



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

Provider Alert # 16

Date: March 3, 2008

Subject: Provider Reimbursement Rates
Provider Retreat
Provider Observation Workgroup
Legislative Update

Provider Reimbursement Rates: On December 19, 2007, the Administrative Committee identified a potential surplus of \$498,291 in the direct services budget based on the November 2007 Direct Services Utilization Reports. As a result of the surplus the Committee voted to maintain open enrollment for the school readiness program and to recommend an increase to the Citrus and Dixie County School Readiness Program Provider Reimbursement Schedules. The recommendation was designed to increase the Citrus and Dixie County School Readiness Program Provider Reimbursement Schedules equal to the 2005 Market Rate. The estimated cost associated with the recommendation was \$185,924. The effective date was February 1, 2008.

On January 23, 2008, the Administrative Committee noted a continued surplus of \$436,925 in the direct services budget based on the December 2007 Direct Services Utilization Reports (this surplus included the implementation of the increased School Readiness Program Provider Reimbursement Schedules in Citrus and Dixie County). As a result of the surplus the Committee voted to continue open enrollment and to recommend an increase to the School Readiness Program Provider Reimbursement Schedules in all Counties. If approved by the Board the recommendation would increase the School Readiness Program Provider Reimbursement Schedules equal to the 2007 Market Rate. The estimated cost associated with the recommendation was \$377,385. The recommended effective date is March 1, 2008.

In January 2008 the Administrative Committee expected to see an estimated surplus of \$622,848 in the direct serves budget based on the January 2008 Direct Services Utilization Reports. (The Committee expected the surplus because the impact of the increased School Readiness Program Provider Reimbursement Schedules would not be realized until the end of March 2008). However, the January 2008 Utilization Reports indicated a \$377,385 surplus (\$245,463 less)

The decrease in the surplus was caused by the **unexpected** enrollment of one hundred and fifty five (155) children in the School Readiness Program. The estimated cost associated with providing services to the additional children for the remaining months of the fiscal year is \$245,024.

As a result of the unexpected activity the Executive Director immediately closed enrollment in the School Readiness Program for eligible children from non-mandatory eligibility groups.

As a result of the unexpected enrollment Coalition staff intended to recommend one of the following solutions to the Administrative Committee during the February 2008 meeting; however the meeting was cancelled due to a lack of a quorum. As a result the following will be recommended to the Board on March 5, 2008: Revise the Administrative Committee's Action Item # 2007-08-48 Proposed Action to **ONE** of the following actions listed in priority order:

Proposed Board Action:

1. Authorize the Executive Director to increase in the reimbursement rates for school readiness services provided to children birth to kindergarten entry that are equal to the 2007 Market Rate for the period of March 1, 2008 to June 30, 2008.
 - i. Pay the increased reimbursement rates retro-active (included in the June 2008 payment) if funding is available.
 - ii. If funding to support the entire increase is not available the Executive Director is authorized to reduce the rate by calculating the percentage of the 2007 Market Rate that can be supported by the direct services budget. (For example the direct services budget may support an increase to the reimbursement rates equal to 98% of the 2007 Market Rate.)
 - iii. If funding is not available to support any increase this action item will be considered repealed.
2. Authorize the Executive Director to increase the reimbursement rates for school readiness services provided to children birth to kindergarten entry that are equal to the 2007 Market Rate for the period of March 1, 2008 to June 30, 2008. This action is based on an anticipated reduction in enrollment caused by natural attrition at a rate of 45 children for each of the remaining months of the fiscal year (February –June 2008- a total anticipated enrollment decrease of 225 children.)
3. Authorize the Executive Director to increase the reimbursement rates for school readiness services provided to children birth to kindergarten entry that are equal to the 2007 Market Rate for the period of March 1, 2008 to June 30, 2008. Implement dis-enrollment process to dis-enroll 182 school age children from the School Readiness Program effective March 6, 2008.

In addition, staff will notify the Board that one provider is in favor of eliminating the reimbursement rate increase and utilizing the funds to maintain an open wait list.

If you have additional recommendations please notify staff in writing by Tuesday March 4, 2008 at 5:00PM. The additional recommendations will be presented to the Board on behalf of providers. Notification should be sent to sbosanko@elc-naturecoast.org

Provider Retreat: The FY2008-2009 Provider Retreat has been scheduled for June 5, 2008. The meeting will be held at the Citrus Springs Community Center located at: 1570 West Citrus Springs Blvd. Citrus Springs, FL. 34434. The meeting will begin at 10:00 a.m. Please notify Glenna McManigell of your attendance at gmcmanigell@elc-naturecoast.org or 1-877-336-5437 Ext. 222.

Provider Observation Workgroup: In November 2007, the Coalition established a Provider Observation Workgroup. The purpose of the Workgroup is to review the issues surrounding the current program observation system that was shared with providers in the October 29, 2007 Provider Alert # 4. In November 2007, the Board voted unanimously to authorize staff, in conjunction with providers, to draft a revised system to document provider compliance with Chapter 411.01 Florida Statutes. On January 31, 2008 the Workgroup conducted its first meeting. The outcomes of the meeting included the following:

- Consensus of the Workgroup was to maintain the implementation of the provider observation tool (a standard observation tool for all providers); however, revise the criteria on the tool to ensure all state, federal, and Coalition requirements are included.
- Coalition staff will identify and document all state, federal, and Coalition requirements and related criteria
- Coalition staff will draft a check list monitoring tool including all identified requirements and related criteria
- The Workgroup will meet on March 11, 2008 to review and if necessary revise the check list.

If you did not attend the Workgroup meeting on January 31, 2008 and are interested in attending the meeting on March 11, 2008 please notify Glenna McManigell at gmcmanigell@elc-naturecoast.org or 1-877-336-5437 Ext. 222

Legislative Update: The following provides analysis on relevant 2008 Legislative Bills.

SENATE BILL 136

Bill Summary: An act relating to child care facilities, requiring each child care facility to establish standards for training staff on matters pertaining to domestic violence, provide not less than 2 hours of training for new personnel and not less than 1 hour of training each year thereafter for experienced personnel.

Operational Implications: Places responsibility for developing and providing the training on child care facilities.

Fiscal Implications: Increased responsibilities for DCF and licensing entities to monitor required training.

Effective Date if Passed: July 1, 2008

History: Bill filed by Senator Wilson. Referred on 11/28/07 to Children, Families & Elder Affairs; Health & Human Services Appropriations.

SENATE BILL 148

Bill Summary: An act relating to the VPK Education Program; revising the number of instructional hours required for school-year VPK from "at least 540" to "up to 720 instruction hours or the same number of instruction hours as is provided to a student in kindergarten and first grade" for private prekindergarten providers and to at least "the same number of instructional hours as the school provides for a student in kindergarten or first grade" for school-year VPK programs delivered by public schools; revising the determination of a full-time equivalent student in the same manner.

Operational Implications: Increases VPK instructional hours.

Fiscal Implications: Increased instructional hours require additional funding.

Effective Date if Passed: July 1, 2008

History: Bill filed by Senator Wilson on 9/6/07. Referred on 11/28/07 to Education PreK-12 and Education PreK-12 Appropriations.

SENATE BILL 260

Bill Summary: An act relating to public child care, allowing children who are under the age of kindergarten eligibility and who are under the jurisdiction of a state circuit court due to a documented case of child abuse, abandonment or neglect to receive first priority for placement into the Gold Seal Quality Care Program. In cases where this legislation creates a conflict with a priority placement identified in s. 411.01(6), a child who is at least 3 years of age but who is not eligible for kindergarten shall have first priority for placement.

Operational Implications: May require coalitions to make changes in eligibility priorities and procedures and require development of processes for assessing eligibility in coordination with DCF and circuit courts. In some areas of the state, need may exceed availability of Gold Seal Quality Care Programs, raising concerns regarding adequate supports for establishing Gold Seal Quality Care Programs.

Effective Date if Passed: July 1, 2008

History: Bill filed by Senator Wilson. Referred on 11/28/07 to Education PreK-12; Finance & Tax; General Governmental Appropriations.

SENATE BILL 280

Bill Summary: An act, cited as the Zaniyah Hinson Act, relating to religious-exempt child care programs, requiring religious-exempt child care program to display a certificate of compliance issued by an accrediting agency recognized by the department; providing requirements for accrediting agencies; providing timeframes to meet requirements for training and credentials; requiring accrediting agencies for religious exemption to submit standards and an annual report to the department.

Operational Implications: Places additional responsibilities on DCF for establishing requirements, reviewing standards, and approving religious-exemption accrediting agencies; places additional requirements on religious-exempt programs and their accrediting agencies to meet health and safety standards, including requirement for one initial on-site visit by the accrediting agency; requires DCF to hold an annual meeting of accrediting agencies.

Fiscal Implications: Increased responsibilities for DCF and licensing entities.

Effective Date if Passed: July 1, 2008

History: Bill re-filed by Senator Lynn. Referred on 11/28/07 to Regulated Industries; Finance & Tax; General Governmental Appropriations.

SENATE BILL 468

Bill Summary: An act relating to child care facilities, requiring electronic submission of fingerprints of child care personnel and retention of fingerprints by the Department of Law Enforcement, reporting of records to the Department of Children and Families, requiring Level 2 screening of each person employed in a child care facility every 5 years.

Operational Implications: Electronic submission and maintenance of fingerprint records is expected to reduce the time between submission of records and clearance.

Fiscal Implications: DCF is required to pay a fee to DLE for maintenance of records. As is currently the practice, the facility or person fingerprinted must bear the cost of the state and federal criminal history check.

Effective Date if Passed: July 1, 2008

History: Bill filed by Senator Hill. Referred on 12/13/07 to Children, Families & Elder Affairs; Criminal Justice; and Criminal & Civil Justice Appropriations.

SENATE BILL 676

Bill Summary: An act relating to publicly funded facilities for children; revising market rate provisions; requiring annual establishment of market rate by county; revising the number of instructional hours required for school-year VPK from "at least 540" to "up to 720 instruction hours or the same number of instruction hours as is provided to a student in kindergarten and first grade"; revising the determination of a full-time equivalent student in the same manner; requiring pre- and post-assessments of progress of students in VPK; designating that DOE, AWI or the early learning coalition must approve the assessment; requiring the lead teacher to administer the assessments within specified time periods (within 30 days of enrollment and within 15 days before the end of the program); requiring DOE or the coalition to score the assessments; and

designating the use of the assessment information to identify special needs, to inform the program, and to be incorporated into the kindergarten screening and readiness rate.

Operational Implications Requires annual determination of market rate by county; increases VPK instructional hours; gives authority for approving pre- and post-assessment to three different entities – AWI, DOE and coalitions; requires administration of assessments by lead teachers who will require training to administer assessment tools and will have very limited time to administer assessments; requires DOE and coalitions to score assessments without a clear mechanism for ensuring the reliability of assessment administration; and delineates multiple purposes for one assessment tool.

Fiscal Implications: Increased VPK instructional hours will require additional funding; training, administration and analysis of assessments will require funding; annual determination of market rate raises further concerns regarding current school readiness reimbursement rates.

Effective Date if Passed: July 1, 2008

History: Bill filed by Senator Fasano. Referred on 1/09/08 to Education PreK-12; Children, Families & Elder Affairs; Transportation & Economic Development Appropriations; and Education PreK-12 Appropriations.

SENATE BILL 702 (HOUSE BILL 741 IDENTICAL)

Bill Summary: An act relating to prekindergarten education; making mandatory and providing an effective date for requirements for increased levels of education for prekindergarten instructors.

Operational Implications: Changes “aspirational” professional credential requirements for VPK instructors to mandatory; requires each VPK class to have at least one instructor who holds an associate’s or higher degree in early childhood education or child development by 2010-11; requires each VPK class to have at least one instructor who holds a bachelor’s or higher degree in early childhood education or child development by 2013-14.

Fiscal Implications: In order to reach these goals, staff in the field are likely to need scholarships and other supports; community colleges and universities may need additional funding in order to offer the courses necessary to meet this requirement; the wage and benefit costs to programs will increase with increased educational requirements.

Effective Date if Passed: July 1, 2008

History: Bill filed by Senator Rich. Referred on 1/09/08 to Education PreK-12, Education PreK-12 Appropriations and Transportation & Economic Development Appropriations. House Bill 741 filed by Long; referred on 2/5/08 to School & Learning Council and Policy & Budget Council.

SENATE BILL 1352 (HOUSE BILL 629 IDENTICAL)

Bill Summary: An act relating to early learning; creating the Agency for Early Learning (the Agency) to be housed for administrative purposes in the DOE; providing for appointment of an agency director and agency responsibilities; providing for type two transfer of AWI OEL, DOE OEL, DCF child care licensing, and DOH Florida Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program to the Agency; designating the Agency as the lead agency for administering the federal Early Learning Opportunities Act; revising calculation of the kindergarten readiness rates; and providing for conforming provisions and clarification of certain duties.

Operational Implications: Closes four offices in four separate state departments/agencies and consolidates administration of early learning programs, including school readiness, VPK, child care licensing and early intervention into one agency administered under DOE; creates a separate budget entity not to be subject to

control, supervision or direction of DOE; designates the agency head as an appointee of the Governor subject to confirmation of the Senate; places the AWI within the Department of Management Services with a separate budget and responsibility for the Office of Unemployment Compensation Services and the Office of Workforce Program Support; gives authority for establishing performance standards that serve as the basis for the kindergarten readiness screening to the Agency; deletes the statutory requirement that the minimum kindergarten readiness rate must not exceed the rate at which more than 15 percent would fall below the minimum rate; gives accountability authority for VPK standards to the Agency; and designates ELAC as an advisory council to the Agency.

Fiscal Implications: All personnel and property of the existing offices are to be transferred to the new Agency.

Effective Date if Passed: July 1, 2008

History: Bill filed by Senator Rich on 1/24/08. Companion House Bill 629 filed by Representative Ausley; referred on 1/27/08 to Schools & Learning Council and Policy & Budget Council.

SENATE BILL 1404 (HOUSE BILL 627 IDENTICAL)

Bill Summary: An act relating to child care, providing for the Office of Early Learning within AWI to establish Florida's five tier Sunshine State Stars Quality Rating System, subject to specific appropriation; providing for voluntary quality rating standards and requirements; establishing a voluntary pilot program in Broward, Duval, Hillsborough, Leon, Miami-Dade, Orange, Palm Beach, and Pinellas to expire on July 1, 2010; providing technical support and financial incentives for advancement in quality ratings; and requiring the OEL within AWI to develop an early education workforce development plan.

Operational Implications Places responsibility for establishing and administering the QRS on AWI OEL with input from ELAC, providers and parents; requires the system to be voluntary and be enacted only upon appropriation of necessary funding; establishes that standards must address learning environment, curricula and screening, staff qualifications, professional development, business practices and family involvement; creates a two year pilot project that incorporates both urban and rural counties; establishes grants and awards for programs in tiers 1, 2 and 3 and merit awards for programs in tiers 4 and 5; requires coordination between AWI OEL and early learning coalitions for implementation of the program; does not preclude other counties from implementing a quality rating system; and requires the workforce development plan to address credentialing, education and scholarships.

Effective Date if Passed: July 1, 2008

History: Bill filed by Senator Rich on 1/25/08; companion House Bill 627 filed by Representative Ausley; referred on 1/27/08 to Schools & Learning Council and Policy & Budget Council.

SENATE BILL 1670 (HOUSE BILL 879 IDENTICAL)

Bill Summary: An act relating to early learning; authorizing use of telecommunication methods in conducting early learning coalition board meetings with proper notice and reasonable access; transferring requirements for the establishment of a statewide child care resource and referral network by DCF to AWI; providing for use of early learning coalitions as child care resource and referral agencies; transferring duties of the DCF with respect to the Child Care Executive Partnership Program to AWI and early learning coalitions; requiring accreditation associations to have written accreditation standards that meet or exceed state's licensing requirements and require at least one on-site visit to provider or school for private VPK providers; removing the requirements for refingerprinting every 5 years of VPK instructors if there is no break in covered employment of more than 90 days; and providing requirements for assignment of substitute VPK instructors.

Operational Implications: Assists coalitions in conducting board business; aligns statute with current practices; and allows AWI to develop rules relative to VPK issues.

Fiscal Implications: No obvious major impact.

Effective Date if Passed: July 1, 2008

History: Bill filed by Senator Gaetz on 2/8/08. Companion bill HB 879 filed by Kelly.

To view Senate Bills for the 2008 regular legislative session visit:

<http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/index.cfm?Mode=Bills&Submenu=1&Tab=session&CFID=51400193&CFTOKEN=32852376>

To view House Bills for the 2008 regular legislative session visit:

<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Bills/bills.aspx>

If you have any questions or concerns related to this Alert please contact Sonya Bosanko at sbosanko@elc-naturecoast.org or 1-877-336-5437 Ext. 224