



EARLY LEARNING
COALITION
OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

School Readiness Provider Reference Guide

2016-2017

OFFICE OF
Early Learning
LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE.

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Fiscal Year 2016-2017

Dear School Readiness Providers:

I welcome you to a new year of serving children in your community! The Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida is here to support you and to assist in any way we can to make this year a positive one of learning for you and the children you serve.

This School Readiness Provider Reference Guide is developed by the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida to assist child care providers in the provision of School Readiness services. It will serve as a ready source of information to which you can have access at all times. If you still have questions after reading about a topic in this guide, I encourage you to contact your mentor for further guidance.

We will provide updates as they come to us from the Office of Early Learning, and will also revise this handbook every year to ensure that you have the latest information available. Please be sure to watch your e-mail for blasts of information regarding School Readiness, as this is our primary mode of communication. We look forward to working with you this year, and smoothing out the contract processes for all of us.

Thank you for your good work, for serving the children of Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee counties and preparing them for school. We appreciate all you do!

Sincerely,

Gayla J. Thompson

Gayla J. Thompson

Chief Quality Officer

Authority and Right of Revision

The Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida (ELC) is the authorized entity for the administration of School Readiness in Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee Counties. Such authorization requires the ELC to follow all rules and regulations required by law and to ensure that Child Care providers receiving funding also comply with the requirements of the respective programs.

The Office of Early Learning (OEL) is designated as the lead agency and must comply with lead agency responsibility pursuant to federal law.

Program Overview

The School Readiness (SR) program is a federally funded program primarily for low income families and high risk children, including those children who have been the victims of abuse and neglect. Child care services are offered to families in need of full or part-time child care services due to employment, disability, or educational commitments.



In addition to supporting the family, the SR program helps to prepare children for kindergarten and build the foundation for their educational success. These services can also help promote developmental milestones, learning levels and socialization for children in care. One goal is to help Florida's children develop the skills they need to become good readers and successful students. Included in the SR requirements for providers are high literacy standards, strict accountability, appropriate curricula, committed periods of instruction, manageable class sizes and qualified instructors.

- The Office of Early Learning is designated as the lead agency to administer federal funding through the Child Care Development Grant.
- ELC receives state and federal funding to administer the SR program in Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee Counties.
- Eligible child care providers are strongly encouraged to become SR providers and participate in this important program.

Provider Family Services

1. Provider Type

In order to participate in the SR program, providers must be one of the following:

- Licensed child care facility
- Licensed family child care home
- Licensed large family child care home
- Registered family child care home
- Approved in-home or relative care giver
- Non-public school that is exempt from licensure
- Faith-based provider that is exempt from licensure
- Public School district-operated school



2. Provider Qualifications

SR providers must meet and maintain the following criteria:

- Annually complete and submit the State's SR contract 6M-4.610 F.A.C., OEL-SR 20 and all other required forms.
- Be in good standing with the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) Child Care Licensing Unit, the Coalition and/or their current or previous accrediting agency. Good standing means that within the past twelve (12) months, the prospective SR provider, including owner and management, has been free of the following specific administrative actions:
 - Probation status, suspension, denial or revocation of facility license, registration or accreditation
 - Termination by any other ELC based on past poor performance, misrepresentation or fraud
 - More than one (1) Class 1 violation (as defined by DCF)
 - Disbarment from receiving federal or state funds
- Have implemented an Office of Early Learning (OEL) approved developmentally appropriate curriculum for ages birth to five
- Must meet the DCF requirements for child care facilities and/or family child care homes, as demonstrated by a fully compliant Health and Safety Inspection by DCF (if licensed) or have posted the Health and Safety Checklist from OEL (if license exempt, non-public school, registered family child care home or approved informal care giver)
- Have a history of compliance with the ELC, if a previously participating provider. Approval with a history of non-compliance will be subject to approval by the ELC CEO.

Provider Application Process 6M-4.610 F.A.C.

1. To be an SR provider, the following documents must be submitted each year:

- Provider Contract (Form OEL-SR20)
- Provider Location List (Exhibit 1 if applicable)
- Required Documentation (Exhibit 2)
- Reimbursement Rate (Exhibit 3)
- Holiday Schedule (Exhibit 4)
- Due Process Procedures (Exhibit 5)
- One of the following:
 - Licensed Provider Responsibilities (Form OEL-SR206)
 - License Exempt Provider Responsibilities (Form OEL-SR20LE)
 - Informal Provider Responsibilities (Form OEL-SR20FFN)
- Gold Seal Certificate, if applicable
- DCF License
- Letter of confirmation with DCF exemption number, if exempt
- Certificate of accreditation
- Liability Insurance
- IRS W-9
- Current Sunbiz print-out identifying the officer, director, or authorized person
- Electronic deposit information (if new, or changes in information)
- Forms and the SR checklist are available at http://www.elcofswfl.org/downloads-sr_info.php
- Contracts are due by May 15 annually.

2. The provider contract is subject to ELC approval each time it is submitted.

3. Providers are required to complete and return Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) provider update forms at least annually and when requested by ELC.

4. If mailing, faxing or e-mailing documents:

Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida
Attn: Kristi Biffar, Supervisor of Mentors and Trainers
2675 Winkler Avenue, Ste. 300
Ft. Myers, FL 33901
Phone: 239-935-6177
Fax: 239-275-6449
e-mail: Kristi.biffar@elcofswfl.org

- SR applications and documents may also be e-mailed, faxed, mailed or hand delivered to the ELC. All required and completely filled out documents must be turned in at the same time.

- Upon successful completion of all the requirements, the provider will receive a copy of the signed provider contract authorizing participation in the SR program, a certificate and window cling signifying the status as an SR provider.
- SR services may not be offered or begun before the provider and staff have met all requirements.
- Providers will not be reimbursed for child care services offered prior to approval as an SR provider by the ELC.
- Assistance may be requested from a Quality Mentor. Quality Mentors are trained early learning professionals who are responsible for monitoring providers for contract compliance, offer technical assistance to contracted providers, assess programs using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System, and help providers in the Southwest Florida Stars, our quality rating improvement system, to achieve their goals for quality. Providers are assigned a mentor who will help with paperwork, and to whom questions can be addressed.

Background Screening

1. All directors and child care staff must complete a satisfactory Level 2 background screening before beginning employment.

2. All directors and child care staff must be rescreened at least once every 5 years. This means successful clearance from disqualifying offenses listed on the Affidavit of Good Moral Character, which each individual must sign.

Clearances must come from the following sources:

- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE)
- Affidavit of Good Moral Character, notarized (available on our website http://www.elcofswfl.org/downloads-sr_info.php)
- Optional local county sheriff's and city police screening (if applicable for county and city of residence)



3. If previously screened:

- Fingerprinting and subsequent screening clearance from DCF must be completed prior to beginning employment with the current SR provider.
- If the employee was screened with a former employer child care facility within five years and there was no more than a 90 day break in service, than that screening is accepted as current and rescreening is not required. This documentation must be secured from the former employer.
- Documentation of a less than 90 day gap must be submitted to the ELC as well as be available to DCF onsite.

- Any other form of background screening is unacceptable and new screening will be required.

4. Break in child care employment: An employee with a greater than 90 day break in employment in child care requires a new and complete background screening.

5. All directors and child care staff must sign a notarized Affidavit of Good Moral Character. The document is available on our website <http://www.elcofswfl.org/downloads>. This document is considered current as long as the staff stays with the facility and must be kept in the teacher's file.

Educational Qualifications

Providers are expected to comply with early childhood staff education requirements as set forth by DCF. Training and credentialing requirements can be found at the DCF website <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/child-care/training>.

A. Educational Requirements for Centers

1. Director's Credential Requirements

- All Providers (except for public schools) must have a director with a Director's Credential as verified on their DCF transcript.
- A credentialed director must be on-site a majority of hours, excluding weekends and evening hours, that the facility is in operation. This means, at a minimum, the director must be present 51% of the time a facility is open and operational. A director of a child care facility can only be the director for one facility.

2. Staff Credential

- Any child care facility operating eight (8) or more hours a week and serving 20 or more children must have at least one (1) teacher on staff with a staff credential, verified on the DCF transcript.
- The total number of credentialed teachers required for each facility is determined by the number of children enrolled. There must be at least one (1) credentialed staff for every 20 children.

3. Child Care Personnel

- All child care personnel are required to have the 40 hour required child care training listed on the DCF website (<http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/child-care/training>.) This training must begin within the first 90 days of employment and be completed within the first year of employment.
- Following completion of the 40 hour training, child care personnel are required to obtain 10 hours of in-service annually thereafter. The guidelines are available on the DCF website. The fiscal year for training hours runs from July 1 to June 30.

B. Educational Qualifications for Family Child Care Homes

1. Large Family Child Care Home

Operator must complete:

- 30 hour Family Child Care Home Training, prior to licensure
- Staff Credential (excluding employment history recognition), one (1) year prior to licensure
- 5 hour (or .5 continuing education units) Early Literacy and Language Development, prior to licensure
- First Aid Training, prior to licensure
- Infant and Child Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), prior to licensure
- 10 hour Part II module within 6 months of licensure
- 10 hour annual in-service training during licensure year

Employee must complete:

- 30 hour Family Child Care Home Training, beginning within 90 days of employment and completed within one (1) year from which the training began
- 5 hour (or .5 continuing education units) Early Literacy and Language Development within twelve (12) months of employment
- 10 hours of annual in-service training during licensure year

Substitutes who work more than 40 hours per month must complete prior to caring for children:

- 30 hour Family Child Care Home Training
- 5 hour (or .5 continuing education units) Early Literacy and Language Development
- First Aid Training
- Infant and Child Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)

Substitutes who work less than 40 hours per month need to complete prior to caring for children:

- The 6 hour Family Child Care Rules and Regulations or 3 hour Fundamentals of Family Child Care

2. Licensed/Registered Family Child Care Homes

Operator must complete:

- 30 hour Family Child Care Home Training, prior to licensure
- 5 hour (or .5 continuing education units) Early Literacy and Language Development, prior to licensure
- First Aid Training, prior to licensure

- Infant and Child Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), prior to licensure
- 10 hour annual in-service training during licensure year

Substitute who works less than 40 hours per month must complete the following prior to caring for children:

- 6 hour Family Child Care Rules and Regulations or 3 hour Fundamentals of Family Child Care
- First Aid Training
- Infant and Child Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)

Substitute who works more than 40 hours per month must complete the following prior to caring for children:

- 30 hour Family Child Care Home Training
- 5 hour (or .5 continuing education units) Early Literacy and Language Development
- First Aid Training
- Infant and Child Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)

Provider Responsibilities

A. Contractual Agreement

Prior to authorization for SR services, every applicant must enter into a contractual agreement with the ELC by signing an SR provider contract. The contract outlines the following established requirements of each SR provider and the provider's commitment to comply with these requirements. Listed here are some highlights of the contract's provisions.

1. Legal requirements: Providers meet and maintain state and local health requirements in accordance with federal, state and local laws, statutes, and rules. Such requirements include, but are not limited to:

- Background screening
- Childhood immunizations
- Building and physical premises safety
- Minimum health and safety training

These requirements for a "healthy and safe environment" are applicable to all SR providers, including license-exempt or unlicensed providers. Additionally, licensed and license exempt child care programs who advertise as "summer camps" during the summer months remain subject to all legal conditions of the SR program as long as they receive SR funding or have a valid SR contract.

2. ELC policies: The provider agrees to comply with all local ELC policies previously approved by the ELC Board of Directors and those approved during the term of the contract.

3. The School Readiness contract is good for one fiscal year, from July 1 through June 30. The new contract must be signed before the old contract expires, to provide continuity of care for children. In 2015-2016 the state wrote the contract used by all Coalitions and providers across the state of Florida. This contract is the one in use for the year 2016-2017.

4. Placement of children: The signed provider contract does not guarantee the placement of children. Children are placed in programs based on parental choice and the availability of SR funding. To be eligible for reimbursement, the SR provider may only enroll a child who has an SR certificate issued by ELC.

5. Payment limits: Authorization for payment is based on a current, valid child care certificate which provides specific dates of approval. Any fees charged for child care services provided prior to or after the authorized dates remain the responsibility of the parent or legal guardian. ELC is not responsible for payment of any child's care who is not approved by ELC to receive SR services. ELC does not pay fees other than the daily provider designated reimbursement rate. Additionally, any difference between ELC payment plus the parent fee and the provider's usual rate is to be paid by the parent.

6. Unexcused absences: The provider is required to promptly notify ELC if a child is absent for five (5) consecutive days with no contact from the parent.

7. Obtain and maintain child care liability insurance:

- Providers are required to secure sufficient child care liability insurance coverage, (including transportation of children if SR children are transported by the program). See contract for specifics.
- Insurance must include an endorsement to the policy naming ELC as additionally insured.
- ELC should be listed as Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida, 2675 Winkler Ave., Ste. 300, Fort Myers, FL 33901 for all counties. No name of an individual from the ELC is necessary.

8. Not transferrable: The SR contract is not transferrable to another entity, corporation or owner without the prior written approval of the Coalition. A change in corporate ownership is deemed a transfer. New paperwork must be signed with the new owner.

9. Notification of change:

- Provider agrees to report any changes in contact or program information within fourteen (14) calendar days to the mentor using the Provider Notice of Change form (available at http://www.elcofswfl.org/downloads-sr_info.php)
 - Loss or change of director
 - Loss or change in accreditation or licensure status
 - Changes to contact information (telephone numbers, mailing address, e-mail etc.)

- Changes such as temporary emergency closures are to be reported in writing within two (2) calendar days.
- Permanent business closings or changes in business location or ownership must be reported at least thirty (30) calendar days prior to the changes.
- Program and business information is submitted annually for inclusion in the Child Care Resource and Referral Network and the provider is responsible for ensuring that the ELC has up-to-date business and contact (including emergency contact) information.

10. Reporting unusual incidents: Provider agrees to report unusual incidents to the ELC no later than the close of business on the next business day of the unusual incident and to submit a written report to the ELC within three (3) business days from the date of the incident.

11. Maintenance of records:

- SR child enrollment records are confidential and the provider must maintain and protect the data.
- Records, which include sign in and out documentation, enrollment and attendance certification, documentation to support excused absences and proof of parent co-payment for children funded by the SR program, must be kept for a period of five (5) years.
- Records may be kept electronically, if backed up regularly to safeguard against loss.
- If the provider closes, all records pertaining to SR children (see list above) and fiscal records for payment of SR funds must be transferred to the ELC, where they will be held for the required five (5) years.



12. Parental/Guardian rights and responsibilities:

- Parents have the legal right to visit their child in person or by telephone at any time the child is in the care of the provider.
- Parents have the legal right to see their child's records and receive a copy of their child's record upon request
- The ELC may notify families if the provider has not met the standards set forth in the SR contract or has been the subject of administrative sanctions by the ELC, DCF or overseeing agency responsible for the provider's child care standing.
- The provider is responsible to collect the daily parent co-payment. Prior to the parent enrolling his/her child in a provider's SR program, the provider must provide the parent with a written list of any fees it charges, and, if applicable, written notice of the difference between the private pay rate and the SR reimbursement rate. No other fees than those listed may be charged.

- The parent has a right to transfer their child to another child care provider. When a transfer is requested, the ELC will request confirmation from the current provider that the parent does not have any outstanding payments of their co-payments within the last 30 days. Only the assigned parent fees are considered for the purpose of transfer approval. Any other fees imposed by the child care provider are the responsibility of the child care provider to seek recoupment from the parent or legal guardian and do not influence the parent's right to transfer the child.

13. Dismissal from child care: Providers are encouraged to utilize the services of the ELC's Inclusion Coordinator prior to dismissing any child from their program based on challenging behaviors.

14. Healthy and safe environment:

- Licensed child care programs must comply with the health and safety standards set forth by DCF.
- License exempt programs and non-public schools agree to annually complete the health and safety checklist and post the checklist prominently on its premises. The checklist is to be submitted annually to ELC no later than July 1.
- The provider understands that they and their staff are mandated reporters of suspected abuse and/or neglect, and agrees to fully cooperate with DCF child protective investigators when investigating any allegation of abuse or neglect.
- The provider acknowledges the importance of promptly reporting suspicions of abuse, neglect or exploitation of children. The provider must ensure all staff annually sign the "DCF Child Abuse and Neglect Mandated Reporter Requirements" or equivalent form approved by ELC.
- If providers choose to participate in the USDA Child Care Food Program, they must comply with all requirements and be in good standing with the program.
- Within thirty (30) calendar days of enrolling a child, the provider agrees to obtain and retain information from the parent regarding the child's age-appropriate immunizations, physical development and other health requirements as indicated on the appropriate form.

B. Serving Children at Risk of Abuse/Neglect

The ELC partners with DCF and the Children's Network of Southwest Florida to support families under the court's supervision in the child welfare system, or who are cooperating with intervention services to help keep children safe.

All "at risk" children must be placed in licensed child care programs. Providers are responsible to notify the child welfare case manager of the child's abrupt removal from child care, frequent and/or unexplained absences, unexplained injuries and/or other signs of mistreatment or insufficient supervision.

Providers will be notified by the ELC when an “at risk” child, under supervision of DCF or Children’s Network, plans to attend their child care facility. Contact information for the child’s child welfare case manager will be given to the provider on Form SR-1026, “Notice of At Risk Placement” which the provider is to sign and return promptly to the ELC.

Any provider who cares for a child under court supervision must immediately (within 24 hours) notify the local designated staff of DCF or the community-based care agency (i.e. Lutheran Services or Family Preservation Services) of any unexcused absence or seven (7) consecutive days of excused absences. The following are also some reasons to contact the caseworker immediately:

- The child has unexplained bruises, welts, cuts or injuries inconsistent with an explanation given for them.
- The child lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, etc.
- Frequent and/or unexplained absences.
- Family moves or abruptly removes child.
- The child begs for or steals food.
- The child’s hygiene is unusually poor.
- The child’s comments indicate abuse or neglect may be occurring.
- The child’s behavior is unusually fearful, excessively shy, withdrawn, depressed, angry or aggressive.
- The child’s parent/caregiver seems unusually harsh, critical, belittling or angry in front of others.
- Any observation or occurrence you believe affects the child’s health, safety or well-being. *(Please remember – your obligation is first to the child. Contact the DCF abuse hotline if you have a reasonable suspicion that abuse or neglect has occurred, in addition to contacting the child welfare case manager).*

C. Requirements of Rilya Wilson Act

Rilya Wilson Act-The Florida Legislature recognizes that children who are in the care of the state due to abuse, neglect, or abandonment are at risk of poor school performance and other behavioral and social problems. It is the intent of the Legislature that children who are currently in the care of the state be provided with an age-appropriate education program to help relieve the negative consequences of abuse, neglect, or abandonment.

1. The Children’s Network of Southwest Florida or DCF are required to notify the operator of a licensed childcare program whenever a child who is subject to this law is enrolled in the program. Children who are subject to this law cannot be withdrawn from the child care program without the prior written approval of the responsible agency.

2. Each child subject to this law (birth to the age of school entry), must attend the program five (5) days a week. When a child is enrolled in an early education or child care program regulated by DCF, the child’s attendance in the program must be a required action in the safety plan or the case plan developed for the child. An

exemption to participating in the licensed early education or child care program five (5) days a week may only be granted by the court.

3. For a child subject to this law who is absent from the program on a day when he/she is expected to be present, the parent or legal custodian with whom the child resides must report the absence to the child care program by the end of the business day. If the parent or caregiver fails to report the absence in a timely manner, the absence is considered unexcused.

4. The provider is required to notify the responsible Child Welfare Case Manager of the unexcused absence of any child who is under their supervision. It must be reported by the close of business the day following the child's absence.

D. Program Requirements

1. Curriculum

- Curriculum used with SR children must be chosen from the list of approved curricula on the Office of Early Learning website.
http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/providers/provider_resources/school_readiness_curriculum.aspx
- The character development element of the requirements may be included in the chosen SR curriculum, or from an additional source such as “The Values Book” by Pam Schiller and Tamara Bryant.

2. Assessments and screening of children birth to five (5) years

- Ages and Stages Questionnaire screening

Deliverable	Tasks and Activities	Due Date
Proof of Developmental screening	Developmental screening for children aged 6 weeks to kindergarten eligibility	Within 45 days after the child's first or subsequent enrollment
	Provider shall enter the child's screening results in to the Enterprise System online	Enter within 60 calendar days of screening
	Provider shall give, in writing, the screening results for each child to the child's parents	Following each screening

- Training and technical assistance is available through the ELC
- For those children who need more support, the ELC will offer Individual Learning Plans for both teachers and parents, as well as the services of the Inclusion Coordinator.

- Assessment
 - Teaching Strategies Gold is the online system paid for by the ELC that can be used to assess all SR children between the ages of birth and five (5).
 - Assessments are available four times a year, but the fall and the spring provide a pre and post assessment.
- Hearing and Vision
 - The provider is offered the opportunity to participate in and support vision and hearing screening for children ages three (3) to five (5) through the ELC.
 - Follow up with the parent is very important should a child be identified as needing more services. Technical assistance is available through the ELC staff.

E. Non-Disclosure and Confidentiality

The provider will be exposed to certain confidential information which has been made available to them in their capacity as a child care provider.

1. This information is confidential and may not be disclosed, except to those permitted by law.
2. Confidential information may include, but is not limited to, social security numbers of parents and/or children, information related to family, health, payments, household demographics, etc.
3. The provider must abide by the standards for the receipt and handling of confidential record information. It is their responsibility to ensure that employees and/or substitutes honor this agreement as well.
4. Confidential information cannot be transmitted by e-mail; it must be faxed, mailed or delivered by hand.
5. The provider is required to protect the confidentiality of child and family information by having staff complete confidentiality agreements and have processes in place to protect the privacy of this information.
6. Confidential information associated with the SR program should only be available to the provider, the parent/guardian, the ELC, the Office of Early Learning, law enforcement, and federal or state agencies as required for audit and research information.
7. Confidential information that identifies children is not to be communicated through e-mail.

F. Nondiscrimination

SR providers may not discriminate against any child, which includes refusing to admit a child for enrollment.

1. Children may not be turned down because of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, age, sex, disability, religion or political beliefs.
2. In addition, it is against the law for an SR provider to charge parents or the ELC a fee higher than what is required of any other private pay parent.



G. Terms and Conditions

The provider is required to tell the truth on all contracts and forms.

1. The provider acknowledges that providing information in order to obtain benefits, payments or reimbursement to which they are not entitled, or to increase the benefits, payments or reimbursements is unlawful.
2. The provider understands that if they knowingly provide false information, omit requested information, sign inaccurate attendance documents or fail to promptly report changes which could directly affect Family Services as an SR provider, the following could occur:
 - The provider may be required to pay back unauthorized payments and/or denied further participation in the program.
 - Provider may be suspended for suspected fraud.
 - The provider may be referred to the Office of the Inspector General at the Office of Early Learning or the Department of Financial Services.
3. The provider shall not use their position as an SR provider to engage in any activity, or be a party to, any form of deception, misrepresentation, falsification, fraudulent or unlawful behavior to affect personal gain, or the personal gain of any relative, friend or business associate.
4. If after investigation into allegations that the provider has intentionally misrepresented enrollment or attendance for funds related to the SR program, the ELC shall permanently disengage the services of that provider.
5. The ELC and its representatives are required to report to appropriate law enforcement agency for further investigation cases where there is sufficient reason to believe that a provider has knowingly provided or submitted any fraudulent information.
6. The ELC has the right to terminate the SR contract at any time for cause. The following are grounds for termination for cause:
 - Action, or lack of action, which threatens the health, safety or welfare of children.

- The failure to comply with the terms of the SR contract including, but not limited to failure to implementation of corrective action or compliance with the terms of probation.
 - The refusal to accept any notice described under the SR contract which the ELC is required to send to the provider.
 - Reasonable or probable cause for the ELC to suspect that fraud has been committed by the provider.
 - Notification of termination must be sent, with proof of delivery, at least five (5) business days before termination.
7. Emergency termination may occur upon notification by DCF that actions or inactions of a provider pose an immediate and serious danger to the health, safety, or welfare of children.
 - The ELC will terminate this Contract on an emergency basis by sending the provider written notice of emergency termination at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to termination, which includes the specific basis of the Coalition's determination.
 - The notice must state that the provider may request a review of the termination determination.
 8. Eligibility to deliver the SR program may be revoked for a period of up to five (5) years, if the provider's contract is terminated.
 9. The provider may terminate the contract if notice is given in writing at least thirty (30) calendar days before the termination date.
 - Alternative arrangements must be made for uninterrupted services for children served under the SR contract.
 - If sufficient notice is not given, the ELC may refuse to issue the final reimbursement payment to the provider.

H. Attendance and Payment

1. Child Family Services and Enrollment

- Upon enrollment, the SR provider will promptly notify the ELC that the child has been admitted into the provider's program by signing and faxing a copy of the child care certificate to the Coalition Family Services Department.
- If the signed child care certificate is not faxed to the Coalition, the Coalition will not know the child is in your program and you will not be paid.

Child care certificates are only valid for ten (10) days from the date of issue. If the child does not enroll within the ten (10) day window, the provider must notify the ELC by e-mail or fax that the parent and child never enrolled. This is very important.

- If the provider asks a child to leave, the provider must contact the ELC within fourteen (14) days to explain why the child was dismissed.

2. Attendance

- SR providers must maintain attendance documentation on each child through one of the following methods:

- A daily sign in/sign out record that documents the date, the child's name, arrival time, departure time and signature of the child's parent or other designee (no initials).
 - An electronic system that records attendance through assigned pin number or fingerprint recognition.
- Providers are permitted up to three (3) paid absences per calendar month per child. Absences may be for any reason.
- Any absence beyond the allowable three (3) are not payable except in the event of extraordinary circumstances based on written documentation provided by the parent/guardian justifying the excessive absence for up to an additional seven (7) days. Examples of extraordinary circumstances include the following:
 - Hospitalization of the child or parent with proof of hospitalization
 - Illness requiring home-stay as documented (parent's note)
 - Death in the immediate family with appropriate documentation (for example obituary, death certificate)
 - Court order visitation with appropriate documentation (for example, court order)
 - Unforeseen documented military deployment or exercise of the parent(s)
 - An unexpected event or unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of the parent
- Parents must provide written documentation and proof supporting the extraordinary circumstances.
 - This documentation must be submitted with requests for reimbursement
 - For absences beyond the allowable three (3) days, the parent must submit written documentation verifying the reason for the additional child absences.
 - For illnesses, a doctor's statement is needed if absences are unusually frequent or for extended periods of time.
- Attendance reports
 - Each month, the provider is responsible for downloading their personal attendance sheets from the ELC SharePoint site.
 - Assistance with SharePoint may be reached by e-mailing the helpdesk@elcofswfl.org
- Submitting information for payment
 - The provider must submit their signed student attendance roster by the 3rd day of each month by fax, mail, in person drop off.
 - Absences beyond the three (3) allowable absences must have supporting documentation from the parent.
 - The provider is responsible for complying with submission of attendance records and other required information in order to be paid promptly and correctly.

Please note: Reimbursement requests submitted more than thirty (30) days after the last day of the previous month of service will not be honored.

3. Compensation and funding

- Direct deposit is required for all child care reimbursements made to the provider on behalf of the ELC. Any exceptions must be approved by the ELC.

Please allow a minimum of two weeks for a request to change direct deposit accounts. The payment process may delay this request until the following scheduled payment date. Therefore, please be advised not to close your current direct deposit account until the new direct deposit account has received the first payment. The Coalition cannot be held accountable for any bank fees incurred due to the change requested.

- Reimbursement rate
 - The amount of child care reimbursement paid for each child is limited and may differ for individual children.
 - The maximum actual amount of reimbursement paid for a child is based on the provider's rate schedule submitted for each fiscal year, minus the assigned parent co-payment.
 - Reimbursement rates are subject to funding availability and may be increased or decreased by the ELC.
 - Rate verification forms may only be submitted by the provider once during the fiscal year.

Example: Jumping Jacks Preschool charges all parents with infants \$28.00 per day. The ELC's maximum rate of payment is \$28.00 per day for infant care. The parent has a daily co-payment of \$2.50. Based on this combination, the ELC will pay directly to the provider \$25.50 for the infant's care, and the parent is required to pay the provider \$2.50 per day, which equals the maximum rate of \$28.00.

- Providers are responsible for keeping track of any change in reimbursement rates affecting them for any child receiving care. The reimbursement rate change could occur in any given month because of a child's birthday.
- The provider is expected to provide the ELC with information of their normal child care rates charged to all parents, regardless of the child's status. This rate is what the ELC considers for reimbursement. It is against the law for a provider to charge the ELC or the parent of the child receiving school readiness funding a higher rate than charged to private families. Providers may charge parents a differential rate if the normal rate charged to private families is higher than the reimbursement rate paid by the ELC. The ELC cannot pay for registration fees or other fees; however these fees may be applied to all parents.

- Funding is not transferable and cannot be assigned to any other person or business. New owners of an existing child care facility must be approved by the ELC before they are eligible to be paid for school readiness services.
- Providers are permitted to identify up to twelve (12) scheduled holidays for which child care will not be provided. The holiday schedule will be submitted each fiscal year with the school readiness contract. The ELC provides compensation for these identified holidays for qualified school readiness children.
- Parent fees are defined as the daily amount assigned by the ELC to be paid by the parent to the provider. Providers are responsible for collecting and reporting any fee that is designated to be paid by the parent. Providers are required to give the parent a receipt, including the dates of service covered, for the fees paid.
 - If a parent does not pay his/her parent fee; it is the provider's responsibility to notify the ELC within 30 days. The provider has the option to request that services be immediately terminated.
 - If a parent leaves the provider's program owing a parent fee, the parent and provider may mutually agree to a payment schedule. If this is not an option, then it is up to the provider to take other action as deemed appropriate or necessary. The provider should notify the ELC of the parent's compliance with this requirement and any subsequent arrangements.
 - Parents must have a zero balance on their parent fees to be able to transfer their child to another child care facility.
- The provider is responsible for ensuring that all attendance documentation submitted for reimbursement is accurate, truthful and supported by the parent's signature on the sign in sheet or electronic attendance record.
- The provider is responsible for reviewing the reimbursement summary provided by the ELC fiscal staff each month.
 - The provider must report any discrepancy or underpayment within 60 days from the date the reimbursement was directly deposited.
 - Any underpayments reported after 60 days will not be honored.
 - The provider is required by law to return any funds to the ELC that are received as a result of error or overpayment.
- SR providers must be audited a minimum of one time during the fiscal year. The ELC may audit attendance records at any time.
 - Records that fail to substantiate the reimbursement claim will automatically result in a disallowed subsidy payment.
 - Disallowed payments may be deducted from any future reimbursement payment.

I. Compliance Verification

1. The ELC has an ongoing duty to evaluate and verify an SR provider's compliance with Florida Statutes and state rules, including the provider contract,

- ELC and Office of Early Learning (OEL) policies and procedures. Providers are required to allow the ELC to enter the child care site at any time for this purpose.
2. The provider must submit their signed student attendance roster by the 3rd day of each month by fax, mail, upload to SharePoint or deliver in person.
 - Absence beyond the three (3) allowable must have supporting documentation from the parent.
 - The provider is responsible for complying with the submission of attendance records and other required information in order to be paid promptly.
 3. The provider may receive unannounced inspections and re-inspections as deemed appropriate by DCF or the ELC.
 - The provider is expected to cooperate with technical assistance and comply with corrective actions.
 - The ELC may enter the provider's facility during hours of operation to verify the provider's compliance. ELC staff is permitted to inspect and copy records maintained by the provider and/or take photographs as needed to determine compliance with the school readiness requirements.
 - If the ELC staff member is unable to conduct an inspection or visit due to refused entry, or no one is on the premises during normal business hours, the provider could be subject to sanctions by the ELC.
 4. The ELC supports providers by offering technical assistance. Providers may also request technical assistance as they deem appropriate.
 5. Technical assistance is offered by the ELC to assist providers in understanding the requirements and how to meet them.
 - If the provider does not comply with the requirements of the School Readiness program, ELC policies and/or directives of the Office of Early Learning, the ELC notifies the provider in writing and, if applicable, gives the provider a specific period of time to comply. The provider must submit corrective action plans for any non-compliance documented during a SR monitoring inspection.
 - If the provider does not comply within the given time period, a final notice of non-compliance may be given before the ELC withholds payment or terminates the contract.
 - Repeated failure to meet SR requirements could result in probation or termination of the provider's SR contract.
 - For serious violations, the ELC may immediately withhold or deny payment, or terminate the SR provider agreement if the provider fails to comply with the requirements of the statute, rule, corrective action or contract.
 - The provider may reapply after twelve (12) months if in good standing and a decision will be made by the ELC regarding continued participation in the Early Learning program. The provider understands that any suspension of payment imposed by the ELC for non-compliance with requirements set forth in law or by this agreement, is considered disciplinary and may not be passed on to the parent.

- The Coalition may revoke the Provider's eligibility to deliver the school readiness program for a period of five (5) years. Notice of revocation shall be provided at the same time as notice of termination.

J. Complaints and Dispute Resolution

1. The provider has the right to appeal any issues of dispute.

- They must first attempt resolution with the designated staff and/or supervisory staff and managers.
- If the outcome does not resolve the matter, the provider may appeal to the ELC Chief Executive Officer (CEO) by following the procedures outlined in ELC policies.

2. In cases concerning SR providers who are in disagreement with any terms of their contractual agreement with the ELC, the provider must submit their dispute in writing directly to the ELC CEO. The ELC CEO will respond in writing within five (5) business days from receiving the dispute, and propose a method of resolution within 15 business days.

