



Special Needs Rate

School Readiness

January 25, 2024



Overview



The Division of Early Learning (DEL) provides a rate differential, or a special needs rate, to offset additional costs providers may incur when serving children with special needs.



Under Rule 6M-4.500(7) F.A.C., “a child care provider may be reimbursed by the coalition at a higher rate if caring for any SR child with special needs requiring additional care beyond services required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)”. To receive a special needs rate, the provider must submit a list of services it is providing to each child with special needs, in addition to routine school readiness services.

1. Services checked on the Matrix of Services Tool must be based on individual needs resulting from a child’s disability or delay and may not simply reflect services offered to all children in a particular class or program.
2. Each service provided to a student should be checked in only one domain.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The ADA requires that childcare providers not discriminate against persons with disabilities on the basis of disability, that is, that they provide children and parents with disabilities with an equal opportunity to participate in the childcare center's programs and services.

1. Centers cannot exclude children with disabilities from their programs unless their presence would post a direct threat to the health or safety of others or require a fundamental alteration of the program.
2. Centers have to make reasonable accommodations to their policies and practices to integrate children, parents, and guardians with disabilities into their programs unless doing so would constitute a fundamental alteration.
3. Centers must provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services needed for effective communication with children or adults with disabilities, when doing so would not constitute an undue burden.
4. Centers must generally make their facilities accessible to persons with disabilities.

<https://www.ada.gov/resources/child-care-centers/>

Determination

Who's Eligible?

- Children who are currently funded with School Readiness funding (BG funding group)
- Children who have documentation of diagnosis that is validated by a licensed health, mental health, education or social service professional other than the child's parent or person employed by the child care provider.



Levels of Services

Level 1 – child requires no services or assistance beyond those that are normally available to all children. Including routine administration of medication, school-wide curricula, and an appropriate learning environment with qualified instructors and standard materials and equipment.

Level 2 – child receives assistance on a periodic basis or receives minor supports, assistance, or services.

Level 3 – child is receiving accommodations to the learning environment that are more complex or is receiving services on a more frequent schedule. Collaboration refers to a joint effort among teachers, family, agencies and other providers and involves cooperative, proactive work on the part of all participants.

Level 5 – child is receiving continuous and intense (one-on-one or very small group) assistance, multiple services, or substantial modifications for most learning activities.

Level 4 – for most learning activities the child is receiving specialized approaches, assistance or equipment or is receiving more extensive modification to the learning environment. Daily services are generally included at this level.



Domains

Domain A: Curriculum and Learning Environment - addresses services provided to the child in the areas of curriculum, instructional strategies, and learning environment.

Domain B: Social and Emotional Behavior – services provided to meet identified social and emotional needs of children with exceptionalities. Including positive behavioral supports, behavioral interventions, social skills development, socialization, and counseling as a related service.

Domain C: Independent Functioning – services that are necessary for the independent functioning of children with exceptionalities, which may be noted in other domains. Services include instruction in organizational strategies, assistance for activities on daily living and self-care, physical therapy, occupational therapy, orientation and mobility training and supervision of students to ensure physical safety. PT, OT and SP may be provided by other agencies. Childcare providers may collaborate with licensed therapists to promote strategies and behaviors that have been recommended.

Domains

Domain D: Health Care- addresses services provided to the child with exceptionalities who have health care needs. Included in this domain are services related to monitoring and assessment of health conditions, provision of related health care services, and interagency collaboration.

Domain E: Communication – includes services to support the communication needs of the child with exceptionalities. Services may include personal assistance, instructional interventions, speech or language therapy, and the use of alternative and augmentative communication systems. Personal assistance for communication may be provided by an interpreter, teacher, speech-language pathologist, note taker, speech-language assistance or teacher aide.





Process for Requesting Special Needs Rate

1. Connect with parent to determine the needs of the child and what discuss additional supports you will be offering.
2. Complete Matrix of Services Tool with parent.
 - Discuss the levels and frequency of services you will be providing.
 - How you will collaborate with other supporting agencies.
 - How you will be communicating with the parent and supporting agencies.
 - The frequency of communication with all parties.
3. Complete the area at the bottom of each page for any additional supports not listed in the Matrix.
4. Parent must sign the Matrix of Services tool prior to submission.
5. Have parent contact the ELC at 239-935-6100 for assistance with uploading both the documentation of the child's diagnosis and the completed Matrix of Services to their family portal account.
6. ELC staff will review the Matrix and score the form to determine the differential percentage (10%, 15% or 20%) based on level of services.
7. If a Special Needs rate is determined, parent will need to re-verify terms and conditions and re-sign enrollment certificate.

Special Needs Rate

Providers will work with the Coalition Inclusion's Specialists to establish targets for improvement.



A matrix form and ELC approval is needed for *each* child that a provider is requesting payment of the special needs rate.



Providers who have Special Needs funded enrollments will be required to complete the **BPIECE** (Best Practices in Inclusion Early Childhood Education for Practitioners) self assessment tool in the QPS website. <https://portal-qps.floridaearlylearning.com/>



The Special Needs Rate is **not** transferrable between providers.



Matrix of Services Tool



Florida Department of Education, Division of Early Learning
 Special Needs Rate Guidance for Funding under the Florida School Readiness Program¹

TOTAL RATINGS: _____

RATE LEVEL: _____

SPECIAL NEEDS RATE: A MATRIX OF SERVICES TOOL

Provider Name: _____
Provider ID: _____ **Date Completed:** _____
Student's Name: _____
Date of Birth: _____
Age: _____
Parent Signature: _____
Name of Person Completing the Matrix: _____
Student has visual impairment: Yes or No (please mark one)
Student has dual sensory impairment: Yes or No (Please mark one)

The parent must provide documentation of diagnosis to the early learning coalition to justify this rate. Diagnosis must be validated by a licensed health, mental health, education, or social service professional other than the child's parent or person employed by the childcare provider.

Examples of diagnoses that may justify a Special Needs Rate include but are not limited to Autism Spectrum Disorder, Deaf or Hard of Hearing, Developmental Delay, Dual Sensory Impairment, Emotional or Behavioral Disability, Developmentally Advanced, Intellectual Disability, Language Impairment, Orthopedic Impairment, Specific Learning Disability, Speech Impairment, Traumatic Brain Injury, Visual Impairment

Instructions

1. Check services or supports to be provided by a School Readiness early learning program to student in Domain A through E.
2. Mark appropriate level (1 through 5) for each domain.
3. Include any additional supports, not included in the checklist, in the box at the bottom of each Domain page.
4. Enter the rating for each Domain at the bottom of each page. ELC staff will review and make final determination.

DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE ARE INCLUDED IN THE MATRIX OF SERVICES HANDBOOK.

Note: Each indicator assumes that services supplied are above and beyond ADA requirements. Each indicator would be fundamentally altering the learning environment or services typically provided to children.

¹ Adapted from the Florida Department of Education Matrix of Services for funding under the Florida Education Finance Program. Available from <http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7690/urlt/2017MatrixServices.pdf>

Domain A – Curriculum and Learning Environment	
Level	Examples of services and assistance that may be required and provided
Level 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Requires no services or assistance beyond that which is normally available to all students
Level 2 Inclusion requires minimal accommodations or supports to the curriculum or the learning environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Electronic tools to use independently <input type="checkbox"/> Materials to assist with accessibility <input type="checkbox"/> Accommodations on assessment or accessible assessment materials <input type="checkbox"/> Consultation monthly with teachers, family, agencies, or other providers
Level 3 Inclusion requires moderate accommodations or supports to the curriculum or the learning environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Electronic tools and assistive technology used with assistance <input type="checkbox"/> Alternative materials, assessments, activities, or equipment <input type="checkbox"/> Special assistance needed in learning environments <input type="checkbox"/> Direct, specialized instruction for some learning activities, which requires additional staff time ² <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly consultation and collaboration with teachers, family, agencies, or other providers
Level 4 Inclusion requires substantial accommodations or supports to the curriculum or the learning environment including but not limited to specialized instruction, modified curriculum or assistive technology used with supervision.	<input type="checkbox"/> Extensive creation or purchase of special materials <input type="checkbox"/> Direct, specialized instruction or curriculum for most learning activities which requires additional staff time <input type="checkbox"/> Assistance for most learning activities, which requires additional staff time <input type="checkbox"/> Assistive technology used with supervision for most learning activities <input type="checkbox"/> Consultation and collaboration more than once per week with teachers, family, agencies, or other providers
Level 5 Inclusion requires extensive individualized modified curriculum and substantial modifications to the learning environment to meet the child's individual needs	<input type="checkbox"/> Specialized instruction for literacy, which requires additional staff time, such as braille or sign language <input type="checkbox"/> Intensive curriculum or instructional approach for most learning activities, which requires an additional staff member <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing, continuous assistance for participation in learning activities, which requires an additional staff member <input type="checkbox"/> Daily consultation and collaboration with teachers, family, agencies, or other providers
Below, include any additional supports currently provided, which are not included in the lists above. This may include services, fundamental alterations to the environment and/or instructional plans for the child.	

DOMAIN A RATING:

² Requiring additional staff time is defined as any additional time needed outside of the normal educational services to provide the child's needed services and supports.