



Questions and Answers about Early Learning Legislation – HB 7165 – for Parents

During the 2013 session, the Florida Legislature passed important early learning legislation. Designed to improve quality and bring more accountability and transparency to the state's early learning programs, the law moved the Office of Early Learning into the Department of Education and implemented changes to the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education and School Readiness programs.

Eligibility for School Readiness

1. Were there any immediate changes to my child care arrangements when the new school readiness eligibility priorities became effective August 1, 2013?

No. Early learning coalitions did not make changes to child care arrangements effective August 1, 2013. However, there may be changes when it is time to redetermine each child's eligibility for services or if there is a change in family circumstances that affects their eligibility.

2. Do homeless children and children of victims of domestic violence have higher priority for school readiness programs under the new eligibility criteria?

Yes. They are considered to be "at risk" and at-risk children under 9 years of age are listed as the second highest priority for early learning coalitions.

3. If the coalition determines that I am ineligible for the program, can the coalition help me identify alternative child care options?

Yes. Each coalition offers Child Care Resource and Referral as a free service to provide information about child care providers in your community and the services they offer. The Child Care Resource and Referral Program can help you with selecting a child care provider that meets your needs as well as providing information about other community resources.

4. If I am currently receiving school readiness services and met the eligibility requirements during my recertification interview, will my services continue?

Your services will continue based on the availability of funding for your family's eligibility category.

Health and Safety Standards for Providers

5. What is a license-exempt child care facility and how do I know if my child care provider is license-exempt?

A child care facility that is exempt from licensure requirements may be located at a religious institution or non-public school that conducts regularly scheduled classes or educational programs. These programs are accredited or members of an organization that meets health and safety requirements. If you would like to know if your child care provider is license-exempt, you may look up provider information on the Department of Children and Families website:

www.myflorida.com/childcare.

6. I understand that there is a requirement for school readiness providers to have a health and safety checklist. What is that?

The checklist, which is under development, will include health and safety indicators that license-exempt providers must complete. The indicators ensure the facility's environment and practices do not pose immediate and/or serious danger to children enrolled. The provider has to complete the checklist, update it each year and post it where it is easy to see.

7. Where can I find the health and safety checklist for my child care provider?

The health and safety checklist must be displayed on the premises of the child care facility. The checklist must be in plain sight for parents and visitors.

8. Where can I find a list of license-exempt child care facilities in my area?

You may get a list of license-exempt child care providers from your local Early Learning Coalition's Child Care Resource and Referral service. To reach statewide Child Care Resource and Referral, call 1-866-357-3239. You may also find a list on the Department of Children and Families website: www.myflorida.com/childcare.

Child Assessment

9. What are preassessments and postassessments?

Preassessments and postassessments measure what a child learns and how they develop over a period of time. In the School Readiness Program, these assessments compare a child's knowledge, skills and behaviors to a set of standards that describe age-appropriate understandings and expectations of children related to areas of development. Florida has a set of standards for children ages birth to 5—[Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#)—that provide information for a child's teacher to help guide instruction. The standards are organized into five areas: physical development; approaches to learning; social and emotional development; language and communication; and cognitive development and general knowledge. While standards and assessments are useful, it is important to understand that all children are individuals and there are variations in child development.

10. What can age-appropriate pre- and post-assessments tell me about my child?

A valid, reliable, appropriate assessment can provide valuable information about your child's learning and development over time. Assessments may use information from teachers, parents and caregivers to help relate a child's progress to a set of developmental standards. It is important to remember that every child develops differently so even though your child may indicate he or she is at a certain level today that may change in just a few weeks. Assessments can help child care providers make instructional decisions and help involve parents and families by giving them information about their children's growth and development. Assessments also provide activities for parents and children to participate in at home.

11. Are providers required to give children pre- and post-assessments?

No. Your local early learning coalition may include assessments in their local plan, but they cannot require providers to give them. You may ask whether a provider gives them and consider that information when you choose a provider.

12. Are providers required to administer developmental child screenings?

Yes. The legislation requires all children receiving school readiness services to receive developmental screening within 45 days of enrolling in the program and each year after that. Parents receive information on the screening and must provide their permission for the screening to take place.

Preventing Fraud

13. The bill has a section that addresses fraud. What does that mean in early learning?

The term "fraud" describes when someone intentionally deceives or omits or misrepresents information knowing that that person or someone else may receive unauthorized benefits as a result. Helping someone else commit fraud is also fraud. Since federal and state funds help pay for VPK and school readiness services, the term includes any act that constitutes fraud under applicable federal or state law. Examples include when a person or a provider gives false information (ex., incorrect income) or intentionally does not report information (ex., a new job) in order to get school readiness benefits he or she is not entitled to receive or to make someone else eligible for benefits that person is not entitled to receive. Fraud may occur in VPK if someone alters a child's birth date or falsifies attendance records.

14. What happens if an individual commits fraud?

A person who commits fraud and receives program benefits they were not entitled to may be arrested, prosecuted, go to jail and have to repay the funds they received that they were not entitled to.

15. What should I do if I see or suspect fraud?

If you see or suspect that a person or provider is giving false information, you should contact your local early learning coalition so they can investigate the situation and take appropriate action. You can also notify, via our [website](#), the inspector general at the Office of Early Learning.

16. Are parents still required to sign their child in and out of their child care center every day?

Yes. Parents are required to sign their children in and out every day. This confirms that services were rendered on a particular day, and it also confirms whether the child is on site or not at any given time. Accurate attendance records are part of helping to prevent fraud.

250 Marriott Drive, Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Telephone: 850-717-8550 Fax: 850-921-0026 Toll Free: 866-FL-Ready (357-3239)

www.FloridaEarlyLearning.com

An equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. All voice telephone numbers on this document may be reached by persons using TTY/TDD equipment via the Florida Relay Service at 711.