Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Heartland, Inc.

www.elcfh.org

ELCFH Contracted Provider Policies *rev. 10.28.26*

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Introduction

This guide containing approved policies and easy to follow resources is designed to complement the State of Florida Statewide School Readiness Provider Contract DEL-20 and the State of Florida Statewide Voluntary Prekindergarten Provider Contract DEL-VPK 20. The provisions in each signed contract are binding and contracted providers are responsible for being well versed in the contract terms and conditions. The ELCFH understands its role in supporting providers in contract fulfillment to assure quality early learning services.

The guide materials are all posted on the ELCFH website under the Provider tab (www.elcfh.org). As the content and forms are updated, the revision docs will be posted on the website and an alert will be sent to all providers via the ELCFH Provider Blast.

The following is a listing of applicable federal and state law and rule regulating School Readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten Programs. Licensing standards for both licensed and licensed exempt programs are also referenced:

- *42 U.S.C. 9858 , et seq;*
- *45 C.F.R. 98;*
- *45 C.F.R. 99;*
- *Chapter 1002, F.S.,*
- *Chapter 6M-4, Florida Administrative Code*
- *Chapter 6M-9, Florida Administrative Code*
- *Chapter 6M-8, F.A.C.,*
- *Rules 6A-1.09433 & 6A-6.03033, F.A.C.*
- *Division of Early Learning School Readiness Health and Safety Handbook*
- *Local Child Care Licensing Standards and Information, as applicable. License exempt programs are expected to comply with all licensing requirements including the use of age appropriate discipline.*

ELCFH Plan: *the ELCFH is responsible under Section 1002.85, FS for the development and maintenance of a local plan which is focused on services offered to families and child care providers. The Plan is routinely reviewed and revised by the ELCFH Board of Directors and approved by the Division of Early Learning.*

This guide and the approved policies automatically incorporate any future legislative or legal changes as applicable.

ELCFH Board Approved Policies

CP1- Contracting, Program Assessment and Consideration for local child care capacity

Child Care Providers who choose to contract for School Readiness are required to adhere to the provisions as listed in the DEL Health and Safety Handbook (DEL SR-6202; 6M-4.620 F.A.C.) and achieve the CLASS observation minimum threshold score (Rule 6M-4.740 F.A.C.). A composite Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) observation score meeting the minimum threshold must be attained in order to contract with the ELCFH. A provider who does not meet this score will be required to have a second program assessment at their own cost and must attain the minimum threshold score as a condition of contracting. The request for a second program assessment must be submitted to the ELCFH within 30 days of the first program assessment. The ELCFH will provide coaching and technical assistance support to help the provider best prepare for the second program assessment.

Exceptions to the minimum threshold programs assessment score may only exist if the ELCFH identifies/ verifies the provider as essential to meeting local child care capacity needs as defined in the ELCFH School Readiness Plan. In cases where the provider does not meet these requirements, the provider will be reviewed for contract eligibility with consideration given by the ELCFH regarding the local capacity needs. Local capacity determination is defined as the city/ town/ vicinity in which the provider is situated while reviewing other child care program availability for families in that same area.

All SR and VPK Providers are required to have an annual contract orientation with the ELCFH. This includes providers located in counties outside of the ELCFH four county service area.

CP2- 90 day introductory period for newly contracted School Readiness Providers

Newly contracted child care providers will have a 90 day introductory period to assure the provider has the capacity to maintain the ELCFH School Readiness Provider contract (Section 1002.88, FS.) An inability to maintain the SR provider contract (i.e. not able to provide a developmentally appropriate program; not able to maintain general health and safety practices as defined in the Division of Early Learning School Readiness Health & Safety Handbooks) will result in a contract review and possible sanctions including contract termination.

CP3- Child Screening

Reference: 6M-4.720 Screening of Children in the School Readiness program

Background: Early Learning Coalitions are required to assure children age six weeks to 60 months are screened using a family friendly, valid and reliable screening tool/ process that reviews each developmental domain. Children who have potential concerns noted via the screening process are to be provided with individualized supports by the ELCFH and connection to community resources.

Policy Rationale: Newly enrolled, redetermined or re-enrolled SR children age 6 weeks to age 60 months will be screened using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) system no later than 65 calendar days after the child's initial enrollment/ re-enrollment in the School Readiness Program.

Policy: As families enroll or redetermine for School Readiness services as required through the Division of Early Learning Portal System, an automatic prompt will provide access to the ASQ/ ASQ:SE tool specific to the child's age.

Process:

- Families have twenty days to choose to complete, decline or defer the screening process within the DEL Portal System
- After 20 days if parent has not completed screenings they will move automatically through Portal function to the Provider for completion. Providers will log into their Provider Portal to find their incomplete screening queue to complete assigned screenings by the due date which is within forty-five (45) calendar days after the screening start date for providers, excluding state-observed holidays. The ELCFH will encourage provider completion and send an email notification no later than 15 days after the provider screening start date. Notification email to include screening start date for provider, screening due date, child's name and date of birth.
- Once completed by either the family or the provider, the ELCFH will review the screening results and provide access to the summary for the family and provider within 15 days. ELCFH staff will initiate interventions as applicable within 30 days of receipt of the screening results.
- Interventions will provide short and long term goals with engagement of the family and provider to support concern areas for the child.
- Intervention implementation will include technical assistance, coaching, observation, program accommodation, and/or parent-teacher education as applicable.
- Plan evaluation will be conducted periodically to assess the applied supports; evaluation may include referral to partner agencies for further screening and evaluation to determine eligibility for services.

CP4- Provider Rate Reimbursement- Children with Special Needs

Children with special needs who receive child care services may require accommodations on the part of the childcare provider. These accommodations can be critical to assure a healthy and safe child care experience. To support needed accommodations for children with special needs in the child care setting, the ELCFH is authorized to offer a special needs rate that is applied to provider payments. The special needs rate is twenty percent more than the regular infant rate for children at all age levels. Gold Seal providers receive twenty percent more than the Gold Seal infant rate.

Providers are required to request this rate and document the modifications that have been made (or planned to be made) in order to serve the child. Documentation includes the parent/ guardian authorization with supporting documentation (ex: IFSP, IEP) and the completed provider application for the special needs provider rate on the ELCFH approved application forms. Additionally, beginning July 1, 2027, to receive a special needs differential, a SR provider must meet or exceed the minimum program assessment composite score identified in Rule 6M-4.740, F.A.C., and submit to the coalition documentation of instructional staff assigned by the provider to the child having met training requirements established in s. 1002.89(1)(d), F.S.

Once received, the ELCFH reviews the full request to determine if the accommodation facilitated by the provider warrants the special needs rate. As needed, a site visit to verify existing or planned accommodations will be conducted. Once approved, a Child Development & Education (CDE) Specialist will be assigned to the child's case/ provider to provide support and to assure the agreed upon accommodation is continuously facilitated while the child is in care. Upon approval of the special needs rate, the provider will enter that rate into their profile and submit. The special needs rate request will be reviewed annually to assure the need still exists and accommodations are being made. Updated support documentation from the parent/ provider may be required as applicable.

CP5- SR/ VPK Provider responsibility to the Personal Rights of Children

The ELCFH believes in respectful and dignified treatment of children. It is expected that this will be evident and observable within the context of the childcare experience. Providers have the opportunity to teach children and parents respect by modeling respectful behavior. The below points highlight notable areas of personal rights within the childcare setting:

1. Children will have access to that which addresses their most basic of needs. Restrooms, clothing and diaper changes will be automatically available as dictated by their individual needs. Reasonable requests for food and water, the bathroom, and rest will be responded to appropriately and positively to by the provider (positive verbal response to child, positive actions to meet the child's request as is reasonable etc.).

2. Children will have free mobility as is reasonable and not be contained to: cribs, playpens, bouncy seats, baby swings, highchairs, booster seats or "bucket" tables for more than 15 minutes and no more than twice daily (and only if happily awake as applicable). **Important note: Children must not be left in high chairs or other types of feeding chairs other than during feeding times.**

3. Children who are contained and clearly unhappy will receive positive regular provider acknowledgement to the child's needs or by offering an alternate, developmentally appropriate activity. Positive acknowledgement may include talking, singing to the child, picking the child up, reading to the child, offering an alternate activity, etc.

4. Children will have access to activities that are offered in a blend of full group, small group and individually. Children will not be required to stay in a full group for an extended amount of time. Full group activities will be specific to gross motor, circle time activities, and special presentations/ events.

5. Providers/ teachers working with children will be responsive to child communication and cues. Deliberate non-response or ignoring of child requests for food, water, bathroom, less restrictive space, a reasonable change in activity and rest demonstrate disrespect to the child and will not be tolerated by the ELCFH and will be reviewed for possible sanctions.

Extreme instances of non-response and deliberate disrespect of the personal rights of children may result in a recommendation for provider contract termination.

CP6- Position Statement: Prevention of expulsion of child/ family from child care program

The Division of Early Learning previously created a guidance statement to address the prevention of child expulsion from childcare programs. The ELCFH aligned with this document and broadly shared with contracted provider sites. The ELCFH does not view child expulsion from a childcare program as an effective disciplinary practice and will provide staff support and technical assistance to providers working with children who present challenging behaviors that could result in dismissal from the program.

It is understood that there are times in which a parent/ guardian's behavior may pose a threat to staff/ child/ client safety, and the childcare program is forced to take action including expulsion of the family from the program. The ELCFH also understands that there are cases in which the child's need especially as related to behavior is so extreme that other children and staff may be at risk. In such situations, the ELCFH asks that the provider site contact the ELCFH so that either technical assistance and/ or redirection of the family to needed resources including a better fit for childcare services may be presented.

Important: Providers are required to report program dismissals/ expulsions to the ELCFH as stated in the applicable provider contract.

CP7: School Readiness Provider Contractual Sanctions- ***Supporting Providers through Corrective Notices and Corrective Action Plans***

The ELCFH will impose contractual sanctions as mandated by the most current Division of Early Learning Health and Safety handbook.

References: SR and VPK Provider Contracts DEL Health and Safety Handbook; ELCFH Policy CP7- Health and Safety (VPK- 1002.55(3)(a)F.S.; SR- 1002.88(1)(a),F.S.); 6M-4; 6M-8; ***Form DEL-SR 6200A (September 2023)***

Progressive enforcement reflects a 24-month period unless otherwise noted.

Class I citations	Class II citations	Class III citations
Technical Assistance- not an option for Class I citation	**1 citation =** technical assistance	**1 or 2 citations =** technical assistance
Corrective Action Plan (CAP)- not an option for Class I citation	**Corrective Action Plan (CAP) must be applied for:** • 2 of the same citation, OR • 4+ different Class II within the contract year	**Corrective Action Plan (CAP) must be applied for:** • 3 or 4 of the same citation, OR • 6+ different Class III within the contract year
6 month probation must be applied for: • 1 or 2 Class I citations	**6 month probation must be applied for:** • 3 of the same citation, OR • failure to comply with CAP, OR • 5+ different Class II citations within the contract year	**6 month probation must be applied for:** • 6 or 7 of the same citation, OR • failure to comply with CAP
Subsequent citations for same Class I: contract must be reviewed for termination. **ELCFH may refuse to contract or revoke the provider's SR eligibility due to Class I citation**	**Contract Termination must be considered for:** • Subsequent citations of the same Class II, OR • 6+ different Class II citations, OR • failure to comply with probation	**Contract Termination must be considered for:** • Subsequent citations of the same Class III, OR • failure to comply with probation

Early Learning Coalitions are required to notify providers of issues requiring sanction, which includes the following for SR providers:

- Accumulation of DCF citations- different standards- within the contract year
- Accumulation of DCF citations- same standards- within a 24-month period
- Class I citation
- Other contractual issues such as non-completion of ASQs; CLASS score not meeting required threshold; breach of confidentiality, etc.

Reasons why a VPK provider would need a contractual notice (sanction) include:

- Class I citation
- Contractual issue as listed above- CLASS score, confidentiality, Progress Monitoring non-compliance, etc.

A provider on DCF probation or suspension is not allowed to deliver the SR or VPK Program. DCF probation/ suspension is typically applied when the provider is cited for the same standard repeatedly (VPK- 1002.55(3)(a)F.S.; SR- 1002.88(1)(a),F.S.). In these instances, the ELCFH will work with the provider to notify impacted families as applicable, and to support the provider in working with DCF to address the issues causing the sanction.

The ELCFH reviews all SR/VPK contracted provider DCF inspection reports monthly. Citations are listed on a tracking grid by provider, and then reviewed for needed sanction notification:

- If a provider is at risk for an ELCFH sanction, the ELCFH will attempt to notify the provider of the risk. Ultimately, it is the provider's responsibility to be aware of their own citations and possible risk to the SR / VPK contract.

- If a provider is required to go on corrective action with the ELCFH, they will receive the following:
    - A letter explaining the issue leading to the sanction, the applied sanction and duration, and next steps for the provider. The letter will include information on *Due Process* as required.
    - The ELCFH may include mandatory activities listed in the letter such as attendance at the next Child Care Business Network (CCBN) series and engagement with an assigned provider mentor.
    - A corrective action plan template specific to the contractual noncompliance will be issued. The provider will be required to complete the form explaining how the noncompliance will be corrected and maintained.
    - The corrective action plan must be accepted by the ELCFH, and then maintained/ upheld by the provider site. Maintenance will be tracked through further DCF visits and/or ELCFH contract monitors, including on-site ELCFH CDE technical assistance visits.
    - At any time during this process, the ELCFH may meet with the provider to support, plan and answer questions. This may be at the ELCFH office or at the provider site.

- The ELCFH reports current sanctions to the ELCFH Quality Committee in the prescribed format.

The ELCFH reserves the right to suspend new enrollments of children funded through the School Readiness Program at any time during the sanctioning process.

A provider risks ineligibility to contract effective in the current and/or following fiscal year for the following reasons:

- Unable or unwilling to comply with the provider created/ ELCFH approved corrective action plan as evidence by DCF inspections and/ or ELCFH contract monitors.
- Being placed on DCF licensing probation/ suspension or denied a license.

This process is designed to give the provider room to correct an issue with DCF. In doing so, the provider should establish strong health and safety maintenance practices before re-engaging contractually with the ELCFH. The provider must complete the following in order to be eligible to re-contract:

- Fully complete terms of DCF imposed probation/ suspension (if applicable)
- Address all non-compliance issues cited by DCF, establish policies & procedures for on-going maintenance, and make adherence a daily and automatic habit.
- Receive a DCF Routine or Renewal inspection report with children present, and all standards monitored and marked compliant.

Related Forms:

- Class I Citation Review- Evaluation Matrix
- Provider CAP Form- Class I citations
- Provider CAP Form- Health & Safety (DCF) template
- Provider CAP Form- specific SR/ VPK contract issues

CP8: Provider Contract Termination- ELCFH Management Rapid Response

The ELCFH Executive Director in coordination with the ELCFH management team has the authority to review any issue of provider contractual non-compliance. Action may include any level of sanction including recommendation for termination or revocation of eligibility to the ELCFH Executive Committee/ Board of Directors as a School Readiness / VPK provider as mandated in 6M-4.620 and 65C-22.010 or 65C-2012, F.A.C. and the applicable provider contract.

Termination/ Revocation

Pursuant to the State of Florida Statewide School Readiness Provider Contract Form DEL-SR 20, the ELCFH has the right to terminate a provider contract for cause at any time. The following are grounds for termination

a. Action, or lack of action, which immediately threatens the health, safety or welfare of children; or
b. Failure to comply with the terms of the provider's contract, including failure to comply with the terms of probation.

Contract termination applies to the current contract for the remainder of the fiscal year period. Revocation of Eligibility means that the provider's eligibility to be contracted for SR and/or VPK services has been removed for a period of five years for SR, and two to five years for VPK. *Reference Rule 6M-4.610(3)(a), F.A.C.* If a provider chooses to appeal a citation issued by DCF, and the results of the appeal could directly impact the sanction status, the provider must submit proof of submission of the appeal.

A provider may be terminated for an established period of time as approved by the ELCFH Board/ Executive Committee in alignment with applicable rule/ statute for the following reasons:

- Noncompliance as listed in the DEL Health and Safety Handbook/ progressive enforcement
- Reversion to prior program patterns that initially caused contracting ineligibility
- Other identified contractual non-compliance that requires termination or revocation as resolution.

Revocation of eligibility to contract is the most serious, and due to egregious, systemic issues that the provider is unwilling/ unable to resolve. Historic data collected from prior review reports may be used when the ELCFH is determining if revocation is the correct action for the provider contract.

Providers who wish to appeal action taken by the ELCFH regarding the contract must follow the Division of Early Learning due process procedure (reference applicable School Readiness of Voluntary Prekindergarten Provider Contract).

In the event that a DCF or accrediting agency citation (which has resulted in a sanction) is overturned, the ELCFH will follow the lead of DCF/ LLA, and/or the accrediting agency, and immediately review the sanction status for the provider.

Review will include relevant reports (DCF/ LLA inspection reports, ELCFH staff observations, CLASS Assessment scores etc.) and on-site observation of the provider program by key ELCFH management. The following non-compliance issues will result in immediate provider contract termination and will not require review and decision by the ELCFH Executive Committee or Board of Directors. All action will be subsequently reported by the Executive Director to the Quality Committee and Executive Committee/ Board of Directors:

- Class I citation by DCF/LLA a history of non-compliance already exists. If no such history exists, then the provider site may be referred for review by the Executive Committee/ Board.
- The provider is not able to maintain contractual compliance during the 90 day introduction period (CP5).
- No longer a legally operating child care provider site (DCF/LLA or USDA Disqualified listing)
- Any other non-compliance issue in which the Board/ Executive Committee has given express permission to the Executive Director to terminate the applicable contract including terms related to provider probation.
- Situations/ issues that create the potential for severe/ serious harm to children may be acted on using the ELCFH Board approved determination process. In such instances, three or more of the ELCFH management team will convene to review and issue written notice to the provider. These issues would be defined as serious enough to warrant an emergency termination (reference Form DEL-SR 20 and Form DEL-VPK 20- Statewide Provider Contracts). Such action will require ratification by the Executive Committee/ Board at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

In such circumstances, a letter will be sent by email and/ or certified mail, return receipt requested, that details the reasons for dismissal and the provider's right of appeal consistent with the process addressed in the ELCFH Appeals Policy (ADM-9) and the applicable DEL statewide provider contract.

CP9: (ADM-9) : Appeal process for contracted providers

A contracted child care provider will has the right to appeal to an adverse action by the ELCFH and afforded response. The ELCFH Appeal Policy can be found on the ELCFH website: 2422 ADM-9 APPEAL POLICY FINAL with form.pdf

Appeal Procedure for Clients and Providers:

a. The client or provider must notify the ELCFH of the issue warranting appeal in writing with supporting documentation if applicable within 30 days of its occurrence.

b. The applicable ELCFH Director will review the grievance issue to determine if the non-compliance issue on the part of the client or provider is solely due to non-compliance with required Florida Rule/ ELCFH Policy pertaining to the applicable service or if a mitigating circumstance leading to the non-compliance should be considered.

c. Within five business days of receipt, the issue will be reviewed by the appropriate Director. The director will advise the client or provider in writing of the decision. Clients seeking further resolution regarding the appeal will be advised to contact the Florida Division of Early Learning.

d. As warranted, due process procedures will be followed for child care provider based disputes as outlined in the State of Florida Statewide School Readiness Provider Contract Form DEL-SR 20 and the State of Florida Statewide Voluntary Prekindergarten Provider Contract Form DEL-VPK 20. All decisions of the Executive Committee or ELCFH Board of Directors and/ or Review Hearing Committee are final.

CP10: School Readiness Program Contracting with Out of County Child Care

The following policy pertains to child care provider sites outside of the four county ELCFH service area and contracted with the ELCFH to provide School Readiness services. The below items are specifically outline the role of the respective ELC within the service area:

Each ELC is responsible for direct oversight of activities related to contractual monitoring, technical assistance, and contractual compliance/ non-compliance and the like within the respective service area. The ELCFH will not provide these services to contracted child care providers who are outside of the four county service area. The ELCFH will not contract with an out of county provider who is not contracted with their local ELC. The ELCFH will provide requested provider information to other ELCs as applicable.

A provider whose contract is terminated or have eligibility revoked by their home ELC will also be required to have their contract terminated/ revoked by the ELCFH.

CP 11: ELCFH Position Statement: Best practices for assuring child safety and protection specific to authorized access

It is imperative that the basic safety of all children is assured at all times. As an agency working with children who are identified as protected (Rilya Wilson Act) and/ or at-risk, it is recognized that the need for diligence and awareness on the part of the child care provider is paramount. **Policy regarding pick up and contact should be developed by the provider and given to each parent/ guardian during enrollment.** The following is highly encouraged of contracted child care providers to best protect our most vulnerable children:

Providers must have **current written information** regarding who may or may not pick up/ have contact with the child.

- Any and all communication with applicable case managers from the referring agency regarding the child's case should be done by **email**. This assures a written record and complies with policy for some of the agencies.
- If a provider is not able to get response from the case manager, they are encouraged to contact their DCF analyst.
- It's important to be mindful of situations where there may be a relationship riff between parents. Court ordered documents showing that a parent may **not** have access to the child must be provided when creating or making substantial changes to the child's approved pick-up/ contact list.
- Providers should not accept changes to this information unless formal/legal written notification is provided by the child's parent/ guardian/ case manager etc.

The ELCFH will provide a form to providers to be completed by the referring agency/ case manager regarding adults who are by court order on the child's protected list. Providers may also request the periodic court-issued snap-out orders to assure information is the most current. These order can be obtained through the child's guardian/ case manager.

- **Note that the ELCFH does not have the authority to require that referring agencies complete this form.** The best scenario is for the provider to maintain a current pick-up/ contact list in writing and to review periodically to assure 100% adherence.
- Child enrollment forms issued by the provider site should be updated on an annual basis. The provider might also consider requiring more frequent reviews (ie every six months, quarterly) by the parent/ guardian to either update or verify as still current. All reviews should be initialed and dated by the parent with a statement explaining that a review was conducted and either changes were made (or not).

CP12: ELCFH Position Statement: Child screen time and impact on executive function

Statement: The ELCFH supports research that guides parents and caregivers in making informed decisions for optimal child health and development. It is understood that the daily habits and routines formed early on in a child's life will ultimately impact their ability to cope as they prepare for school readiness and later life success. This general developmental function can be defined as *executive function*- meaning the child's ability to utilize the prefrontal cortex of the brain to manage attention, emotions and behavior in order to reach goals (reference Galinsky, E. Mind in the Making. HarperCollins. New York, NY. 2010.).

Individual child management of impulsive behaviors and negative emotions is an on-going issue permeating many ELCFH contracted provider programs. There are number of reasons why challenging behaviors and emotions may be present including childhood trauma, health and diet issues, sleep routines, and exposure to controllable elements such as recreational screen time.

The ELCFH believes that screen time for young children should be closely monitored and limited and that overexposure and viewing low quality programming can have negative impact on the executive functioning ability of children. The ELCFH encourages families and caregivers to consider the American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines of families focusing on unstructured play experiences with their children and assuring no more than one hour of quality program viewing occurs daily for children two years and older (reference: https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/American-Academy-of-Pediatrics-Announces-New-Recommendations-for-Childrens-Media-Use.aspx). Families engaging is playful activities that are rich with conversation are promoting deep bonds that promote positive social and emotion development as well as laying the foundation for needed preliteracy skills for later reading. Families are encouraged to model screen-free interactions for a healthier life.

Resources:

- https://www.screenfree.org/ During the annual Screenfree week event, families are encouraged to "rediscover the joys of life away from screens"
- Family Guide: 101 Screen-free Activities (https://www.screenfree.org/project/101-screen-free-activities/); available in English and Spanish
- Screen-free Reading Activities (https://www.screenfree.org/project/100-screen-free-reading-related-activities.

CP13: ELCFH Position Statement: Definition of School Readiness

Dr. David Elkind (Tufts University), a renowned child psychologist, is quoted as saying:
"The skills a child needs to succeed in most kindergartens are not knowing numbers and letters, but rather….

- ***being able to communicate****,*
- ***follow instructions****,*
- *and* ***work cooperatively with other children****."* [1],[2]

This is a shift to more traditional ideas of school readiness which tend to apply more weight on the ABC's, 123's, naming the days of the week and tying shoes.

The Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Heartland (ELCFH) has long held concern for the social and emotional development of children receiving childcare services in the service area of Charlotte, Desoto, Hardee and Highlands counties. Children navigating the effects of trauma and poverty can struggle in their early learning programs, leading to lost opportunities due to the inability to make friends with other children, inability to self-regulate big emotions, or lack of needed continuity due to program suspension or even expulsion. The ELCFH, believes that supporting children's development, assuring basic needs are met, and providing opportunities for supportive relationships are critical to later success in school.

We stand by the belief that the child's readiness for school is not solely the responsibility of the child, parent or preschool teacher- each has an important role!

Ready Children: Basic needs are met- food security, medical home, family stability, consistent housing. Continuity of care is experienced as a child is enrolled in an early learning program and able to make and maintain supportive relationships with adults and other children. Developmental needs of children are identified and addressed early. Children can communicate, follow instructions, and work cooperatively with other children as they prepare for kindergarten entry.

Ready Families: Parents understand their role as their child's first teacher. They are engaged in their child's program and have regular, open communication with their child's teacher. They support their children through daily predicable routines and bonding activities such as engaged conversation, reading aloud, playing games together.

Ready Schools: Early Learning Programs and Kindergarten classrooms understand how to teach individual children. Programs are developmentally appropriate/ hands-on (concrete), literacy focused and encourage parent participation.

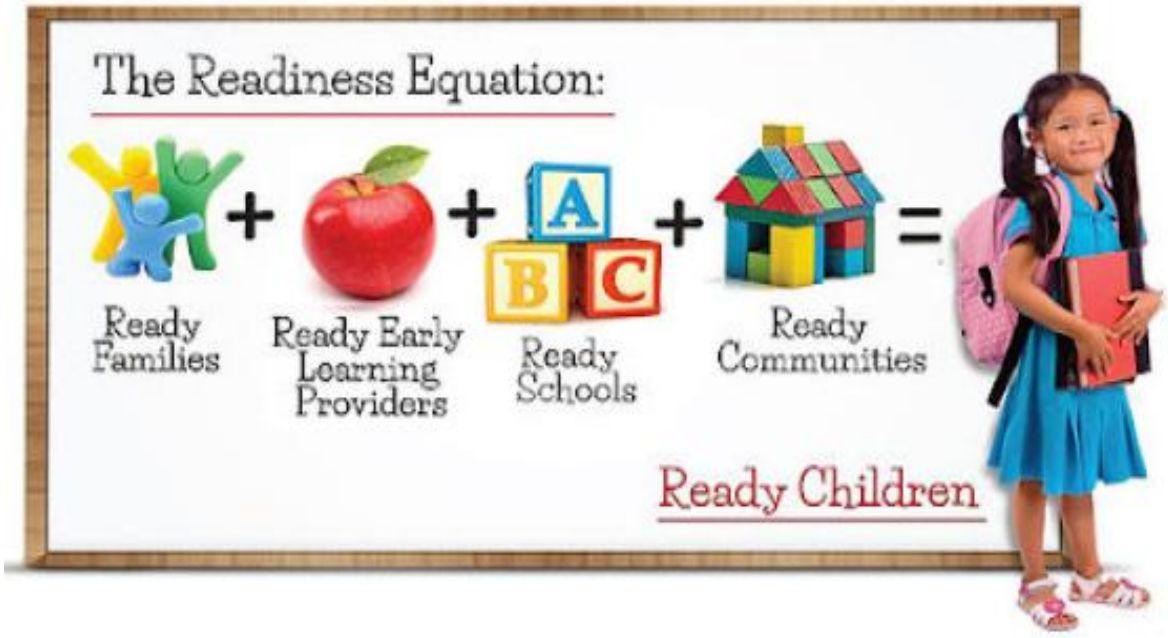
Ready Communities: The immediate community offers support services to address family needs especially any basic need that is unmet, child developmental needs that exceed the expertise of the classroom, and provide families/ individuals with the overarching sense of belonging.

[1] https://especiallyforchildren.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/What-is-School-Readiness.pdf;
[2] "Some Misunderstandings of School Readiness" by David Elkind, Exchange Magazine, 03/08

The ELCFH defines school readiness as the child's ability to function within the classroom in a social-emotional capacity that promotes learning and positive interactions and supports continuity for the full term of the child's program. From there, learning is completely possible and the stage is set to apply academic content.

Basic measurable elements to support social-emotional development as identified through developmental screening include:

- Number of children age birth to five who are eligible for screening vs the total number screened.
    - Number of children noted as "typically developing".
- Number of children suspended / expelled (due to child issue, not parent issue)
    - Support provided to child experiencing suspension/ expulsion to move into a program with "goodness of fit".
- Number of children with developmental concerns warranting early intervention who (with parent consent) receive needed support services.
- Anecdotal notes of ELCFH provided services/ activities and the outcomes for individual children.
- Success stories showcasing a child with a concern, what was done to address the concern/ support the child, and the final outcome.



(***Image Source***: *Delaware Readiness Teams- https://www.facebook.com/DELTEAMS/*)

Further food for thought on school readiness from nationally recognized entities:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, Council on Early Childhood, Council on School Health: "School Readiness" (Technical Report, 8.1.19) states: "*All of a child's early experiences, whether at home, in childcare, or in other preschool settings, are educational. When early experiences are consistent, developmentally sound, and emotionally supportive, children learn optimally and develop resilience for life. To focus only on the education of children beginning with kindergarten is to ignore the science of early development and to deny the importance of early experiences."*[3]

Head Start states: "*School readiness is foundational across early childhood systems and programs. It means children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning, and schools are ready for children. Head Start views school readiness as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning and life. Physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development are all essential ingredients of school readiness."*[4]

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC):

> *"….discussions of school readiness must consider at least three critical factors:*
> *(1) the diversity of children's early life experiences as well as inequity in experiences;*
> *(2) the wide variation in young children's development and learning; and*
> *(3) the degree to which school expectations of children entering kindergarten are reasonable, appropriate, and supportive of individual differences."*[5]

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC- Dr. Dan Gartrell): *"People used to think children were ready for kindergarten if they could say the ABC's, count, identify colors, and write their first name. Readiness was always more complicated than that, and new brain research is helping us understand what readiness really is. Readiness doesn't mean just knowing the academic basics. It means a child has a willing attitude and confidence in the process of learning: a healthy state of mind."*[6]

[3] School Readiness | Pediatrics | American Academy of Pediatrics
[4] School Readiness | HeadStart.gov
[5] PSREADY98.PDF
[6] Readiness: Not a State of Knowledge, but a State of Mind | NAEYC

CP14: Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) in SR and VPK Programs

Young children learn best through hands-on play, active learning, and positive interactions with teachers and peers. School Readiness (SR) and Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) programs are required to provide learning experiences that align with children's ages, developmental levels, and individual needs:

- SR and VPK programs are required to daily lesson plans are posted and implemented using materials that support hands-on learning.
- Lesson plans must reflect the approved contractual curriculum and Florida Standards.
- Classrooms should be arranged to meet the needs of the ages served and include center-based learning opportunities such as blocks, dramatic play, literacy, art, sensory activities, science, math, and music and movement.

Teachers should provide opportunities for children to explore, create, problem solve, communicate, and make choices throughout the day. Well thought out learning experiences are active, engaging, and supported through play, conversation, and meaningful interactions. **Dittos, worksheets, repetitive paper-pencil tasks, long periods of sitting, and other forms of rote learning are not developmentally appropriate and highly discouraged.**

The ELCFH will provide consistent technical assistance, coaching, classroom observations, training, and lesson plan reviews to support developmentally appropriate practices and ensure compliance with SR and VPK expectations. Support services and resources are available through the ELCFH for individual children presenting possible developmental concerns.

The ELCFH Provider Resource Guide, documents and related forms can be found on the ELCFH website at: https://www.elcfloridasheartland.org/providers#Forms