



<b>Policy: ELCPC-60.1.4</b>	<b>School Readiness Application and Waiting List Eligibility Determination &amp; Redetermination Policy</b>	
<b>Coalition Plan: II.B. and II.C.</b>	<b>Board Approved: 5/23/19</b>  <b>OEL Approved: 6/26/19</b>	<b>Effective Date: 6/26/19</b>

**References:** s. 1002.82, 1002.85(2), and 1002.87(7) F.S. and Rule 6M-4.200, 6M-4.208 and 6M-4.300, F.A.C.

**Purpose:** To establish and maintain standardization of procedures for the child eligibility determination and placement process for the School Readiness and Wait List program.

**Background:** The child eligibility and placement process determines eligibility for childcare scholarships and enrollment of children into care. Placements may result from children being enrolled from the Waiting List or by a referral from a partnering agency.

**Policy and Procedures:**

The ELC will determine and re-determine eligibility using the Chapter 1002, Part VI, F.S., and Chapter 6M-4, Florida Administrative Code. The ELC will annually redetermine each child’s eligibility. Upon redetermination, a child may not continue to receive SR program services if he or she is no longer eligible under the eligibility rules.

ELC staff follows the procedures outlined in the above referenced rules to determine the families’ eligibility. ELC staff enrolls the eligible children, giving them a redetermination date of one year and provides the children’s enrollment certificates to the family and the providers.

As families’ redetermination interview dates arrive, ELC staff follows the same procedure as above for redetermining the families’ eligibility and in accordance with ELC’s local service priorities found in ELCPC 60.1.1 Eligibility Service Priorities. –If a family is not eligible, ELC staff documents the reason in the statewide information system using the OEL standard codes. ELC staff contacts the families to let them know that they are no longer eligible for care.

Disenrollment procedures are implemented in accordance with Program Guidance 240.04 SR Funds Management.

### **6M-4.200 School Readiness Eligibility Provisions.**

(1) Definitions. The following definitions are applicable to all rules under chapter 6M-4, F.A.C.

(a) “Child Care Authorizations” and “referrals” means the forms received from recognized referring entities authorizing the need for child care services.

(b) “Child Care Executive Partnership (CCEP)” is a program that uses state and federal funds as incentives for matching local funds derived from local governments, employers, charitable foundations, and other sources to create local flexible partnerships with employers.

(c) “Earned Income” means the gross remuneration resulting from work, professional service or self-employment. This includes commissions, bonuses, and back pay awards.

(d) “Non-temporary Interruption” means a loss in employment or education activity with no reasonable expectation at the time of interruption that the parent will return to that specific eligible work or education activity.

(e) “Parent” means a person who has legal custody of a minor as a:

1. Natural or adoptive parent;
2. Legal guardian;
3. Person who stands in loco parentis to the minor; or
4. Person who has legal custody of the minor by order of a court.

(f) “Payment certificate” means the document issued by the coalition authorizing School Readiness payment for a specific child to a specified child care provider for a defined period.

(g) “Person who stands in loco parentis” means a responsible adult with whom the child lives, who is responsible for the day-to-day care and custody of the child when the child’s parent by blood, marriage, adoption or court order is not performing such duties.

(h) “Purpose for care” means the reason the parent needs care, such as employment, education and training, job search, work activity, respite services, child protection, migrant employed, disability and special needs.

(i) “Special Needs” means a child who has been determined eligible as a child with a disability in accordance with chapter 6A-6, F.A.C., and is participating in a program for children with disabilities provided by the school district or a child who has an individualized educational plan (IEP) or family support plan (FSP).

(j) “Suspend” means to temporarily discontinue services for the parent when the parent intends to resume an eligible education/training or work activity that has an interruption that exceeds three (3) months or the child temporarily does not need school readiness services offered by the coalition.

(k) “Temporary Interruption” means interruption in the parent’s work or education activity with an intent to return to that specific work or education activity. A temporary interruption in employment or education/training activity shall include:

1. Any time-limited absence from work for an employed parent due to reasons such as need to care for a family member or an illness;
2. Any interruption in work for a seasonal worker who is not working between regular industry work seasons;
3. Any student holiday or break for a parent participating in training or education;

4. Any reduction in work, training or education hours, as long as the parent is still working or attending training or education;

5. Any other cessation of work or attendance at a training or education program that does not exceed three (3) months;

6. Any change in age, including turning 13 years old during the eligibility period; and,

7. Any change in residency within the state.

(l) "Unearned Income" means income other than earned income that includes documented alimony and child support received, social security benefits, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) (excluding SSI payments when a child is the recipient), worker's compensation benefits, reemployment assistance or reemployment compensation benefits, veteran benefits, retirement benefits, temporary cash assistance under chapter 414, F.S., and cash gifts received regularly.

(2) Child Care Authorization and Relative Caregiver Program Eligibility. In order for a child to be eligible to receive school readiness services in the following categories, pursuant to section 1002.87(1), F.S., a child care authorization or documentation the parent receives relative caregiver payments must be issued by the appropriate agency.

(a) At-risk and Protective Service Child Care Authorizations. Eligibility is based on a documented child care authorization from the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) or its contracted providers, DCF-designated Lead Homeless Coalition Continuum of Care agency or Certified Domestic Violence Center. "At Risk Child" is defined in section 1002.81(1), F.S.

1. Child care authorizations for at-risk and protective services categories shall be valid for the duration determined by the referring entity. A child may continue to maintain eligibility under the at-risk or protective services categories as long as there is a current and valid child care authorization. The parent no longer maintains the current purpose for care upon the child care authorization's expiration or upon notification of termination from the referring agency to the coalition, whichever comes first.

2. At-Risk and protective services parents with a valid child care authorization will be authorized for 12-months of child care funding. Each time a child care authorization is renewed during the 12-month authorization of child care funding, child care services will continue in increments defined by the referring agency. If a child's age exceeds the age limit during the 12-month authorization period, the child shall continue to receive services for the remainder of the 12-month authorization period.

3. At the initial determination for at-risk child care authorizations, the coalition or contracted designee shall inform the parent that when the referral expires or is terminated by the referring agency, the parent will have three (3) months to provide documentation to establish a purpose for care under another eligibility category to continue receiving services for the remainder of the initial 12-month authorization period. Purpose for care must be reestablished no later than three (3) months after the initial child care authorization's expiration or upon notification of termination from the referring agency to the coalition, whichever comes first. A family will not be limited to a single three (3) month period to reestablish a purpose of care during the 12-month eligibility period.

4. If an additional referral is granted to the parent that extends the purpose for care beyond the initial 12-month eligibility period, the coalition shall authorize the parent for an additional 12-month eligibility period, subject to available funding. The time period that surpasses the initial authorization will be counted toward the subsequent authorization period.

5. If the parent loses purpose for care anytime during the initial 12-month eligibility, the coalition shall provide services for three (3) months, at which time the parent must

reestablish purpose for care to remain eligible. The time period that surpasses the initial authorization will be counted toward the subsequent authorization period, if the parent re-establishes purpose for care.

(b) Relative Caregiver Program. A child may continue to maintain eligibility under the relative caregiver program category if upon closure of the protective services case, the guardian is in receipt of Relative Caregiver Assistance payments for the child in need of school readiness services from the Florida Department of Children and Families.

1. A child may continue to maintain eligibility under the relative caregiver category for up to 12-months for initial and subsequent authorizations, as determined by the coalition, as long as the parent is in receipt of relative caregiver payments.

2. At the initial determination for relative caregiver eligibility, the coalition or contracted designee shall inform the parent that when receipt of relative caregiver payments ends the parent will have three (3) months to provide documentation to establish a purpose for care under another eligibility category to continue to receive services. Purpose for care must be established no later than three (3) months after the receipt of relative caregiver payments ends or upon termination of relative caregiver payments, whichever comes first. A family will not be limited to a single three (3) month period to reestablish a purpose of care.

3. If the parent loses purpose for care anytime during the initial eligibility period, the coalition shall provide services for three (3) months, at which time the parent must reestablish purpose for care to remain eligible. The time period that surpasses the initial authorization will be counted toward the subsequent authorization period.

(c) Welfare Transition Program. Eligibility is based on a documented child care authorization issued by DCF or the local workforce agency.

1. Temporary Cash Assistance parents must also maintain compliance with statutory welfare transition program requirements by DCF or the local workforce referral agency, as monitored by the referring agency.

2. Transitional Child Care/Non-Temporary Cash Assistance parents must also maintain compliance with statutory welfare transition program requirements by DCF or the local workforce referral agency, as monitored by the referring agency.

3. All children eligible under the Temporary Cash Assistance, Temporary Cash Assistance Respite, and Temporary Cash Assistance Applicant programs will be authorized for child care funding for the period indicated by the referring agency's child care authorization. The parent no longer maintains purpose for care under this eligibility category upon child care authorization expiration or upon notification of termination from the referring agency to the coalition, whichever comes first.

4. The coalition or contracted designee shall inform the parent and DCF or local workforce referral agency that when the child care authorization expires or is terminated the parent will have three (3) months to provide documentation to establish a purpose for care under another eligibility category to continue to receive services. Purpose for care must be reestablished no later than three (3) months after the child care authorization expires or upon notification of termination from the referring agency to the coalition, whichever comes first. The time period that surpasses the initial authorization will be counted toward the subsequent authorization period. A family will not be limited to a single three (3) month period to reestablish a purpose of care.

(3) Income Based Eligibility Categories.

(a) Initial Eligibility Determination.

1. Age of the child. The age limits of eligible children are set forth in section 1002.87(1), F.S. If a child's age exceeds the age limit during the 12-month authorization period, the child shall continue to receive services for the remainder of the 12-month authorization period.

2. Family Income. The family's income, as defined in section 1002.81(8), F.S., must be at or below 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for economically disadvantaged and 200 percent of the FPL for Child Care Executive Partnership (CCEP) children for entry into the school readiness program. If 85 percent of the State Median Income (SMI) is less than 150 percent of the FPL, then 85 percent of the SMI is the income threshold for entry into the school readiness program for economically disadvantaged. If 85 percent of the SMI is less than 200 percent of the FPL, then 85 percent of the SMI is the income threshold for entry into the school readiness program for CCEP children.

3. Assets. A family shall not have assets that exceed one million dollars (as certified by a member of such family). This applies to all children funded with Child Care Development Block Grant funds.

4. Working Family. The family must also meet the definition of "Working Family" as defined by section 1002.81(16), F.S.

5. Initial eligibility determinations for Economically Disadvantaged, Special Needs, and Child Care Executive Partnership children will be authorized for 12-months of child care funding.

6. If the parent loses purpose for care anytime during the initial 12-month eligibility, the coalition shall provide services for three (3) months, at which time the parent must reestablish purpose for care to remain eligible. The time period that surpasses the initial authorization will be counted toward the subsequent authorization period. A family will not be limited to a single three (3) month period to reestablish a purpose of care during the 12-month eligibility period.

(b) Maintaining Eligibility at Redetermination.

1. Age of the child. The age of eligible children is set forth in section 1002.87(1), F.S. If a child's age exceeds the age limit during the 12-month authorization period, the child shall continue to receive services for the remainder of the 12-month authorization period.

2. Family Income. The family's income must remain at or below 85 percent of the State Median Income (SMI) as the upper level of the program subsidy support.

3. Assets. A family shall not have assets that exceed one million dollars (as certified by a member of such family).

4. Working Family. The family must also meet the definition of "Working Family" as defined by section 1002.81(16), F.S.

5. All redetermining eligible Economically Disadvantaged, Special Needs, and Child Care Executive Partnership children will be authorized for 12-months of child care as funding allows.

6. All redetermining clients are subject to the graduated phase-out requirements defined by subsection 6M-4.003(3), F.A.C.

(c) Maintaining Eligibility During an Interruption in Employment Activities or Education Activities.

1. A family shall maintain eligibility and child care funding for school readiness services during a temporary interruption in employment activity, as defined in paragraph (1)(k) of this rule, with an option to return to that activity, not to exceed three (3) months. If the temporary interruption in employment exceeds three (3) months, services will be considered suspended, and not reimbursed, until the parent's employment resumes. The child shall not be placed on the waiting list if the parent has verification that they are still employed and returning to that employment. Care may be re-established for the remainder of the initial 12-month authorization upon resumption of employment and reevaluation of the remaining eligibility factors.

2. A family shall maintain eligibility and child care funding for school readiness services

during a temporary interruption in the parent's educational activity with an intent to return to the education activity at the next available full semester or term, not to exceed three (3) months between a semester or term. If the temporary interruption exceeds three (3) months, services will be considered suspended, and not reimbursed, until the parent's education enrollment resumes. The child shall not be placed on the waiting list if the parent has verification that they have enrolled in the next semester. Care may be re-established for the remainder of the initial 12-month authorization upon resumption of education and reevaluation of the remaining eligibility factors.

3. School readiness children shall not be terminated prior to the end of the 12-month eligibility period based on a parent's non-temporary interruption or cessation of employment, attendance at a job training or education program. Parents shall be provided a three (3) month period to re-establish their purpose for care. The 3-month period will start on the last day of verifiable employment/training/education for working families or the last day of the referral period for at-risk families. If a parent does not establish a purpose for care at the end of the three (3) month period, school readiness funding will be discontinued.

4. Parents and providers must be notified if, as a result of any redetermination, a child is determined ineligible for financial assistance within 10 calendar days.

(d) Notification to parents. The coalition or contracted designee shall notify the parents of their responsibility and the method to notify the coalition or contracted designee within 10 calendar days of any change of circumstances related to:

1. Address;
2. Temporary/Non-temporary work or education status;
3. Family size;
4. Failure to maintain attendance at a job training or education program;
5. Income exceeds 85% of the state median income (SMI).

(4) Payment Certificate. Upon determination of eligibility, a parent shall be given a payment certificate to submit to an eligible child care provider to enroll the child in its school readiness program. The payment certificate shall at a minimum include the child(ren) for whom a coalition authorized child care, the provider the family selected, signatures of both the beneficiary and school readiness provider representative, the assessed parent copayment for each eligible child, the authorized hours of care and the authorized begin and end dates for school readiness services.

(5) Transfer of School Readiness Services. Eligible families shall continue to receive school readiness services during the 12-month eligibility period due to a change in residence within the state to a different coalition service area.

(a) The school readiness funding shall transfer to the coalition service area that the family relocates to. Funding shall reflect the remaining balance of 12-month eligibility. Transferring families are subject to the same document requirements found under subsection 6M-4.208(4), F.A.C. The coalition shall make every effort to coordinate with the transferring coalition to obtain documents that would be valid regardless of the location of the coalition such as birth certificates, shot records or proof of parental relationship. Any documentation received because of new employment in the receiving coalition shall not be used to increase a family's copay.

(b) The parent copayment may not be increased due to a transfer of services outside of the coalition service area.

(c) The coalition service area of transfer will be responsible for the redetermination of eligibility at the end of the original 12-month authorization period.

(d) If the family transfers during a three (3) month period to reestablish a purpose of care, the family must reestablish a purpose of care by the end of the three (3) month period

for services to be continued in the new coalition service area.

(6) Termination of School Readiness Services. Services shall be discontinued for a family prior to the end of the 12-month eligibility period under limited circumstances. The family and provider will be notified of disenrollment at a minimum of two weeks prior to termination of services or at the end of the current eligibility period, whichever comes first. The notification to the parent shall include the reason for termination. Qualifying events for termination include:

(a) Excessive unexplained absences that exceed 10 calendar days during a total month of attendance. The coalition shall document three attempts to contact the family and the provider regarding excessive absences prior to disenrollment.

(b) Substantiated fraud or intentional program violation determined by the coalition or its designee pursuant sections 1002.91 and 1002.84 (17), F.S.

(c) A change in residency outside of the state of Florida.

(d) Purpose of care is not reestablished at the end of a three (3) month period.

(e) The family income exceeds 85% of the current state median income.

#### **6M-4.208 Documenting Eligibility for the School Readiness Program.**

(1) Each early learning coalition or designated contractor must determine eligibility for each applicant applying for the School Readiness Program in accordance with section 1002.87(1), F.S., and rule 6M-4.200, F.A.C. All child eligibility documentation shall be maintained by the coalition. Each coalition is responsible for implementing a records retention policy ensuring that all documentation is maintained in accordance with law. The coalition or its designee must conduct internal file monitoring activities to ensure the accuracy of eligibility determinations.

(2) Notwithstanding their inability to provide full documentation at the initial eligibility determination, a coalition shall permit enrollment after initial eligibility determination to children experiencing homelessness as verified by a Department of Children and Families certified homeless shelter.

(3) Each applicant must have a completed signed and dated Form OEL-SR 01, School Readiness Application for each eligibility determination. Form OEL-SR 01, is adopted in and incorporated by reference in rule 6M-4.300, F.A.C. The signature and date may be electronic if the application is available in the statewide information system.

(4) Documentation required for school readiness services eligibility. During the initial determination and redetermination an applicant must submit documentation, as applicable, to verify compliance with eligibility requirements. An office visit shall not be required for the submission of eligibility documentation or establishment of eligibility. Prior to the eligibility determination and enrollment, new applicants shall submit required documentation within 30 calendar days from the date on the funding notification. Redetermining applicants shall submit required documentation through the statewide information system prior to the redetermination date. The coalition shall determine eligibility within ten (10) calendar days of receipt of the documentation.

(a) Age. Verification of age must be established for each child eligible for the school readiness program in accordance with section 1002.87(1), F.S. The coalition shall keep a record of at least one of the following supporting documents that shows the child's name and date of birth:

1. An original or certified copy of the child's birth record filed according to law with the appropriate public officer.

2. An original or certified copy of the child's certificate of baptism or other religious record

of the child's birth, accompanied by an affidavit stating that the certificate is true and correct, sworn to or affirmed by the child's parent.

3. An insurance policy on the child's life which has been in force for at least 2 years.

4. A passport or certificate of the child's arrival in the United States.

5. An immunization record signed by a public health officer or licensed practicing physician, or

6. A valid military dependent identification card.

7. For Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) families identified in section 1002.87(1), F.S., the child's age, as indicated on a child care authorization submitted by the referring agency, is sufficient to establish the child's age as verified by the parent.

8. For children identified in sections 1002.81(a)-(d), F.S., the child's age, as indicated on a child care authorization submitted by the referring agency, is sufficient to establish age as verified by the parent.

9. If no supporting documents listed in subparagraphs (a)1.-8. above are available, a parent's notarized statement of the child's age accompanied by a certificate of age signed by a public health officer or physician stating that the child's age shown in the affidavit is true and correct may be accepted.

(b) Citizenship. Each child receiving services must be a U.S. citizen or qualified alien. Verification of U.S. citizenship or a qualified noncitizen status must be obtained for each child prior to authorizing school readiness services. The coalition shall keep a record of at least one of the following supporting documents establishing citizenship:

1. U.S birth certificate.

2. An original or certified copy of the child's U.S. birth record filed according to law with the appropriate public officer.

3. U.S. passport.

4. Lawfully admitted alien document (e.g. Forms I-94, I-94A, I-197, I-551 & I-766) with non-U.S. passport.

5. Certificate of U.S. citizenship or naturalization.

6. For TANF children identified in section 1002.87(1)(a), F.S., the child's status as a TANF recipient, as indicated on a child care authorization submitted by the referring agency, is sufficient to establish the child's citizenship.

7. For children identified in sections 1002.81(1)(a)-(d), F.S., the Medicaid-eligible status, as indicated on a child care authorization submitted by the referring agency, is sufficient to establish the child's citizenship.

(c) Residency. Each applicant must submit verification of current residency to qualify for the program in the county in which the applicant applied. The coalition shall keep a record of at least one of the following supporting documents that shows the name and current residential address of a parent with whom the child resides:

1. Utility bill (electric, gas, water), cable, internet or landline phone bill dated within 12 months of the date the child application is submitted.

2. Pay stub from a current employer dated within 12 months of the date the child application is submitted.

3. Current and signed residential rental agreement or receipt from rental payment dated within 12 months of the date the child application is submitted.

4. Government-issued document (e.g., Florida driver's license, Florida identification card, property tax assessment showing a homestead exemption), or

5. Military order showing that the child's parent is a service member in the United States Armed Forces and is assigned to duty and resides in Florida when the child attends the school readiness program (e.g., permanent change of station).



6. For children identified in section 1002.87, F.S., the child's status as a TANF recipient, as indicated on a child care authorization submitted by the referring agency, is sufficient to establish the child's residency.

7. For children identified in sections 1002.81(1)(a)-(d), F.S., the child's Medicaid-eligible status, as indicated on a child care authorization submitted by the referring agency, is sufficient to establish the child's residency.

8. If no supporting documents listed in subparagraphs (c)1.-7., above, are available, a coalition may accept a notarized statement provided by the child's parent and a letter from a landlord or property owner which confirms that the child resides at the address shown in the notarized statement.

9. If no supporting documents listed in subparagraphs (c)1.-7., above, are available, for a homeless child as defined in Section 1003.01, F.S., a coalition shall document residency based on other supporting documents showing that the child is homeless and resides in Florida (e.g., letter from a shelter or a notarized statement provided by the child's parent).

(d) Parent Status. Each applicant must meet the definition of parent in subsection 6M-4.200(1), F.A.C., and submit government-issued ID and documentation of guardianship. Additionally, the coalition shall keep a record of at least one of the following supporting documents to verify the parental relationship:

1. A copy of the child's birth certificate, which includes the parent's name or maiden name, if applicable.

2. A court order or other legal documentation that substantiates the adult's relationship to the child(ren).

3. A valid DCF or Workforce Child Care Authorization Form that bears the name of the child and the parent.

4. Documentation the applicant is in receipt of relative caregiver payment or TANF benefits on behalf of the child.

5. A notarized statement provided by the child's parent.

6. Official public or non-public school records.

7. A notarized statement from a medical professional.

(e) Family Size. Each applicant must identify each child and adult included in the school readiness family size, in accordance with section 1002.81(9), F.S.

1. Family size includes the parent(s) and the child(ren) currently residing together in the same dwelling unit (persons who are parents of a child in common regardless of whether they have been married and all children in their care) or person standing in loco parentis.

2. Children with a child care authorization who are in a licensed out-of-home placement or relative/non-relative placement must be listed as a child only case in the statewide information system. A family unit shall include an individual child referred or related sibling group referred in a licensed out-of-home placement or relative/non-relative placement.

3. The family size for a family that includes a child(ren) in receipt of Relative Caregiver payment shall only include the child(ren) in receipt of the Relative Caregiver payment.

4. The family size for a family that includes a child(ren) in receipt of TANF child only benefits shall only include the child(ren) if the child resides with a guardian. If the child resides with a parent, the parent must be included in the family size.

5. A teen parent will be considered a separate household, unless the teen and their child(ren) are included in their parents School Readiness family size. Eligibility and income will be determined consistent with the procedures for other households.

6. The coalition shall keep a record of at least one of the following supporting documents, as applicable, to establish family size:

a. A statewide information system generated form or locally developed form

documenting the applicant's family size including a statement from the parent certifying that the household information is true and correct. In cases where the coalition suspects fraud, the coalition may request additional documentation to establish family size.

b. For TANF families identified in section 1002.87(1), F.S., the child's family size as a TANF recipient, as indicated on a child care authorization submitted by the referring agency as verified by the parent, is sufficient to establish family size.

c. For children identified in sections 1002.81(1)(a)-(f), F.S., the child's family size on a child care authorization submitted by the referring agency as verified by the parent, is sufficient to establish family size.

(f) Purpose for Care. Each applicant must meet the purpose for care requirements of the program in accordance with sections 1002.81(1), (7), (16) and 1002.87(1), F.S. The coalition shall keep a record of at least one of the following supporting documents establishing purpose for care:

1. For children identified in sections 1002.81(1)(a)-(f), F.S., the child's purpose for care, as indicated on a child care authorization submitted by the referring agency, is sufficient to meet this requirement. If income documentation (earned and unearned) is available during the initial and subsequent eligibility verification, it must be submitted at that time by the family or the referring agency. A child is eligible under the relative caregiver program category if, the guardian is in receipt of Relative Caregiver Assistance payments from the Florida Department of Children and Families.

2. For children identified in section 1002.87(1)(a), F.S., the child's status as a TANF recipient, as indicated on a child care authorization submitted by the referring agency, is sufficient to establish purpose for care.

3. For income eligible families, purpose for care is established by the parent's work schedule as verified on one of the income documents listed below in subparagraph (4)(f)6.

4. Education. Each applicant requesting services in order to attend an approved educational activity in accordance with Section 1002.81(16), F.S., shall provide an official school schedule and proof of enrollment from an accredited education institution. Use of educational activities as a purpose for care shall be limited to GED programs, secondary education programs, technical or vocational programs, associate of arts, associate of science, bachelor of arts, and bachelor of science programs.

5. Documentation for exemptions to work requirements due to disability or age:

a. Disability – In order to be exempt from work requirements due to disability, a parent must submit documentation from a physician licensed under chapter 458 or 459, F.S., or a disability award letter from the U.S. Social Security Administration.

b. Age – In order to be exempt from work requirements due to age, a parent must submit proof of receipt of retirement income benefits from the U.S. Social Security Administrator or documentation from a physician licensed under chapter 458 or 459, F.S.

6. Income. Each applicant must submit documentation of earned and unearned income in accordance with paragraphs (a)-(g), below. This applies to at-risk children identified in section 1002.81(1), F.S., if available. If income documentation is not available for at-risk children, the coalition shall still process the eligibility determination under the at-risk child care authorization.

a. All earned income and unearned income not excluded by section 1002.81(8), F.S., and employment, shall be documented.

b. For all applicants, other than those who are self-employed, each source of earned income, at a minimum, shall be documented by hours of employment and rate of pay based on:

l. Four (4) weekly, two (2) biweekly, two (2) semi-monthly, or one (1) monthly pay stubs

that are current and consecutive; or

II. A signed statement by the employer dated within 4 weeks of applying for SR child care funding; or

III. A signed contract for employment that has a termination date of not less than 9 months from the date of applying for SR child care funding.

c. Each source of unearned income, as defined by section 1002.81(15), F.S., shall be documented at a minimum by:

I. Source documentation establishing receipt of unearned income such as, but not limited to, alimony, social security benefits, supplemental security income, worker's compensation benefits, reemployment assistance, veteran's benefits, retirement benefits, temporary cash assistance under chapter 414, F.S., and regularly received cash gifts.

II. For child support, verification from the child support enforcement office or a written statement from the absent parent or household member.

III. For varied amounts of unearned income, the parent must provide a minimum of four (4) weekly, two (2) biweekly, two (2) semi-monthly, or one (1) monthly source of unearned income documentation.

d. Income Fluctuations. For families that have irregular earnings (fluctuations) due to seasonal or other types of work schedules such as retail employment during the holidays or tourism in the summer, the coalition or contracted designee must:

I. Calculate the average income for the previous 12 months. The average must reflect income changes that occur during the eligibility period, including situations in which a family had monthly income above 85 percent of the State Median Income (SMI), for part of the year and lower income in other months.

II. For instances where a family, upon redetermination, may not have 12 months of pay stubs, use an employer verification statement that affirms the average annual income.

e. Self-Employment. For purposes of income verification, self-employment is defined as work activities that produce income that an individual uses to meet daily living expenses. The self-employment activity must contribute to the applicant's livelihood and the time and effort put into the activity will indicate intent to make a profit. Passive or casual activities that can be more appropriately qualified as "hobbies" or volunteer work do not meet this criterion.

I. Self-employed applicants shall provide appropriate documentation sufficient to determine a minimum of 20 hours worked per week and income, such as: business account ledgers, written documentation from customers, contractors, or federal tax returns.

II. For initial eligibility determination, eligibility shall not be denied solely because the applicant makes less than the minimum wage. If an applicant makes less than minimum wage at initial eligibility determination, the authorized eligibility period shall be twelve (12) months. However, subsequent eligibility authorizations will be dependent on whether or not the participant can document that self-employment activities generate consistent business gains. Once minimum wage is established by self-employment activities, subsequent eligibility may continue to be authorized for twelve (12) months.

(g) An acknowledgement of income and family size used to establish the family copayment in accordance with rule 6M-4.400, F.A.C., if applicable, shall be documented by every family applying for school readiness service, including families of children identified in section 1002.81(1), F.S. This acknowledgement shall be made and documented at each determination of eligibility. The acknowledgement may be recorded on locally created income worksheets that includes the information listed on the income worksheet generated by the statewide information system or worksheets generated by the statewide information system, if available.

## **6M-4.300 School Readiness Application and Waiting List Procedures.**

### **(1) Definitions.**

(a) "Early learning coalition" or "coalition" refers to the entity charged with administering school readiness program services pursuant to sections 1002.83 and 1002.84, F.S. "Early learning coalition" or "coalition" includes applicable OEL contractors.

(b) "Eligible" means that a family meets the school readiness eligibility criteria pursuant to section 1002.87, F.S., and subsection 6M-4.200(2) or (3), F.A.C.

(c) "Notification" means that the early learning coalition has contacted the parent or documented attempts to contact the parent via telephone, email, fax or mail.

(d) "Parent" means individual defined in rule 6M-4.200, F.A.C.

(e) "Potentially eligible" means that the family's application appears to meet the requirements for eligibility but the family has not yet submitted necessary documentation to determine eligibility.

(f) "Prequalifying questions" means questions that parents must answer prior to submitting an application. The prequalifying questions screen families according to the school readiness eligibility requirements pursuant to section 1002.87, F.S., and subsection 6M-4.200(2) or (3), F.A.C.

(g) "Revalidation" means the process of a family's confirmation that the information about the family on the waiting list is current.

(h) "Removal" means that a family is removed from the waiting list for a reason identified in paragraph (4)(d), below.

(i) "Single point of entry (SPE)" also known as the Family Portal, means the process established under section 1002.81(14), F.S., for a parent to apply for the school readiness program at various locations throughout a county.

(j) "Waiting list" means a list of children waiting for potential enrollment in the school readiness program once funding is available. The list is a record of the names of parent(s), the names and dates of birth of their children, waiting list date and anticipated eligibility and priority category for seeking school readiness services. The waiting list is maintained by the early learning coalition.

### **(2) Prequalifying Questions and School Readiness Application.**

(a) In order to participate in the school readiness program, parents shall submit a prequalifying questionnaire, file an application, certifying the family's total assets do not exceed the program requirements and provide requested documentation to an early learning coalition. For relative caregiver and TANF child only cases, the family's income and assets shall be based on the child's income only. If funds are available at the time of application the coalition shall conduct an eligibility determination. If funds are not available at the time of application, the coalition shall place the child or children on a waiting list as set forth herein.

(b) All parents requesting school readiness program services must first complete the prequalifying questions before completing the School Readiness Application and submit it through the single point of entry available at the following web address: <https://familyservices.floridaearlylearning.com>. Questions three and four of the prequalifying questions are based on the current Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for the total number of family members reported in question two. Parents may complete the prequalifying questions and School Readiness Application at any time. If the results of the prequalifying questions indicate that the family may be potentially eligible, the family will then be directed to complete the School Readiness Application. Upon completion of the School Readiness Application, parents must submit at least one document per parent residing in the household

to complete the application process. The document may be a current paystub, a verification of employment statement, written statement from employer, school enrollment or class registration, or documentation of a temporary or permanent disability.

1. Form OEL-SR 01-PQ, Prequalifying Questions, dated July, 2018, are hereby incorporated by reference and may be obtained at the office website at [www.floridaearlylearning.com](http://www.floridaearlylearning.com) or by contacting the Office of Early Learning, Department of Education, 250 Marriott Drive, Tallahassee, FL 32399. The incorporated form is also available at: <https://www.flrules.org/Gateway/reference.asp?No=Ref-09599>.

2. Form OEL-SR 01, School Readiness Application, dated July, 2018, are hereby incorporated by reference and may be obtained at the office website at [www.floridaearlylearning.com](http://www.floridaearlylearning.com) or by contacting the Office of Early Learning, Department of Education, 250 Marriott Drive, Tallahassee, FL 32399. The incorporated form is also available at: <https://www.flrules.org/Gateway/reference.asp?No=Ref-09600>.

(c) For at-risk families identified in section 1002.871(1), F.S., who have a valid child care authorization, eligibility determination processing shall not be dependent on completion of the prequalifying questions and application, however, an application must be completed within 14 calendar days of eligibility determination.

(d) If the prequalification screening results indicate that the family may not be potentially eligible, the family shall be directed to contact the early learning coalition which shall offer Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) services pursuant to rule 6M-9.300, F.A.C.

#### (3) Eligibility Screening.

(a) Early learning coalitions shall review each submitted application and required documentation within 20 calendar days of submission to determine if the parent is potentially eligible pursuant to section 1002.87(1), F.S. The early learning coalition shall notify the parent if the eligibility criteria have or have not been met.

(b) If the coalition determines that the family is potentially eligible based on their application and funding is available, the early learning coalition shall conduct an eligibility determination pursuant to section 1002.87, F.S., and subsection 6M-4.200(2) or (3), F.A.C. Upon determining the family eligible for the school readiness program, the child is eligible for enrollment with a provider delivering the school readiness program. The coalition shall indicate the required supporting documents for eligibility determination pursuant to rule 6M-4.208, F.A.C.

(c) If the family is potentially eligible and funding is not available, the early learning coalition shall place the child on its waiting list according to subsection (4).

(d) If the family is not potentially eligible, the early learning coalition shall offer the parent CCR&R services pursuant to rule 6M-9.300, F.A.C.

#### (4) Waiting List Management.

Each coalition shall utilize a waiting list as an enrollment management tool for the school readiness program on an ongoing basis. An early learning coalition shall not purge its waiting list by removing all children at one time. A coalition's waiting list management shall consist of:

##### (a) Placement of Children on the Waiting List.

1. A family shall be placed on the waiting list on a first-come, first-serve basis, based on the date of the approved application, the potential eligibility category and priority categories specified in section 1002.87(1), F.S., and the age of the child. An early learning coalition may consider local service priorities within a priority category.

2. If a parent requests school readiness program services for an additional child following placement on the waiting list, the additional child shall be placed on the waiting list according to the initial date the family was placed on the waiting list. The additional child shall also be

assigned a potential eligibility category and priority specified in section 1002.87(1), F.S.

3. An unborn child shall not be eligible for the waiting list.

4. A parent may update the information reported in the School Readiness Application. The coalition shall review the changes according to subsection (3). If the family remains potentially eligible, the family shall retain its place on the waiting list.

(b) Revalidation.

At least once every six (6) months from the date the family was initially placed on the waiting list or from the last revalidation date the coalition shall contact the parent and request the parent to submit updated information regarding eligibility status. The coalition shall notify the parent within 30 calendar days prior to the revalidation date.

(c) Availability of Funding.

The early learning coalition shall notify the parent within thirty (30) calendar days of funding availability to potentially enroll the child in the school readiness program. In the notice, the coalition shall provide instructions to the parent on how to complete the school readiness eligibility determination process pursuant to rule 6M-4.208, F.A.C.

(d) Removal from the Waiting List.

The coalition shall notify the parent of removal from the waiting list. The notification shall include the reason why the family was not placed on the waiting list or why the family or child was removed from the waiting list. Notice of removal is not required when funding becomes available for the child to receive school readiness services and the child is enrolled with a school readiness provider. A family will be removed from the waiting list under the following circumstances:

1. Failure to maintain accurate contact information;

2. Failure to meet the school readiness eligibility requirements as specified in section 1002.87(1), F.S.;

3. Failure to confirm information. The parent does not validate its information by the due date indicated on the notification;

4. Over age limitations. Any child on the waiting list age 13 or older will be removed from the waiting list;

5. School readiness services no longer needed. The parent indicates, via email, fax, mail, telephone or in person, that school readiness services are no longer needed;

6. The parent does not respond to the notification for available funding by the due date;

7. The family no longer resides in the early learning coalition's service delivery area; or

8. Funding becomes available for the child to receive school readiness services and the child is enrolled with a school readiness provider. Actual eligibility determination will be conducted prior to authorization for enrollment, which will be based on available funding. Enrollment in the school readiness program will be on a first-come, first-serve basis pursuant to section 1002.87(1), F.S.

(5) Reapplication.

(a) If a family is removed from the waiting list, a parent must reapply for school readiness services and shall be screened for eligibility according to subsection (3) to be placed back onto the waiting list and receive a new waiting list date.

(b) If a family on the waiting list of an early learning coalition moves out of the coalition's service area, the family shall reapply for eligibility services with the coalition operating in the family's new location. The family will receive a new waiting list date with the coalition offering services in the new location.

Disenrollment procedures are implemented in accordance with Program Guidance 240.04 SR Funds Management.

1002.87(7) F.S.

If a coalition disenrolls children from the school readiness program, the coalition must disenroll the children in reverse order of the eligibility priorities and criteria listed in subsection (1) beginning with the children from families with the highest family incomes. A notice of disenrollment must be sent to the parent and school readiness program provider at least 2 weeks before disenrollment to provide adequate time for the parent to arrange alternative care for the child. However, an at-risk child may not be disenrolled from the program without the written approval of the Child Welfare Program Office of the Department of Children and Families or the community-based lead agency.