

EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF OSCEOLA COUNTY

SCHOOL READINESS PROVIDER ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION

ITEM: 408A.01

EFFECTIVE DATE: 4-17-08

REVISED: 5-21-09

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POLICY STATEMENT

The Early Learning Coalition of Osceola County (Coalition) shall establish and maintain criteria for establishing a School Readiness provider's eligibility before authorizing a provider to offer School Readiness services in order to ensure compliance with Chapter 411.01, F.S.

PROCEDURE

1. New Providers

- A. Central Agency staff shall conduct New Provider Orientations with potential early learning providers that includes the following information:
 - I. A review of the School Readiness Provider Agreement to ensure that the potential School Readiness provider has a full understanding of the terms and conditions required to meet the Federal Code, Florida Statutes, state rules and the policies and procedures of the Agency of Workforce Innovation and the Coalition or its designee.. The provider must agree to all terms and conditions and sign the Agreement. If the provider refuses to sign the Agreement, the provider is considered ineligible.
 - II. An overview of the School Readiness structure, including a brief explanation about the Coalition and the services available, an introduction of the Coalition's website, the Coalition's contact information, an overview of the services available through the Central Agency and School District, requirements of maintaining the School Readiness provider status (see Section 2. of this policy), an overview about the VPK program and, as applicable, the requirements to become a VPK provider.
 - III. A review of all aspects of administrative and payment functions, forms, and deadlines regarding the implementation of School Readiness services.
 - IV. An overview of the automated web-based monthly reimbursement information system.
 - V. An overview of Coalition's policies and procedures that pertain to implementing the School Readiness program and where they can be found on the Coalition's website.
 - VI. A map showing the location and address of the Coalition office, Central Agency offices, and other key locations as identified.
 - VII. A contact list of Central Agency and Coalition staff.
 - VIII. Provider Representative contact information and a schedule of the Provider Advisory Council (PAC) meetings and an explanation of what the PAC is.
 - IX. The Annual Training Calendar, including Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Overview workshops and other professional development opportunities as identified.
 - I. Other information as identified.
- B. All potential early education providers attending a New Provider Orientation shall receive, at a minimum, the applicable ERS manual(s) and workbook(s) and a School Readiness Provider Agreement and will be required to acknowledge receipt of the documentation and materials received.

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- C. Parents wishing to select a new provider will be notified that their provider of choice is required to complete a School Readiness provider approval process and that they may experience a delay in services while the provider is completing this process.
 - D. Upon receipt of the signed School Readiness Provider Agreement and required documentation, the Central Agency staff will complete, in its entirety, an ERS Evaluation and/or School Readiness Program Evaluation, within 30 business days.
 - E. Upon receiving an average score of 3.5 on the respective ERS Evaluations and/or 85% on the School Readiness Program Evaluation, the provider will be notified in writing that they have met the minimum requirements for being a School Readiness provider and will receive a School Readiness Provider Agreement.
- II. All required documentation shall be collected and a provider file started. Documentation shall include, but not be limited to:
- a) Current Gold Seal verification, as applicable
 - b) Current licensing verification, as applicable
 - c) Current registered status verification, as applicable
 - d) Current director's credential, as applicable
 - e) Current staff credentials, including Attestation of Good Moral Character, Level 2 background clearances, mandated class completion certificates, CDA certifications, as applicable
- III. All provider information will be entered into the Resource and Referral database, if not already entered, including but not limited to, provider name, address, contact information, the days and hours of operation, age groups accepted, rates, and other information as identified.
- IV. Parents wishing to select a new provider will be notified that their provider of choice is required to complete a School Readiness provider approval process and that they may experience a delay in services while the provider is completing this process.
- V. If once the SRPE is completed, and the provider has scored an 85% or higher respectively, the provider will be notified in writing that they have met the minimum requirements for being a School Readiness provider and an orientation will be scheduled. Parent(s) who selected the newly approved School Readiness provider will be notified in writing that they may enroll/transfer their child into the provider's location, as applicable.
- VI. If once the SRPE is completed, and the provider has NOT scored an 85% or higher, the provider will be notified in writing that they have not met the minimum requirements for being a School Readiness provider. Providers not meeting the minimum requirements may reapply after a three (3) month period.
- VII. If a parent initially selected a new provider that was unable to meet the new School Readiness provider minimum standards, that parent will be notified in writing that the provider was deemed ineligible to provide School Readiness services and will be asked to make another provider selection.

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2. Existing School Readiness Providers

A. General Compliance

- I. All School Readiness providers must:
 - a) Comply with all state and federal statutes, rules and regulations, Coalition policies and procedures, and terms and conditions of the School Readiness Provider Agreement, as applicable.
 - b) Must maintain an average ERS score of 3.5 or above in the ERS domains.
 1. Centers -The initial ERS evaluation will include one (1) classroom in the age groups of infants/toddlers (ITERS) and/or pre-school (ITERS), as applicable. If the ERS evaluation scores of the one (1) classroom monitored reflect a score below 3.5, additional classrooms will be monitored to total 50% of the classrooms for that age group in order to validate the initial score. If the initial ERS evaluation score is validated based on the average score of 50% of classrooms monitored for that age group, the provider will be placed on provisional status. If the initial ERS evaluation score is not validated, based on the average score of 50% of classrooms monitored for that age group, the provider will remain in good standing as a School Readiness provider.
 2. Family Child Care Homes - must maintain an average FCCRS score of 3.5 or above in the FCCRS domains.
- E) Maintain a passing score on the Compliance Observation (on a pass/fail basis) to be in good standing as a School Readiness provider.
- F) In addition to maintaining an average score of 3.5 or above on the ERS Evaluation, non licensed providers including registered, faith based exempt licensed, and informal School Readiness providers must also maintain a 3.5 or above on the Health and Safety component of the ERS evaluation to be in good standing as a School Readiness provider

B. Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Evaluations and Compliance Observations

- II. Existing School Readiness providers must complete an ERS Evaluation, which includes the assessment of required health and safety standards, and a Compliance Observation each fiscal year.
- III. If, during the fiscal year, the Central Agency makes one (1) attempt to evaluate/observe a provider, and that attempt fails, due to any reason, including but not limited to, the provider not being at the location, the provider not having children in care that day, the provider being closed that day, etc.; the Central Agency representative will complete the following steps:
 - a) A notice will be taped securely to the entrance of the location notifying the provider that the Central Agency representative attempted to complete their ERS Evaluation and/or Compliance Observation. The notice will instruct the provider to call the Central Agency representative within ten (10) working days and will provide a contact number to schedule their two (2) week visitation window so that the provider's evaluation, inspection and/or observation may be completed as required. The notice must state that failure to do so may result in their immediate

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- suspension of providing School Readiness services and the transfer of their children for a period of one (1) year.
- b) A letter will be mailed to the provider notifying them that the Central Agency representative attempted to complete their evaluation, inspection and/or observation. The letter must notify them that they have until the designated date to contact the Central Agency representative to schedule their two (2) week visitation window so that the provider's evaluation, inspection and/or observation may be completed. The letter must state that failure to do so may result in their immediate suspension of providing School Readiness services and the transfer of their children for a period of one (1) year.
 - c) The Central Agency representative will call the provider and, if necessary, leave a message notifying the provider that a letter has been sent to them regarding instructions for scheduling their evaluation, inspection and/or observation and that failure to do so may result in the transfer of their children and suspension from providing School Readiness services for a period of one (1) year. If the Central Agency representative is unable to leave a message, two additional attempts will be made to notify the provider by phone. The Central Agency representative must log the date(s) and time(s) of the phone attempts in the provider's file for documentation purposes.
- IV. If the provider fails to schedule their two (2) week visitation window and/or schedules their window and their evaluation, inspection and/or observation is unable to be completed due to a reason within the provider's control, the Coalition will be immediately notified of the provider's non-compliance.
 - V. The Central Agency will generate a letter to the provider that is out of compliance notifying them that as of a certain date, they will be suspended of providing School Readiness services due to non compliance. The letter must include a copy of the Coalition's grievance policy and procedures and must reflect the dates of attempts made to notify the provider of their responsibility to schedule and complete their evaluation, inspection and/or observation. The Coalition must also be copied.
 - VI. The Central Agency will generate a letter to parents with children currently in care with the non-compliant provider notifying them of the provider's suspension. Parents shall be given the option of remaining with the provider and paying the provider's full rate or transferring their child(ren) to a SR provider and continuing to receive their School Readiness subsidy.
 - VII. A provider who is suspended from providing School Readiness services may apply as a new provider after a period of one (1) year and must meet the minimum standards established by the Coalition.
- C. Provisional Status Parameters for Existing School Readiness Providers
 - I. School Readiness providers not meeting the minimum standards on ERS Evaluations and/or Compliance Observations, as established by the Coalition, shall be placed on provisional status for a minimum period of six (6) months to one (1) year.
 - II. During this provisional period, the provider will be responsible for requesting technical assistance, attending technical assistance workshops and/or investing in their business to

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meet the minimum standards established. During this period, the provider will not be eligible to receive incentives from the Coalition such as scholarships, mini grants and/or other incentives as identified.

- III. Providers on provisional status may at any time request one (1) additional ERS Evaluation and/or Compliance Observation during their provisional period to measure their progress and/or be removed from provisional status, should they meet the minimum requirements.
- IV. Providers on provisional status shall be given a period of six (6) months to improve their program. After the initial six (6) month period, the provider shall receive their ERS Evaluation and/or Compliance Observation at anytime within a second six (6) month period to re-determine the quality of their program and to confirm their provider status. Those providers meeting the minimum standards established by the Coalition shall be removed from provisional status and reinstated as a School Readiness provider. Those providers NOT meeting the minimum standards established by the Coalition shall be suspended as a School Readiness provider.
- V. A School Readiness provider may go on provisional status and/or be suspended for falling below any of the required minimum standards established by the Coalition. For example, a provider may meet the minimum requirements for their ERS Evaluation and fail their Compliance Observation. The provider must continue to meet the minimum standards for the ERS Evaluation and improve their score on their Compliance Observation to meet the minimum standards in order to remain a School Readiness provider.

EXCEPTION: Providers who receive multiple ERS Evaluations may be suspended as a School Readiness provider for a portion of their School Readiness program and continue providing School Readiness services for another portion of program. Example: A provider may provide infant/toddler and pre-k services. If a provider meets the minimum standards for pre-k services on the ECERS; however, falls below the minimum standards for their infant/toddler program on their ITERS, the provider will only go on provisional status and/or be suspended from the infant/toddler program, providing their Compliance Observation meets the minimum standards, as applicable.

- VI. If an existing School Readiness provider is suspended, as stated above, the Central Agency will generate a letter to the provider out of compliance notifying them that as of a certain date, they will be suspended of providing School Readiness services due to non compliance. The letter must include a copy of the Coalition's Non Employment Related Grievances Policy (#206A.02) and must reflect the dates of attempts made to notify the provider of their responsibility to schedule and complete their evaluation, inspection and/or observation. The Coalition must also receive a copy.
- VII. The Central Agency will generate a letter to parents with children currently in care with the non-compliant provider notifying them of the provider's suspension and the need to transfer their children to another School Readiness provider due to non compliance.
- VIII. Providers who become suspended from providing School Readiness services may re-apply after a one (1) year period as a new provider (steps listed in Section 1 apply).

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- D. ERS Evaluations and Compliance Observations for the Central Florida “Quality Counts” Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) Participants, as applicable:
- I. School Readiness providers who wish to participate in the QRIS must first meet the minimum quality threshold by scoring an average of 3.5 or higher in the ERS domains on their previous ERS Evaluation to qualify. Providers who elect to participate in the QRIS must agree to meet the requirements of this program to remain eligible to receive the associated benefits. the QRIS are not guaranteed acceptance into the Central Florida “Quality Counts” Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS).
 - II. Selected School Readiness providers shall receive an ERS Evaluation on a minimum of 50% of their classrooms. Their scores will be averaged and an overall ERS score will be calculated.
 - III. Selected participants must meet the minimum standards established by the Coalition on ERS Evaluations and Compliance Observations to remain in the Voluntary Quality Matters Pilot Project Initiative and to continue providing School Readiness services.
- E. School Readiness Providers who are placed on Provisional Status by DCF
- I. A School Readiness provider who is placed on provisional status by DCF for health and safety related violations will be immediately suspended from being a School Readiness provider, regardless of their ERS and/or Compliance Observation scores.
 - II. A School Readiness provider who is suspended for this reason will remain suspended until they are fully reinstated by DCF, regardless of the time period that lapses. A suspended provider must follow the steps for a new provider to become reinstated as a School Readiness provider.

PARTIES AFFECTED

All new and existing School Readiness providers in Osceola County.

ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS / FORMS

School Readiness Provider Agreement
School Readiness Program Evaluation
ERS Evaluation Tool
Compliance Observation Tool
Coalition Policies and Procedures
Letter of Notification

Provider Letter of Non-Compliance
Parent Notification of Transfer of Children
Attendance Form
W-9 Form
Map of Locations
Schedule of PAC Meetings