402/0402ContentsIndex.html&StatuteYear=2017&Title=-%3E2017-%3EChapter%20402](http://leg.state.fl.us/STATUTES/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=0400-0499/0402/0402ContentsIndex.html&StatuteYear=2017&Title=-%3E2017-%3EChapter%20402)
- Chapter 65C-22 F.A.C. - <https://www.flrules.org/gateway/ChapterHome.asp?Chapter=65c-22>

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## APPENDIX

- Section 402, F.S. - [http://leg.state.fl.us/STATUTES/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&URL=0400-0499/0402/0402ContentsIndex.html&StatuteYear=2017&Title=-%3E2017-%3EChapter%20402](http://leg.state.fl.us/STATUTES/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=0400-0499/0402/0402ContentsIndex.html&StatuteYear=2017&Title=-%3E2017-%3EChapter%20402)
- Chapter 65C-22.008 F.A.C. - <https://www.flrules.org/gateway/ChapterHome.asp?Chapter=65c-22>

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- P.L. No. 94-142 - [https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/idea35/history/index\\_pg10.html](https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/idea35/history/index_pg10.html)
- Section 402.305 F.S. - [http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&Search\\_String=&URL=0400-0499/0402/Sections/0402.305.html](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=0400-0499/0402/Sections/0402.305.html)
- Child care provider search feature – <https://cares.myflfamilies.com/PublicSearch>
- DCF website – <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/child-care/brochures-facts-progress>

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- School Readiness – [http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/school\\_readiness.aspx](http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/school_readiness.aspx)
- Rule 6M-4.200, F.A.C. – <https://www.flrules.org/gateway/ChapterHome.asp?Chapter=6M-4>
- Section 1002.87, F.S. – [http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&Search\\_String=&URL=1000-1099/1002/Sections/1002.87.html](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=1000-1099/1002/Sections/1002.87.html)
- 45 CFR §98.20 - <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CFR-2017-title45-vol1/CFR-2017-title45-vol1-sec98-20>

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