



## Council for Lifelong Learning School Readiness

# Fact Sheet

September 2001

<p>1. What is School Readiness?</p>	<p>The 1999 Legislature established a statewide school readiness program for the state's at-risk birth-to-kindergarten population under the direction of the Florida Partnership for School Readiness. The program consists of an integrated seamless service delivery system for all publicly funded early education and child care programs including: First Start, Even Start, pre-k, Head Start, migrant pre-k, Title I, subsidized child care, and teen parent.</p> <p>The "School Readiness Act" establishes the school readiness program through school readiness coalitions established by a county or a multi-county combination. Each coalition's school readiness program will have funding from all of the coalition's early education and child care programs that are funded with state, federal, lottery, or local funds.</p>
<p>2. Who is eligible to participate in the school readiness program?</p>	<p>Priority for participation in the school readiness program must be given to children under kindergarten age who are at risk, from families who are migrant farm workers, teen parents or working families with incomes not over 150 percent of federal poverty level, children with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged children. An "economically disadvantaged" child means a child whose family income is below 150 percent of the federal poverty level. Once in the program, the child may remain until kindergarten without regard to family income level, subject to adjustment to the family's co-payment on the sliding fee scale.</p>
<p>3. What is the Florida Partnership for School Readiness?</p>	<p>The Florida Partnership for School Readiness (Partnership) serves as the principal organization responsible for enhancement of school readiness. The Partnership has duties which include providing final approval and an annual review of coalitions and plans; safeguarding the effective use of federal, state, local, and private resources to achieve the highest possible level of school readiness for the state's children; adopting a system for measuring school readiness that provides objective data regarding the expectations for school readiness and can be used to assist in determining program effectiveness; developing and adopting performance standards and outcome measures and preparing a plan for measuring school readiness which includes a uniform screening that will provide objective data regarding expectations for</p>

	<p>school readiness.</p> <p>The Partnership is assigned to the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI), which administers school readiness funds, plans, and policies pursuant to a contract with the Partnership. <b>(See the Agency for Workforce Innovation Fact Sheet.)</b> All instructions to local school readiness coalitions will emanate from AWI pursuant to policies of the Legislature, plans of the Partnership, and the contract between the Partnership and AWI. The Partnership is the state-level governing board with responsibility for adopting and maintaining coordinated programmatic, administrative, and fiscal policies and standards for all school readiness programs, while allowing a wide range of programmatic flexibility and differentiation.</p>
<p>4. What are local school readiness coalitions and plans?</p>	<p>Local school readiness coalitions consist of 18 to 25 members, with more than 1/3 of the members from the private sector. Neither the members nor their families may earn an income from the early education and child care industry. Counties serving less than 400 children must join in a coalition with another county, share a fiscal agent, or demonstrate efficiency and effective plan implementation. Each coalition must implement a plan that includes a comprehensive program of school readiness services that enhance the cognitive, social, and physical development of children to achieve the performance standards and outcome measures specified by the partnership. There are 57 local school readiness coalitions, each operating under a plan approved by the Florida Partnership for School Readiness.</p> <p>The local school readiness plan is expected to provide extended-day and extended-year services when needed and provide for a single point of entry and unified waiting list. It must include: developmentally appropriate curriculum, character development, age-appropriate assessment of each child's development, pretest upon entering and posttest upon leaving each program, appropriate staff-to-child ratio, healthful and safe environment, and a resource and referral network to assist informed parental choice. Additionally, each plan must provide: parental co-payment through a sliding fee scale, parental choice of settings and locations, trained instructional staff, eligibility priority for at-risk and economically disadvantaged children (<i>once in the program, the child may remain until kindergarten</i>), payment rates developed by the coalition, systems support and direct enhancement</p>

	<p>services, a business plan, strategies to meet the needs of unique populations, and a fiscal agent who acts on policy direction from the coalition.</p>
<p>5. What is the School Readiness Program Estimating Conference?</p>	<p>The School Readiness Program Estimating Conference must develop estimates and forecasts of the number of individuals eligible for school readiness programs in accordance with the standards of eligibility established by state or federal statute or administrative rule as the conference determines are needed to support the state planning, budgeting, and appropriations processes. In addition, the School Readiness Program Estimating Conference is required to estimate the unduplicated count of children who are eligible for services under the school readiness program.</p>
<p>6. Who serves as the fiscal agent for a local school readiness coalition?</p>	<p>If the local school readiness coalition is not a legally established corporate entity, the coalition must designate a fiscal agent, which may be a public entity or a private non-profit organization. The fiscal agent may not provide direct early education or childcare services; however, a fiscal agent may provide such services upon a written request of the coalition to the Partnership and upon the approval of such request by the Partnership.</p>
<p>7. What are the applicable funding streams and how will they be allocated?</p>	<p>The AWI must administer school readiness funds pursuant to a contract with the Partnership. AWI will prepare a school readiness equity and performance funding formula for approval by the Legislative Budget Commission.</p> <p>A coalition's school readiness program will have available to it funding from all the coalition's early education and child care programs that are funded with state, federal, lottery or local funds, including Florida First Start programs, Even-Start literacy programs, prekindergarten early intervention programs, Head Start Programs, programs offered by public and private providers of child care, migrant prekindergarten programs, Title I programs, subsidized child care programs and teen parent programs, together with any additional funds appropriated or obtained for the coalition's program. (Note—although provided by law, teen parent programs have not yet been made part of any coalition's school readiness program.) Administrative costs must be kept to the minimum necessary for efficient and effective administration of the plan, but total administrative expenditures must not exceed 5 percent unless specifically waived by the Partnership.</p> <p>Funding will be distributed as block grants to assist coalitions in integrating services and funding to develop a quality service</p>

	<p>delivery system. Subject to appropriation, the Partnership may also provide financial awards to coalitions demonstrating success in merging and integrating funding streams to serve children and school readiness programs. State funds appropriated for the school readiness program may not be used for the construction of new facilities or the purchase of buses. The Partnership must present to the Legislature recommendations for providing necessary transportation services for school readiness programs. All cost savings and all revenues received through a mandatory sliding fee scale must be used to help fund the local school readiness program.</p>
<p>8. What are the applicable statutes and rules?</p>	<p>Section 216.136(10) F.S. -- School Readiness Program Estimating Conference                  Section 229.567, F.S. -- Uniform screening                  Section 240.529(4)(f)2., F.S. -- Training Program Report Cards                  Section 411.01, F.S. -- Florida Partnership for School Readiness</p>
<p>9. Where can I get additional information?</p>	<p>Agency for Workforce Innovation                  1320 Executive Center Drive                  Tallahassee, FL 32399-0067                  (850) 488-7228  <a href="http://www2.myflorida.com/awi/">www2.myflorida.com/awi/</a></p> <p>Florida Partnership for School Readiness                  The Holland Building, Room 251                  600 South Calhoun Street                  Tallahassee, FL 32399                  (850) 488-0337  <a href="http://www.myflorida.com/myflorida/government/learn/schoolreadiness/index.html">www.myflorida.com/myflorida/government/learn/schoolreadiness/index.html</a></p> <p>The Florida House of Representatives                  Committee on Workforce and Technical Skills                  (850) 922-9463</p> <p>The Florida House of Representatives                  Council for Lifelong Learning                  (850) 414-6694</p>