



Early Learning Coalition of the Nature Coast
Serving Citrus-Dixie-Gilchrist-Levy-Sumter Counties

Early Learning Program Operating Procedure (ELPOP)

Chapter 3: School Readiness Program Requirements

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Chapter 3 School Readiness Requirements

3.1 General Services

- A. Providers who receive school readiness funding shall be considered "school readiness providers". The Coalition may enter into an Agreement with school readiness providers that meet the following criteria:
1. Produce current proof of license, license exempt, or registration (not required for informal care).
 2. Obtain and maintain 100% compliance with the Coalition's Health and Safety Assessment, or on the Child Care Licensing inspection.
 3. Produce current, valid, and accurate proof of insurance listing the Coalition as additionally insured as required later in this policy. Proof must be an insurance certificate.
 4. All potential providers must be in good standing with the local licensing agency (informal care is exempt from this requirement).
 5. Obtain a minimum of 80% compliance with the Coalition's ELCNC-23 School Readiness Program Pre-Assessment Tools and obtain 100% compliance with the Coalition's ELCNC-24 School Readiness Health and Safety Pre-Assessment/Assessment Tools, if the facility is not licensed.
- B. School Readiness Provider Agreement: The ELCNC-18 School Readiness Provider Agreement and ELCNC-19 School Readiness Provider Agreement Attachments must be fully executed and authorized by the Executive Director. Provider reimbursement shall be contingent upon the existence of a current executed agreement. The following provisions are applicable to school readiness providers:
1. The agreement will, at a minimum, require the following:
 - a. The school readiness provider must submit attendance sheets by the second working day of the month by 5:00 pm following the service month in order to receive full reimbursement. If the school readiness provider submits attendance sheets after the second working day of the month following the service month the following penalties will apply:
 - (A) The first offense of a late submission will result in the provider's contract being placed on probation in accordance with the Coalition's School Readiness Provider Agreement Termination and Reinstatement Procedure.
 - (B) The second offense of late submission, within a twelve (12) month period, will result in the continued probation status and the provider will be subject to a 10% penalty fee assessed on the total monthly reimbursement amount.
 - (C) The third and subsequent offenses of late submissions, within a twelve (12) month period, will result in the termination of the School Readiness Provider Agreement.
 - (D) The Executive Director may extend the due date on a case by case basis where unusual circumstances caused the late submission of attendance sheets.
 - (E) The placement of a provider on probation and the assessment of penalties fees as described in this policy are subject to the Coalition's Grievance Policy upon request by the provider.

- b. The school readiness provider must document attendance daily. Documentation must include the child's legal name, the time the child arrives and departs, and the signature of the person responsible for dropping off and/or picking up the child.
- c. In the event a child is absent for five (5) consecutive days with no contact from the parent, the school readiness provider must notify the Coalition, utilizing ELCNC-211 Child Attendance Notice.
- d. The school readiness provider must comply with the program observation requirements.
- e. The school readiness provider must offer unlimited parental access.
- f. The school readiness provider will require parents to pay their parent fees and document all scholarships appropriately. The school readiness provider must collect a minimum of 85% of assessed parent fees and report collection to the Coalition on ELCNC-28 School Readiness Provider Quarterly Report.
- g. The school readiness provider must offer a character development program to develop basic values.
- h. The school readiness provider must maintain required staff-to-child ratios.
- i. The school readiness provider must offer a staff development program, requiring all staff members to complete annual in-service training hours, in accordance with the following: teachers with a National CDA/FCCPC credential or higher are required to complete a minimum of twelve (12) in-service hours per year and teachers with no credential are required to complete a minimum of twenty (20) in-service hours per year. School readiness providers may utilize on-site in-service training programs to meet these requirements, if approved by the Coalition. For on-site trainings to be approved, the following process must be completed.
 - (A) The program director must submit an agenda, training materials, and a pre/post test to the Coalition for approval prior to conducting the training. The purpose of the pre/post test is to document that training objectives have been met. Once approved, the training may be offered.
 - (B) A sign in sheet must be completed at the training, along with the pre and post tests.
 - (C) Following the training, the program director must submit a copy of the agenda, sign in sheet, pre and post tests to the Coalition. The Coalition will issue certificates to document completion and approval of the training hours for each participant.
- j. The school readiness provider must maintain healthy and safe environment and comply with the ELCNC-24 Health and Safety Assessment Tools or Child Care Licensing requirements (as applicable). If a licensed school readiness provider is found to be in non-compliance by the licensing counselor, the provider is required to notify the Coalition within one (1) hour of the inspection by telephone and by the close of that business day, in writing. The provider must provide the Coalition with a copy of the licensing inspection report and any corrective action plan developed by the licensing counselor. The provider must also submit a copy of the follow up inspection to the Coalition, to document that compliance has been achieved, within three (3) working days of the inspection by the licensing counselor.
- k. The school readiness provider must implement a parent involvement and education program.
- l. The school readiness provider must submit the ELCNC-28 School Readiness Provider Quarterly Report to the Coalition by the 20th calendar day after the end of the reporting period. For the purpose of accurately reporting parent fees collected and understanding parents may be delinquent on fees for a period of up to thirty (30) days, the Coalition must utilize the following calculation methods to determine

the percentage of parent fees collected: the Coalition shall determine the parent fees assessed and collected from the beginning of the fiscal year to the thirtieth (30th) day prior to the last day of the reporting quarter and divide the amount of collected fees by the amount of assessed fees. For example, in the first quarter reporting period, the Coalition would determine the parent fees assessed and collected for the months of July and August. The second reporting period would include the fees assessed and collected for the months of July – November, the third reporting period would include July – February, and the fourth quarter would include July – May. A final calculation of the percentage of fees assessed and collected must be completed thirty (30) days after the close of the fiscal year and submitted to the Coalition.

- m. The school readiness provider must certify and utilize a Coalition-approved developmentally appropriate curriculum designed to enhance the age-appropriate progress of children in attaining the performance standards adopted by the Agency for Workforce Innovation. The certification is included in the ELCNC-19 School Readiness Provider Agreement Attachments. The ELCNC-29 Coalition-Approved Curricula is available for reference on the Coalition's website.
- n. The school readiness provider's program must enhance the age-appropriate progress of each child in the development of the following school readiness skills:
 - (A) Compliance with rules, limitations, and routines
 - (B) Ability to perform tasks
 - (C) Interactions with adults
 - (D) Interactions with peers
 - (E) Ability to cope with challenges
 - (F) Self-help skills
 - (G) Ability to express the child's needs
 - (H) Verbal communication skills
 - (I) Problem-solving skills
 - (J) Following of verbal directions
 - (K) Demonstration of curiosity, persistence, and exploratory behavior
 - (L) Interest in books and other printed materials
 - (M) Paying attention to stories
 - (N) Participation in art and music activities
 - (O) Ability to identify colors, geometric shapes, letters of the alphabet, numbers and spatial and temporal relationships.
- o. Provider Meeting Attendance: The school readiness provider must attend in person, send a representative, or participate via teleconference in a minimum of 80% of the provider meetings. The Coalition acknowledges that occasionally a School Readiness provider will be unable to attend a provider meeting at short notice due to circumstances beyond their control. The Coalition may excuse a

provider's absence from a meeting if notified in writing of the circumstances surrounding the absence and if it is the Coalition's judgment that the reason for the absence is valid. Providers whose school readiness contracts are placed on in-active status due to lack of enrollment of school readiness children are excused from attendance at provider meetings scheduled during the period of the in-active status.

- p. License Certifications: The school readiness provider must be a legally operating child care provider and must submit current license certifications or other applicable documents to the Coalition in accordance with the terms of the provider's ELCNC-18 School Readiness Provider Agreement.
2. The agreement will include the statement: "the provider shall comply with all school readiness requirements as a condition of receiving school readiness funds".
 3. The agreement will state that the school readiness provider is required to submit current insurance certifications that include the Early Learning Coalition of the Nature Coast (including the Coalition's main office address) as a named insured on the general liability insurance policy and in accordance with the following:
 - a. The school readiness provider shall be liable, and agree to be liable for, and shall indemnify, defend and hold the Coalition harmless from all liability, claims, suits, judgments, expenses or damages including court costs and attorney's fees arising out of intentional acts, negligence or omissions by the early learning provider in the course of the operations of the contract. This also includes the indemnification of the State for any liabilities set forth in section 768.28 Florida Statutes.
 - b. The school readiness provider's insurance: At all times during an Agreement, the school readiness provider shall maintain insurance policies meeting the requirements of this section.
 - c. Adequate General Liability Coverage as determined by the Coalition, at a minimum limit of \$500,000 for child care centers and \$300,000 for family child care homes per occurrence for Bodily Injury and Property Damage.
 - d. If transportation is provided as part of the school readiness program Business Automobile Liability with minimum limits of \$500,000 per occurrence for Bodily Injury and Property Damage is required. (ELCNC-20 Insurance Affidavit must be submitted to certify whether or not transportation is provided.)
 - e. Worker's Compensation coverage for all employees, meeting the legal requirements for employees in Providers SIC code(s) or an affidavit stating that the provider is not required to carry the insurance (ELCNC-20 Insurance Affidavit).
 - f. The school readiness provider shall provide a Certificate of Insurance signed by an authorized representative of the insurer evidencing the insurance required by this section. The Certificate of Insurance shall provide that the Coalition shall be given not less than ten (10) days written notice prior to the cancellation or restriction of coverage. A renewal or replacement Certificate of Insurance shall be provided not less than ten (10) days before expiration or replacement of the insurance for which a previous certificate has been provided.
 - g. Insurance Company Requirements: All insurance companies providing insurance must be authorized to conduct business in the State of Florida.
 - h. This Agreement does not limit the types of insurance that the early learning provider may desire to obtain or be required to obtain by law. The limits of coverage under each policy maintained by the early learning provider shall not be interpreted as limiting the early learning provider's liability and obligations under the Agreement.
 - i. Public school systems covered under F.S. s. 768.28 shall be required to submit a certificate of insurance only.

4. The School Readiness Agreement will not include payment for initial start-up costs to open a new school readiness operation, for the purchase or improvement of land, or for the purchase, construction, or permanent improvement of any building or facility (per 98.54 of CCDF final rule). Any such costs in excess of earnings under the rate payment methods will be met through resources outside the Coalition.
5. The Agreement will include provisions for emergency closing and reimbursements in accordance with the Coalition's requirements and will include a Provider Contingency Plan attachment that addresses the following:
 - a. Description of circumstances that would cause the facility to close in the event of a natural disaster or emergency, i.e. the provider will close based on the recommendations of the local Emergency Operations Center and/or if the county school system is closed
 - b. Description of the program's process for notifying parents and the Coalition of emergency closures
 - c. If applicable, a description of the program's re-location process and location.
 - d. Description of the program's essential services required prior to re-opening, i.e. electricity, water, safe structure, healthy and safe environment
 - e. Description of the program's process for notifying parents and the Coalition for re-opening the facility
 - f. Description of the program's employee payment policy during natural disasters or emergencies
 - g. Description of the program's process for assisting parents in accessing temporary transfers
6. The Coalition will complete ELCNC-118 Sub-recipient/Vendor Relationship Determination and the ELCNC-126 Federal Sub-recipient/Vendor Determination Checklist for each sub-contracted provider and attach a copy of the determination to the School Readiness Provider Agreement.
7. The school readiness provider will submit to the Coalition the ELCNC-21 Signature Authority Form at any time that it becomes necessary to update the information.

C. School Readiness Provider Agreement Termination and Reinstatement Procedure:

1. School Readiness providers are required to maintain compliance with a variety of mandates, as outlined in the School Readiness Provider Agreement & Attachments. Consequences of non-compliance may range from being placed on at-risk status, probationary status, or contract termination. This document is designed to help providers to better understand the consequences of non-compliance in a variety of areas, as well as how to go about addressing non-compliance issues.

At-risk status indicates to a School Readiness provider that attention is needed in this area. The duration of the at-risk status may vary. There are no immediate consequences to being placed on at-risk status.

Probationary status indicates that a School Readiness provider is in a state of serious non-compliance. The duration of the probationary status may vary. The consequences of probationary status include:

- o The School Readiness program is ineligible to participate in any Coalition grant opportunities, such as the Accreditation Mini Grant Program, the Inclusion Grant Program, the Provider Recruitment/Expansion Program, and the Quality Initiatives Mini Grant Program, as well as any other grant programs that may be implemented.
- o The School Readiness program's owner is ineligible to participate in the Professional Development Reimbursement Program and the Teacher Incentive Payment (TIP) Program.

Immediate termination of a School Readiness Provider Agreement may occur if a condition or situation exists that poses imminent danger to children of injury or death. This condition or situation may be identified by the Coalition, the Department of Children & Families, and/or a law enforcement agency. Also, immediate termination will occur if the School Readiness provider fails to submit appropriate insurance and licensing documentation, as outlined in the School Readiness provider agreement and attachments.

If a non-compliance issue is noted, the appropriate staff member will complete an ELCNC-22 School Readiness Provider Non-Compliance Report and submit it to the Contracts and Compliance Department. The Contracts and Compliance Manager or designee will update the Coalition's tracking system and notify the provider of the at-risk or probationary status. Upon resolution of the non-compliance issue (if applicable), the staff member that submitted the original ELCNC-22 School Readiness Provider Non-Compliance Report will submit an additional ELCNC-22 School Readiness Provider Non-Compliance Report indicating an "issue resolved date", along with any appropriate documentation. The Contracts and Compliance Manager or designee will update the Coalition's tracking system and notify the provider of the lifting of the at-risk or probationary status.

a. Provider Meeting Attendance

School Readiness providers are required to attend or send a representative to provider meetings facilitated by the Coalition. Meetings are held every other month (six meetings per year) in each region served. The opportunity to phone in to a meeting is offered to the greatest extent possible. Absences may be excused by the Program Managers, at their discretion. Requests for excused absences must be submitted in writing to the Program Manager.

The ELCNC-22 School Readiness Provider Non-Compliance Report will be submitted by the Assistant Contracts and Compliance Manager or designee.

Consequences of non-compliance with this requirement are:

At-risk status	Probationary status	Termination
Two missed provider meetings within a fiscal year (unexcused).	Three missed provider meetings within a fiscal year (unexcused).	Four missed provider meetings within a fiscal year (unexcused).

Any School Readiness provider that was placed on probationary status for this non-compliance area will have that status lifted on July 1st of the next fiscal year.

b. Submission of Attendance Rolls and Documentation

School Readiness providers are required to submit their monthly attendance rolls no later than the second (2nd) working day of the month following the service month, by 5:00 pm. Sign in/out sheets must be submitted no later than the seventh (7th) working day of the month following the service month, by 5:00 pm. Rolls and sign in/out sheets must be submitted to the appropriate Coalition office for their county.

The ELCNC-22 School Readiness Provider Non-Compliance Report will be submitted by the Finance Manager or designee.

Consequences of non-compliance with this requirement are:

At-risk status	Probationary status	Termination
At-risk status does not apply to this area of non-compliance.	At the first instance of late submission of attendance rolls or sign in/out sheets, probationary status will be imposed for the remainder of the fiscal year.	The third instance of late submission of attendance rolls within the same fiscal year results in termination of the School Readiness provider agreement.

	<p>The second instance of late submission of attendance rolls within the same fiscal year results in continued probationary status and a 10% penalty fee assessed on the total monthly reimbursement amount.</p> <p>Late submission of sign in/out sheets will result in the revoking of the reimbursement payment.</p>	
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The Executive Director may waive this policy on a case by case basis where unusual circumstances caused the late submission of attendance rolls. The provider must submit a written extension request or letter of appeal explaining the reason for late submission.

- c. School Readiness Provider Quarterly Report
School Readiness providers are required to submit quarterly reports to the Coalition each quarter, according to deadlines established and outlined on the form itself.

The ELCNC-22 School Readiness Provider Non-Compliance Report will be submitted by the Assistant Contracts and Compliance Manager or designee.

Consequences of non-compliance with this requirement are:

At-risk status	Probationary status	Termination
Late submission of the report results in at-risk status. If the provider submits the report within thirty (30) days of the notification of the at-risk status, the at-risk status will be lifted.	If the provider does not submit the quarterly report within thirty (30) days after notification of the at-risk status, probationary status is imposed. Probationary status will continue until the end of the fiscal year.	If a provider does not submit three (3) quarterly reports within a fiscal year, the provider agreement will be terminated.

Late/non-submission of the Provider Quarterly Report by the due date implies non-reporting of parent fees. If the provider does not submit the Quarterly Report within thirty (30) days from the date of the at-risk status notification, the provider will be placed on probation. The provider will be required to implement a parent fee collection policy plan within ten (10) working days of the notification of probationary status.

- d. Collection of Parent Fees
School Readiness providers are required to collect a minimum of 85% of assessed parent fees from families participating in their programs. Parent fee collection is reported on the quarterly reports.

The ELCNC-22 School Readiness Provider Non-Compliance Report will be submitted by the Assistant Contracts and Compliance Manager or designee.

Consequences of non-compliance with this requirement are:

At-risk status	Probationary status	Termination
The first instance of collection of less than 85% of assessed parent fees	The second instance of collection of less than 85% of assessed parent	If the provider fails to submit a corrective action plan while on

<p>results in at-risk status. In addition, the provider is required to submit to the Coalition a plan for implementation of a parent fee collection policy within ten (10) working days. The plan must clearly state the date that parent fees are due (daily, weekly, monthly), a notice of delinquent account sent to the parent the day after parent fees become late including a statement to parents that the provider is required to notify the Coalition if the fees become more than thirty (30) days past due. This is considered to be a corrective action plan.</p>	<p>fees results in probationary status. In addition, the provider is required to submit to the Coalition a plan for implementation of a parent fee collection policy within ten (10) working days. The plan must clearly state the date that parent fees are due (daily, weekly, monthly), a notice of delinquent account sent to the parent the day after parent fees become late including a statement to parents that the provider is required to notify the Coalition if the fees become more than thirty (30) days past due. This is considered to be a corrective action plan.</p>	<p>probationary status or fails to meet the requirements of a corrective action plan developed during the probationary status the School Readiness agreement will be immediately terminated.</p>
<p>The Coalition will monitor the implementation of the plan within forty-five (45) days of submission, and if the system is working well, the at-risk status will be removed. If the plan is not submitted or is not implemented satisfactorily, probationary status will be imposed.</p>	<p>The Coalition will monitor the implementation of the plan within forty-five (45) days of submission, and if the system is working well, the probationary status will be removed at the end of the fiscal year.</p>	

e. Unlimited Parental Access

School Readiness providers are required to allow parents/caregivers unlimited access to their child during the hours of care. Providers submit a copy of their "open door policy" to the Coalition as an exhibit to the School Readiness provider agreement. Providers must keep on file any legal documentation showing that a particular parent or other person has restricted access to the child, to ensure child safety.

Consequences of non-compliance with this requirement are:

At-risk status	Probationary status	Termination
At-risk status does not apply to this area of non-compliance.	Probationary status does not apply to this area of non-compliance.	Upon documentation of denial of unlimited parental access, the School Readiness provider agreement will be terminated.

f. Health and Safety Issues – Licensed Providers

School Readiness providers are required to maintain early learning environments which are safe and healthy for the children in attendance. Compliance with applicable state law is monitored by the Department of Children and Families. Providers are required to report non-compliances noted by Department of Children and Families Licensing Counselors to the Coalition by telephone within one (1) hour of the inspection and in writing by the end of that business day. It is preferable to fax the licensing inspection report to the local Coalition office, along with any corrective action plan developed by/with the Licensing Counselor. *Providers are required to report all non-compliances noted by Child Care Licensing, even if the issue was corrected immediately.* The provider must also submit to the Coalition a copy of the follow up inspection report to document that compliance has been achieved, within three (3) working days of the re-inspection, if applicable. Providers are required to follow the timelines established by the Licensing Counselor for compliance.

The ELCNC-22 School Readiness Provider Non-Compliance Report will be submitted by the Program Manager or designee.

Consequences of non-compliance with this requirement are:

At-risk status	Probationary status	Termination
<p>The first instance of non-reporting of non-compliance identified by DCF will result in at-risk status for the remainder of the fiscal year.</p> <p>If the re-inspection indicates that the non-compliance issue or issues have been resolved, the at-risk status will be lifted.</p> <p>NOTE: Non-compliance issues which pose imminent danger to a child will result in the immediate termination of the School Readiness provider agreement.</p>	<p>The second instance of non-reporting of non-compliance identified by DCF will result in probationary status for the remainder of the fiscal year.</p> <p>If the re-inspection indicates that the non-compliance issue or issues have been resolved, the probationary status will be lifted.</p> <p>NOTE: Non-compliance issues which pose imminent danger to a child will result in the immediate termination of the School Readiness provider agreement.</p>	<p>The third instance of non-reporting of non-compliance identified by DCF may result in termination, depending on the severity and duration of the non-compliances found.</p> <p>NOTE: Non-compliance issues which pose imminent danger to a child will result in the immediate termination of the School Readiness provider agreement.</p>

g. Health and Safety Issues – Non-licensed Providers

School Readiness providers are required to maintain early learning environments which are safe and healthy for the children in attendance. Compliance is monitored by the Coalition utilizing the approved Health and Safety Checklist, which mirrors Department of Children and Families Child Care Licensing requirements as stated in Florida law. The Coalition will conduct at least two inspections each fiscal year of all non-licensed providers (faith-based exempt, registered homes, school-based sites, and any other type of facility which is not regulated by the Department of Children and Families). Providers are required to comply with 100% of the applicable items on the checklist.

The ELCNC-22 School Readiness Provider Non-Compliance Report will be submitted by the Program Manager or designee.

Consequences of non-compliance with this requirement are:

At-risk status	Probationary status	Termination
<p>Failure to achieve 100% compliance will result in at-risk status. A corrective action plan will be developed, with timelines developed that are applicable to the area of non-compliance. A follow up inspection will be completed at the close of the corrective action period. If full compliance has been achieved, the at-risk status will be lifted.</p> <p>NOTE: Non-compliance issues which pose imminent danger to a child will result in the immediate</p>	<p>If the follow up inspection shows continued non-compliance, probationary status will be imposed. The provider will remain on probation until the next regularly scheduled inspection. If compliance is achieved at that time, the probationary status will be lifted. If compliance is not achieved, another corrective action plan must be developed and implemented.</p> <p>NOTE: Non-compliance issues which pose imminent danger to a</p>	<p>If a provider remains on probationary status for health and safety issues for two full inspection cycles, the Coalition will consider termination of the agreement for the health and well-being of children.</p> <p>NOTE: Non-compliance issues which pose imminent danger to a child will result in the immediate termination of the School Readiness provider agreement.</p>

termination of the School Readiness provider agreement.	child will result in the immediate termination of the School Readiness provider agreement.	
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h. Provider Observations

School Readiness providers are required to offer quality early learning environments to meet the requirements of the School Readiness Program as set forth in Florida Statute, as well as the requirements of the School Readiness provider agreement. The Coalition's approved provider observation tool will be utilized to monitor compliance with these requirements. The observation will be completed at least twice per fiscal year. Scoring percentages are developed at the program and classroom levels, as well as developing a composite score. Scores are evaluated to determine the level of compliance achieved.

The ELCNC-22 School Readiness Provider Non-Compliance Report will be submitted by the Program Manager or designee.

Consequences of non-compliance with this requirement are:

At-risk status	Probationary status	Termination
<p>If a provider achieves a composite score of 95.00% – 96.99%, the program is placed on at-risk status. A corrective action plan will be developed and implemented, and the areas of non-compliance re-evaluated after approximately thirty (30) days.</p> <p>When the corrective action items are re-evaluated, a new composite score will be developed. If the score is 95.00% - 96.99%, the at-risk status will remain until the next provider observation is completed. If the score is 97.00% or above, the at-risk status will be lifted.</p>	<p>If a provider achieves a composite score of 85.00% - 94.99%, the program is placed on probationary status. A corrective action plan will be developed and implemented, and the areas of non-compliance re-evaluated after approximately thirty (30) days.</p> <p>When the corrective action items are re-evaluated, a new composite score will be developed. If the score is 85.00% - 94.99%, the probationary status will remain until the next provider observation is completed. If the score is 95.00% - 96.99%, the status will be raised to at-risk. If the score is 97.00% or above, the probationary status will be lifted.</p> <p>If a provider is on probationary status for low scores on the provider observation for a period longer than one year, the Coalition will consider termination of the School Readiness provider agreement, depending on the potential negative impact on the well-being and safety of the children. A review will be conducted by the appropriate Advisory Council, which will make a recommendation to the Board, as needed.</p>	<p>If a provider achieves a composite score below 85.00%, the School Readiness agreement may be terminated immediately.</p> <p>At the Coalition's discretion, the provider may be offered a thirty (30) day corrective action period with intensive technical assistance. At the end of the thirty (30) days, an additional full provider observation will be completed. A second composite score will be developed. If the score is below 85.00%, the School Readiness provider agreement will be terminated immediately. If the score is 85.00% - 94.00%, the provider will be placed on probationary status. If the score is 95.00% - 96.99%, the provider will be placed on at-risk status. If the score is 97.00% or above, the provider will be considered to be performing appropriately.</p>

i. Multiple Probationary Issues

If a School Readiness provider is identified with more than two unresolved non-compliance issues and has been placed on probationary status for two separate infractions, the provider will move to termination status. The Program Manager will make a written recommendation to the Executive Director regarding the implementation of termination procedures based on the severity of the probationary issues and their potential impact on children, providing documentation as appropriate. The Executive Director will determine whether or not there is good cause to terminate the School Readiness agreement. The Executive Director may waive this policy on a case by case basis where the non-compliances were caused by unusual circumstances. If termination occurs, the provider may submit a letter of appeal explaining the reason for the probationary issues and outlining the provider's plan to resolve the issues. The Executive Director will review the letter of appeal and will determine whether or not to make any recommendation to the Advisory Councils and/or the Board regarding the provider's eligibility for a School Readiness agreement. If the Executive Director determines that termination is in order, the provider may refer to the procedures below pertaining to the reinstatement of the School Readiness agreement if desired.

Example: Probation + Probation = Possible termination of School Readiness agreement

j. Reinstatement of a School Readiness Agreement

In the event a School Readiness provider is interested in reinstating their School Readiness agreement after it was terminated by the Coalition the following action must be taken. If the School Readiness provider agreement was terminated due to a violation of and/or non-compliance with the school readiness agreement and the violations and/or non-compliance issues are corrected and documented appropriately, Coalition shall submit a recommendation to the local Advisory Council for reinstatement. The Coalition will not consider reinstatement earlier than three (3) months after the original termination. The recommendation will be considered if the provider is in full compliance with local licensing agency and Coalition-approved policy and procedures. If the recommendation for reinstatement by the Advisory Council is approved by the Coalition Board, the School Readiness agreement will be reinstated and the School Readiness provider will be placed on probation. Probationary periods will range from three (3) to twelve (12) months based upon Coalition Board recommendation. School Readiness provider agreements terminated due to fraud are not eligible for reinstatement. The classifications of the probationary periods are as follows:

Three (3) months: Violation was a result of non-compliance with the School Readiness agreement requirements not related to Health and Safety issues (i.e. not attending required School Readiness provider meetings, not submitting the ELCNC-28 School Readiness Provider Quarterly Report or similar area of non-compliance)

Six (6) months: Violation was a result of non-compliance with a Health and Safety issue as documented by the Department of Children and Families Licensing Inspection or the Coalition Health and Safety Assessment, non-compliance with the Provider Observation Tool.

Twelve (12) months: Violation was a result of non-compliance in multiple areas documented on the Health and Safety Assessment and/or the Department of Children and Families Licensing Inspection, Provider Observation Tool and the School Readiness agreement requirements.

3.2 Reimbursement Procedures

A. Establishing Reimbursement Rates and Parent Fees (Co-payments)

1. The Coalition is responsible for negotiating fixed rates with school readiness providers. Rates negotiated may not exceed the rates paid by the general public (private pay rate) nor will they exceed Coalition's approved ELCNC-235 School Readiness Program Provider Rate Schedule. All rates shall be determined utilizing the following levels of care:

- a. Infant care (0-12 months of age)

- b. Toddler care (13-24 months of age)
 - c. Two year old care (25 -36 months of age)
 - d. Preschool-age children (3 years old)
 - e. Preschool-age children (4 years old)
 - f. Preschool-age children (5 years old)
 - g. In-School (Kindergarten – 12 years old) (Before and after school care shall be available for eligible school-age children who are enrolled in school. Part-time or full-time care shall be available for eligible children who are in-school and who need services during school breaks, holidays, etc.)
2. The Florida Legislature passed legislation to enable the Coalition to pay up to the full market rate for providers that have met criteria for designation as a Gold Seal Provider. Upon receipt of proof of gold seal the Coalition shall negotiate separate rates for providers who are designated as Gold Seal Providers. Should a school readiness provider's private rate equal or exceed the maximum rate (prevailing market rate) for age and type of care, the Gold Seal rate may be negotiated up to 20% above the maximum rate or up to the school readiness provider's private pay rate, whichever is lower. Should a school readiness provider's rate be less than the Coalition's maximum rate (prevailing market rate) for age and type of care, the Gold Seal rate shall be the caregiver's private pay rate. Providers who receive their accreditation during a fiscal year will become eligible for Gold Seal rates the first of the month following the Coalition's receipt of their paperwork from the state, regardless of the actual effective date on the certificate. Note: Gold Seal rates will be paid as funds are available; proof of Gold Seal must be maintained in the provider file.
 3. The Coalition will determine the School Readiness Program Provider Rate Schedule annually utilizing the annual market rate survey conducted by the Agency for Workforce Innovation/Office of Early Learning.
 4. The Coalition will negotiate special needs rate using the Coalition's approved ELCNC-235 School Readiness Program Provider Rate Schedule for the age of the child as a guideline and taking into consideration the special services/needs of the child.
 5. The Coalition is responsible for establishing a parent fee (the parent co-payment) based on the Coalition's approved ELCNC-265 Parent Fee Schedule for each child. The parent fee schedule is based on the family size, income, and federal poverty level. The school readiness provider is responsible for collecting the parent fee and will certify on a monthly basis that the parent fee has been collected. Non-payment of parent fees is a reason for termination of financially assisted school readiness services. In the event of a change in school readiness providers or termination of financially assisted school readiness services, no parent will be responsible for more than 30 days of past due fees.
 - a. Should a parent prefer a school readiness provider whose private pay rate paid by the general public exceeds the negotiated school readiness rate the parent will be responsible for the difference between the provider's private rate and the Coalition's subsidy rate when the following conditions are met: the parent/guardian is aware of the charges prior to enrolling his or her child; the parent/guardian and provider understand that the charges are between the provider and parent/guardian and are not administered by the Coalition; and the parent/guardian has been advised of other care options available prior to entering in to an agreement with the provider.
 - b. The Coalition will ensure that, to the maximum extent possible, quality school readiness options are available for all clients. The Coalition will further ensure that school readiness providers do not charge school readiness clients rates that exceed their published private rate.

- c. The only fees that can be required of a parent who participates in the school readiness program with a school readiness provider or directly operated center or home, with the exception of transportation, registration/supply fees, or late pick-up fees, are those listed in the Coalition's Parent Fee Schedule.

B. Reimbursement Determination

1. Maximum rates payable to providers are not to exceed the providers private pay rates or those listed on the Coalition's approved ELCNC-235 School Readiness Program Provider Rate Schedule.
2. Reimbursements for full- and part-time care increments are made according to the reported number of child "days participated" for the payment period. If a child is authorized for 6 hours or more hours per week (Monday through Friday), the child may attend school readiness services full-time. School readiness services will be reimbursed at the full-time rate. If a parent works weekends or if the work week exceeds forty (40) hours and includes weekends, the weekend school readiness services would be paid at the daily/part-time rate. Providers will also be reimbursed for approved holidays and absences.
3. Reimbursement will be made for full- or part-time school readiness services and will reasonably relate to the hours of a parent's qualifying activity (e.g., employment, community service, training, educational activities, etc.), and reasonable travel time. Appropriate documentation for clients classified as two parents one parent working must meet at risk guidelines referred to in the Eligibility and Enrollment section of this policy.
4. When a client's request for hours of school readiness services appears excessive under the circumstances (e.g., beyond full time care for a regular full-time job), the Coalition will explore the appropriateness of the request with the parent or the authorizing caseworker and keep a written justification for any additional authorized hours in the client eligibility file. Permission will be sought from the Department of Children and Families, or the contracted provider, for a family with an open case to participate in school readiness services overnight/weekends instead of normal working hours.
5. Up to twelve (12) holidays will not be counted as an absence for purposes of reimbursement. The Coalition will authorize reimbursements to providers of full- and part-time care for up to twelve (12) holidays per year.
6. The provider will enter "H" on the daily attendance and enrollment roster for only those children who were actually enrolled in the program prior to the holiday. If days prior to or after a holiday are marked with "N" (non-reimbursable) the holiday cannot be reimbursed.
7. For children enrolled part-time and scheduled to attend on a holiday, the provider will be reimbursed at the part-time rate. For children enrolled full-time and scheduled to attend on a holiday, the provider will be reimbursed at the full-time rate. If the child does not attend the provider may receive reimbursement for an excused absence in accordance with this policy. For children not scheduled (not authorized) to attend on a holiday, no reimbursement will be made to the provider. If a child is not in attendance, the provider will receive payment for the scheduled attendance.
8. Reimbursement will be authorized for no more than a total of three (3) absences per calendar month per child except in the event of extraordinary circumstances in which case the Executive Director or designee (management level employee) will provide written approval for payment based on written documentation provided by the parent justifying the excessive absence for up to an additional seven (7) days.
 - a. Examples of extraordinary circumstances include the following:
 - (A) Hospitalization of the child or parent with appropriate documentation;

- (B) Illness requiring home-stay as documented by the parent or legal guardian for a maximum of three (3) days per month. The remaining allowable four (4) days must be documented by a medical professional.
 - (C) Death in the immediate family with appropriate documentation (i.e. obituary, death certificate);
 - (D) Court ordered visitation with appropriate documentation (i.e. court order); or
 - (E) Unforeseen documented military deployment or exercise of the parent (s).
- b. Total monthly reimbursed absences will not exceed ten (10) calendar days.
 - c. In the event a child is absent for five (5) consecutive days with no contact from the parent, the provider will notify the Coalition and the Coalition will determine the need for continued school readiness services. If a termination from financially assisted school readiness services notice is filed, the notice will be provided to the referring entity.
 - d. When an at-risk child has any unexcused absence or seven (7) consecutive days of excused absences from a school readiness program, the school readiness provider will immediately notify the Department of Children and Families assigned Family Services Counselor or supervisor by telephone or fax of the absence. The Rilya Wilson Act establishes these reporting requirements for children 3 to 5 years old; this rule will apply to all children of any age in a school readiness program.
 - e. Should a provider independently decide to "hold" a slot for a child beyond the allowable number of absences, due to a prolonged illness or other family circumstances, such days will not be reimbursable.
 - f. Payment for a child shall be suspended if the child does not attend at least one (1) instructional day during the calendar month.
9. The school readiness provider's insurance certificate and license must be current in order to receive reimbursement.
10. The Coalition will maintain a Continuation of Operations Plan to be used in the event of emergency closings due to catastrophic events. A government-declared state of emergency prompts and allows the Coalition to activate its Continuation of Operations Plan (COOP). In the event the Coalition's COOP plan is activated providers will be reimbursed at the rate normally received during non-emergency hours.
- a. Providers may receive up to ten (10) days of payment per child per month. Provider documentation for absences must include damage sustained in emergency causing closure. Additional reimbursements must be approved by the executive director of the Coalition.
 - b. A provider will not be paid for a child during a temporary closure if the child attends another provider's program on that day. The Coalition may only pay one provider for the same child.
 - c. The Coalition will use the local school district's or local government's closure schedule as a general determination of the number of eligible days for closure reimbursement at the discretion of the Coalition's Executive Director. If a provider is temporarily closed beyond the closure period for the school district or local government (for example, due to extensive damage or extended localized power outages) the Coalition may consider reimbursing additional days based on written documentation from the provider.

- d. A school readiness provider will be reimbursed at the same daily rate and unit of care received during non-emergency days. Under no circumstances may a Coalition reimburse in excess of the pre-existing approved hours for an individual child during the temporary closure.
11. Documentation of the circumstances causing a temporary closure is not required if a school readiness provider's program site is in an area where government offices normally open to the public are closed by the county, state, or federal governments or public schools are closed by the school district, because a state of emergency is declared to exist in the county by the county government, the Governor of the State of Florida, or the President of the United States.
12. A school readiness provider may close its facility or program for emergencies at any time, however, in order to be eligible to receive payment, written documentation needs to be submitted to the Coalition which demonstrates that the closure is temporary and caused by circumstances beyond the provider's control. Payment will be approved at the discretion of the Executive Director.
13. Parents receiving Child Care Resource and Referral services are informed of the availability of a variety of child care settings and of their right of parental choice in the selection of child care. (The exception to this rule is children who are under protective services and must be served at a licensed facility.) Children may be placed in a child care facility that is owned or directed by the parent. In the case of family child care homes, children of the owner/director would not be eligible to receive payment for care from the parent in the child's home.

C. Unit of Care Standard Codes

1. To ensure that state and federal reporting requirements are met the Agency for Workforce Innovation/Office of Early Learning maintains standard codes within the statewide reporting system on specific fields for the school readiness program. The number of codes and fields are amended and revised based on reporting needs.
2. The Coalition is required to request the Agency for Workforce Innovation/Office of Early Learning to provide them a list of the standard codes as well as any amendments and/or revisions to the codes.
3. The Coalition is required to utilize the standard codes in order to ensure accurate state and federal reporting.
4. Enrollment and attendance codes.

The following codes will be used on attendance rosters:

- a. X= day a child is present
 - b. A= authorized absence beyond three days which has been approved by the Executive Director
 - c. E=excused absence
 - d. H= reimbursable holiday
 - e. T= day a child is terminated from financially assisted school readiness services
 - f. N= enrolled not reimbursable
5. A copy of the attendance roster will be maintained at the premises of the school readiness provider. Proof of attendance signed by parents will also be maintained by the school readiness provider.

6. Should the Coalition determine that a provider has fraudulently misrepresented a child's attendance as reflected by the reimbursement request; the Coalition will follow procedures to reclaim those funds as stated in the Suspected Fraud policy described in this policy.

D. Timing of Reimbursements

1. The Coalition will establish and manage an accounts receivable/accounts payable system for school readiness services with written policies and procedures.
2. The Coalition will process requests for payments from school readiness providers according to State and Federal policies and procedures.
3. Payment to school readiness providers may be processed on a schedule adopted by the Coalition. Such payments will be monthly at a minimum but may be as frequent as daily. The Coalition will develop procedures that will: 1) process payments in the most expeditious manner possible, not to exceed seven (7) working days from receipt of an accurately prepared and timely submitted attendance rosters (pending available funds) and 2) maintain efficient workflow patterns for Coalition staff.
4. An early learning provider that receives reimbursement for school readiness services may be obligated to repay the funds in full or in part for various reasons, including but not limited to:
 - a. Overpayment
 - b. Improper payment
 - c. Disallowed payment as a result of an audit
5. When an early learning provider's account with the Coalition becomes delinquent the Coalition must exercise and document due diligence in securing full payment by substantially performing the following collection efforts:
 - a. Request for Payment: The Finance Manager must request the early learning provider in writing to repay the funds, specifying the amount the early learning provider owes, the reason the early learning provider is obligated to repay the funds, and the date by which the early learning provider is requested to repay the funds.
 - b. First Demand Letter for Payment: The Finance Manager, within ten (10) calendar days after the date the early learning provider's account becomes delinquent, issues the early learning provider a demand letter by certified mail, return receipt requested. A first demand letter includes the following:
 - i. Full amount that the early learning provider owes
 - ii. Reason the early learning provider's account is delinquent
 - iii. Demand for immediate repayment of the full amount by a date within 30 calendar days after issuance of the demand letter
 - iv. The early learning provider's right to dispute the delinquent account by submitting a written dispute to the Coalition before the date that the letter specifies; and
 - v. A description of the collection efforts that the Finance Manager may use if the early learning provider fails to repay the delinquent account.

- c. A Second Demand Letter for Repayment: The Finance Manager, within ten (10) calendar days after the early learning provider fails to repay a delinquent account in full by the date required in the first demand letter, issues the early learning provider a second and final demand letter by certified mail, return receipt requested. A second demand letter includes the following:
 - (A) Full amount that the early learning provider owes
 - (B) Reason that the early learning provider's account is delinquent
 - (C) Demand for immediate repayment of the full amount by a date within 10 calendar days after issuance of the second demand letter
 - (D) The early learning provider's right to dispute the delinquent account by submitting a written dispute to the Coalition before the date specified in the first demand letter, if the date is not expired
 - (E) Notice that the early learning provider may not receive further state or federal funds from the Coalition until the early learning provider repays the delinquent account in full; and
 - (F) Notice that the Coalition may report a delinquent account for Collection by the Agency for Workforce Innovation if the early learning provider fails to repay the account in full by the date required in the second demand letter
 - d. Repayment Schedule: The Finance Manager may negotiate a repayment schedule that allows the early learning provider to submit partial repayments. The Finance Manager must require the early learning provider to repay the entire amount within six (6) months of the date specified in the request for payment.
 - e. Offsetting Payment: The Finance Manager may offset, in full or in part, an amount that the early learning providers owes for one early learning program with state or federal funds due from the Coalition to the early learning provider for another early learning program. The Finance Manager must accurately enter the offsetting state or federal funds across programs. The transaction in the Coalition's accounting records must clearly identify the repayment from the early learning provider to the program that the early learning provider owes and payment to the early learning provider from funds due to the early learning provider for the other program. The Finance Manager may offset an amount that an early learning provider owes the Coalition from funds for one fiscal year with funds due from the Coalition to the early learning provider for a subsequent fiscal year. The Coalition must accurately enter the offsetting funds across fiscal years. The transaction in the Coalition's accounting records must clearly identify the repayment from the early learning provider for the fiscal year that the early learning provider owes and payment to the early learning provider for the subsequent fiscal year from which payment is due from the Coalition to the early learning provider. The Coalition may continue to offset state or federal funds across early learning programs or fiscal years to secure full payment of the debt after the debt becomes a delinquent account.
6. The Finance Manager may report a delinquent account to the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) if:
- a. The Finance Manager's efforts to collect the delinquent account do not result in repayment in full; and
 - b. The early learning provider does not have a continuing contractual relationship with the Coalition which is anticipated to result in funds available for offset (described earlier)
7. To report a delinquent account for collection by AWI, the Finance Manager must submit its request in writing.

8. AWI may deny the Finance Manager's request to report a delinquent account for collection by AWI if the Coalition does not submit documentation of due diligence in securing the full payment by substantially performing the collection efforts described earlier. AWI may also deny a request if the request does not contain the following information:
 - a. The early learning provider's name, address, and federal employer identification number or social security number, as applicable;
 - b. The full amount that the early learning provider owes;
 - c. If the early learning provider repays part of the debt, the amounts collected and uncollected;
 - d. The underlying agreement between the Coalition and the early learning provider;
 - e. The date that the early learning provider's account becomes delinquent;
 - f. The Finance Manager's efforts to collect the delinquent account and the dates of the collection efforts;
 - g. Copies of the demand letters that the Finance Manager issued to the early learning provider; and
 - h. If the early learning provider disputed the delinquent account, the documentation of the dispute-resolution process and result of the dispute.
9. If the Finance Manager's report of a delinquent account for collection by AWI does not include the required information, AWI may return the request to the Coalition. If the Finance Manager does not resubmit the request with the required information within 45 calendar days after AWI returns the request, AWI may deny the request. If AWI denies the Finance Manager's report of a delinquent account for collection by AWI, AWI may return the delinquent account to the Coalition and deduct the amount that the early learning provider owes from state or federal funds due to the Coalition to AWI.

E. Forms Required for Reimbursement

1. An attendance roster for each student will be completed by each school readiness provider, to receive reimbursement and to document that school readiness services were provided.
2. The Coalition will not process attendance rolls that are submitted beyond sixty (60) days of a reimbursement period. School readiness providers submitting attendance rolls on the sixty-first (61st) day and beyond agree to forfeit reimbursement for that period of time.

F. Payment Disputes

1. In the event an early learning provider wishes to dispute the payment received, the provider must document the dispute on the ELCNC-248: Improper Payment Dispute, attach all supporting documentation, and submit it to the Client Services Counselor.
2. The Client Services Counselor must investigate the dispute and indicate action taken on the ELCNC-248: Improper Payment Dispute and forward it to the Client Services Manager for final approval.
3. Awarded disputes that involve payment due to the early learning provider must be immediately copied to the Finance Manager for payment disbursement within forty-eight (48) hours. The Finance Manager must maintain the adjustment disbursement in a pending file and ensure duplicate payment is not disbursed during the following cycle. The Client Services Counselor must indicate "copied to the Finance Department"

on the original and maintain the original in a pending file for re-submission to the Finance Department during the following reimbursement cycle.

4. Awarded disputes that involve payment due to the Coalition must be addressed during the next reimbursement period.

G. Notification of Improper Payment Adjustment

1. In the event an improper payment is discovered after disbursement has been completed, the Client Services Counselor must complete the ELCNC-234 Prior Period Adjustment Worksheet, enter the adjustment into the Enhanced Field System (EFS), and print a Trial Reimbursement Report. Notification of the improper payment must be documented on the ELCNC-249 Notification of Improper Payment Adjustment Form and immediately submitted to the early learning provider.
2. Improper payments that involve payment due to the early learning provider must be immediately copied to the Finance Manager for payment disbursement within forty-eight (48) hours. The Finance Manager must maintain the adjustment disbursement in a pending file and ensure duplicate payment is not disbursed during the following cycle. The Client Services Counselor must indicate "copied to the Finance Department" on the original and maintain the original in a pending file for re-submission to the Finance Department during the following reimbursement cycle.
3. Improper payments that involve payment due to the Coalition must be addressed during the next reimbursement period.

3.3 Parent and Child Services

A. Children's Assessments

1. The Education Specialists shall visit providers throughout the year, so that children, teachers, and directors become comfortable with Coalition staff. This positive working relationship will facilitate the assessment and follow up processes, and will assist children in feeling comfortable with the administration of the assessments. The Coalition will strive to build positive relationships with teachers, so that they are viewed as a resource to the teacher as he/she plans activities to meet the needs of the children in care.
2. To ensure the validity of the child assessment program, Education Specialists will be trained by certified LAP trainers to utilize the assessment instrument correctly, and monitored by the Coalition to ensure that the tools are being utilized according to guidelines. It is critical to the success of the assessment program that the assessments be administered consistently by all staff, utilizing the guidelines set forth by the developers of the assessment instruments. Each assessment must be completed individually with each child. The LAP assessment system has been extensively researched, and is updated and re-normed as needed to ensure the validity of the assessment.
3. The Education Specialists will conduct program-wide pre-assessments at the beginning of each school year. The pre-assessment period is August 15 – October 15 of each year.
4. Prior to the pre assessment period, the Education Specialists will enter child and classroom information into the web-based tracking system. Classroom data must be updated, to include the current teacher information and class lists. In addition to provider consultation, the Education Specialists will review enrollment reports generated by the statewide early learning data system. Enrollment by provider reports will be utilized to assist the Education Specialists in verifying the enrollment location of all school readiness children to be assessed. The Coalition will develop a plan for the assessment period, and will keep providers informed about when to expect their assessments to be conducted.

5. The Education Specialists will send an introduction letter to each parent providing a brief explanation of the purpose of pre-and post-assessments.
6. Enrollment reports will be generated from the statewide early learning data system five (5) business days prior to the start of the assessment period and again in four (4) weeks to determine the children that are to be assessed. Any child that enrolls after September 15 will not be assessed until the program-wide pre-assessment is completed. This will ensure that all children assessed during the pre-assessment period have the opportunity to become comfortable with their classroom environment prior to assessment.
7. It is noted that there may be children listed on the statewide early learning data system enrollment reports that are not actively attending a school readiness program. Children may remain on the reports until their re-determination date, even though the family may not be utilizing the program. Also, there may be some children for whom assessment is not possible for other reasons, such as:
 - a. Child leaves the program unexpectedly
 - b. Child refuses to cooperate with assessment
 - c. Child has a physical or language barrier that prevents completion of the assessment
 - d. Child is absent due to illness or family emergency
 - e. Child enrolls in the program with a three-day (or other short-term) referral from the Department of Children and Families
 - f. Child attends the program for less than two (2) consecutive hours each day
 - g. Other circumstances that would prevent a complete and accurate assessment
8. The Education Specialists shall keep written documentation on all children that are not able to be assessed, including the reasons why assessment was not conducted. Attempts to assess will be documented on the ELCNC-32 Provider Contact Form. Three documented attempts will be made to assess each enrolled child. Education Specialists will document the reasons for non-attendance, if known.
9. The Education Specialists will work with providers to develop an assessment schedule for any child that may attend the program during non-traditional hours. This may include, but is not limited to, children that attend care in the evenings and children who participate in VPK or Head Start programs in addition to School Readiness. The Education Specialists will adjust the typical work hours of staff to accommodate the needs of any such children, starting earlier or later than the traditional work day.
10. Children that enter the school readiness program between September 15 and December 31 will be pre-assessed within forty-five (45) days. The Coalition's Early Learning Plan requires that new children receive an assessment within forty-five (45) days of entry into the program. This allows the child to become acclimated to his/her care arrangement prior to assessment. The Education Specialists will review reports generated by the statewide early learning data system each month to identify new children and develop a plan for conducting the required assessment. Children enrolling after January 1 will be assessed during the program-wide post-assessment period. This will ensure that children are not pre- and post-assessed in a short time frame. NOTE: if a provider has particular concerns about any child at any time, the provider may contact the Coalition to request a visit from the Education Specialists for assistance and/or assessment.
11. All assessment data will be entered into the web-based tracking system. The Education Specialists will generate reports for each child's parent/caregiver and for each classroom teacher from the tracking system. Parent reports will be returned to the child's teacher within two (2) weeks of the completion of the assessment and classroom reports will be distributed to each facility within two (2) weeks of the close of the pre- and post-

assessment periods. Early learning providers are expected to assist by ensuring that the reports go home with each child immediately. Reports with summary data for each facility as a whole will be distributed to the site directors within one month of the close of each general assessment period.

12. Early learning providers have been given the option to assess their private pay children with the LAP assessments if they so desire. Assessment kits may be checked out from the Coalition for this purpose. It is the provider's responsibility to secure parental consent prior to assessment. The Coalition provides training opportunities to teachers in sites that wish to provide the assessments as a service to their children. Assessments are to be conducted only by teachers trained in the correct assessment process. The Coalition will input the scoring information on children assessed, and will facilitate the printing and distribution of reports generated by the tracking system. *NOTE:* this is an additional service offered by the Coalition, and does not take precedence over meeting the needs of the school readiness population. Reports will be generated after the assessment process of required children is complete. Providers that choose to assess their private pay children will be provided with referral information about any of their children that are noted with potential concerns, and it will be their responsibility to share that information with the parent.
13. If a provider has specific concerns about a private pay child that they wish Coalition staff to assess in any county, they are directed to make that request in writing.
14. The Education Specialists will conduct program-wide post-assessments at the close of each school year, according to the general guidelines outlined for the pre-assessment. The post-assessment period is April 1 – May 31 of each year.
15. Enrollment reports will be generated from the statewide early learning data system five (5) business days prior to the post assessment period start date and again in four (4) weeks to determine the children that are to be assessed. Any child that enrolls on or after May 1st will not be assessed during the program-wide post-assessment period. This will ensure that all children assessed during the post-assessment period have the opportunity to become comfortable with their classroom environment prior to assessment. *NOTE:* Children that entered the program on or after January 1 will only receive a post-assessment.
16. The Education Specialists shall keep written documentation on all children that are not able to assessed, including the reasons why assessment was not conducted. Attempts to assess will be documented on the ELCNC-32 Provider Contact Form. Three documented attempts will be made to assess each enrolled child. Education Specialists will document the reasons for non-attendance, if known.
17. The protocol for the E-LAP indicates that children that score more than 25% below their chronological age in two or more domains of the E-LAP assessment may indicate a developmental concern. The chart below will be used to evaluate the children's scores. It will be necessary to compare the child's chronological age to the child's developmental age in each domain of the assessment. If the child's score is **BELOW** the number in the chart in two or more domains, for two consecutive assessments, the follow up process will be initiated. If obvious concerns are present, the referral process will be implemented immediately. This concern could be noted by the parent, the Education Specialist or the early learning provider/teacher. The scoring information can be gathered from the Redelearner classroom report titled "Approximate Developmental Ages by Domain".

Child's Chronological Age (in months)	Developmental age indicating concern (25% below the child's actual chronological age)
1	0
2	0
3	0
4	3
5	3
6	4
7	5

Child's Chronological Age (in months)	Developmental age indicating concern (25% below the child's actual chronological age)
8	6
9	6
10	7
11	8
12	9
13	10
14	10
15	11
16	12
17	12
18	13
19	14
20	15
21	15
22	16
23	17
24	18
25	18
26	19
27	20
28	21
29	21
30	22
31	23
32	24
33	24
34	25
35	26
36	27

18. The protocol for the LAP-D 3rd Edition indicates that children who score 1.5 or more standard deviations below the mean in two or more subscales of the LAP-D assessment may indicate the need for further screening and/or assessment. This information can be gathered from the Redelearner classroom report titled "Z-Score Rank by Subscale". The quantity "Z" represents the number of standard deviations between the raw score and the mean; it is negative when the raw score is below the mean, positive when above. The far right column on that report indicates the number of subscales in which the child scored below the cutoff. If the child scores below the cutoff in two or more subscales, in two consecutive assessments, the referral process will be initiated. If obvious concerns are present, the referral process will be implemented immediately. This concern could be noted by the parent, the Education Specialist or the early learning provider/teacher.
19. The following steps must be taken when a child's assessment results indicate two or more areas of concern. This educational support process is to be completed within forty-five (45) days of the development of the LAP reports, to allow the classroom teacher as much time as possible to implement the Individual Learning Plan. NOTE: The Coalition shall complete the educational support process as quickly as possible, not waiting until the end of the forty-five (45) day period.
20. It is important that Education Specialists maintain open communication with early learning providers. If a teacher or parent is not comfortable with the results of a child's assessment, the provider may request a re-evaluation of the child in writing to the Education Specialist. The Education Specialist shall re-assess the child in the domains that have indicated a concern. The Education Specialist shall maintain the request in the child's assessment file.

21. Teacher Conferences and the Individual Learning Plan Process:

- a. The Education Specialist will conduct a conference with each child's teacher to develop an ELCNC-35 Individual Learning Plan (ILP) based on the areas of concern noted in the assessment. Teachers will assist in the development of the ILP, based on the specific needs of the child. Activity ideas may be obtained from the Redelearner system, the LAP planning cards, and other sources. A copy of the ILP will be furnished to the parent/caregiver. If the student has been identified by a school system and has a current Individualized Education Plan the Education Specialist is exempt from the provisions of this section.
- b. The Education Specialist will communicate as needed with child's teacher to provide additional activity ideas and to discuss the child's progress in each noted area, conducting site visits as appropriate.

22. Parent Conferences and the Referral Process:

- a. At the end of each assessment period, the Education Specialists will compile a listing of children identified with possible concerns, based on their assessment scores. Once that list is generated, the Education Specialist will contact the parent/caregiver and teacher notifying them of the possible concern and briefly outlining the referral process.
- b. Education Specialist will communicate the assessment report outcomes to the teacher. Teachers are invited to participate in the parent conferences as available. If the teacher is unable to attend, the Education Specialist shall follow the teacher conference as outlined below.
- c. If a teacher or parent feels that the assessment may be inaccurate they may request a new assessment in the domain that the child has exhibited non-mastery, as stated above. If an additional assessment is conducted at the parent or teachers request, an Education Specialist will administer the assessment. If the assessment results validate the original indication of a referral, the referral will be generated. A parent may refuse to utilize the referral; however, the Education Specialist will proceed with recommended activities that support the learning environment for the child(ren) who have not mastered the skills as evidenced in the child assessment results.
- d. The Education Specialist will attempt to contact each parent/caregiver by telephone to set up a conference. Appointments will be set to meet the need of the parent, such as before or after the parent's work hours. If a working telephone number is not available, early learning provider staff will be asked to assist in the appointment-setting process.
- e. Once the appointment is set, the Education Specialist will send the parent/caregiver a letter to confirm the appointment. The letter should be mailed directly to the parent's home address. A copy of the letter is to be kept in the child's file. NOTE: FDLRS Springs requests that an Ages & Stages Questionnaire be completed by the parent and sent with the referral, if possible. This applies to Citrus, Dixie, Gilchrist, and Levy Counties. The appropriate ASQ form is to be mailed to the parent with the appointment confirmation letter.
- f. The Education Specialist will conduct a conference with child's parent/caregiver to review the child's assessment scores and complete the appropriate agency referral. The Education Specialists will provide the parent/caregiver with appropriate activity suggestions to assist him/her in working with the child in the noted areas of concern. These activity suggestions are to be printed from the web-based assessment tracking system, to correspond with the child's noted areas of concern.

- g. An Inclusion Folder containing information describing an inclusive environment, along with a community resource guide and developmental expectations guide will be provided to the parent/caregiver at the scheduled conference.
 - h. Appropriate reports from the tracking system will be provided to the community agency, to assist the agency in evaluating the indicated areas of delay.
 - i. If parent is unable to attend a conference or cannot be reached by telephone or mail, three documented attempts to inform the parent must be recorded.
23. A case file will be maintained by the Education Specialists for each child identified with possible concerns. Files MUST contain the following information:
- a. Case management log, to be utilized to document all activities completed
 - b. LAP-D/E-LAP report, as appropriate
 - c. Copy of the ASQ, if completed by the parent, if applicable
 - d. Three documented attempts to contact parent/caregiver (if the parent/caregiver is unable to attend the initial conference)
 - e. Signed consent to refer the child for further evaluation
 - f. Copy of the completed Individual Learning Plan (ILP)
 - g. Copies of all written communication sent to the parent, including any items that might be returned as undeliverable
24. Each child that is identified with developmental concerns during the pre-assessment will be assessed again in the month of January, unless the child is already receiving services through an active IEP with a school system. The appropriate LAP assessment will be conducted by the Education Specialist according to the general assessment guidelines. Upon completion of the assessment, the child's scores will be reviewed again to determine the need for case management and/or the development of an updated Individual Learning Plan. The child's parent/caregiver is to be kept informed of the child's progress and needs in writing, by telephone, and/or by conference, as appropriate. Documentation is to be maintained in the case file.
25. Reporting and Analysis: Coalition staff shall analyze the overall data collected and by provider to accomplish the following:
- a. Establish a report for each provider indicating the results in each classroom and the overall results for the site. The report shall be designed in a format that will assist the provider in determining the effectiveness of their Early Learning Program in accordance with the following:

Report criteria to be written.
 - b. Establish an overall report that is designed in a format that will assist the Coalition Board in determining the effectiveness of the School Readiness Program and the areas of concern in accordance with the following:

Report criteria to be written.
 - c. Establish an overall report that is designed in a format that will assist the Coalition in determining staff development programs.

d. The appropriate reports shall be submitted to the Coalition Board and providers in a timely manner.

B. Family Needs Assessments and Support Services

1. The Coalition will conduct a family needs assessment during the Child Care Resource & Referral process. The Coalition will develop a Family Needs Assessment Form designed to identify family needs in addition to child care. Families applying for the wait list will also be provided with an opportunity to fill out a Needs Assessment Form.
2. The Coalition will partner with community agencies to refer families demonstrating a need. The Coalition will offer additional support services upon request by the parent.

C. Review of Health Records

1. The Coalition will conduct a review of vision and hearing screening results for children birth – kindergarten entry at eligibility determination and upon receipt of updated health records. Parents applying for the wait list will be offered a similar review for their child(ren).
2. When there is an identified need specific to vision and/or hearing, the Coalition will refer parents/caregivers to the agency/physician that conducted the exam for further evaluation.

D. Parent Involvement and Education

1. The Coalition will periodically distribute family tip sheets to school readiness families, both in the Coalition's office and through the school readiness providers.
2. The Coalition will periodically notify parents of workshops/trainings that target family support and early education and care.

E. Inclusion Program

1. The Coalition will conduct activities designed to increase community awareness of the Coalition's availability as a resource for information and services to assist families with special needs children. The Coalition will distribute information at community events, as well as having information available at the Coalition offices. The materials distributed will include information regarding the American's with Disabilities Act, and the manner in which inclusive education strives to meet and exceed these laws.
2. The Coalition's community awareness program will include information regarding equal access to early learning opportunities for all children, regardless of special needs. The program will focus on the need to provide support for the inclusion of children with special needs in child care settings with typically-developing children.
3. Coalition staff will continue active participation in the interagency councils throughout the Coalition's service area. Members of these councils will continue to provide information regarding the availability of services to individuals identified with special needs in the community. Partnerships with local, county, and state agencies will be maintained to ensure that accurate information is available to the community.
4. Coalition staff will provide technical assistance to community members contacting the Coalition. If Coalition staff cannot provide the requested information or assistance, contact information for appropriate service agencies will be provided.
5. The Coalition will offer and/or facilitate education and training activities on various inclusion topics on an on-going basis. Training opportunities will be offered quarterly to early learning teachers and staff, on topics

designed to meet the needs of the community. These educational opportunities will be presented in such a manner that they directly reflect the abilities and skills of the audience. The Coalition will ensure that the dates, times, and locations are selected to meet the needs of the early learning community.

6. Coalition staff will provide technical assistance to early learning providers and staff developing inclusive environments through appropriate program design, as well as accommodations, adaptations, and enhancements of existing programs.
7. Coalition staff will provide technical assistance to parents of individuals with special needs to assist them in developing a repertoire of inclusion strategies that may be utilized outside of the child care setting.
8. Coalition staff will be responsible for the oversight and reporting of all Warm Line activities as outlined in the Child Care Resource and Referral Standard Levels of Service.
9. Coalition staff will participate in professional development activities that will include attending at least one professional conference annually that supports inclusion and disability topics in addition to the required statewide inclusion trainings.
10. Coalition staff will track all activities performed in conjunction with the inclusion program. These records will be used to fulfill reporting requirements of the Standard Levels of Service, as amended.
11. Early learning providers may be eligible to participate in the Coalition's Inclusion Mini Grant Program if they serve a child with an active Individual Education Plan (IEP) developed by the local school system or with documentation of a special need provided by a licensed physician/therapist. Program guidelines are available on the Coalition's website.

3.4 Resource and Referral Requirements

- A. The Coalition is responsible for the coordination and provision of CCR&R services in Citrus, Dixie, Gilchrist, Levy, and Sumter Counties in accordance with the Standard Levels of Service, as amended.

3.5 Eligibility and Enrollment Requirements

- A. The Coalition will maintain a unified waiting list (UWL) and simplified point of entry for clients applying for the School Readiness Program. The Coalition will coordinate early education and care learning programs in the community to include their family/child data in the UWL. Programs include but are not limited to Head Start, Teen Parent Program, and Even Start.
- B. The Coalition will have access to equipment necessary to conduct business including sufficient computer hardware and software to adequately track client eligibility, to provide accurate invoices, to produce accurate financial information and to generate timely reports as required. Equipment must be compatible with the Florida Agency of Workforce Innovation/Office of Early Learning Information Technology Resources as defined in Section 282.3031, F.S.
- C. The Coalition will provide sufficient space to conduct business and promote privacy when meeting with clients and offer services in an area convenient to clients.
- D. The Coalition will provide child care consumer information in the family's primary language, be culturally sensitive to all families, and offer services via telephone and at walk in locations.
- E. The Coalition will provide timely, convenient, quality, eligibility/re-determination services to families in all geographic areas of the Coalition's service delivery area, in their primary language when possible, and based on the Coalition's established eligibility priorities.

- F. The Coalition will maintain and utilize a written procedure to resolve client complaints and work with the Coalition to resolve any issues of eligibility, reduction, or termination of financially assisted services as requested by individual clients or applicants for services.
- G. The Coalition will notify applicants or clients of the right to a review in cases of a determination of ineligibility for services or termination, suspension, or reduction in services.
- H. The Coalition must provide a notice to parents when a change in eligibility status, parent fees, authorized dates, or any other eligibility fact occurs. To the greatest extent possible, the parent must be provided at least ten (10) days notice unless the change occurs as a result of the parent reporting new information. The notice of change must include the name and address of the parent/guardian, list of eligible children for funding, beginning and end dates for funding, parent fee for each eligible child, the effective date of the parent fee, funding restrictions such as licensed care for protective service children and the re-determination date. Parents should be informed of their right to appeal any decision and the process by which to appeal.
- I. Coalition personnel performing duties relating to parent/child application intake and eligibility determination and approval must not perform duties relating to accounting.

3.6 Eligibility Process

- A. The Coalition shall provide school readiness slots in accordance with the number of clients to be served as determined by the Coalition, subject to available funding. These slots can be shifted among types of school readiness funding and school readiness providers in order to meet the changing needs of the Coalition's clients.
- B. Application
 - 1. All questions on the ELCNC-216 Eligibility and Enrollment Form for School Readiness Services and the ELCNC-215 School Readiness Services Terms and Conditions shall be completed by the parent/guardian in accordance with instructions attached to the form and additional instructions as follows. If assistance completing the application is needed, the Coalition must assist the parent/guardian during the eligibility process. The parent/guardian must initial and date any changes or additions. The eligibility clerk must explain in the case notes why assistance was needed. For at-risk children who receive expedited services, the child's case worker can complete the application on behalf of the parent/guardian. The parent/guardian must sign and submit the terms and conditions and supporting application documents within ten (10) days. If the parent/guardian does not submit the terms and conditions and supporting application documents the Coalition must request assistance from the child's case worker and document all attempts to complete the eligibility file in the case notes.
 - 2. The application shall be signed and dated by the parent/guardian upon initial intake. A new application shall be completed and signed and dated, at a minimum of biannually, for subsequent re-determination unless the Executive Director authorizes a waiver of this requirement. The Coalition must provide notice of re-determination to the parent at least ten (10) days prior to the current authorization end date. The re-determination notice must include the name and address of the parent/guardian, end dates for current funding, instructions for setting an appointment and documentation/instructions for the Coalition's mail in redetermination process.
 - 3. The application process will include ELCNC-224 Early Learning Services Appeal regarding the rights of parents/guardians to appeal any decision and the process by which to appeal. A copy of the signed ELCNC-224 Early Learning Services Appeal shall be given to the parent/guardian and a copy placed in the client file.
 - 4. All applications and supporting documentation must be recertified every six months at a minimum. The Coalition has developed and implemented a recertification by mail process to minimize the need for parents/guardians to take time off from employment/mandatory activities in order to establish continued eligibility for school readiness services.

5. If services are authorized by referral, the application will include ELCNC-282 Child Care Application and Authorization Form. The document must include, at a minimum, the name of the agency/caseworker who is making the referral, person being referred, parent(s)/guardian(s) with address and demographics for child(ren), date of birth for child(ren), Social Security Number, type of referral (in home, out of home, foster care), authorized referral period, and number of hours authorized. The purpose of care must be clearly specified. The referral must bear the signature of the authorizing caseworker or it is not a valid authorization. A new referral must be obtained if any dates or required information are missing. The Coalition will exercise "due diligence" in attempts to obtain a corrected referral; two (2) attempts represents due diligence. TCC referrals must clearly indicate the two year period authorized. The Coalition must attempt to contact the parent/guardian to complete the child care application. Attempts must be documented and, when necessary, must include telephone and mail attempts. If the parent does not respond, the Coalition must notify the referring agency.

Eligibility determination for services authorized by referral should be timely. Child Care Authorizations expire after seven (7) calendar days for TANF and ten(10) calendar days for protective services, from the signature date of the caseworker.

6. Child Care Certificate: (The Child Care Certificate is an EFS-generated form or ELCNC-237). The Child Care Certificate must be a RILYA WILSON ALERT stamp if the case is subject to Rilya Wilson reporting requirements. The Child Care Certificate is signed by the applicant and the Client Services Counselor at certification and indicates the last date the document can be returned to the Coalition office. A copy of the Child Care Certificate is maintained in the client's file. The original is returned to the applicant, to be passed on to the provider. The provider then signs the Child Care Certificate and returns it to the Coalition, signifying their acceptance of the child, within the specified time.

C. Application Supporting Documentation

1. Parents must supply the Coalition with the following applicable information, prior to eligibility determination. All applicable documents must be kept current and must be maintained in the parent/child eligibility file:
 - a. Proof of Family Status: The applicant must complete and sign ELCNC-217 Verification of Family Status indicating who they are claiming as part of their household and what relationship they have to any child for whom they are requesting funding. The applicant also verifies and attests to their marital status and the amount and type of unearned income received by any of the named household members when completing the form.
 - b. Proof of Identity for the parent/guardian arranging school readiness services: The applicant must include one of the following documents:

Preferred source: Driver's license or government issued picture identification card including but not limited to state ID, military ID, passport, alien registration card, refugee card, employment ID, or student ID. These could include documents issued by other governmental agencies including foreign countries.

Alternative source: When photo ID is not available then two forms of identification showing the applicant's name should be obtained, such as a Social Security card, pay stubs, employment record, an insurance card, or other documentation secured as proof of residency or earned/unearned income.

If a parent cannot provide any of the above documentation then a third party attestation could be obtained. This document should have a fraud disclaimer on it and the third party could describe the individual in question (height, weight, age, hair color, etc.) and the relationship to the child and a brief explanation as to how the third party knows the information. The case narration must

explain why alternative sources were not available and what efforts were made to obtain such documents. This option should be used as a temporary measure only.

- c. Proof of Citizenship/Immigration Status for the child must include one of the documents listed below:
- (A) Original or certified copy of a birth certificate issued by a state, county, municipal authority or outlying possession of the United States bearing an official seal
 - (B) Certification of birth abroad issued by the Department of State (Form FS-545 or Form DS-1350)
 - (C) U.S. Social Security card issued by the Social Security Administration
 - (D) U.S. Passport (current or expired)
 - (E) A current foreign passport with a temporary I-551 stamp
 - (F) U.S. Citizen ID Card (Form I-197)
 - (G) ID Card for use of Resident Citizen in the United States (Form I-179)
 - (H) Permanent Resident Card or Alien Registration Receipt Card (Form I-551)
 - (I) School ID card with photograph
 - (J) Military dependent's ID card
 - (K) Native American tribal document
 - (L) School record or report card
- d. Birth Verification: The Coalition shall keep a record of at least one (1) of the following supporting documents that shows the name and date of birth of the child applied for/receiving services:
- (A) An original or certified copy of the child's birth record filed according to law with the appropriate public officer
 - (B) 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
 - (C) An insurance policy on the child's life that has been in force for at least two(2) years
 - (D) A passport or certificate of arrival in the United States
 - (E) An immunization record indicating the child's name and date of birth, signed by a public health officer or by a licensed practicing physician
 - (F) A valid military dependent identification card

If a child's parent is unable to submit any of the supporting documentation listed above, the Coalition shall document the child's age based on an affidavit sworn to or affirmed by the child's parent. The affidavit must be accompanied by a certificate of age, signed by a public health officer or by a licensed practicing physician which states that the physician has examined the child and believes that the age shown on the affidavit is true and correct.

When the Coalition receives referrals from the Department of Children and Families or a referral from a Workforce Agency, additional procedures may be necessary to satisfy proof of age requirements. These may include:

- (A) Requesting a copy of the age verification document to be submitted with the referral; documentation must be one of the sources listed above.
- (B) If the referring agency cannot provide one of the approved sources described above, then verification of age must be obtained directly from the client. In order that services are not delayed, protective services and foster care clients shall be given a period of ten (10) working days to provide the verification of age. Documentation of the attempts to obtain the appropriate verification must be kept in the file until at least one of the valid sources listed above is obtained. For example, a letter to the referring agency or applicant,

requesting the documentation to be provided within ten (10) days or an application for obtaining a copy from the appropriate agency that maintains the birth record may be filed.

- e. Immunization and Physical Records: Records are required for each child applying for/receiving School Readiness services, age birth through kindergarten entry. Records to be submitted include a current, completed State of Florida physical form (DH30/40) and an up-to-date immunization record (DH680). The vision and hearing sections of the DH30/40 physical form cannot be left blank.

The Client Services Counselor shall not withhold services when the health records for children in mandatory care (at-risk) categories are not submitted, however, the Coalition must request the documentation from the applicant, utilizing ELCNC-223 Notice of Required Documents, contact the referring agency, and contact the child's school readiness provider within three (3) working days to request a copy of the health records. The Client Services Counselor will maintain documentation of on-going efforts to collect the health records. If, after thirty (30) days, the Client Services Counselor has not collected the health records, the Client Services Counselor must file a report with the Department of Children and Families' Licensing Department. The Client Services Counselor must maintain documentation of the report in the child's file.

In the case of children less than two (2) months of age, health records shall be submitted when the child is seventy-five (75) days old.

The Client Services Counselor may document waivers for children whose parents object to immunizations on religious grounds and/or children whose medical condition contraindicates immunization.

- f. Verification of Current Residence in the State of Florida and Residency Within the County Service Area: One of the following must be provided.
 - (A) Utility bill in the parent/caregiver's name with residential address
 - (B) Pay stub in the parent/caregiver's name with residential address
 - (C) Government-issued document (e.g. Florida driver's license, Florida identification card, current property tax assessment showing a homestead exemption)
 - (D) Military order showing that the child's parent is a service member in the United States Armed Forces and is assigned to duty in Florida when the child attends School Readiness services (e.g. permanent change of station)
 - (E) If no supporting documents listed above are available, a county document such as a 911 address statement bearing the parent's name and physical address may be accepted
 - (F) If no supporting documents listed above are available, the Client Services Counselor may accept an affidavit sworn to or affirmed by the child's parent accompanied by a letter from a landlord or property owner which confirms that the child resides at the address shown on the affidavit.
 - (G) If no supporting documents listed above are available for a homeless child as defined in Section 1003.01, F.S., the Client Services Counselor shall document residency based on other supporting documents showing that the child is homeless and resides in Florida (e.g. letter from a homeless shelter or affidavit sworn to or affirmed to by the child's parent)

To be eligible for School Readiness services, a child must reside in Florida while attending the program. If the applicant is a participant in the "State of Florida Address Confidentiality Program", he/she is not required to disclose their physical address. The parent should provide official documentation of the fictitious address that was provided at the time they began participating in the program. This fictitious address received from the Attorney General's Office serves as proof of residential requirements for the School Readiness program.

- g. Proof of Legal Guardianship/Custody (if applicable): If the applicant's relationship to the child cannot be established:

A child's birth certificate is acceptable, showing the parent's name and the child's name. In the case where the parent's name does not appear on the birth certificate of the child then a court order or other form of legal documentation should be obtained showing relationship.

The Coalition may collect an attestation from the parent stating their legal relationship to the child, under penalty of perjury, which is a first degree misdemeanor, punishable by a definite term of imprisonment, not exceeding one year and/or a fine not exceeding \$1,000 pursuant to ss.837.012 or ss.775.082, or ss.775.083 Florida Statutes.

Valid referrals are also sufficient to establish the relationship.

Relatives are eligible for school readiness services if they have legal custody of the child(ren) for whom they are applying for services. A Power of Attorney with specific reference to child care would be sufficient evidence, as would a court document that shows an award of custody. A child placed in the care of a non-relative would not be eligible for school readiness services without legal custody documentation.

- h. Proof of Marital Status: Proof of marital status will be collected if the Client Services Counselor determines that documentation is necessary to establish household size and relationships for gross income calculation purposes. Evidence includes a copy of divorce papers or an attestation from the parent stating their marital status, under penalty of perjury, which is a first degree misdemeanor, punishable by a definite term of imprisonment, not exceeding one year and/or a fine not exceeding \$1,000 pursuant to ss.837.012 or ss.775.082, or ss.775.083 Florida Statutes.
- i. ELCNC-225 Verification of Employment/Training Incapacitation Form when used as a purpose for school readiness services. This requirement is waived for work registration three (3) day referrals.
- j. Documentation of guardian's employment. Eligibility for children at risk or abuse and/or neglect is not dependent on family income or work requirement. This requirement is waived for work registration three (3) day referrals.
- k. Native American Tribal Membership Documentation: Native Americans must have documentation of child's membership in federally recognized Indian Tribe, if applicable to verify purpose of care.
- l. Documentation of Household Income: Proof of all family income as described below.

(A) Earned Income:

Preferred source: Six (6) weekly, three (3) biweekly, or two (2) monthly current and consecutive pay stubs or an ELCNC-225 Verification of Income/Employment Form. When the employee has not been employed long enough to provide the required current and consecutive paystubs or when the employee paystubs do not reflect current pay status of the employee then an income verification form should be given to the applicant to be completed by the employer. Hours Worked x Rate of Pay will be used to calculate future earnings. An employer may be contacted for verification of employment and hours worked at the discretion of the Client Services Counselor; case history notes will be maintained in the eligibility file.

Alternative sources: The applicant may provide a signed statement by the employer. This should be on company letterhead. The statement should be signed and dated and include the name and signature of the person writing the statement, their title, telephone number, and business address. It should also include the projected hours of employment, rate of pay, number of days

per week, date the applicant started, and the first date of pay. The statement should also indicate if the employee is required to work Saturdays and/or Sundays or has a regularly scheduled day off.

The applicant may provide a signed contract for employment if it was recently issued, however, if the contract has been in effect for more than six (6) weeks prior to the application the Client Services Counselor should request proof of current income from employment as listed above.

If the applicant receives income from self-employment, the Client Services Counselor will refer to the Coalition's policy on calculation of self-employment income contained in the ELCNC Early Learning Eligibility Policy and Procedure Manual.

If the applicant receives bonuses, the bonuses will be added to the gross household income after gross household income is calculated.

If the applicant receives tips as a part of their earnings that are not declared in the employee's paystubs, the Client Services Counselor will refer to the Coalition's policy on calculation of self-employment income contained in the ELCNC Early Learning Eligibility Policy and Procedure Manual.

Individuals that are considered to be self-employed may perform casual labor, such as lawn work or side jobs. Acceptable forms of documentation to establish income may be written statements from each employer, or a work calendar that tracks the dates worked, for whom the work was performed, and the amount of payment received. These calendars can then be used as verification but only when no other verification possibility exists. Case notes should clearly explain why other types of earning documentation are unavailable.

(B) Unearned Income: All unearned income shall be current and verified (six (6) weekly, three (3) biweekly, or two (2) monthly), including:

i. TANF: Cash Assistance:

Preferred Source: Must be verified by the case manager or an award letter showing how much is received and who is included in the grant. The following website, <http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/>, along with the recipient's Social Security number, will permit verification of TANF.

Alternative Source: Award letter, OSST printout, FLORIDA screen print, referral with income amount included by caseworker.

ii. Child support payments:

Preferred Source: Verification of current child support payments includes verification from child support enforcement or clerk of the court website showing gross amount paid to the household on behalf of the child and the period over which it is paid.

Alternative Source: If child support enforcement information is not available a written notarized statement from the absent parent indicating what the absent parent paid over the last six weeks including the dates the payments were made is acceptable. Copies of checks check stub, and/or canceled checks must accompany the written statements, or be submitted in lieu of the written statements.

Alternative Source: Initially a court order can be used to determine the child support payments. All support must be verified (if a child lives with their grandparent support from each parent must be verified).

Alternative Source: If for any reason the first two source alternatives are not available, an attestation from the parent stating the child support received or not received under the penalty of perjury, which is a first degree misdemeanor, punishable by a definite term of imprisonment, not exceeding one year and/or a fine not exceeding \$1,000 pursuant to ss.837.012, or 775.082, or 775.083 Florida Statutes is acceptable. The case narration must contain narration explaining why the first two alternatives were not available. The date, phone number, and description of what occurred when an attempt to contact an absent parent who is paying court-ordered or non-court-ordered child support must be entered in the case narrative. The Client Services Counselor should discuss with the custodial parent what recordkeeping should be set up and used to establish child support payments in the future. For example, the absent mother sends a check two to three times per month. Copies of two months of checks should be requested. If the absent parent is paying in cash, then a calendar should be maintained by the custodial parent showing dates and amounts of payments, preferably with the absent parent's initials next to the payment amount.

- iii. Alimony: Verification of alimony must be a court order showing the amount ordered and a written statement from the payee that it is being received as stipulated. Copies of payments for six weeks can also be submitted. If the recipient indicates alimony is not being received as ordered the applicant must submit a signed notarized statement attesting the amount of alimony received within the last six week period.

Alternative Source: When the recipient indicates alimony is not being received as ordered, then proof of the last six weeks of payment (two months if paid monthly) must be obtained from the source. This can include copies of pay stubs or payment receipts for the last six weeks. If not paid weekly, then former spouse/partner will submit a written, signed, dated statement explaining what payments were made and when. The statement should include the address and phone number of this person in case there are additional questions. The statement must be signed by the former spouse.

- iv. SSA Payments (formerly OASDI – Old Age Survivors Disability Insurance: Verification of social security income must include a current award letter from the Social Security Administration. (Award letters are updated each year in December; therefore if eligibility is approved, the approval must authorize services for a maximum of six months or until the following December, whichever is less).

Alternative Source: Written letter from the Social Security Administration showing current year of monthly gross benefits before deductions, if any.

- v. SSI Payments: Supplemental security income

Preferred Source: Copy of the award letter from Social Security Administration. This letter is updated once each year, in January.

Alternative Source: Written letter from the Social Security Administration showing current year of monthly gross benefits before deductions, if any, and a note from a physician confirming disability and the need for child care assistance.

- vi. Unemployment/Worker's compensation: Verification of Worker's Compensation must be an award letter showing the gross amount of benefits being received and the start date of the benefit.

Alternative Source for Worker's Compensation: A written statement from the employer paying the Worker's Compensation signed by authorized personnel including the gross amount of benefits being received and the start date of the benefit. The applicant is eligible for a 30 day period from the start date of the benefit.

- vii. Veteran's benefits
- viii. Retirement benefits
- ix. Other income: Other income earned or unearned that is received on a regular basis must be verified through documents that include the gross amount of income and the frequency of the income.

Documentation shall be obtained from the source such as award letters, written statements from the absent parent or household member. If the amount varies, then a minimum of six weekly, three biweekly or two monthly income amounts shall be verified. The documents used for verification shall be current and consecutive.

- x. Documentation that may be required to verify the purpose of care:

Proof of Incapacitation: For the purpose of establishing disability, the ELCNC-218 Verification of Disability is used as it meets all required criteria. Verification of disability, if temporary disability, must be submitted every sixty (60) days until proof of SSI payment is received.

Proof of Educational Activities: For the purpose of establishing educational activity, the ELCNC-267 Verification of Education is used as it meets all required criteria. The document must be completed by an official of the school or institution showing the number of classroom hours and any lab hours, the date the semester/training period starts, and the date it ends. This should bear the school stamp or contain an official seal. On-line courses are an allowable form of education or training as long as appropriate documentation has been submitted.

Seeking Employment Affidavit: This affidavit is applicable to TANF Child Only clients and for a period of thirty (30) days from enrollment or from the day the parent lost employment for the parent to reestablish employment. (If the eligibility period ends before the parent has reestablished employment, services cannot be authorized without a new referral.) The parent must sign an affidavit stating that they are currently seeking employment. The affidavit must be dated by the parent.

- m. Proof of At-Risk Status:

- (A) Inadequate home environment as documented on the revised Home instrument
- (B) English not first language of family
- (C) Age of parent at child's birth (18 years or younger)
- (D) Parent has an educational history of participating in Special Education
- (E) Educational level (highest grade completed) of either parent is low (less than high school)/ low literacy level
- (F) Three (3) children under 5 years old in the family

- (G) Child/sibling or parent has been in foster care
- (H) Children are multiples
- (I) Suspect developmental delay in any area
- (J) Child lives with grandparent or has lived with multiple caregivers
- (K) Child was born prematurely or was in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit
- (L) Child has a documented developmental delay or handicapping condition
- (M) A sibling has a handicap or delay, is in special education or has behavioral concerns
- (N) A parent or caregiver has handicap or developmental delay
- (O) There is a history of emotional /physical/sexual abuse of a child or sibling or parent
- (P) One parent has been or is currently incarcerated
- (Q) Child was/is a drug exposed newborn
- (R) Parent minimally meeting child's basic needs
- (S) Family is currently or previously homeless
- (T) Mental health illness within family
- (U) Child, parent, or sibling has chronic medical problem/condition
- (V) Child or sibling was diagnosed as failure to thrive

2. If the application is submitted and is incomplete the Coalition shall send the parent an ELCNC-223 Notice of Required Documents.

D. Determining Eligibility

1. Determining Purpose of School Readiness Services:

- a. Eligibility Categories are divided into levels of priority. The following sections divide the eligibility categories by priority beginning with priority one (mandated placements). In addition to meeting categorical eligibility criteria, there shall be an authorized need or purpose for the school readiness services. Purposes for school readiness services include protection of the child, employment of the parent or other authorized caretaker, participation in approved education activities, crisis intervention for Welfare Transition recipients, therapeutic plan for the child, Welfare Transition participation or work activities, seeking employment for transitional child care recipients whose eligibility is based on increased child support and Transitional Education and other at-risk factors as described in the Enrollment and Eligibility section of this policy. The Coalition must determine eligibility within three (3) working days of receipt of a completed application and supporting documentation.
- b. Priority One: Protective Service/TANF Placements

(A) Children At-Risk of Abuse and/or Neglect: Protective Service clients are children under the age of 13 who are determined to be at risk of abuse, neglect or abandonment and who are clients of the Department of Children and Families or contracted providers. This also includes children age 13 through 17 years old with special needs as defined later in this section, who in addition meet one of the following requirements.

i. In Home

- (a) The protective investigator or protective services counselor shall determine eligibility and authorize the Coalition to provide school readiness services.
- (b) The purpose of school readiness services shall be for the employment of the parent, the protection of the child, or therapeutic plan documented by a professional.
- (c) The child is eligible for school readiness services as long as an authorization form or reauthorization form for such care is received by the Coalition at least every six (6) months. In the case of Protective Investigation, child care will not be authorized in excess of forty-five (45) days.
- (d) Fees shall be assessed against the parent's income. In the event the parent's income exceeds 200% of the federal poverty level the Coalition must enroll the child in the school readiness program and assess the provider's maximum rate to the parent. The purpose of enrollment is to track attendance of the at-risk child. Under special circumstances described in this policy, the fee can be reduced with written approval from the Executive Director, but never waived.
- (e) Reasonable efforts shall be made and documented to collect the applicable parent fee from the parent(s). Under special circumstance, as described in this policy, the fee may be reduced, with written approval from the Executive Director. When reasonable efforts to collect from the parent fails, the school readiness provider shall receive 100% of the negotiated rate, with written approval from the Executive Director.
- (f) A child who is age three (3) years to school entry, under court ordered protective supervision or in the custody of the Family Safety Program Office of the Department of Children and Family Services or a community-based lead agency, and enrolled in a licensed early education or child care program must be enrolled to participate in the program five (5) days a week. The child may not be withdrawn from the program without prior written approval of the Family Safety Program Office of the Department of Children and Family Services or the community-based lead agency. If the child covered by this section is absent from the program on a day when he or she is supposed to be present, the person with whom the child resides must report the absence to the program by the end of the business day. If the person with whom the child resides, whether the parent or caregiver, fails to timely report the absence, the absence is considered to be unexcused. The program shall report any unexcused absence or seven consecutive excused absences of a child who is enrolled in the program, to the local designated staff of the Family Safety Program Office of the Department of Children and Family Services or the community-based lead agency by the end of the business day following the unexcused absence or seven (7) consecutive excused absences. An exemption to participating in the licensed early education program five (5) days per week may be granted by the court.
- (g) If the child is dually eligible in protective services/foster care and other eligibility categories then they may be served in the category where funds are available,

however, provisions stated above remain with the child. If funds become unavailable in such other categories, the child shall be moved back to protective services/foster care funding. In no case shall the child be terminated from school readiness services, as long as they remain protective services/foster care eligible.

ii. Out of Home Placements/Substitute Care

- (a) The child shall be in substitute care or placed with a relative or a non-relative.
- (b) Eligibility shall be determined by the Protective Investigator, Protective Services Counselor or Foster Care Counselor, or contracted provider.
- (c) The purpose of school readiness services shall be for protection of the child, employment of the foster parent, relative, or non-relative, or the therapeutic plan for the child as documented by a professional.
- (d) The child shall be eligible for full or part time school readiness services as long as authorizations for school readiness services are received by the Coalition from the Department of Children and Families or contracted provider at least every six (6) months.
- (e) Reasonable efforts shall be made and documented to collect the applicable parent fee from the parent(s). Under special circumstance, as described in this policy, the fee may be reduced, with written approval from the Executive Director. The fee shall not be assessed against the child's third party benefits nor shall the fee be assessed against the foster parent's income. When reasonable efforts to collect from the parent fails, the fee shall be assessed against the child's income. If the child has no income, the school readiness provider shall receive 100% of the negotiated rate, with written approval from the Executive Director.
- (f) Prior to dis-enrolling any child in this category, the Coalition shall contact the referring agency to verify termination.

(B) TANF At Risk - Children in the Relative Caregiver Program

- i. Eligibility shall be determined by the Department of Children and Families, Family Safety counselor or contracted provider.
- ii. The purpose of school readiness services shall be to seek or maintain employment, therapeutic plan for the child, relatives' disability/infirmary as documented by a physician's statement or the relative's receipt of disability benefits such as SSA or SSI and documented medical treatment.
- iii. The child must be a recipient of the Relative Caregiver Program payment. Initial proof of eligibility shall be a Child Care Application and Authorization form provided by the Department of Children and Families, or the contracted provider. The Child Care Application and Authorization form shall be dated, list the caregiver's status as a recipient of the Relative Caregiver payment, indicate the amount of the benefit payment and bear the signature of the caseworker providing the document. Following proof of eligibility shall be a Child Care Authorization and Application or signed and dated Letter of Eligibility provided by the Department of Children and Families, or the contracted provider. If the child is no longer under protective supervision at the time of initial enrollment a signed and dated Letter of Eligibility listing the caregiver's status as a recipient of the Relative Caregiver payment indicating the amount of the benefit payment and bearing the

signature of the caseworker providing the document provided by the Department of Children and Families or the contracted provider shall meet the initial proof of eligibility.

- iv. Fees shall be assessed on the child's income only. Under special circumstances, described in this policy, the fee may be reduced with written approval from the Executive Director.
- v. Prior to dis-enrolling any child in this category under protective investigation or supervision the Coalition shall contact the referring agency to verify termination.

(C) TANF "Child Only"

- ii. Eligibility shall be determined by the Department of Children and Families or contracted provider.
- iii. The purpose of school readiness services shall be to seek or maintain employment, therapeutic plan for the child, relatives' disability/infirmity as documented by a physician's statement or the relative's receipt of disability benefits such as SSA or SSI and documented medical treatment.
- iv. The child must be receiving temporary cash assistance as a TANF "child only" case. Proof of eligibility shall be a Letter of Eligibility, provided by the Department of Children and Families or contracted provider. The Letter of Eligibility shall be dated, list the caregiver's status as a Caretaker Relative, indicate the benefit amount and bear the signature of the caseworker providing the document.
- v. Fees shall be assessed on the child's income only. Under special circumstances, described in this policy, the fee may be reduced with written approval from the Executive Director.

(C) Children At-Risk of Welfare Dependency: This group includes children under the age of 13 who are at risk of welfare dependency. This also includes children age 13 through 17 years old with special needs as defined below, and which in addition meet this criteria.

i. Participants in the Welfare Transition program include:

- (a) Temporary cash assistance clients, whose children shall be eligible based on a documented referral and documented compliance with statutory welfare transition program requirements by the Department of Children and Families or the local workforce referral agency. Note: Children in families that are receiving temporary cash assistance and are subject to federal work participation requirements shall receive school readiness services prior to other children eligible for services under Section 411.01 (11), Florida Statutes. Such children must be offered services within seven (7) calendar days from receipt of the referral. If services cannot be provided within seven (7) calendar days, written notification shall be submitted to the referring caseworker.
- (b) Transitional Child Care/Non-Temporary Cash Assistance clients, whose children shall be eligible based on a documented referral and documented compliance with statutory welfare transition program requirements by the Department of Children and Families or the local workforce referral agency.
- (c) Eligibility in this subcategory shall be determined by the Department of Children and Families or contracted provider.

- (d) The purpose of school readiness services shall be to allow the parent work registration, job search, job preparation, employment, or approved education activities that lead to employment and any other work activity authorized by the Department of Children and Families or contracted provider.
 - (e) The child shall be eligible for full or part time school readiness services in accordance with the purpose for care as long as authorization for school readiness services is received by the Coalition from staff authorized to execute a school readiness authorization. Work registration referrals shall be assessed the minimum fee on the Coalition's approved parent fee schedule.
 - (f) All Welfare Transition clients shall pay a fee based on family size and income. Under special circumstances, determined by the Coalition, the fee can be reduced with written approval from the Executive Director of the Coalition, but shall never be waived.
 - (g) TANF/Welfare Transition applicants shall be given an authorization for up to six months of school readiness services. Work registration referrals shall be for three (3) days.
- ii. Participants in the Welfare Transition Respite Child Care program include the following
- (a) Eligibility is limited to families currently receiving cash assistance. Authorization of services will be determined by the Welfare Transition staff.
 - (b) The purpose of school readiness services are to alleviate a crisis in the family and avoid out of home placement, while assuring the safety of the child is maintained.
 - (c) Respite child care shall not be provided for more than thirty (30) days per child in any ~~contract~~ year.
 - (d) On a case by case basis, this may also include services provided to families affected by a natural disaster.
 - (e) Each child shall be eligible to receive up to twenty-four (24) hours of services per day.
 - (f) All respite clients shall pay a fee based on family size and income. Under special circumstances, described in this policy, the fee may be reduced with written approval from the Executive Director.

(D) Migrant Farm Workers

- i. The population in this subcategory shall include persons who are employed in agricultural work whose income varies according to weather conditions and market stability. Typically, this would mean working for more than one agricultural employer during the course of a year.
- ii. Eligibility shall be determined by the Coalition.
- iii. The purpose of school readiness services shall be to allow the parent work registration, job search, job preparation, employment, approved education activities that lead to employment and any other work activity authorized by the Department of Children and Families or contracted provider.

- iv. Eligibility shall continue so long as the client meets eligibility criteria as determined and re-determined by the Coalition at least every six (6) months.
- v. All migrant clients shall pay a parent fee based on family size and income. Under special circumstances, determined by the Coalition, the fee can be reduced with written approval from the executive director of the Coalition, but shall never be waived.

(E) Native Americans

- i. The population for this subcategory shall include parents whose children are members of federally recognized Native American tribes and who need school readiness services to enable employment of twenty (20) hours or more per week.
- ii. Eligibility shall be determined by the Coalition.
- iii. The purpose of school readiness services shall be to allow the parent work registration, job search, job preparation, employment, approved education activities that lead to employment and any other work activity authorized by the Department of Children and Families or contracted provider.
- iv. Eligibility shall continue so long as the client meets eligibility criteria as determined and re-determined by the Coalition at least every six (6) months.
- v. All clients shall pay a parent fee based on family size and income. Under special circumstances, described in this policy, the fee may be reduced with written approval from the Executive Director.

(F) Teenage Parents

- i. The population for this subcategory shall include teen age parent(s) (a person or persons under 18 years of age or enrolled in school in grade 12 or below, who is pregnant, who is the father of an unborn child, or who is the parent of a child) who are employed a minimum of twenty (20) hour per week or are enrolled in a high school diploma/GED program who are not involved in a Department of Education Drop Out Prevention Program or a Welfare Transition Teen Parent Program.
- ii. Eligibility shall be determined by the Coalition.
- iii. The purpose of school readiness services shall be to allow the parent work registration, job search, job preparation, employment, approved education activities that lead to employment and any other work activity authorized by the Department of Children and Families or contracted provider.
- iv. Eligibility shall continue so long as the client meets eligibility criteria as determined and re-determined by the Coalition at least every six (6) months.
- v. All clients shall pay a parent fee based on family size and income. Under special described in this policy, the fee may be reduced with written approval from the Executive Director.

c. Priority Two: Children with Special Needs

(A) Funds for Special Needs/Handicapped services for children should be available from the Department of Education's Handicapped Preschool Program and Exceptional Student Education Program. School Readiness funds may be used to supplement but not supplant services provided by DOE.

(B) Special Needs is defined as: children or teens with a physical, mental, or health care condition that affects or prevents the child's ability to develop, achieve, and/or function in an early learning setting at a typical rate. Eligibility is based on one or more of the following factors:

i. Children birth to less than thirteen (13) years of age: Children with an Individual Education Plan (IEP); children in Exceptional Student Education (ESE), a child with a physical disability documented on a doctor's statement of disability noting that he/she needs assistance to perform developmentally appropriate tasks; any child receiving SSI benefits or determined by a physician to be disabled.

This category also includes children with special needs enrolled in Protective Services who have been identified as having mild to moderate emotional problems as certified by a licensed psychiatrist, licensed psychologist, or licensed mental health professional and for whom child care is part of an overall treatment program.

ii. Children age thirteen (13) years to less than nineteen (19) years of age: Eligibility ends once a child reaches the age of thirteen (13) unless he/she has a documented physical or mental disability making him/her incapable of self-care, or are under court supervision for protection purposes. If the child has been receiving child care services for protection since prior to 2005 then there must be a court order or DOE matrix with a score of 254-255 or a medical statement indicating an IEP (Individual Education Plan) or FSP (Family Service Plan), or a doctor's note indicating he/she is incapable of self-care is required; disability due to a developmental delay or established medical condition, mild or moderate emotional problems as certified by a licensed psychiatrist, licensed psychologist, or licensed mental health professional meets the criteria/definition of child for this category.

iii. Eligibility for special needs funding is dependent upon the submission of documentation specific to the criteria outlined in this section. Special needs documentation will be reviewed at a minimum of twice per year to determine the need for additional/updated reporting. Funding for this category of care is contingent upon the provider adapting their curriculum and/or classroom structure to accommodate the child's disabilities.

iv. Enrollment in and payment for child care/dependent school readiness services for a child meeting identified special needs criteria is contingent upon availability of funding and in accordance with the Eligibility and Enrollment section of this policy. If funding is not available at the time of eligibility determination, the child should be placed on the waiting list based on the eligibility category and date of application.

v. Application for children meeting the special needs category shall be made by the parent/guardian. If the parent/guardian has received a school readiness authorization from the Welfare Transition Program staff, Economic Self-Sufficiency staff, Protective Services staff, or contracted provider, the Coalition shall obtain documentation from the parent for the special needs eligibility.

d. Priority Three: Low Income birth-12/Working poor children

(A) Low income (under 150% of the Federal Poverty Level) Birth to Kindergarten Entry: includes working families who need school readiness services for their children birth to kindergarten entry in order to maintain employment or approved education activities of at least 20 hours per week. The family income must be below 150% of the federal poverty level upon entry into the

program. In two parent families, each parent must individually meet the purpose of school readiness services criteria. Eligibility may also be based on other at-risk factors as referenced in this policy, to apply to all sub-categories below.

- i. The population in this subcategory shall include all other families who are working a minimum of twenty (20) hours per week.
- ii. Eligibility shall be determined by the Coalition.
- iii. The purpose of school readiness services shall be to allow the parent employment or to attend approved education activities.
- iv. Eligibility shall continue so long as the client meets eligibility criteria as determined and re-determined by the Coalition at least every six (6) months.
- v. All clients shall pay a parent fee based on family size and income. Under special circumstances, described in this policy, the fee may be reduced with written approval from the Executive Director.

(B) Low income (under 150% of the Federal Poverty Level) 6-12 years of age includes working families who need school readiness services for their 6-12 year old children in order to maintain employment or approved education activities of at least twenty (20) hours per week. The family income must be below 150% of the federal poverty level upon entry into the program. In two parent families, each parent must individually meet the purpose of school readiness services criteria. Eligibility may also be based on other at-risk factors as referenced in this policy, to apply to all sub-categories below.

- i. The population in this subcategory shall include all other families who are working a minimum of twenty (20) hours per week.
- ii. Eligibility shall be determined by the Coalition.
- iii. The purpose of school readiness services shall be to allow the parent employment and to attend approved education activities.
- iv. Eligibility shall continue so long as the client meets eligibility criteria as determined and re-determined by the Coalition at least every six (6) months.
- v. All clients shall pay a parent fee based on family size and income. Under special circumstances, described in this policy, the fee may be reduced with written approval from the Executive Director.

e. Priority Four: All other eligibility categories stated in F.S. 411

(A) Eligibility for three-and four-year-old children who may not be economically disadvantaged but who have been served in a specific part-time or combination of part-time exceptional education programs with required special services, aids, or equipment, and were previously reported for funding part time with the Florida Education Finance Program as exceptional students.

- i. The population in the subcategory shall include families with a documented referral from the Local Education Agency certifying the child participates in a part-time exceptional education program under part B or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 20 U.S.C s1401-1420, and the child has an individualized education plan. School

readiness services will be reimbursed only during that portion of the day during which the child is not receiving services from the Department of Education

- ii. Eligibility shall be determined and documented by referral from the Local Education Agency.
 - iii. The purpose of school readiness services is at risk of school failure.
 - iv. Eligibility shall continue so long as the child meets eligibility criteria as determined and re-determined by the Coalition at least every six (6) months.
 - v. All clients shall pay a parent fee based on family size and income. Under special circumstances, described in this policy, the fee may be reduced with written approval from the Executive Director.
 - vi. School readiness services will be reimbursed only for that portion of the day during which the child is not receiving special education or related services from the school district.
- (B). Eligibility for children (0-12 years of age) who meet federal and state requirements for eligibility for the migrant preschool program but who do not meet the criteria of economically disadvantaged.
- i. The population in this subcategory includes families with documented referral from the Local Education Agency, certifying that the parent(s) meet the federal definition of a migrant agricultural worker or migrant fisher as defined in 34 CFR 200.40.
 - ii. Eligibility shall be determined and documented by referral from the Local Education Agency.
 - iii. The purpose of school readiness services is at risk of school failure.
 - iv. Eligibility shall continue so long as the child meets eligibility criteria as determined and re-determined by the Coalition at least every six (6) months.
 - v. All clients shall pay a parent fee based on family size and income. Under special circumstances, described in this policy, the fee may be reduced with written approval from the Executive Director.
- (C) Low Income (Under 150% of the federal poverty level) 0- kindergarten entry two parent home one working parent.
- i. The population in this category shall include one working parent in a two parent home. The family income must be below 150% of the federal poverty level upon entry into the program.
 - ii. The purpose of care shall be for the at-risk child.
 - iii. Eligibility shall be determined by the Coalition.
 - iv. The purpose of school readiness services is to assist children at risk of school failure and must be documented in accordance with this operating policy.
 - v. Eligibility shall continue so long as the client meets eligibility criteria as determined and re-determined by the Coalition at least every six (6) months.

- vi. All clients shall pay a parent fee based on family size and income. Under special circumstances, described in this policy, the fee may be reduced with written approval from the Executive Director.
- (D) Low Income (Under 150% of the federal poverty level) 6-13 years of age two parent home one working parent
- i. The population in this category shall include one working parent in a two parent home. The family income must be below 150% of the federal poverty level upon entry into the program.
 - ii. The purpose of school readiness services shall be to allow the non-working parent work registration, job search, job preparation, approved education activities that lead to employment and any other work activity authorized by the Department of Children and Families or contracted provider.
 - iii. Eligibility shall be determined by the Coalition.
 - iv. The purpose of school readiness services is to assist children at risk of school failure and must be documented in accordance with this policy.
 - v. Eligibility shall continue so long as the client meets eligibility criteria as determined and re-determined by the Coalition at least every six (6) months.
 - vi. All clients shall pay a parent fee based on family size and income. Under special circumstances, described in this policy, the fee may be reduced with written approval from the Executive Director.
- (E) Non-Prioritized Child Care Purchasing Pool
- i. The Coalition may provide a funding pool that consists of public and private funding to promote and improve access to quality school readiness services for children 0-13 years of age of working families who need school readiness services.
 - ii. The population in this category shall include working families whose income is up to 200% of the federal poverty level.
 - iii. Eligibility shall be determined by the Coalition at least every six months. If both parents are in the home, each parent must individually meet the eligibility requirements. The client shall be required to provide adequate documentation of employment and income.
 - iv. The purpose of school readiness services shall be to allow the parent work registration, job search, job preparation, employment, approved education activities that lead to employment and any other work activity authorized by the Department of Children and Families or contracted provider.
 - v. All clients shall pay a parent fee based on family size and income. Under special circumstances, described in this policy, the fee may be reduced with written approval from the Executive Director.
- (C) Eligibility for Families Affected by a Natural Disaster: During a natural disaster the Coalition may waive income eligibility, work requirements and reduce parent fees for families on a documented case-by-case basis who need services to ensure a child's safety and protection.

For example a child who is deemed homeless would need shelter and supervision during the day to ensure protection of the child. When evacuees from other areas (including other states) that have been declared a natural disaster area seek refuge in the Nature Coast service area the Coalition may serve those children (pending available funds) and waive income eligibility and work requirements for those families on a case-by-case basis not to exceed six months.

2. Assessing Parent Fees

- a. The Coalition Board is responsible for adopting a parent fee schedule (ELCNC-265 School Readiness Program Parent Fee Schedule) for each family that receives school readiness services based on the family size and family's income.
- b. In determining fees, calculate the annualized countable gross earned and unearned income of all family unit (see definition) members in accordance with the following:
 - (A) If a parent/guardian's employer has completed an employment verification form multiply the number of hours worked per week by the hourly wage received to determine the weekly gross income. Multiply the weekly gross income by 52 to determine the annual income.
 - (B) If the parent/guardian submitted pay stubs determine the frequency of pay.
 - i. WEEKLY (receives pay every week): Add all six (6) current and consecutive stubs (gross amounts) then divide the total amount by the number of stubs. Multiply by the number of weeks in a year (52) to obtain the annual income. FORMULA: $A+B+C+D+E+F=G/6 \times 52 = \text{Annual Income}$
 - ii. BI-WEEKLY (receives pay every other week): Add all three (3) current and consecutive stubs (gross amounts) then divide by the number of stubs. Multiply by the number of pay periods in a year (26) to obtain the annual income. FORMULA: $A+B+C=D/3 \times 26 = \text{Annual Income}$
 - iii. SEMI-MONTHLY (receives pay two (2) times per month): Add all three (3) current and consecutive stubs (gross amounts) then divide by the number of stubs. Multiply by the number of pay periods in a year (24) to obtain the annual income. FORMULA: $A+B+C=D/3 \times 24 = \text{Annual Income}$
 - iv. MONTHLY (receives pay on a monthly basis): Add two (2) current and consecutive stubs (gross amounts) then divide by the number of stubs. Multiply by the number of pay periods in a year (12) to obtain the annual income. FORMULA: $A+B=C/2 \times 12 = \text{Annual Income}$
 - (C) If parent/guardian is not employed for a twelve (12) month period the Client Services Counselor must annualize the income by determining the daily income and multiply it by the number of days anticipated to be worked in the year. The parent/guardian must provide documentation from their employer on the number of days worked annually.
 - (D) If the parent/guardian submitted income tax records or business statements the Client Services Counselor must determine the annual gross income from the income tax record or from the monthly business statements. If monthly business statements are submitted the Client Services Counselor must add the gross monthly income of all statements and divide it by the number of statements submitted and multiply by 12.
 - (E) The Client Services Counselor must determine if there are any other types of income (unearned income) received. The eligibility clerk must determine the annual unearned income

amount utilizing the calculations listed above. The unearned income must be added to the earned income to determine the total annual income.

- c. The following are exempt when determining countable income for fee assessment:
 - (A) SSI payments received by the child(ren)
 - (B) Adoption subsidy from the federal Title IV-E program under the Social Security Act. If adoption subsidy is received from a private source it is counted.
 - (C) Economic Incentive Payment – one-time payment made by the United States government to taxpayers to stimulate the economy
 - (D) School Loans/Grants – Pell Grants and others that are primarily for school expenses
 - (E) Alimony (paid out of the home)
 - (F) One-time-only gifts – non-recurring monies received once as a gift, such as a birthday present, etc.
 - (G) Work Study – non-taxable income from a school
 - (H) Child Support (paid out of the home)
 - (I) Food Stamps
 - (J) Housing Payments – 60BB-4.100(8)(d) housing assistance payments from HUD issued directly to a landlord and associated utilities expense.
 - (K) Foster parent monthly allotment
 - (L) Sale of personal assets, such as stocks, bonds, house, car, and insurance policies
 - (M) Earned income of a child under the age of eighteen (18) years old who is enrolled as a full time student
 - (N) Money borrowed with an established repayment plan – this would be income from the loan such as a check each semester from a student loan or a cash advance from a credit card.
 - (O) Capital gains as claimed on income tax
 - (P) VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) payments
 - (Q) Earned Income Tax Credits or dependant care credits
 - (R) Foster parents, shelter status, and court-ordered relative and non-relative caregivers are not considered a part of the child's family unit, so their income is not considered for purposes of eligibility.
 - (S) Families in a natural disaster area are not required to include disaster relief or other forms of temporary assistance when calculating income thresholds for family eligibility purposes.
- d. When more than one family unit lives within a single dwelling, that portion of the second family unit's income that is paid to the applicant family as living expenses, i.e. rent, utilities, food, etc. shall

be included in the income portion of the applicant family. Such information is generally based on an attestation from the second family unit, under the penalty of perjury, which is a first degree misdemeanor, punishable by a definite term of imprisonment, not exceeding one year and/or a fine not exceeding \$1,000 pursuant to ss.837.012, or 775.082, or 775.083, Florida Statutes is acceptable.

- e. When more than one family unit rents a single dwelling and they share expenses or both families pay to a third party, then no countable income is created for the applicant family from the second family unit.
- f. For children at-risk of abuse and/or neglect in out of home placement/ relative /non-relative/foster care in which the child does not receive TANF "child only" benefit, relative caregiver payment or other income:
 - (A) The fee shall be assessed against the income of the child's parent or legal guardian and shall be court ordered if necessary.
 - (B) The fee may be temporarily reduced to the minimum fee based on a case by case basis during an event that limits a parent's ability to pay in accordance with the fee reduction policy described later.
 - (C) The Coalition may grant a parent fee reduction for a foster parent that is caring for children with an open protective services case in accordance with the fee reduction policy described later. Foster parents, shelter parents, and court ordered relative caregivers are not considered a part of the child's family unit, so their income is not considered for purposes of eligibility.
- g. For children at-risk of abuse and/or neglect protective services out of home placements (relative/non relative/foster placement) in which the children receives a TANF "child-only" benefit in which the needs of the relative or legal guardian are not included in the grant, or TANF at-risk (Relative Caregiver Program) participants, based upon documentation identifying the child as TANF at-risk or as TANF "child only" benefit recipient, from the courts system or the Department of Children and Families, or contracted provider:
 - i. The fees shall be assessed against the child's income only. The relative or legal guardian shall pay the assessed fee.
 - ii. The fee may be temporarily reduced to the minimum fee on a case by case basis during an event that limits a parent's ability to pay in accordance with the fee reduction policy listed below.
- h. The Coalition may grant a temporary reduction in the parent fee for a caregiver with a child under protective services in the school readiness program who is in foster care or out of home placement.
 - (A) The Coalition must document the reason for a fee reduction for foster parents, such as:
 - i. Child's parents/guardians are in prison
 - ii. Child's parents/guardians are in residential treatment
 - iii. Child's parents/guardians become incapacitated
 - iv. Death of child's parents/guardians
 - v. Homeless shelter/living arrangements
 - vi. Child's parents/guardians experience a natural disaster (storm, earthquake, etc.)
 - vii. Child's parents/guardians experience an emergency situation such as a fire or robbery
 - viii. Child's parents/guardians become unemployed
 - ix. As per fee reduction request provided by the referring agency

- (B) The approved fee reduction/waiver notice (ELCNC-229 Fee Reduction Notice must include a start and end date for the reduction or waiver that coincides with the duration of the special circumstances and the dates included in the supporting documentation.
 - (C) The Coalition may also reduce the parent fee when one or more of the parents/guardians or other adults in the home included in the original application are granted a medical interruption in services, such as maternity leave. If the parent provides proof that no income will be paid by their employer during the medical leave the Coalition shall re-calculate the household income, excluding the medical leave parent's income. If the parent provides proof that the income will be reduced to leave or other cash benefits, the Coalition shall re-calculate the household income utilizing the documented leave or other cash benefit paid by the employer. The reduced fee must only be authorized for the duration of the medical interruption for a maximum of sixty (60) days.
 - (D) The Coalition may also reduce the parent fee when one or more of the parents/guardians or other adults in the home included in the original application lose their employment. If the parent provides proof of loss of employment (the employer may complete ELCNC-225 Verification of Income/Employment), the Coalition shall re-calculate the household income, excluding the non-working parent's income. The reduced fee must only be authorized for the period the parent is not working for a maximum of thirty (30) days.
 - i. The eligibility clerk must determine if the parent/guardian is eligible for full time or part time care. Full time care is authorized when the parent/guardian works more than thirty (30) hours a week including travel time. Part time care is authorized when the parent/guardian works less than thirty (30) hours a week including travel time but not less than twenty (20) work hours per week.
- c. Determine the family size: Family consists of a parent or parents living together, their minor children and any other minor child for whom they are legally responsible. A family may also include other adult(s) that the parent considers part of the family such as an aged grandparent that is supported by the family. If a family and an unrelated individual(s) live in the same housing unit it shall constitute two family units. A teen parent who is emancipated will be considered a separate household. If the family lives with a relative or non-relative who is not supported by the family the relative is not counted in the family size. Applicant for school readiness services must complete ELCNC-217 Verification of Family Status to certify household members.
- d. Once the family income and family size is determined the eligibility clerk must determine the parent fee. The fee is determined utilizing the Coalition's ELCNC-265: School Readiness Program Parent Fee Schedule. The Client Services Counselor must first find the family size across the top of the page of the parent fee schedule and follow the family size line down the page to the appropriate income range. The family fee associated with the income and family size can be found on the most left column titled daily family fee. The fee is applied to the youngest child in the family. If applicable child number 2 and 3 are assessed 50% of the fee assessed to the youngest child and all other children in the family are assessed the minimum parent fee listed on the School Readiness Program Parent Fee Schedule. The exception is foster care, for which the assessed fee applies to each child.
- e. The assessed parent fees begin with the first day of eligibility and reimbursable care. When the assessed fee changes and the amount of the parent/guardian fees are decreased the new fee should be effective immediately. When the fee is increased both the parent/guardian and provider must be notified immediately of the fee change. The notice must include the start date of the new fee and the right for the parent/guardian to file an appeal. To the greatest extent possible, the new fee will be effective ten (10) days from the date the change is identified.

26. Enrollment:

1. The Coalition will ensure through written documentation that all parents are provided information regarding programs, services, and providers available for school readiness programs. In addition, written information will be provided to parents detailing the length of care available through the provider chosen, and the cost covered by the subsidized child care program for that provider. The Coalition will only provide one full-time payment for one service per child, and parents who choose a program that does not cover the total amount of time needed for child care will be responsible for any additional costs for wrap-around care/after school care after the initial service has been provided. This policy excludes extended child care services, which are services in excess of 11 hours are needed for instances such as a parent who works nights and sleeps during the day. The actual number of extended hours shall be authorized by the Executive Director on a case-by-case basis and shall consider the needs of the child as well as the needs of the parent.
2. The costs such as field trips, arts and crafts fees, recreational activities, registration fees etc., whose costs are in addition to the cost of child care, will not be paid by the Coalition, but are the responsibility of the parent.
3. School readiness services for children at risk of abuse or neglect shall be provided in centers or homes which are licensed. This will apply to children who live with their parents or where the alleged incident of abuse or neglect occurred. The Coalition may approve placement of children in non-licensed facilities based on a waiver request from the child's caseworker.
4. Clients in all other categories, including children in foster care/out of home placements, shall have a choice of school readiness services upon determination and re-determination of eligibility. The Coalition must provide a list of eligible school readiness providers to the parent and require the parent to select their provider and sign a statement certifying their choice.
5. When a parent chooses a non-school readiness provider, the Coalition will provide the parent a school readiness agreement package. Included in the package will be a clearance form and agreement notice. A signature is required on each form.
 - i. All forms must be completed and submitted to the Coalition. The clearance form must contain the names, dates of birth and social security numbers, if they exist, for all persons over the age of 12 years in the household of the non-school readiness informal provider chosen by the parent.
 - ii. The Coalition is responsible to ensure that all information required in the forms is completed, which includes a clearance form and a signed agreement form. School readiness services may begin at any time, after all other Coalition requirements have been met, but retroactive payments, if subsequently made, will only go back to the date when all properly completed required forms have been submitted to the Coalition.
 - iii. The Coalition shall forward the background screening form to the Department of Children and Families screening coordinator.
 - iv. The screening coordinator will forward to the Coalition the screening form and a form advising on whether or not the non-school readiness informal provider may legally be paid to serve as an informal school readiness provider.
 - v. The Coalition shall notify the parent and the non-school readiness informal provider of the outcome of the abuse clearance.
 - (B) If the outcome is denial of legal caregiver, a letter of termination for service provision shall be forwarded to the parent and the non-school readiness informal provider by the Coalition.

- (C) If the outcome is approval, the Coalition shall reimburse for school readiness services rendered during the interim of completion of paperwork and the clearance process, as well as future payments.
 - (D) The abuse clearance process shall be completed in no more than thirty (30) days, once the screening coordinator is in receipt of the clearance form.
6. The Coalition shall enter the enrollment into the Statewide Data system assigning the appropriate billing groups in accordance with Other Cost Accumulator Definitions assigning the child to the provider chosen by the parent/guardian, and entering all other required information.
 7. Changes in Schedule: When a parent reports a change that affects the child's authorized schedule the Coalition must send the ELCNC-203 Early Learning Program Notice of Schedule Change to the early learning provider.
 8. Transfers: Parents may transfer their children from one provider to any authorized provider in any county once the child's status has been determined eligible and enrolled. The Coalition must document the transfer in the statewide data system and the child/family file, and must maintain a completed ELCNC-215: Early Learning Program Provider Transfer Terms and Conditions Form. Prior to the transfer the parent must pay all parent fees due to the current provider and sign, if applicable, the Student Attendance Verification form. The provider must submit ELCNC-201 School Readiness Program Provider Transfer Form – Zero Balance, indicating that all parent fees have been paid before the transfer can be processed. A completed ELCNC-220: Notice of Transfer Form must be sent to both providers.
 9. Interruptions in Employment
 - i. All low income clients funded in 97P00, who lose their employment shall be allowed thirty (30) calendar days to seek new employment. School readiness services provided during this period shall be reimbursable.
 - ii. During a temporary break in employment for up to sixty (60) calendar days for medical reasons, including maternity leave, if determined medically necessary and documented by a physician licensed under chapter 458 or 459 Florida Statutes. During this time school readiness services will be reimbursed. If the eligibility period ends before a parent has reestablished a purpose for care they cannot be authorized for new funding without establishing that they meet a purpose for care.
 - iii. Clients with an interruption in employment, with an option to return to that employment, shall be allowed a non-reimbursable break in service. The client is not placed on the waiting list but the financial assistance school readiness services are considered suspended until employment resumes. Care may be re-established upon resumption of employment. Such circumstances may include seasonal employment, school system related employment or maternity leave.
 10. Changes in Assessed Parent Fee
 - i. The amount of the co-payment will be in effect for the family's 6-month eligibility period, unless:
 - i. Re-determination is conducted more frequently;

- ii. The caretaker/parent/legal guardian requests, and is granted, a reduction in co-payment amount due to special circumstances; or
 - iii. An incorrect co-payment was assessed by the eligibility determiner as a result of an error of the eligibility determiner, program participant error, or program participant fraud, resulting in corrective action to reduce or increase the family's co-payment; and
 - iv. If there is any change in marital status, employment status, income, or family size.
- (E) The Coalition will not take action to recover a reimbursement rate overpayment caused by an incorrect co-payment due to an error of the Coalition.
- (F) A reimbursement rate overpayment caused by an incorrect parent fee, which resulted from program participant error or program participant fraud, will be recovered pursuant to the laws of the State of Florida or applicable rule. All adjustments/paybacks must be entered into the EFS system and paid in accordance with invoicing requirements.
- (G) The Coalition shall notify the parent and provider of changes in the parent fee. An ELCNC-202: Notice of Fee Change must be sent to the parent and the early learning provider.

3.7 Waitlist

- A. All school readiness clients applying for the waiting list must meet the certification of eligibility requirements stated in the Eligibility and Enrollment section of this operating policy.
- B. The Coalition shall place eligible children on the waiting list by the child's legal name, age, eligibility category and type of service care requested. The Coalition shall inform the parent of the wait list status with an ELCNC-262 Wait List Application Status and explain the six (6) month validation procedure outlined below.
- C. The Coalition shall prioritize the waiting list based on the Coalition's eligibility priorities.
- D. The Coalition shall validate each name on the waiting list every six (6) months by way of a response to ELCNC-275 Waitlist Update or phone contact. Notification sent to those on the waiting list will give the parent/guardian a specific timeframe to contact the Coalition to provide necessary updated information to remain on the waiting list. Names will be removed from the waiting list for failure to contact the Coalition in the timeframe requested or if a purpose for school readiness services or eligibility no longer exists. Names will also be removed from the waiting list once the child has been authorized for placement.
- E. An unborn child shall not be eligible for the waiting list.
- F. The Coalition shall provide the opportunity for Needs Assessments/Family Support and Health Records Review as described in the Parent/Child services section of this policy to every parent applying to place their child on the waitlist.
- G. Clients will be notified of the availability of funding by Client Services Counselors by phone or by mail utilizing ELCNC-227 Waitlist Funding Notification. Actual certification of eligibility will be conducted in accordance with the Eligibility and Enrollment section of this operating procedure prior to authorization for placement, which will be based on available funding capacity.

3.8 Termination of Financially Assisted School Readiness Services

- A. Pursuant to s. 411.01, F.S., once determined eligible for school readiness services a child shall remain eligible until he or she reaches kindergarten age. However, eligibility for financially- assisted school readiness services may not continue if the child does not continue to meet the eligibility requirements.

- B. If at any time the Coalition, Department of Children and Families staff, local Welfare Transition coalitions, contracted providers or any authorization entity determines that a client is ineligible for school readiness services, a financially assisted school readiness service termination notice shall be sent to the Coalition. The client shall be given a ten (10) day notice prior to termination of financially assisted school readiness services unless services are being terminated immediately due to extended failure of the parent or authorized caretaker to report changes in job or income status which made him or her ineligible. If during the ten (10) day notice period, the parent contacts the Coalition and provides acceptable documentation for the continuation of care, the termination notice shall be voided with documented consent from the authorizing caseworker. All parties who received a copy of the notice shall be notified that the termination has been voided. In the event a client has received services for which he or she was not eligible, recoupment or suspected fraud procedures shall be instituted by the Coalition.
- C. When financially assisted school readiness services are subject to termination, for a participant whose school readiness services are based on an At-Risk authorization, the Coalition shall contact the referring agency to verify continued eligibility, utilizing ELCNC-240: Disposition of Day Care Referral Form for Children At Risk of Abuse and Neglect.
- D. School readiness providers shall be notified immediately by the Coalition when a client is no longer eligible for financially assisted school readiness services. The notice shall be sent on the ELCNC-221 School Readiness Program Notice of Termination Form and must provide ten (10) days notice when possible.
- E. Failure to pay the applicable parent fee is grounds for termination of financially assisted school readiness services. School readiness services shall be reinstated or continued if the parent or other responsible party makes satisfactory arrangements with the provider to pay any past-due fees.
- F. It shall be the responsibility of the school readiness provider to notify the Coalition of non-payment of fees in a timely manner. In no cases shall a parent/guardian be responsible for more than thirty (30) days of past-due parent fees. Collection of past-due parent fees is the responsibility of the school readiness provider.
- G. Abuse of the enrollment or attendance requirements by a client will be considered grounds for termination from the financially assisted school readiness services. In the case of Welfare Transition and at-risk clients, the case manager will be notified in order to determine whether school readiness services continue to be necessary despite the client enrollment or attendance abuse.
- H. In the event FDLE finds evidence of fraud committed by a parent/guardian school readiness services will be terminated until the re-coupment process is completed or the client has agreed to and complies with a repayment plan.

3.9 Dis-enrollment Process

- A. Eligibility for school readiness programs is established in section 411.01 (6), Florida Statutes and federal regulations, 45 CFR 98 and CFR 260-265 and is described in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) State Plan and the Child Care and Development Fund State Plan (CCDF). The provision of child care services, through the Early Learning Coalition of the Nature Coast, Inc., is critical for addressing state policy goals in the areas of school readiness, child welfare and economic self-sufficiency of low-income families. Significant financial penalties could apply to the state if childcare services are not provided for families receiving temporary cash assistance and subject to work requirements.
- B. Early Education and Care, while critical to achieving federal and state policy objectives, are not an entitlement or guaranteed. A Fair Disclosure statement on the eligibility and re-determination forms is given to parents notifying them that the provision of school readiness services is subject to the availability of funding and placement priorities.
- C. It is the position of the Early Learning Coalition of the Nature Coast Board of Directors that dis-enrollment of children from the school readiness program must be a last resort decision. It is the policy of the Early Learning Coalition of

the Nature Coast, Inc., to utilize a wide range of budget management strategies to maintain fiscal integrity and balance, including the utilization of dis-enrollment of non-priority participants as an option of last resort to maintain fiscal integrity. The decision to activate the dis-enrollment policy stated below must be preceded by documentation that the following activities have been completed:

1. Re-determination of eligibility of current mandatory enrollments (mandatory enrollments are children in protective services and the welfare transition program – see eligibility and enrollment section of this operating procedure):
 - a. The Coalition will re-determine eligibility of current enrollments with referring agencies.
 2. Re-determination of eligibility in current non-priority categories
 - a. The Coalition will re-determine eligibility of current non-priority enrollments.
 3. Coordination with other School Readiness Partners
 - a. The Coalition will communicate with other school readiness partners to research other avenues of service. Guidelines regarding parental choice must be met when changing or moving children from one program to another.
 4. Re-evaluation of Coalition Budget.
 - a. The Coalition will direct the Administrative Committee to conduct a complete review of the Coalition's operating budget. In addition, the Administrative Committee will conduct a complete review of the Coalition's projected utilization of direct service dollars.
- D. If dis-enrollment is deemed necessary after exhausting all other options described above, the Coalition shall:
1. Immediately notify the Agency for Workforce Innovation/Office of Early Learning of the dis-enrollment decision (the notification must be received by the Agency for Workforce Innovation no more than three days after the dis-enrollment decision is made).
 2. Determine the number of children that must be dis-enrolled to balance the direct service budget. Dis-enrollment may not cause the slot expenditures to drop below the slot allocation approved by the Coalition
 3. The Coalition shall dis-enroll an established number of children enrolled in non-federally funded category as follows:
 - a. Dis-enrollment of school-age children (age 12 and 11)
 - b. Dis-enrollment of school-age children (age 10, 9, and 8)
 - c. Dis-enrollment of school-age children (age 7 and 6)
 - d. Dis-enrollment of children 0 - kindergarten entry_beginning with the highest income families
 4. The Coalition shall dis-enroll an established number of children enrolled in the Working Poor category.
 - a. Dis-enrollment of school-age children (age 12 and 11)
 - b. Dis-enrollment of school-age children (age 10, 9, and 8)
 - c. Dis-enrollment of school-age children (age 7 and 6)

- d. Dis-enrollment of children 0 - kindergarten entry beginning with the highest income families
5. The Coalition shall place all dis-enrolled children on the waitlist by priority.
6. The Coalition shall follow all termination of financially assisted school readiness services policies stated in this operating procedure.
7. The Coalition shall release a public announcement detailing the causes of the dis-enrollment.

3.10 Community Outreach

- A. The Coalition will participate in community-wide events promoting school readiness and child care awareness, and engage in key community agencies or groups that have particular expertise and/or services designed to meet the school readiness needs of specialty populations of families and children in culturally relevant ways.
- B. Coalition staff shall become members of civic organizations and community boards including but not limited to local Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Clubs, Transportation Boards etc. to promote the awareness of quality early education and care of young children to the community including private sector individuals and businesses.
- C. Coalition staff shall attend community events that raise awareness of quality education and care of young children.

3.11 Consumer Education

- A. The Coalition will engage in activities designed to provide comprehensive consumer education to parents and the public. Activities will include attending community fairs/events.

3.12 Provider Observations:

- A. The Coalition will complete observations of school readiness providers, utilizing the Coalition's approved ELCNC-25 School Readiness Program Provider Observation Tool and the guidelines stated below:
 1. The Coalition recognizes that on-going quality early education is crucial for the development of children. Young children need the stability and opportunities that quality care provides, in order to enter school ready to learn. The Program Management Observation Instrument and the Classroom Observation Instruments are designed to encompass all of the state, federal, and Coalition mandates related to sub-contracted school readiness programs and to assist providers that hold an Agreement with the Coalition to maintain the quality of their programs in accordance with state, federal, and Coalition requirements.
 2. In order for the Coalition to accurately document provider compliance with program regulations and program quality the Coalition must build a professional working relationship with each owner/director and teacher and become familiar with the day-to-day operations of the program. To accomplish this, the Coalition's Education Specialists will visit the facility on a regular basis throughout the contract year. These types of visits are referred to as informal visits and are intended to provide an opportunity for the provider to request formal technical assistance, to ask questions, and to orientate the Education Specialist with the program. The Education Specialists shall document the outcomes of the informal visits on the ELCNC-32 Provider Contact Form. The documented outcomes of the informal visits may be used to assist the Education Specialist in completing the provider observation tools.
 3. In addition to the informal visits, the Education Specialists will visit each program on a quarterly basis to complete formal observations two times during the fiscal year. The first observation will be completed by December 31 and the second observation will be completed by June 30.

- a. The Education Specialists will visit each classroom in the facility, completing all Classroom Observation Instruments. Ratings will be assigned for each area in accordance with the following:
 - (A) Compliance: The Education Specialist will indicate if the criterion was observed in compliance or if supporting documentation such as the Provider Contact Forms and Technical Assistance Forms indicate on-going compliance.
 - (B) Non-Compliance: The Education Specialist will indicate if the criterion was observed in non-compliance or if supporting documentation such as the Provider Contact Forms and Technical Assistance Forms indicate on-going non-compliance.
 - (C) Not applicable: The Education Specialist will indicate if the criterion was not applicable to the age group being observed, such as references to diapering activity in a preschool-age classroom.
 - (D) Excused: The Education Specialist will indicate if the criterion was not observed due to unusual circumstances on the day of the observation. Supporting statements and/or documentation must be included in the comments section.
 - b. Overall comments for each section of the Observation Instrument may also be included in the comments section. The purpose of the comments is to capture the program strengths and weakness noted during the observation, informal visits, and the implementation of technical assistance. For example, if the teacher has a system in place that exceeds a particular requirement it is important for the Education Specialist to document the best practice. Likewise, if a practice is noted out of compliance it is important for the Education Specialist to note the non-compliance issue providing an explanation of the concern.
 - c. If the score indicates that corrective action is required, the Education Specialist and provider will develop a Corrective Action plan utilizing the ELCNC-34 Corrective Action Form. The plan will include a timeline (not to exceed 30 days) for the activity established in the Corrective Action Plan and the approximate date for the Education Specialist to conduct a follow up assessment of the items listed on the Corrective Action Plan. If the program successfully implements all activities in the Corrective Action Plan as evidenced in the follow up assessment, the Corrective Action Plan shall be considered completed. If the program does not score appropriately following the implementation of the Corrective Action plan the Education Specialist will follow the School Readiness Termination/Suspension/Reinstatement policies described earlier.
4. Upon completion of the observation, the Education Specialist will meet with the owner/director or representative to discuss the ratings and any comments. The Education Specialist will document the completion of the observation on the ELCNC-32 Provider Contact Form and provide a full copy of the observation to the provider within three working days either by mail or email.
 5. Upon completion of the observations and prior to August 15 of the following fiscal year the Education Specialist will release a report to each school readiness provider summarizing the overall program compliance with state, federal, and Coalition requirements. To complete this task, the Education Specialist will utilize a provider workbook which captures a variety of data gathered throughout the fiscal year during the provider observations, during site visits, and during other types of meetings between the Coalition and the provider.
 6. Special Provisions for Out-of-County School Readiness Providers
 - a. The Coalition recognizes that some school readiness providers in other counties may wish to hold n Agreement with the Nature Coast Coalition to provide school readiness services to children who reside in the Nature Coast Coalition's service area, but whose parents choose to place them in care outside of their home county. Exceptions may be made to the observation requirements, if all of the following conditions are met.

- (A) The facility holds an Agreement with the Nature Coast Coalition as well as with their local Coalition
 - (B) The program serves five (5) or fewer children from the Nature Coast
 - (C) The "home" Coalition has a mechanism to document compliance with the items listed in the observation form, and the document is submitted by the "home" Coalition or the provider to the Nature Coast Coalition. Note: "home" coalition means the Early Learning Coalition located in the same county as the provider.
- b. If an out of county provider does not have any Nature Coast school readiness children enrolled, the provider observation and health and safety inspection requirements will be suspended and the contract placed in an "in-active" status. If at any time a parent wishes to enroll a Nature Coast school readiness child at a facility that does not have an observation conducted within the last year and a health and safety inspection conducted within the last six (6) months on file, Coalition staff will conduct a provider observation (a copy of the most recent observation conducted by the home Coalition will suffice if the observation was conducted within the previous six (6) months) and health and safety inspection PRIOR TO the child attending the program. Note: a Department of Children and Families licensing inspection may be utilized to document completion of a health and safety inspection.
7. Special Provisions for In-County School Readiness Providers with No Enrolled School Readiness Children
- a. The Coalition realizes that there may be times when a provider contracts for school readiness services but does not have any school readiness students enrolled in their program. If this occurs, that provider's school readiness Agreement may be placed in an in-active status. During the in-active status, the Education Specialist will not complete the ~~program~~ provider observations.
 - b. Prior to the enrolling of a child into the provider's school readiness program a provider observation must be conducted, unless the last observation was conducted within the previous six (6) months. All requirements must be met. The Education Specialist will provide technical assistance as needed to ensure that the provider meets all criteria on the provider observation tool. Once all criteria have been met on the provider observation tool, the Education Specialist must notify the Program Manager who will revise the contract status from in-active to active, if the health and safety inspections are satisfactory and up to date (see below).
 - c. Following the revision of contract status from in-active to active the Education Specialist must conduct provider observations for the remaining months of the fiscal year.

3.13 Health and Safety Assessments

- A. The Coalition recognizes that on-going health and safety assessments are crucial for the health and safety of children. The Health and Safety assessment instrument is designed to assess the general health and safety of subsidized child care arrangements and to help providers recognize unsafe conditions and if necessary to improve their child care environments.
- B. The Coalition will conduct health and safety pre-assessments of potential school readiness providers, utilizing the appropriate ELCNC-24 Health and Safety Pre-Assessment/Assessment and the guidelines stated below:
 - 1. The Health and Safety Pre-Assessment is designed to review the health and safety standards of potential school readiness providers that are interested in entering into an agreement to provide school readiness services. Potential providers must successfully meet all of the requirements in the Health and Safety Assessment prior to execution of a school readiness contract.

2. When a potential school readiness provider is identified, Coalition staff will set up a meeting with the site director and review the Health and Safety Assessment process. Coalition staff will provide technical assistance as needed to assist the provider in preparing for the assessment. When the potential provider feels ready for the assessment, the provider will notify the Coalition. After notification, Coalition staff must conduct the assessment within two weeks.
 3. The observer will state the purpose of the visit to the program representative and greet all staff.
 4. The observer will observe all classrooms that are interested in providing school readiness services; however, no more than six (6) classrooms will be observed in one day.
 5. After all indicators are completed the observer will review the document with the program representative. If all indicators are met the program will be considered ready to enter into a school readiness contract. The provider must have the opportunity to execute the contract within thirty (30) days.
 6. If all indicators are not met the observer and provider will develop a technical assistance plan. The plan will include a timeline (not to exceed thirty (30) days) for the activity established in the corrective action plan and the date for the observer to conduct an assessment of the completed corrective action plan. If the program successfully implements all activities in the corrective action plan the program will be considered ready to enter into a school readiness contract. If the program does not meet all of the activity listed in the corrective action plan the observer will continue to work with the provider until all indicators are met.
 7. The observer will provide the owner/director with a copy of the completed assessment and if necessary the corrective action plan within seven (7) days of the visit.
 8. Licensed Family Child Care Homes and Licensed Centers who have been inspected by the local licensing department within the last six (6) months may be exempt from the Health and Safety Pre-Assessment process. The Coalition must collect a copy of the licensing department's inspection of the provider. If the provider met all of the indicators listed on the licensing department's inspection the provider will be considered ready to enter into a subsidized child care contract. If the provider did not meet all of the indicators the observer may conduct an additional assessment or develop a corrective action plan in compliance with the above.
- B. The Coalition must conduct unannounced on-going health and safety assessments on all school readiness providers at a minimum of twice per year or as often as deemed necessary by the Coalition. Inspections conducted by the local licensing authority within the last six (6) months may be utilized as an assessment to meet this requirement.
1. If a provider fails to meet any indicator during on-going health and safety assessments (or licensing inspection) the provider must be placed on a corrective action plan. The Coalition must follow the School Readiness Agreement Termination and Reinstatement policies described earlier.
 2. If the local licensing authority fails to conduct an inspection on a licensed site within the six (6) month time frame, Coalition staff will visit the site to conduct the health and safety assessment inspection.
 3. If an out of county provider does not have any Nature Coast school readiness children enrolled, the Coalition health and safety assessment inspection requirement will be suspended. If at any time a parent wishes to enroll a Nature Coast school readiness child in the facility, Coalition staff will conduct a health and safety assessment PRIOR to the child attending the program.
 4. If an in-county provider does not have any Nature Coast school readiness children enrolled and the contract has been placed on in-active status, the Coalition health and safety assessment inspection requirement will be suspended. If at any time a parent wishes to enroll a school readiness child at the facility, Coalition staff will conduct a health and safety inspection PRIOR to the child attending the program, unless the most recent inspection has been completed satisfactorily during the previous six (6) months.

3.14 Training and Technical Assistance:

- A. The Coalition will provide a minimum of one hundred twenty (120) hours of training and workshops (forty (40) hours in Citrus, forty (40) hours in Sumter, and forty (40) combined hours in Dixie, Gilchrist and Levy Counties) that promote the enhancement of quality in the school readiness setting and promote effective teaching strategies. Topics must include, but are not limited to, the following areas:
 - 1. Curriculum development: The Coalition will develop and implement training workshops to assist teachers in planning age-appropriate, developmentally appropriate, research-based programs for young children.
 - 2. Parent involvement and education programs: The Coalition will develop and implement training workshops designed to promote parent involvement in the education of children.
 - 3. Healthy and safe environments: The Coalition will develop and implement training workshops that assist teachers in maintaining healthy and safe environments for young children.
 - 4. Early literacy: The Coalition will develop and implement training workshops that assist teachers in planning appropriate early literacy activities.
- B. The Coalition will develop and implement a pre-and-post test for each training workshop. The purpose of the pre-and-post test is to evaluate the participants gain in knowledge in the subject area as a result of the training workshop.
- C. The Coalition will provide technical assistance which improves health and safety practices, relates to the program observation results, and assists school readiness providers in offering high quality services as requested.
- D. The Coalition will research and collect early education and care training information provided by staff development programs in the community, such as the school system, and distribute the information to school readiness programs throughout the county. Documentation of training information shared will be maintained by the Coalition.
- E. The Coalition will provide training on all curricula purchased by the Coalition for school readiness or VPK providers as requested. In addition, the Coalition will provide inclusion training (as described in the quality initiative section below) and any other training identified by staff, the Advisory Councils, the school readiness providers, or any early learning partners, as appropriate. The Coalition will develop and implement a pre- and post-test for all trainings. The purpose of the pre- and post-test is to evaluate the participants' gain in knowledge in the subject area as a result of the training.
- F. The Coalition will provide training on the following curricula/subjects as requested:
 - 1. Woven Word
 - 2. Second Step
 - 3. Start with the Arts
 - 4. Talking About Touching
 - 5. A Planning Guide to the Pre-School Curriculum
 - 6. Infant/Toddler Planning Guide
 - 7. The Complete Daily Curriculum
 - 8. Creating Readers

9. Handwriting Without Tears

3.15 Coalition Curricula Approval Process

- A. The Early Learning Coalition of the Nature Coast is responsible for ensuring that all school readiness providers utilize an appropriate curriculum. To accomplish this, the Coalition requires school readiness programs to utilize one or more Coalition-approved curricula. Curricula approval evaluations shall be based on the Florida School Readiness Performance Standards, including learning activities designed to enhance children in the following areas:
1. Physical health
 2. Approaches to learning
 3. Social and emotional development
 4. Language and communication
 5. Cognitive development and general knowledge
 6. Motor development
 7. Character development
- B. Indicators of an effective curriculum include the following:
1. Children are active and engaged
 2. Goals are clear and shared by all
 3. Curriculum is evidence-based
 4. Valued content is learned through investigation, play, and focused , intentional teaching
 5. Curriculum builds on prior learning and experiences
 6. Curriculum is comprehensive
 7. Professional standards validate the curriculum's subject-matter content
 8. The curriculum is likely to benefit children
- C. Curriculum Approval Process
1. The Coalition's Advisory Councils are responsible for reviewing curricula and recommending curricula for Coalition-approved to the Board of Directors.
 2. Any individual requesting approval of a curriculum must submit the ELCNC-31 Request for Curriculum Approval Form to the Coalition.
 3. A sample lesson plan and a sample of the curriculum materials, book, or other appropriate material must be attached to the ELCNC-31 Request for Curriculum Approval Form.
 4. Coalition staff will conduct an initial review, utilizing the ELCNC-30 Checklist for Curriculum Evaluation.

5. The review shall presented through an action item that includes the Request for Curriculum Approval Application, supporting documentation and the completed Checklist for Curriculum Evaluation to the appropriate Advisory Council at the next regularly scheduled meeting.
6. The Advisory Council shall review the documents and either approve the application for recommendation to the Board of Directors or deny the application listing the reasons for the denial.
7. If the Advisory Council denies the Curriculum Approval Application Coalition staff shall inform the applicant of the denial including the reasons specified by the Advisory Council.
8. If the Board of Director's approves the curriculum approval action item Coalition staff shall inform the applicant of the approval in writing.
9. If the Board of Director's denies the curriculum approval action item Coalition staff shall inform the applicant of the denial in writing.

3.16 Quality Initiative Programs:

- A. The Board of Directors of the Early Learning Coalition of the Nature Coast has adopted several Quality Initiatives designed to enhance the quality of early learning programs.
- B. The Advisory Councils, (established by the Board of Directors) are responsible for recommending the implementation of quality initiatives on an annual basis based on the documented need in each county served by the Nature Coast Coalition. In addition, the Advisory Council's recommendations must include the associated budget for each recommended initiative. (The Advisory Councils may recommend the implementation of all or some of the adopted quality initiatives listed below.)
- C. The Advisory Councils are responsible for the implementation and oversight of all active quality initiatives.
- D. The Advisory Councils are responsible for the development and recommendation of additional quality initiatives designed to enhance the quality of early learning programs based on documented need in each county served by the Nature Coast.
- E. Quality Initiative programs that provide financial support to purchase materials, equipment and other non-consumable items require the provider to return all materials, and equipment if the provider does not fulfill the requirements of the program or the early learning contract/agreement is terminated within five years of the completion of the quality initiative.
- F. Early learning providers must adhere to the requirements as stated in the School Readiness Provider Agreement and/or the Statewide Provider Agreement (AWI-VPK-20), as applicable, as a condition of receiving school readiness funds allocated to quality initiative programs. Each local Advisory Council establishes quality initiative programs and supporting budgets as a resource to providers to maintain quality early learning environments. The following establishes the criteria for participation in all quality initiative programs.
 1. Early learning provider must hold a School Readiness Provider Agreement and/or Statewide (VPK) Provider Agreement
 2. Early learning providers must maintain compliance with all areas of the School Readiness Agreement and/or the Statewide (VPK) Provider Agreement.
 3. The School Readiness Provider Agreement and/or Statewide (VPK) Agreement shall not be placed in a probation status.

G. The following Coalition-funded quality initiative programs are subject to the Quality Initiative Terms and Conditions Agreement:

1. Accreditation Mini Grants – Participants currently enrolled in the program must fund the remaining costs of accreditation.
2. Quality Resource Purchases
3. TIP Program (Director or Owner only) - Teachers may continue participation
4. Professional Development Reimbursement Program (Director or Owner only) - Teachers may continue participation
5. Provider Recruitment/expansion -This applies to existing contracted providers who are participating in the program to expand existing services.
6. Any other quality initiative programs designed to support early learning programs (not individual teachers) approved by the Board

H. Adopted Quality Initiatives

1. Teacher Incentive Payment Program: The Teacher Incentive Payment Program is intended to promote longevity in the employment of early learning teachers and to promote teacher training.

The program is designed to provide stipends to eligible school readiness teachers¹. The stipends are based on the length of time a teacher is employed by a school readiness provider and the number of additional training hours², approved by the Coalition as eligible training hours³ completed by the teacher up to a maximum of eighteen (18) hours per fiscal year.

In order to participate in the program teachers must meet all of the following:

¹ Teacher is defined as any individual including the owner/director that works with children for more than 20 hours per week. This may include owners, directors, lead teachers, assistants, and cooks who work with children during meal times, etc.

² Additional Training Hours are defined as training hours achieved by a teacher that are in addition to the twelve (12) annual in-service training hours required by the Coalition.

³ Eligible Training Hours may be earned in a variety of ways such as participation in national, state, or local conferences relating to children, specialized workshops, or completion of additional modules from Part II of the courses offered by the Child Care Training Program, and are defined as training in any of the following areas:

- Health and safety, including universal precautions
- Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)
- First Aid (this training may only be taken to meet the in-service requirement once every three years)
- Nutrition
- Child development – typical and atypical
- Behavior management
- Working with families
- Child abuse and neglect
- Child care for multilingual children
- Working with children with disabilities in child care
- Outdoor play safety
- Guidance and discipline
- Computer technology for educational settings
- Leadership development, program management, and staff supervision
- Age appropriate lesson planning
- Literacy
- Other course areas relating to child care, early education, or child care management

- a. Be employed for at least one continuous year at the same early learning provider
- b. Be employed by an early learning provider in Citrus, Dixie, Gilchrist, Levy, or Sumter County that holds an Agreement with the Early Learning Coalition of the Nature Coast to provide school readiness services during the teacher's participation in the Teacher Incentive Payment Program and for at least one year prior to the teacher's enrollment in the TIP Program.
- c. Meet the minimum educational requirements to be considered "credentialed" as determined by the Department of Children and Families.

Participants must complete the following steps to receive a stipend:

- a. Complete and submit to the Coalition an ELCNC-45 TIP Program - Training Prior Approval Form and ELCNC-36 W-9 Form for each training at least two weeks prior to the training. Enclose a copy of the training flyer, agenda, or other documentation describing the training content. The Coalition will notify the applicant in writing if the training is approved.
- b. Attend the approved training.
- c. Complete and submit an ELCNC-46 TIP Program - Stipend Request Form attaching a copy of the training certificate or the ELCNC-47 TIP Program - Verification of Completed Training Form to the Coalition.

Payments will be made based on the following matrix and on the availability of funds.

Stipend Awarded Per Training Hour

	Employed for 1 Year	Employed for 2 Years	Employed for 3 Years	Employed for 4 Years	Employed for 5 Years	Employed for 6 Years	Employed for 7 Years	Employed for 8 Years	Employed for 9 Years	Employed for 10 or more Years
Stipend per Additional Training Hour	8.00	9.00	10.00	11.00	12.00	13.00	15.00	20.00	21.00	22.00
Maximum Stipend Amount	\$144	\$152	\$180	\$198	\$216	\$254	\$270	\$360	\$378	\$386

The program will run through April 30th of each fiscal year. This will allow the Coalition to process payments and close the program budget before the close of the fiscal year. All ELCNC-45 TIP Program - Training Prior Approval Forms must be received by April 30th and all ELCNC-46 TIP Program - Stipend Request Forms must be received by June 15th.

- 2. Professional Development/Certification Reimbursement Program: The Professional Development/Certification Reimbursement Program is designed to assist early learning educators that are employed by participating early learning providers with the costs associated with enhancing their knowledge in the field of early education.
 - a. Teachers employed by an early learning provider may submit an ELCNC-42 Professional Development/Certification Reimbursement Program - Preliminary Application and ELCNC-54 36 W-9 for reimbursement for one or more of the following types of training/coursework/certifications (applications are only accepted from July 1- June 1) (Preliminary Applications are utilized prior to the training for advance approval; however, teachers are responsible to pay all costs up-front):
 - (A) State-mandated training courses, such as the 10 hour and 30 hour courses required by the Department of Children and Families
 - (B) CPR/First Aid, if no classes are available that are free of charge

- (C) Early childhood conference attendance including lodging (must meet Coalition-approved travel policy; mileage will not be reimbursed)
 - (D) Early childhood-related college courses needed for the Director Credential or a degree in Early Childhood Education/Child Development
 - (E) Training and/or courses related to early childhood education
 - (F) CDA and/or FCCPC courses, including courses needed for renewal of certification
 - (G) Fees associated with obtaining a National CDA certification
 - (H) Director Credential course
 - (I) Level two background screenings and other certifications as required by the Department of Children and Families licensing or VPK legislation.
- b. Coalition staff shall review and approve or deny each application. The Coalition shall notify each applicant of the Coalition's decision. (The applicant is responsible for all registration activities and payment of associated fees.)
 - c. Upon completion of the course/conference/certifications, the applicant will submit a completed ELCNC-43 Professional Development/Certifications Reimbursement Program – Application for Reimbursement to the Coalition office for the applicant's county, including documentation of completion and/or attendance, certificate (if applicable), and receipts for all payments.
 - d. Coalition staff shall review and approve or deny the applications. All approved applications shall be processed by the Coalition in a timely manner.
2. Literacy Program: The Literacy Program is designed to help educate parents on the importance of reading to young children and to implement programs that enhance children's literacy skills.
- a. Coalition staff shall attend community events throughout the year to hand out literacy bags to families with young children. The literacy bags shall be imprinted with the Coalition's logo and contact information and shall include one age-appropriate book, information about the Coalition, and the importance of reading to young children, and other educational materials as available.
 - b. Client Services Counselors will distribute an age-appropriate book to all children that enter the Coalition office.
 - c. The Coalition shall adopt literacy programs that enhance children's literacy skills.
3. Quality Resources: The Advisory Councils are responsible for studying the effectiveness of the early learning programs operated by the Coalition. The Advisory Council members study a variety of reports provided by Coalition staff. The reports include information on all aspects of the early learning programs as well as reports outlining the progress of school readiness children through the pre-and-post assessments. The Advisory Councils utilize the reports to target specific areas that may need further development and may direct staff to create a Quality Resources Grant allowing for the reimbursement to early learning providers for the purchase of specific educational materials including curricula addressing the area of development. If the specific material includes curricula, Coalition staff shall assist in the training of the classroom teachers, to ensure that new curricula and programs are implemented correctly to enhance the learning of children. Providers shall not receive a Quality Resources Grant disbursement until they have attended and completed the related training and submitted proof of purchase and proof of goods received to the Coalition's Finance Department.

4. Accreditation Mini Grant Program: The Accreditation Mini-Grant Program is intended to offer funding to early learning providers to help facilitate and maintain accreditation.
 - a. The grant award may be used for application fees, verification fees, and membership fees if required for accreditation and/or to purchase equipment necessary to meet accreditation requirements. Funding is based on budget allocations determined by the local Advisory Council and further approved by the Board. The amount awarded to each applicant may vary according to provider need and could vary depending on the numbers of approved applications.
 - b. Distribution of grant funds will occur in two parts. The applicant must first apply for accreditation or accreditation renewal (including membership in accrediting agency, if required) before being permitted to apply for the second part of the grant. Prior to applying for the second part of the grant, the provider is expected to conduct a self-assessment to determine the needs of the program as they apply to the particular accreditation requirements. The second part of the grant can be utilized for needed equipment/materials and/or verification/validation fees (if the provider is ready for the verification/validation visit). The Coalition will provide technical assistance to providers as requested during the accrediting process.
 - c. Providers may be reimbursed for accreditation fees that have already been paid (if payment was within the current fiscal year and receipts are provided). Grant funds will not be used to reimburse a provider for equipment or services purchased by the provider previous to the grant award.
 - d. The provider is required to return, in full, any mini-grant awards received if the provider does not complete accreditation within two years after receiving the verification fee award and purchases or services.
 - e. The provider must submit an ELCNC-39 Accreditation Mini Grant Application Part One to apply for the accreditation application fee and the membership fee to the accrediting agency if applicable, and/or the annual report fee for currently accredited providers. Applications must be submitted as directed on the application to the Coalition office by the deadlines on the application. The application must include a copy of the accrediting application as well as the receipt and a copy of the membership application and receipt.
 - f. Coalition staff shall review all Accreditation Mini Grant Applications and approve or deny the application based on the guidelines stated above. The Coalition will not award funds more than once for the application fee, if the provider has allowed the application period to expire.
 - g. If the application is not in compliance with the guidelines above, or an un-allowable cost was included in the application the Coalition will notify the applicant of the denial and the applicant's right to re-submit a revised application (if prior to the deadline date indicated on the application).
 - h. If the Coalition approves the application, Coalition staff shall notify the provider. All approved applications shall be processed by the Coalition in a timely manner.
 - i. The provider must submit an ELCNC-40 Accreditation Mini Grant Application Part Two for the verification/validation fee and/or equipment/materials needed to satisfy accreditation requirements. The amount awarded will be determined based on the accreditation mini-grant application and site observation conducted by the Coalition. Applications must be submitted as directed on the application and cannot be submitted until the provider has applied for accreditation and completed a self-study. The provider will receive an approved Accreditation Mini Grant disbursement after the provider submits proof of purchase and proof of goods received to the Coalition's Finance Department.

- j. The Coalition may fully or partially approve an application.
 - k. After accreditation has been awarded and documentation of accreditation is received by the Coalition, the provider will be eligible to be reimbursed at Gold Seal rates, as long as this rate does not exceed the rate charged to private pay customers. The effective date of the Gold Seal reimbursement rate is the first complete month following the date that the Coalition was notified of the award and supplied with a copy of the certificate, pending the availability of funds.
 - l. The Coalition may apply a funding formula to allocate funds to the applicants, if the requests exceed the amount of available program funding, as outlined in the program guidelines.
5. Provider Recruitment/Expansion Program: Recognizing population growths for children birth to five in each county serviced by the Early Learning Coalition of the Nature Coast, it is important to support initiatives to recruit new early care providers to increase the number of quality early care programs offered to children. The Provider Recruitment/Expansion Program also supports existing early learning providers seeking funds to increase capacity. In accordance with this operating procedure all providers have the opportunity to contract with the Coalition to provide quality, safe environments that promote social, emotional, and academic success. The Coalition is committed to providing the necessary resources to recruit child care facilities and those interested in opening a child care facility in order to offer more opportunities to parents/caregivers for parental choice. To further this commitment the Coalition, through this program, will assist established early learning providers to increase capacity to serve more children which continues to provide parents/caregivers many choices when choosing a quality early learning program. The program will be implemented in accordance with the following:
- a. Coalition staff will actively contact established child care facilities including Family Child Care Homes to provide information on the benefits of serving as an early learning provider. In addition, staff will work collaboratively with the Department of Children & Families and Workforce Development Boards in targeting those interested in opening a child care facility.
 - b. Coalition staff will meet with the potential early learning provider to provide the following information:
 - (A) Provide an orientation presentation outlining the history of the Coalition and the Early Learning Program
 - (B) Review the School Readiness Provider Agreement and/or the Statewide Provider Agreement (AWI-VPK-20) Application (VPK) with the potential Early Learning Provider
 - (C) Review the Health & Safety Pre-Assessment
 - (D) Review Coalition-approved Provider Observation Tool
 - (E) Review student assessment process
 - (F) Review ELCNC-44 Early Learning Provider Recruitment/Expansion Program Application and assist the provider in completing the application, if applicable.
 - c. The Coalition will conduct the Coalition-approved Health & Safety Pre-Assessment. In addition the early learning provider must certify compliance with program agreement requirements.
 - d. The score earned on the Health & Safety Pre-Assessment, the application information, and staff observation will determine the needs of the provider. The Advisory Council will review recommendations from staff based on the information contained in the Health & Safety Pre-Assessment, or the Department of Children and Families licensing inspection, Provider

Recruitment Application, and staff observation. Provider Recruitment/Expansion awards will be approved by the Advisory Council. All funds allocated under this program must be used to enhance the early care environment for children and maintain compliance with Coalition-approved policies & procedures.

- e. If an early learning provider is currently contracted with the Coalition to provide early learning services the provider is eligible to apply for a provider recruitment/expansion award. To qualify for this quality initiative program, the early learning provider must target expanding services to increase the capacity of children served. The following procedures will apply:
 - i. Coalition staff will review current capacity of the early learning provider's program.
 - ii. Coalition staff will document the anticipated increase based on an interview with the facility director/owner.
 - iii. Coalition staff will conduct an observation visit and document the potential needs based on the area(s) targeted for expansion.
 - iv. Coalition staff will review the early learning provider's observation reports (if applicable) conducted by the Coalition to verify compliance.
 - f. Allowable costs for this program include but are not limited to:
 - (A) Furniture to support the new learning environment
 - (B) Resource material (i.e. books, dramatic play, crayons, paint, manipulative items, curriculum and other items necessary to support the new learning environment
 - (C) Fencing
 - (D) Outdoor play equipment used for the development of gross motor skills
 - (E) Literature (books and furniture to support literacy activities)
 - g. All providers must comply with Coalition and legislative requirements as stated in the provider agreements. Failure to comply may result in the elimination of participation in Coalition funded quality initiative programs as stated in the Quality Initiative Funding Procedure and the Provider School Readiness Agreement Termination/Suspension/Reinstatement procedure described earlier)
 - h. All awards allocated under this program must be utilized to enhance the early learning environment and maintain compliance with Coalition-approved policies and procedures and will only be disbursed to providers after the submission of proof of purchase and proof of goods received to the Coalition's Finance Department. Funding for quality programs does not include capital improvements or transportation and may require match funding by the early learning provider. Award amounts will be approved by the Advisory Council. Non-compliance with this program and/or termination of the school readiness/VPK contract with the Coalition within 1 year of the contract period will result in repayment of funds.
 - i. Approved applications shall be processed by the Coalition in a timely manner.
6. The Coalition shall house a Resource Lending Library at the Coalition's offices throughout the Nature Coast service area. Providers and parents shall have the opportunity to access many resource books, educational toys and games, and many children's books. In addition, providers shall have access to Ellison Die Cutting

Machines and a wide variety of dies. This quality initiative is implemented annually. A budget recommendation is necessary only when items in the resource room need replenishing or replacing.

7. Provider Alerts: Coalition staff shall develop and distribute provider alerts when it is critical to disseminate time-sensitive information to early learning providers. Email is the preferred distribution method, although providers that do not have email will be mailed or faxed a copy of all alerts.
8. Inclusion Mini Grant Program: The Inclusion Mini Grant Program is intended to offer funding support to early learning providers serving children with a diagnosed special need identified with an active Individual Education Plan (IEP) developed by the local school system or a licensed physician/therapist. In some cases, it may be necessary to provide special materials or equipment for children with disabilities to assist them in functioning in an inclusive early childhood environment.
 - a. Awards for the Inclusion Mini-Grant Program are based on budget allocations determined by the local Advisory Council and further approved by the Board. The amount awarded to each applicant may vary according to the individual needs of each provider. Providers may be reimbursed for equipment or services previously purchased if payment was made during the current fiscal year. Requests will be presented to the local Advisory Council for approval at their next regularly scheduled meeting prior to disbursement of funds.
 - b. Awards may be requested as a need is identified, subject to availability of funds. There is no set deadline for application. Early Learning providers may submit the ELCNC-41 Inclusion Mini Grant Program Application.
 - c. Allowable costs for this program include but are not limited to:
 - (A) Special materials or equipment needed to supplement daily routine
 - (B) Special training to support requirements listed on child's IEP
 - (C) Resources to assist teachers with understanding how to respond to certain behaviors/situations
 - d. The applicant must be an early learning provider contracted to provide School Readiness or Voluntary Prekindergarten services. The applicant must be in full compliance with contract deliverables and serving a child with an active IEP developed by the local school system or documentation of a special need provided by a licensed physician/therapist.
 - e. Disbursement of approved awards will occur after the provider submits proof of purchase and proof of goods received to the Coalition's Finance Department.
9. Grandparent Program – to be written
10. Quality Initiative Surplus Plan – to be written

3.17 Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the School Readiness Program

- A. The Coalition's Advisory Councils are responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the school readiness program through the analysis of a variety of data.
- B. In August of each fiscal year the Advisory Councils shall review and analyze the following program data:
 1. Child pre and post assessments and health records review

2. Provider observation reports
 3. Statewide kindergarten screening reports (most recent)
 4. Provider status (# of providers, type of providers, # of gold seal, etc.)
 5. Quality initiative outcomes
 6. Training and technical assistance outcomes including participant pre and post tests and evaluation of training material and content
 7. Eligibility separated by at-risk categories
 8. Parent involvement activities and outcomes
 9. Parent and provider surveys focused on received services
- C. Based on the analysis of the data, correlation of the data, the Coalition's vision and mission and the legislative intent for school readiness the Advisory Councils present a School Readiness Program Evaluation report including recommendations designed to increase the effectiveness of the school readiness program to the Coalition Board of Directors.