



August 2008

Issue No. 14

Provider News Alert

Our Mission and Vision

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Our Mission

To promote high-quality school readiness, voluntary pre-kindergarten and after school programs, thus increasing all children's chances of achieving future educational success and becoming productive members of society. The Coalition seeks to further the physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs of Miami-Dade and Monroe County children with a priority toward the ages before birth through age 5.

Our Vision

To ensure a comprehensive and integrated system providing for all families and their children, beginning before birth to 5 years, the affordable opportunity to enter school ready to learn and succeed in life.

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President's Message



We are pleased to announce that as of the end of July, the number of children with Certificates of Eligibility for VPK rose above 15,000! Compared with figures from a year ago, there are over 2,000 more children with certificates for the 2008-2009 School Year program. On that note, I would like to highlight the fine work that the Coalition's VPK Department has been doing to get private centers certified, and the excellent job that Miami-Dade County Department of Human Services has done in registering children for the program. It is through this collaboration with the early care and education community and our other partners that we can truly make a difference for the children of Miami-Dade and Monroe counties.

When I became President/CEO of the Early Learning Coalition, I promised you a heightened level of communication, accountability, and transparency. I have worked hard to keep that promise and thank you for your ongoing support and collaboration. I hope that you will share in my excitement about our new Performance Dashboard. This tool allows visitors to our website, including parents, educators, providers, community leaders, and others, to review enrollment numbers, contract measures, and performance metrics. We sincerely hope that you will find this tool useful and that you contact us if you have any questions or comments.

Lastly, we constantly look for better ways to communicate with the network of providers in

both counties served by the Coalition. We commonly communicate through:

1. News Alerts
2. Board Committee Meetings
3. Monthly Provider Business Meetings
3. Town Hall Meetings
4. Onsite visits
5. E-mail and Fax blasts

Please take a moment and inform us of any other ways that we can improve our communication with you. Your comments and suggestions are always appreciated. Write to us at info@elcmdm.org.

I remain at your service.

Sincerely,

Evelio C. Torres
President and CEO

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

Be Election Ready

Remember to make your vote count! On August 26th, Miami-Dade County will be holding primary elections. You could vote as early as August 11th. For more information go to www.miamidade.gov/elections/home.asp.

2008 Early Childhood Association of Florida Conference

The ELC will be holding a raffle for two School Readiness providers, one from Miami-Dade and one from Monroe, to attend the 2008 Early Childhood Association of Florida Conference. The conference will be held at the Double Tree Hotel in Orlando, Florida, on September 25-28, 2008. The only pre-requisite is that entrants must be School Readiness providers. Please limit entries to one per person. Send your name, position, and center name to Alina Soto at asoto@elcmdm.org by August 21, 2008. The raffle will take place at the Coalition's Headquarters in Coral Gables, 2555 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Suite 500 on August 22nd at 3:00pm. Attendance is not required to win. Good luck!

State Mandates Provider Agreement

The Early Care and Education Provider Agreement is the work product of a taskforce comprised of providers and Coalition staff. The taskforce met during a two (2) year period to develop the final agreement. Additional feedback and input from the provider community was elicited during meetings of the Provider Services Committee. A draft of the agreement was posted on the Coalition website for several months in order for the community to provide comment and recommendations.

In accordance with part 3 of the 2007-2009 State Child Care and Development Fund Plan, the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe must ensure that 100% of payments for services are made to eligible providers who have executed an approved child care application with the Coalition. To meet the requirements of this mandate, the Coalition's Board of Directors has approved an Early Care and Education Provider Agreement that takes effect January 1, 2009. The requirements set forth in the Early Care and Education Provider Agreement are mandated by 45CFR98 (Code of Federal Regulations), Chapter 402.25 and Chapter 411.01 of the Florida Statutes, and Rule 60BB-4 of the Florida Administrative Code.

Beginning January 1, 2009, payment for children who receive financial assistance through

the School Readiness Program will only be made to centers, family child care homes and school age providers who have a signed Early Care and Education Provider Agreement with the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe.

In addition to meeting the above mandates, the agreement also provides accurate, current provider information for the Child Care Resource and Referral database and assists in the identification of child care needs in the community.

Providers are encouraged to access the agreement through the Coalition's website at <http://www.elcmdm.org/downloads/index.htm>, or by calling 305-646-7220.

CCEP

Early Care and Education providers are encouraged to participate in the Child Care Executive Partnership (CCEP) program. If you serve children of your employees - not just your teachers, but any employee that works in your center - they may be eligible to participate in this great employee benefit program. The purpose of the program is to help you offer child care to your employees who qualify for the school readiness program.

Who is eligible and how does it work?

- *Low to moderate wage families, at or below 200% of the federal poverty level may qualify.
- *There is no wait list for qualifying families.
- *Providers are reimbursed at 50% of their respective school readiness rate, minus the parent fee, and may be eligible for a tax benefit of up to 50% as an employee benefit for "in-kind" services.

How do you apply?

*Visit www.elcmdm.org and locate the Announcements banner. Click on May 2008, Child Care Executive Partnership and download the information package. Complete the Center Participation Agreement and fax that page to Alina Soto at 786-888-9282.

*Complete pages 1 and 2 of the (Step 1) CCEP Pre-Screening Form and fax only those two pages to Sharon Gordon at 305-514-6152 for Miami-Dade, and to Kathy Snyder at (305) 292-7156 for Monroe. DO NOT send supporting documentation, your employee can take that paperwork with them to their eligibility interview.

*You should hear from Ms. Gordon or Ms. Snyder within approximately a week of her receiving your pre-screening form.

*Give a copy of the Pre-Screening Form to your employee to take to their interview along with a copy of the Step 2 Employee Checklist. It may be helpful to review the checklist with your employee to insure that they have all of the documents needed prior to their eligibility interview.

Once determined eligible, the child(ren) name will appear on your regular School Readiness roster.

For additional information please call Alina Soto at 305-646-7249.

Partner of the Month



We would like to sincerely thank The Children's Trust for their ongoing partnership and the services they fund for the children of our community. The Early Learning Coalition receives funding for our Five Star Quality Rating System, Quality Counts, and for our Child Care Executive Partnership Program. Additionally, the Trust funds a portion of the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten outreach efforts to help ensure that all of our community's children have an

opportunity to participate in a high quality, early education program.

On behalf of the young children of our community, our staff and our board of directors, we thank The Children's Trust.

Events

Tremaine Grant Luncheon



On July 24, a luncheon was held at The Coalition to recognize the 10 providers who participated in the Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation initiative focusing on early identification of young children with learning difficulties. For over two years, these providers opened up their doors to Coalition coaches, facilitating child assessments, hearing, vision and speech screenings, staff and family workshops, seminars, and training activities. These learning opportunities supported family education and advocacy and allowed their teachers to develop developmentally appropriate strategies to work with children with special needs. A heartfelt "Thank You" to **Lakeview Baptist, New Horizons, New Horizons II, Little Red School House, Su's Creative Preschool, Precious Moments, Grace Lutheran Preschool, New Aladdin, Bright Star and Discovery Lane** for, without their support and cooperation, we could not have succeeded in our work. A side note, the Coalition was selected to participate in Phase II of the Tremaine initiative, Recognition & Response, to continue research-based intervention programming.

RIF Care to Read Program

The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe partnered with Reading Is Fundamental, Inc (RIF) to deliver the Care to Read® training to Miami-Dade County providers. RIF is the nation's oldest and largest nonprofit literacy organization in the United States dedicated to families and their children. Care to Read® is RIF's early literacy program that supports the development of children's emergent literacy skills through training and resources. Early childhood directors and staff were encouraged to apply for Care to Read® trainings offered by RIF. Selected participants attended a two day training and received literacy materials for their centers.



Board of Directors and Committees

Over the next few months, we will be featuring our board members to familiarize our community with the dedicated professionals who serve on our board of directors. This month, it is our pleasure to feature Octavio A. Verdeja Jr., CPA, and our Board Chair.



Mr. Octavio A. Verdeja Jr. serves as the Managing Partner of Verdeja & De Armas, LLP, one of the largest local firms in South Florida providing professional services to more than 1,500 national and international organizations.

Mr. Verdeja specializes in the not-for-profit and school industry with clients such as local museums, art centers, and children's organizations. He has become a leader in the audits of schools in

Miami-Dade, Broward, and Monroe Counties, where he currently audits large educational organizations including charter, private, and not-for-profit schools. Mr. Verdeja has been involved in the real estate development industry for over 20 years. His clients include some of the largest developers in Miami-Dade and Broward Counties. Mr. Verdeja's firm has also performed many audits for condominium and homeowners associations.

In 2005, Governor Jeb Bush appointed Mr. Verdeja as the Chair of the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe, where he volunteers countless hours each month as a service to the young children of our community. Mr. Verdeja serves as a member of the University of Miami Citizens Board. His passion for community involvement has also led him to volunteer his time and expertise to a number of educational and charitable organizations throughout our community. He is a member of both the AICPA and the FICPA, and holds a complimentary continuing education seminar annually for CPAs in our community. Mr. Verdeja serves as a frequent guest speaker for universities and other entities.

Upcoming Board and Committee Meetings:

If you are interested in attending any of these meetings or becoming involved, please refer to the Events section of our website at www.elcmdm.org for upcoming meetings.

Name	Date	Time	Location
Spending Plan Committee	18-Aug	10:00AM	ELCMDM Board Room
Finance Committee	29-Aug	8:00AM	ELCMDM Board Room
Program & Strategy Committee	3-Sept	1:00PM	ELCMDM Board Room

ELC Knowledge Center

Welcome to the ELC Knowledge Center. This section of our News Alert serves to provide parents, educators, and caregivers more accessible information about services in addition to the programs administered by the ELC. The Knowledge Center is a place where you can learn about upcoming trainings, special reports on early education and care, and other issues, like inclusion and special needs services, that are related to early childhood education and care. We welcome you to contact us, or any of the partner organizations for more information.

Inclusion and Special Needs

Assessment: This year our focus for child assessment is continued skill development for administering the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ). This screening was developed for parents, as well as childcare staff, and we encourage each provider to include families as much as possible to work with the teacher. It is the responsibility of each classroom teacher to screen their students, and at the same time, encourage family participation in the process; the ASQ is not to be sent home for the family to complete the questionnaire without guidance.

Training: Child Development Services (CDS) will conduct eight county-wide trainings on the ASQ administration. CDS will also be conducting various trainings county-wide related to topics on inclusion. All trainings are offered in English, Spanish and other languages by request. These trainings are in high demand so please watch for the training calendar and sign up early.

Inclusion: This year the inclusion program will consist of eight week intervention strategy plans for children whose ASQ results indicate concerns. Individual Improvement Plans (IIP) will be determined through teacher, parent, director, and facilitator with monthly follow-up contact and mentoring of strategy implementation.

Following the intervention period, children will be rescreened. Children whose results

continue to show concerns will be referred for community evaluation and their inclusion strategies will be updated.

Providers: Need assistance and/or consultation regarding health, development, special needs, or disability support, then call the Warm-line at 305-953-5166 in Miami-Dade and (305) 292-7150 ext. 273 or toll free at 1-877-595-5437 ext. 273 for Monroe. These are your hotlines to on-site help if needed.

Miami-Dade County News Briefs

VPK Standards Training

Training will be held on August 14, 2008. This session will be held from 1:00 to 4:00 pm at the Coalition. The session is limited to 30 participants, so it is necessary to reserve your space by calling 305-646-7220 ext. 229 and registering with Simona Beltran. No one will be allowed in to the training after 1:15 pm. If you have already taken this training, there is no need to enroll.

The parking garage for the coalition can be accessed on Andalusia, but validation will not be available. There is also metered parking on the street.

Support Literacy in Florida While Shopping at Macy's

The Miami Dade Family Learning Partnership, in collaboration with Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) and Macy's department stores, is spreading the joy of reading in our community through the "Book A Brighter Future" reading campaign. Purchase a \$3 Macy's shopping pass from July 28-Aug. 16 and save \$10 on any \$50 purchase. The purchase of these certificates supports local literacy programs and provides books to underserved children in our Miami-Dade community. Contact Macy's stores for details or call Debbie Adolf of the Learning Partnership at (305) 891- 7323 or email dadolf@childreadiness.org.

Monroe County News Briefs

New Classroom Mentor- Upper Keys

Amber Eby joins the ELC Monroe team as the new Classroom Mentor in the Upper Keys. Amber is originally from the Upper Keys and received her K-12 education in Monroe County schools. She received her BA in Elementary Education with an ESOL endorsement from Florida Atlantic University. Amber's teaching experience includes elementary grades, as well as, 3 years working as a preschool teacher for ages 2 and 3. After two weeks of training with Classroom Mentor Trina Rodriguez, Amber will be introduced to the Upper Keys providers. Please join us in welcoming Amber to the Monroe team!

Mentoring Program Provides On-Site Trainings to Providers



Pictured is Trina Rodriguez during a **Supporting Teachers during In-Class Transitions: The Power of Prevention** training at Banana Cabanna Academy. A variety of individual and small group trainings are available to meet the needs of providers. For more information or to schedule an on-site training, please contact Monroe Classroom Mentor, Trina Rodriguez at (786) 325-3836.

Monroe VPK Update

With the upcoming August 18th start of the new 08/09 VPK School Year Program, providers are urged to ensure that all eligible four year olds have received their

Certificates of Eligibility so that they may be officially enrolled in your VPK programs and payments authorized. Providers who have reached their VPK capacity are asked to refer interested parents back to their local Wesley House office to receive an updated list of VPK providers in their area who still have space availability. Currently, a record number of Certificates of Eligibility (289) have been issued for the 08/09 School Year Program.

Quality Counts

Quality Counts Update

There are currently 175 programs active in the Quality Counts system.

*Center based programs: 140

*Family childcare homes: 35

*Programs selected and pending notification: 25

Additionally, Head Start Programs and Miami-Dade Public Schools/Ready Schools Miami will receive formal classroom assessments and access to training opportunities through Quality Counts.

Not involved with Quality Counts yet? It's never too late to make a difference! A simple two step process can get you on your way to giving the quality care that makes the difference in the lives of the children and families of Miami-Dade/Monroe County.

1. Attend a Quality Counts Overview Training
2. Submit a Quality Counts application

For more information or to download an application please visit the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe website:

<http://www.elcmdm.org/qualitycounts/index.htm>

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Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe | 2555 Ponce de Leon Boulevard | Suite 500 | Coral Gables | FL | 33134