Florida’s Voluntary Prekindergarten Program

Provider Orientation

August 1, 2012
VPK Program Overview

• The Voluntary Prekindergarten Education (VPK) program was created in 2005 to prepare every four-year-old for kindergarten and continued educational success.

• The VPK program helps each child build a strong foundation through the use of developmentally appropriate curricula with an emphasis on early literacy and mathematical thinking skills.

• Highlights of the VPK program include manageable class sizes, program accountability and increased instructor credentials.

• Data has consistently demonstrated that children who participated in the VPK program are better prepared for kindergarten compared to children who did not participate in VPK.

• VPK is FREE for all children four years old on or before September 1 of the program year.

• VPK Program Options
  Each child may enroll in one session of the VPK Program

  School-Year Session — 540 Instructional Hours  ~ OR ~
  Summer Session — 300 instructional hours
VPK Requirements

• **Provider must be** either **accredited** by an approved accrediting association, hold a **Gold Seal** designation, or be licensed. Gold Seal sites must submit a copy of their Gold Seal accreditation.

• **Providers must be set up for reimbursement** with the Coalition’s Child Care Connection office
  – providers serving School Readiness scholarship children are already set up for reimbursement. Providers who are not set up need to complete the reimbursement paperwork.

• **VPK registration packets must be complete and accurate, and include the VPK Checklist as the cover page.**

• **OEL- VPK 20 Statewide VPK Provider Agreement**
  – Agreement must be **signed prior to the beginning** of the VPK program each year
  – **Notification of Change Attachment A**

• **Advance Payment waiver**

• **OEL-VPK 10 Site information**

• **OEL-VPK 11A Instructor details & 11B Classroom information**

• **VPK Calendar**
  – must equal 540 hours for school year programs, 300 hours for summer programs
  – VPK calendars and instructions are posted on the Coalition website, www.earlylearningcoalitionsarasota.org
Additional Information

• School Year VPK class ratios are
  – 1 lead teacher to 11 children or
  – 1 lead teacher and 1 secondary teacher to 20 children
  – Maximum School Year VPK class size is 20 children

• Summer VPK class ratios are
  – 1 lead teacher to 12 children
  – Maximum Summer VPK class size is 12 children

• Temporary closures are reimbursed only if a state of emergency has been declared.

• Parents are allowed to change VPK providers only once, unless the student meets the criteria for good cause exemption.

• Providers are not permitted to charge a registration fee or require parents to agree to any additional services or care as a condition of enrollment in the VPK Program.
Additional Information continued

• For all classes:
  – Ratios must be maintained for VPK hours
  – Non-VPK children are included in the ratio
  – Mixed ages are permitted
  – Rest time is not paid instructional time; Programs over 4 hours/day must account for rest as required by licensing

• Must have minimum of 4 VPK children to start

• VPK Program cannot start more than 14 days before Labor Day or before first day of Public School.

• Summer Program cannot start before May 1 and must end before the start of the Public School in August or September.

• Call or email the Coalition to be added to the list of VPK providers that is available to parents on the Coalition website, www.earlylearningcoalitionsarasota.org
VPK Director Requirements

• Must hold Director’s credential current within 5 years

• VPK Endorsement is required if director credential was issued after 12-31-06. Child Care Transcript will indicate VPK Exempt or VPK Endorsed.

For VPK Endorsement information and forms visit www.myflorida.com/childcare, Forms and Applications, then go to Training.

• VPK Standards Training 2008 or the new Four-year-Old Standards 2011 is required for the VPK Endorsement and must appear on the DCF transcript.

• Coalition requires directors to have education credentials on file and Level 2 background screening current within 5 years. This is a higher standard than licensing and includes FBI, FDLE and Local Background Checks.
VPK School Year Teacher Education Requirements

LEAD Teacher Education Requirement for School Year Programs

• **Minimum of a current within 5 years FCCPC or NECC** (formerly known as CDA/ CDAE). Additional credential qualifications are posted on the Coalition’s website on the VPK page and are listed on Page 2 of the instructions for form VPK 11A.
  – All credentials must be posted on Instructor’s DCF Child Care Transcript. Staff Credential Applications are available online at [www.myflorida.com/childcare](http://www.myflorida.com/childcare) under Forms and Applications, then Training.

• **Emergent Literacy for VPK Instructors** is required with FCCPC, unless Early Literacy for Children Age Birth to Three was awarded before 11-1-2005. Best practice is for all VPK instructors to take the Emergent Literacy course.
  – Emergent Literacy course is available online [www.myflorida.com/childcare](http://www.myflorida.com/childcare), Training Information, Online Courses.

• **VPK 2008 Standards Training or the new Four-Year-Old Standards** – certificate must be on transcript
  – Lead instructors and directors are required to take the Four-Year-Old Standards training, secondary instructors are strongly encouraged to take the Standards training. Contact Dianne Lawrence at 954-4830 ext. 3 for training information.

SECONDARY Teacher Education Requirement for School Year Programs

• **Minimum DCF state mandated 40 hour training** completed, or in process of being completed

  **Note:** Secondary instructor is required for VPK school year classes with over 11 children. Maximum school year class size is 20 children.
VPK Summer Teacher Education Requirements

SUMMER Teacher Education Requirements for VPK Summer Programs

• A bachelor’s or higher degree in early childhood education or related field

• A bachelor’s or higher degree in elementary education if the instructor has been certified to teach children any age from birth through 6th grade
  - certificate need not be current
  - certificate need not be from Florida, but may not be suspended or revoked

• A Temporary or Professional Florida Educator Certificate
  - certification may be in any area

VPK Substitute Teacher Education Requirements

SUBSTITUTE Teacher Education Requirements for SCHOOL YEAR Programs

• Minimum Education Requirements
  – Any of the requirements listed below for a summer program OR
  – A DCF 40-hour Introductory Child Care Training course if the VPK class is offered in a child care facility
  – A DCF 30-clock-hour Family Child Care Home training if the VPK class is offered in a large family child care home
  – A DCF 30-clock-hour Family Child Care Home training if the VPK class is offered in a family day care home
  – Four-Year-Old Standards 2011 (recommended as best practice)

SUBSTITUTE Teacher Education Requirements for SUMMER Programs

• Minimum Education Requirements
  – An associate’s or higher degree of study in any field OR
  – A national Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or
  – A credential approved by DCF as being equivalent or greater than a national CDA credential (e.g. FCCPC)
  – Four-Year-Old Standards 2011 (recommended as best practice)
Guidelines for Substitute Use

• A substitute instructor may not be used for more than 30 percent of a program’s hours.
  – School Year: 30% of 540 hours = 162 hours
  – Summer: 30% of 300 hours = 90 hours

• Providers may use different substitute instructors on different days, but the combined instructional hours of all substitutes cannot exceed 30 percent of the VPK program hours.

• The Coalition must receive documentation of a level 2 background screening clearance and applicable credentials before a provider can assign a substitute instructor to a classroom. Submit documentation for at least one substitute with initial VPK Program information to avoid any problems.

• It is the providers responsibility to track substitute usage and submit documentation to the Coalition when requested.
Level 2 Background Screening Requirements for **ALL** VPK Directors, VPK Instructors, and VPK Substitutes

- **FBI Background Fingerprint Screen** current within 5 years
  
  Must submit new fingerprints via livescan (cost **$38.75**) every 5 years. Visit [http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/admin/backgroundscreening/](http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/admin/backgroundscreening/) for more detailed information.

- **FDLE Background Screen** – must be current within 5 years

- **Local Background Screen** – must be current within 5 years

- **Affidavit of Good Moral Character** – *must be reviewed and notarized*
  
  The Affidavit of Good Moral Character must be notarized before VPK program begins. The Affidavit remains in effect as long as the employee remains at the same site, with no break in service more than 90 days – it does not have to be reissued every year.

- Keep track of expiration dates for Level 2 background screenings so there will be time to renew before the VPK start date, if necessary.

  **All directors, teachers and substitutes must have current credentials and Level 2 background clearance in place, current within 5 years, or the VPK program will not be approved.**
VPK Application Deadlines

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Paperwork Received</th>
<th>VPK Start Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VPK School Year 2012 -2013</td>
<td>July 13, 2012</td>
<td>August 20, 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>August 10, 2012</td>
<td>September 10, 2012</td>
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<td>September 7, 2012</td>
<td>October 1, 2012</td>
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Mail complete VPK packet to:
Early Learning Coalition
1750 17th Street, Building L
Sarasota, FL 34234
Reporting VPK Changes

VPK Change Form

• Coalition must be notified of changes **in writing** within 14 days of the change.

• However, you are strongly encouraged to submit updated information BEFORE a change is implemented as your site may be out of compliance with the VPK program. This may result in withholding of VPK reimbursement.

• We are here to help you implement your change smoothly and within compliance, so we can do that when we are notified BEFORE the change occurs.
Attendance

- Review attendance sheets as soon as received. NON-VPK days are indicated as “shaded-in days” on the attendance sheet. Any discrepancies on attendance sheets should be reported to the Coalition’s Child Care Connection office immediately, at 556-1600 ext. 110. **DO NOT wait until reimbursement to report discrepancies.**

- **Parents are required to sign children in and out each day.** Parents must sign their full signature – no initial, first names, or “Mom” – and include time in and time out.

- Providers will not be reimbursed if there are discrepancies between attendance sheets and parent sign in/sign out sheets.

- Provider attendance sheets and sign in/sign out sheets will be randomly monitored at least once per year.
VPK Absences – 80/20 Rule

• **20% of VPK students’ absences will be paid.** Absences exceeding 20% will not be paid (20% of 540 = 108 hours or 36 days of a 3 hour VPK program).

• **Each month** absences will be calculated for each VPK child enrolled and **20% of the absences that occurred for each child that month will be paid.** Absences over 20% for each child each month **will not be paid.**

• At the **end of the provider’s VPK program** the provider will receive a **reconciliation payment** for any absences that were unpaid **if the child’s overall absences did not exceed 20%**. As stated in the AWI summary, “In other words, if a child is absent for more than 20% in one month but is absent for less than 20% of the entire program, the provider will receive a reconciliation payment at the end of the program.”

• Providers **may not charge parents for any unpaid absences over the 20% that will be paid.**
Student Attendance and Parental Choice Certification (SAPCC)

- Parents need to sign the Student Attendance and Parental Choice Certificate sheet each month certifying that the attendance the provider reported for their child is correct.

- SAPCC forms must be submitted when providers are randomly monitored (at least once a year).

- Parents **may not** sign the SAPCC before the last day of the month their child attended (ex: attendance roster shows child present on October 30, parent signed SPACC on October 29).

- Providers will not be reimbursed if there are discrepancies or incorrect dates on the SAPCCs.
VPK Return to Service Form

- Providers must submit ‘Return to Service Form’ when a child is absent on the last day of service each month.

- Absence is not payable for child’s first day of attendance or after the child’s last day of attendance.

- If the child does not return to the VPK Program the absences are not payable.
VPK Reimbursement

• The 2012-2013 **VPK School Year** payment rate for Sarasota County is **$2,385.38** which comes to **$4.41** an hour.

• The **VPK Summer** payment rate for Sarasota County is **$2,028.03**, which comes to **$6.76** an hour. *This rate is effective July 1, 2012 with the new state fiscal year.*

• VPK reimbursement is calculated by the hour; providers are reimbursed by the day.
Parent Registration information

VPK Registration location and schedules
Coalition’s Child Care Connection
2886-C Ringling Blvd
Sarasota, FL 34237
941- 556-1600

Registration hours:
Tuesdays 7:30am-6:30pm
Thursdays 7:30am-5:00pm

VPK Registration is also available in North Port on specified days.
Call Child Care Connection at 556-1600 ext 101

Additional information on VPK registration can be found on Coalition’s website
www.earlylearningcoalitionsarasota.org
Certificate of Eligibility

- All students must obtain a Certificate of Eligibility before starting in a VPK class.

- All transferring students must fill out Re-Enrollment form and obtain a new Certificate of Eligibility before starting in another VPK class.

- Payment for a child cannot start before the issue date on the Certificate of Eligibility.

- All original (white) Certificates of Eligibility must be mailed to Child Care Connection office at 2886-C Ringling Blvd, Sarasota, 34237.

- Child Care Connection must have minimum of 4 certificates before VPK program starts.
Contact Information

- **Reimbursement questions:**
  - Traci Knight
  556-1600 ext. 110  tknight@childcareconnectionsarasota.org

- **Child enrollment questions:**
  - Laura Woodson
  556-1600 ext. 108  lwoodson@childcareconnectionsarasota.org
  FAX for Reimbursement and Child Enrollment: (941) 556-1606

- **Provider application and approval:**
  - Traci Knight  tknight@childcareconnectionsarasota.org
  556-1600 ext. 110

- **VPK program monitoring, mentoring, curriculum, assessment and training:**
  - Dianne Lawrence
  954-4830 ext. 223  dlawrence@earlylearningcoalitionsarasota.org
  FAX for Provider application, VPK program monitoring, mentoring ,etc (941) 954-4831
The Early Learning Coalition is looking forward to working with you to ensure that four year old children in Sarasota County receive the high quality early learning experiences they need to be ready for learning and ready for life.

*We value your participation!*