

**LEGISLATIVE CONCERNS—2009- 2010 SESSION**

***FUNDING FOR EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS – SCHOOL READINESS & VPK***

**SCHOOL READINESS**

**Background Information**

- **TANF Recipients** (required by law to serve) – children listed on child care authorizations from local Workforce partner agencies.
- **Children at risk of abuse or neglect** -protective services, foster children, & children listed on child care authorizations from the Department of Children and Families.
- **Low-income Working Families-** families who are working or going to school at least part-time and they meet income qualifications. This is the group with the most flexibility for local control. This is also the group that is moved to a wait list when funds are limited.

**Current Statewide Status-**

- 856,634 children (age 0-12) were living at or below 150% of the federal poverty level in 2007, meeting eligibility requirements for school readiness services.
- Only 247,349 children (less than 30%) received services in 2008-09 due to funding limitations.

**Current Big Bend Region Status-**

- Enrolled- 4,082 Leon County- 2555
- Wait List- 1571 Leon County- 1103

**House and Senate Transportation and Economic Development Committees**

- Budget Reduction Exercises- 15% reduction is required of this committee and the budget that has significant available funds in AWI is School Readiness Services.

\$ 3,806,411	Reduction- State Funded School Readiness Matching Funds
<u>\$15,728,550</u>	Reduction- General Revenue Funded School Readiness Matching Funds
\$19,534,961	Total Reduction in School Readiness Matching Funds

As a result of this reduction, the state will be unable to draw down \$23.7 million in federal funds for a total reduction in School Readiness of over \$43 million. A reduction of this magnitude will result in an estimated 10,800 fewer children receiving child care services. In addition, this reduction could potentially impact the Agency’s ability to retain American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds due to the “non-supplantation requirement” of the \$105 million in School Readiness ARRA funds.

- Additional Exercise requested by Senate TEDA Committee

AWI was asked to determine the potential impact of specific amount reductions

- 10 Million General Revenue & 12.2 Million Federal Match Draw Down
  - 159 children and budget reduction of \$636,423
- 50 Million General Revenue & 58.5 Million Federal Match Draw Down
  - 778 Children – and budget reduction of \$3,117,213

## **VOLUNTARY PRE-KINDERGARTEN**

### **Senate and House Pre-k – 12 committees**

#### **Background Information**

VPK is an entitlement program meaning all children requesting the VPK program must be served. School Readiness children enrolling in VPK may also receive school readiness funding for the balance of the day that VPK does not fund. Approximately, 70% of VPK providers also receive school readiness wrap around.

VPK Children in the Big Bend Region- 2,384 Leon – 1,698

#### **Current and future budgetary needs**

- For 2009-2010
  - Approximately \$28m is required to account for current year deficits.
  - Approximately \$8m for 2008-2009 deficit
  - Approximately \$20m for estimated enrollment increase
- For 2010-2011
  - Approximately \$80m is required\*.
  - Approximately \$38m in nonrecurring ARRA funds
  - Approximately \$42m for estimated enrollment increase

\*Based on anticipated appropriation of approximately \$328m. Total required for 2010-2011 is approximately \$409m.

### **Possible Impact of reductions on workforce, families and children.**

Without school readiness assistance, many parents cannot work. For families that do receive school readiness services, the typical cost of care is 7% of family income; without support, the cost would be 50% of family income.

Inadequate child care arrangements costs Florida businesses through increased absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover. Thirty-eight percent of young children in Florida have parents that have had to change child care arrangement in the past month or change jobs in the past year (or both) due to child care conflicts.

Low income mothers who receive child care assistance are 40% more likely to remain employed after 2 years than those that do not receive assistance.

Children in high quality early learning environments have better development, academic, and life outcomes.

There are several inter-connections for the VPK and School Readiness program. Budget cuts in either one will severely impact the other.

- Funding for School Readiness wrap for VPK children.
- Higher quality, educational program for at risk children might be lost if VPK providers chose to not participate.
- If more children are added to VPK classrooms, accredited providers could be in danger of losing accreditation. This could result in loss of Gold Seal status and additional school readiness rate that is paid to these providers.
- Families on SR waitlist or who have lost their SR funding can move back to unemployment rolls, need cash assistance, and potentially lose their jobs.

**Bills under consideration at this time- Consolidation of early childhood services into one agency**

- Create a unified early care and education system with efficiencies in staffing, infrastructure, and resources across the three state agencies.
  - Florida Department of Education Office of Early Learning currently utilizes five staff persons as field staff to support Voluntary Prekindergarten Program training and technical assistance. The Agency for Workforce Innovation also has field staff available to support training and technical assistance. Potential savings: Approximately \$500,000.
  - Both agencies utilize fiscal, information technology, program, and research/evaluation staff. Potential savings: undetermined.
  - State appropriation processes are complex as each agency involved is staffed by different legislative committees. Numerous legislative staff must dedicate time to understanding, communicating, analyzing, and coordinating early learning issues. Potential savings: undetermined.
- Support a seamless early care and education system that simplifies access for parents and providers.
  - One responsible agency would simplify access issues for parents who currently must visit multiple state websites or make multiple calls for information on the Florida Voluntary Prekindergarten Program.
  - One responsible agency would simplify procedures and processes for early learning service providers. Currently providers that serve children through the 3-hour Florida Voluntary Prekindergarten Program and provide school readiness services have to:

- Keep two separate eligibility procedures, attendance rosters, verification processes, and multiple other forms
  - Follow different absentee processes and payment policies
  - Navigate two separate sets of standards for four-year-old children, the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Standards and Florida Birth to Five Performance Standards
  - Conduct different child assessments for the Florida Voluntary Prekindergarten Program and the School Readiness Program on the same children
  - Monitor and participate in training requirements from three different agencies
- AWI Office of Early Learning is the administrator for the Child Care Development Block Grant and oversees birth to age five early care and education services for Florida and has staff with expertise in early childhood.
    - AWI Office of Early Learning has the early childhood and child development expertise among its staff to best guide Florida's early care and education system.
    - AWI Office of Early Learning works successfully with local early learning coalitions, and local coalitions provide direct connections to providers and parents and have a successful history of being responsive to local needs.