



## Early Learning Coalition of the Nature Coast

Serving Citrus – Dixie – Gilchrist – Levy – Sumter Counties

### Provider Alert #82

Date: April 7, 2010  
Subject: Special Needs Rates Authorization

The Early Learning Coalition of the Nature Coast is authorized to reimburse School Readiness providers at a higher rate for children enrolled under the Special Needs billing category. In conjunction with our continuing efforts to utilize our Direct Services budget to its greatest advantage, the Coalition has developed a Special Needs Payment Approval Process and ELCNC-303 Special Needs Payment Provider Application.

#### **Background Information:**

The Coalition has the authority to reimburse providers at a higher level for children that have a documented special need who attend a School Readiness program. In the past, when appropriate documentation of the special need was provided to the Client Services Counselor, payment could be authorized based solely on that documentation. In an effort to ensure that the additional funds are necessary for the inclusion of the special needs child in the School Readiness classroom, providers will now be asked to submit an application for special needs funding. On this application, the provider will describe the adaptations that would be necessary to serve the child in the regular classroom setting with his/her peers. The application will be reviewed by the Program Manager of the Coalition, and a determination will be made on whether the adaptations will require additional funding from the Coalition in the form of Special Needs reimbursement for the child.

#### **Additional Information:**

Once approved by the Program Manager, the provider will be contacted by the Contracts and Compliance office staff to complete any amendment necessary to establish a Special Needs reimbursement rate for that provider. Payment will be authorized when all contract documents are in order to allow the additional reimbursement rate.

In addition, the Education Specialist assigned to the provider will be required to document the implementation of the environmental adaptations needed to serve the child in a classroom with his/her peers. Within thirty (30) days of the approval for Special Needs reimbursement, the Education Specialist will visit the child's classroom to determine if the provider is implementing the plan. The Education Specialist will monitor the implementation of the plan at least twice per year, as long as the child is receiving School Readiness Special Needs funding.

If at any time it is determined that the environmental adaptations are not being offered or are no longer necessary to meet the needs of the child, Special Needs reimbursement will be terminated.

For children currently receiving Special Needs reimbursement, an application must be submitted and approved for the additional payment to continue. The Program Manager and/or Education Specialist will contact you to assist in the completion of the application.

The Special Needs Payment Approval Process and ELCNC-303 Special Needs Provider Application are attached for your review. If you have any questions, please contact your local Program Manager.

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### Special Needs Payment Approval Process

School Readiness providers may request special needs payment rates for students with documented special needs under certain circumstances. Following are the steps that need to be taken to determine the need for special needs reimbursements.

1. When a parent/caregiver enrolls a child with special needs in the School Readiness program, the Client Services Counselor will notify the appropriate Program Manager. This notification should include the child's name, the facility that he/she is enrolled in, and a copy of the documentation provided by the parent/caregiver that explains the special need/disability of the child.
2. When a notification is received by the Program Manager, he/she will contact the assigned provider. The provider will be given a copy of the ELCNC-303 Special Needs Payment Provider Application. The Program Manager will explain the application process, ensuring that the provider understands their requirement to explain environmental adaptations that are required to meet the child's needs. Special needs funding will only be approved if there are adaptations required to allow the child to succeed in the classroom environment that require additional funding.
3. The provider will return the completed application to the Program Manager. The Program Manager will review the application to determine if the provider's plan to meet the needs of the child requires additional funding.
4. If additional funding is NOT approved, the Program Manager will notify the provider of the denial in writing, specifying the reasoning behind the denial. The Program Manager will supply a copy of the denial letter, along with the original application to the Contracts and Compliance Department to be filed in the provider's contract file.
5. If additional funding IS approved, the Program Manager will notify the Contracts and Compliance Department in writing, and will submit the notification with the application form. The Program Manager will keep a copy of the approved application.
6. The Contracts and Compliance Department will contact the School Readiness provider to complete a contract amendment for the purpose of establishing special needs rates for the child.
7. Once the amendment is completed, the Contracts and Compliance Department will forward the amended rates to the CCR&R Coordinator, who will enter that the appropriate rates are entered into EFS for the provider. Once the SPCR/SPTN rates have been entered by the CCR&R Coordinator, the Finance Department will be notified in writing, preferably by email. Notification will include the name of the child that has been approved for the special needs reimbursement rate.
8. The Program Manager will provide a copy of the approved application to the Education Specialist assigned to the facility. Within thirty (30) days of the special needs payment approval, the Education Specialist will visit the child's classroom to determine if the provider is implementing their plan. The Education Specialist will monitor the implementation of the environmental adaptations at least twice per year. An ELCNC-32 Provider Contact Form will be utilized to note the outcomes of the visits. The Program Manager will review the Provider Contact Forms to ensure that the provider is implementing their plan.

9. If, at any time, it is determined that the provider is not implementing environmental adaptations for the special needs child, the Program Manager will notify the Client Services Manager. The Client Services Manager will notify the appropriate Client Services Counselor in writing/email that the eligibility for special needs rates for the child has been terminated. The Client Services Manager will also send notification to the Contracts and Compliance Department for the provider's file.



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ELCNC Use Only:

Plan Rec'd \_\_\_\_\_ Appr Yes/No Init. \_\_\_\_  
Copy CS Dept. \_\_\_\_\_ Educ Dept \_\_\_\_\_

**Special Needs Payment - Provider Application**

To: \_\_\_\_\_ (provider)    In Reference To: \_\_\_\_\_ (child's name)

The Early Learning Coalition of the Nature Coast has received documentation supporting the special need/disability of the child referenced above. School Readiness provider funding for the Special Needs category of care is contingent upon the provider adapting the educational environment to accommodate the child's needs. Please indicate how you plan to provide the "least restrictive environment" for this child to enhance his/her success in your facility.

Criteria	The Child's Needs	Provider Plan: The provider will...
Physical Accommodation		
Adaptive Equipment		
Staffing		
Schedule/Routine/Curriculum		
Resources needed to facilitate success, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Classroom activities</li> <li>▪ Outdoor activities</li> <li>▪ Health and safety needs</li> </ul>		

Please Note: This form must be completed by the provider. "Child's Needs" and "Provider Plan" may incorporate some or all of the above criteria. Applications are subject to approval by the appropriate Program Manager. Coalition staff will visit the provider within thirty (30) days of special needs payment approval and subsequently on at least a twice yearly basis to determine if the provider plan is being implemented as described above. **Provider funding for the Special Needs category of care is contingent upon the provider adapting to accommodate the child's disability.**