

6M-4.200 School Readiness Eligibility Provisions.

(1) Definitions. The following definitions are applicable to all rules under chapter 6M-4, F.A.C.

(a) “Authorization Period” means the period the family is authorized to receive services once the family is determined to meet all the eligibility requirements.

(b) “Child Care Authorizations” and “referrals” means the forms received from recognized referring entities authorizing the need for child care services.

(c) “Earned Income” means the gross remuneration resulting from work, professional service or self-employment. This includes commissions, bonuses, and back pay awards.

(d) “Parent” means a person who has legal custody of a minor as a:

1. Natural or adoptive parent;
2. Legal guardian;
3. Person who stands in loco parentis to the minor; or
4. Person who has legal custody of the minor by order of a court.

(e) “Payment certificate” means the document issued by the coalition authorizing School Readiness payment for a specific child to a specified child care provider for a defined period.

(f) “Person who stands in loco parentis” means a responsible adult with whom the child lives, who is responsible for the day-to-day care and custody of the child when the child’s parent by blood, marriage, adoption or court order is not performing such duties.

(g) “Purpose for care” means the reason the parent needs care, such as employment, education and training, job search as indicated on a valid Department of Children and Families (DCF) or Workforce Child Care Authorization form, work activity, respite services, child protection, seasonal work, disability and special needs.

(h) “Re-establishment Period for Purpose of Care” refers to the period where the family continues to receive services during a temporary change.

(i) “Special Needs” means a child who has been determined eligible as a child with a disability in accordance with chapter 6A-6, F.A.C., and is participating in a program for children with disabilities provided by the school district or a child who has an individualized educational plan (IEP) or family support plan (FSP).

(j) “Suspend” means to temporarily discontinue services for the parent when the parent intends to resume an eligible education/training or work activity that has a change that exceeds three (3) months or the child temporarily does not need school readiness services offered by the coalition.

(k) “Unearned Income” means income other than earned income that includes documented alimony and child support received, social security benefits, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) (excluding SSI payments when a child is the recipient), worker’s compensation benefits, reemployment assistance or reemployment compensation benefits, veteran benefits, retirement benefits, temporary cash assistance under chapter 414, F.S., and cash gifts received regularly. Regularly means a definite pattern and at uniform intervals of time.

(2) Authorization period and purpose for care. A family’s eligibility for school readiness services depends on an established purpose for care. A coalition must authorize services in accordance with the family’s purpose for care. During the authorization period the child shall be considered eligible and shall receive services at least at the same level, regardless of a change in family income remaining at or below 85% SMI or a temporary change in the ongoing status of the child’s parent as working or attending a job training or educational program.

(a) A temporary change includes:

1. Any time-limited absence from work for an employed parent due to reasons such as need to care for a family member or an illness;

2. Any interruption in work for a seasonal worker who is not working between regular industry work seasons;

3. Any student holiday or break for a parent participating in training or education;

4. Any reduction in work, training or education hours, as long as the parent is still working or attending training or education;

5. Any other cessation of work or attendance at a training or education program that does not exceed three (3) months;

6. Any change in age, including turning 13 years old during the eligibility period; and,

7. Any change in residency within the state.

(b) Twelve-month authorization period. The coalition shall authorize at-risk, Economically Disadvantaged and Special Needs children for 12-months of child care funding.

1. At-risk. Eligibility is based on a documented child care authorization from the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) or its contracted provider, DCF-designated Lead Homeless Coalition Continuum of Care agency or Certified Domestic Violence Center. “At Risk Child” is defined in section 1002.81(1), F.S.

a. Child care authorizations for at-risk and protective services categories shall be valid for the duration determined by the referring entity.

b. A child may continue to maintain eligibility under the at-risk or protective services categories as long as there is a current and valid child care authorization. Each time a child care authorization is renewed during the 12-month authorization of child care

funding, child care services will continue in increments defined by the referring agency. If an additional referral is granted to the parent that extends the purpose for care beyond the initial 12-month authorization period, the coalition shall authorize the parent for an additional 12-month authorization period.

2. Economically disadvantaged. To be eligible under this category the family must meet the following requirements -

a. Family Income. The family's income, as defined in section 1002.81(8), F.S., must be at or below 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for initial eligibility and 85 percent State Median Income (SMI) for continued eligibility. If 85 percent of the State Median Income (SMI) is less than 150 percent of the FPL, then 85 percent of the SMI is the income threshold for entry into the school readiness program.

b. Assets. A family shall not have assets that exceed one million dollars (as certified by the family member applying for services). This applies to all children funded with Child Care Development Block Grant funds.

c. Working Family. The family must also meet the definition of "Working Family" as defined by section 1002.81, F.S.

3. Special needs. To be eligible under this category, a child must be age three to kindergarten admission and have documentation of an individual education plan from the local school district.

(c) Authorization period less than twelve months. The following authorization periods apply for children being served in other categories. Parents must also maintain compliance with statutory requirements specific to the program, as monitored by the referring agency.

1. Relative Caregiver Program and the Guardianship Assistance Program. A child may continue to maintain eligibility under the Relative Caregiver or Guardianship Assistance programs if, upon closure of the protective services case, the guardian is in receipt of Relative Caregiver Assistance or Guardianship Assistance payments for the child in need of school readiness services. A child may continue to maintain eligibility under the Relative Caregiver or Guardianship Assistance programs for up to 12-months for initial and subsequent authorizations, as determined by the coalition, as long as the parent is in receipt of Relative Caregiver or Guardianship Assistance payments.

2. Welfare Transition Program, Temporary Cash Assistance, and Transitional Child Care/Non-Temporary Cash Assistance.. Eligibility is based on a documented child care authorization issued by DCF or the local workforce agency. All children eligible under the Temporary Cash Assistance, Temporary Cash Assistance Respite, and Temporary Cash Assistance Applicant programs will be authorized for child care funding for the period indicated by the referring agency's child care authorization. The parent no longer maintains purpose for care under this eligibility category upon child care authorization expiration or upon notification of termination from the referring agency to the coalition, whichever comes first.

(3) Re-establishment period for purpose of care. When a parent experiences a loss in purpose for care, the coalition must provide the parent a three (3) month period to re-establish purpose for care, at which time the parent must meet purpose for care to remain eligible. If the child served is subject to twelve-month eligibility, then the child will remain eligible for the remainder of the twelve-month authorization period. The child shall continue to receive services at the same level and provider shall continue being reimbursed during the three (3) month re-establishment period.

(a) At-risk, relative caregiver and welfare transition program. The parent no longer maintains the current purpose for care upon the child care authorization's expiration or upon notification of termination from the referring agency to the coalition, whichever comes first. The coalition or contracted designee shall inform the parent and DCF or local workforce referral agency that when the child care authorization expires or is terminated the parent will have three (3) months to provide documentation to establish a purpose for care under the same eligibility category or another eligibility category to continue to receive services.

(b) Economically disadvantaged. The parent no longer maintains purpose for care upon cessation of employment, attendance at a job training or education program.

(c) The time period that surpasses the initial authorization will be counted toward the subsequent authorization period.

(d) A family will not be limited to a single three (3) month period to reestablish a purpose of care.

(4) Redetermination. All redetermining eligible At-risk, Economically Disadvantaged and Special Needs children will be authorized for 12-months of child care.

(a) Family Income. The family's income must remain at or below 85 percent of the State Median Income (SMI) as the upper level of the program subsidy support to be eligible for a subsequent authorization.

(b) All redetermining clients are subject to the graduated phase-out requirements defined by subsection 6M-4.400(3), F.A.C. if the family unit income increases to above 150% FPL and remains at or below 85% SMI.

(c) Parents and providers must be notified if, as a result of any redetermination, a child is determined ineligible for the program within two weeks.

(5) Notification to parents. The coalition or contracted designee shall notify the parents of their responsibility and the method to notify the coalition or contracted designee within 14 calendar days of any change of circumstances related to:

(a) Address;

(b) Change in work or education status;

(c) Family size;

(d) Failure to maintain attendance at a job training or education program;

- (e) Income exceeds 85% of the state median income (SMI).
- (6) Payment Certificate. Upon determination of eligibility, a parent shall be given a payment certificate to submit to an eligible child care provider to enroll the child in its school readiness program. The payment certificate shall at a minimum include the child(ren) for whom a coalition authorized child care, the provider the family selected, signatures of both the beneficiary and school readiness provider representative, the assessed parent copayment for each eligible child, the authorized hours of care and the authorized begin and end dates for school readiness services.
- (7) Transfer of School Readiness Services. Eligible families shall continue to receive school readiness services during the 12-month authorization period due to a change in residence within the state to a different coalition service area.
 - (a) The school readiness funding shall transfer to the coalition service area that the family relocates to. Funding shall reflect the remaining balance of 12-month authorization. Transferring families are subject to the same document requirements found under subsection 6M-4.208(4), F.A.C. The coalition shall make every effort to coordinate with the transferring coalition to obtain documents that would be valid regardless of the location of the coalition, such as birth certificates, shot records or proof of parental relationship.
 - (b) The parent copayment may not be increased due to a transfer of services outside of the coalition service area, unless the family is in graduated phase-out at the time of the coalition transfer in accordance with subsection 6M-4.400(3), FAC.
 - (c) The coalition service area of transfer will be responsible for the redetermination of eligibility at the end of the original 12-month authorization period.
 - (d) If the family transfers during a reestablishment period for purpose of care, the family must reestablish a purpose of care by the end of that same three (3) month period for services to be continued in the new coalition service area.
- (8) Termination of School Readiness Services. Services shall be discontinued for a family prior to the end of the 12-month authorization period under limited circumstances. The family and provider will be notified of disenrollment at a minimum of two weeks prior to termination of services or at the end of the current authorization period, whichever comes first. The notification to the parent shall include the reason for termination. Qualifying events for termination include:
 - (a) Excessive unexplained absences that exceed 10 calendar days during a total month of attendance. The coalition shall document three attempts to contact the family and the provider regarding excessive absences prior to disenrollment.
 - (b) Substantiated fraud or intentional program violation determined by the coalition or its designee pursuant sections 1002.91 and 1002.84 (17), F.S.
 - (c) A change in residency outside of the State of Florida.
 - (d) Purpose of care is not reestablished at the end of a three (3) month period.

(e) The family income exceeds 85% of the current state median income.

Rulemaking Authority 1001.213(2) FS. Law Implemented 1002.81(1), (8), (16), 1002.82(2)(f), (z), 1002.87(1), (5), (6) FS. History—New 4-21-03, Formerly 60BB-4.200, Amended 7-31-14, 12-18-16, 8-20-18.