

6M-4.740 Program Assessment Requirements for the School Readiness Program.

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

(a) “Care Levels” refers to the age of the majority (51% or more) of enrolled children in a classroom. Three care levels are used to meet the required observation quota: Infant (ages 0-18 months), Toddler (ages 19-35 months), and PreK (ages 36 months-kindergarten entry.)

(b) “Classroom” refers to any well-defined room in which care is provided or classes are held; a room arranged with materials and equipment and set up as a learning space with intent to implement a plan of activities for the School Readiness program. The classroom provides a space where learning can take place uninterrupted by outside distractions. If floor to ceiling walls are not present, the classroom walls must be defined by stable barriers, and must adhere to the requirements for such barriers as established in Forms OEL-SR-6202, OEL-SR-6204, and OEL-SR-6206 as incorporated by reference in Rule 6M-4.620, F.A.C. Any classroom that is eligible to receive a School Readiness child enrollment at any time, is considered under this definition. Any classroom that serves children in the School Readiness program for less than two consecutive hours a day is not considered a “classroom” per this definition.

(c) “Composite Classroom” means a School Readiness provider classroom randomly selected through the OEL-defined system to meet the composite score calculation requirements of 50% of classrooms at each care level served by the provider.

(d) “Composite Program Assessment Score” means an average of all OEL-adopted program assessment dimension scores, omitting the negative climate score, if included in the tool.

(e) “Contract Minimum Threshold” means the minimum score pursuant to Section 1002.82(2)(n), F.S., and defined in Rule 6M-4.741, F.A.C., that a provider must achieve on the program assessment to be eligible to contract for the School Readiness Program.

(f) “Early Learning Coalition” or “coalition” refers to the entity charged with administering School Readiness Program services pursuant to Sections 1002.83 and 1002.84, F.S. “Early Learning Coalition” or “coalition” includes applicable OEL contractors.

(g) “Negative Climate Score” means the measure of the level of expressed negativity shown by teachers and/or children in a classroom.

(h) “Observer” means a certified reliable observer for the age group of the classroom being observed, that meets the requirements of Form OEL-SR 740.

(i) “Personnel” is defined as the director and all teachers entered into the OEL-defined system on the Class Roster and includes all instructional staff assigned to classrooms as lead and assistant teachers. Instructional staff does not include substitutes or others who fill in for an absent teacher or those who are temporarily in a classroom for a teacher break.

(j) “Program Assessment” refers to the measurement of the quality of teacher-child interactions, including responsive caregiving, emotional and behavioral support, engaged support for learning, classroom organization, and instructional support for children using the assessment adopted by the Office.

(k) “Quality Improvement Plan” refers to a targeted 12 month plan to improve program quality using performance goals and strategies.

(l) “Quality Improvement Threshold” means the score as adopted by the Office under Section 1002.82(2)(n), F.S., and defined in Rule 6M-4.741, F.A.C., under which a provider is eligible to contract for the School Readiness Program but must be on a Quality Improvement Plan.

(m) “School Readiness Child Care Slots” refers to the number of School Readiness paid child care slots filled during a month of service.

(2) Program Assessment Requirements. Beginning with the 2019-20 School Readiness Contract year and subsequent years, all School Readiness providers serving children from birth to kindergarten entry must have a program assessment conducted and meet the Contract Minimum Threshold to be eligible to participate in the School Readiness Program. A coalition shall waive the Contract Minimum Threshold if the coalition determines that a provider is essential to meet local child care capacity needs as defined in the coalition’s School Readiness Plan, pursuant to Rule 6M-9.115, F.A.C. Providers that have had the Contract Minimum Threshold waived must be on a Quality Improvement Plan. Providers that meet the minimum score for contracting but do not meet the Quality Improvement Threshold shall be placed on a Quality Improvement Plan.

(a) Form OEL-SR 740, Program Assessment Requirements Handbook, dated (April, 2021), is hereby incorporated by reference and may be obtained at the office website at www.floridaearlylearning.com or by contacting the Office of Early Learning, Department of Education, 250 Marriott Drive, Tallahassee, FL 32399. The incorporated form is also available at: <https://www.flrules.org/Gateway/reference.asp?No=Ref-12828>.

(b) Providers must electronically report in the OEL-defined system a director, the number of classrooms as well as teachers and care levels assigned to those classrooms as outlined in Form OEL-SR 740, Program Assessment Requirements Handbook. Non-exempt providers or exempt providers that have opted in to participate in program assessment requirements, pursuant to subsection (3) of this rule, must submit an updated monthly roster in the OEL-defined system.

(c) Providers must give consent in the OEL-defined system to coalition staff or a third-party contractor to administer a program assessment for each selected classroom.

(d) Providers that fail to comply with paragraphs (2)(b) and (c) of this rule will not have a program assessment conducted and will not be eligible for a contract to provide School Readiness services.

(e) Program assessments will be provided by the coalition annually.

1. Providers that have been determined ineligible to contract based on program assessment scores may request a second assessment that follow the guidelines in Form OEL-SR 740 and paragraphs 3. and 4. of this rule and is conducted at the provider's expense by an observer. The new Composite Program Assessment Score must meet the Contract Minimum Threshold for the provider to be eligible for a School Readiness contract.

2. Providers currently on a Quality Improvement Plan who wish to have a program assessment to conclude their QIP early may request a second assessment that follows the guidelines in Form OEL-SR 740 and paragraphs 3. and 4. of this rule. The assessment is conducted at the provider's expense by an observer to satisfy the requirements of the Quality Improvement Plan prior to the end of the 12 month Quality Improvement Plan.

3. A single classroom will be reassessed and its score will replace the previous score to calculate a new composite score if the teacher previously assessed is still actively teaching in the classroom being reassessed. If the previously assessed teacher is not active in the classroom and the newly assigned teacher is hired after the previous assessment was completed, the single classroom will be reassessed and its score will replace the previous score to calculate a new composite score. If the previously assessed teacher is not active in the classroom and the newly assigned teacher was moved from a different classroom, every classroom will be reassessed for the new scores to replace the previous assessment scores.

4. If at the time of the provider's request for a second program assessment, there are less than 50% of the original classrooms in the program assessment baseline or teachers remaining active, new observations shall be made on the randomly selected rooms identified by the OEL-defined system. If the provider adds any new classrooms when its registration is reset, all classrooms selected by the OEL-defined system (50% by care level) must be observed for the second assessment.

(f) Coalitions shall notify providers of their program assessment score within 14 calendar days after the composite program assessment score is generated. Individual classroom scores and notes shall be provided to providers within 10 calendar days upon written request by provider.

(g) Providers currently on a Quality Improvement Plan will have a program assessment completed within 60 calendar days prior to the end of the 12 month Quality Improvement Plan term.

(h) For providers not on a Quality Improvement Plan who score above the Contract Minimum Threshold but below the Quality Improvement Threshold, the coalition shall place the provider on a Quality Improvement Plan within ten calendar days after the provider is notified of the composite program assessment score.

(i) Except as noted herein, for contracted School Readiness providers that score below the Contract Minimum Threshold, the coalition shall terminate the current contract and may revoke the provider's eligibility for up to five years. Written notice of termination will be sent to the provider from the coalition at least thirty (30) calendar days before the termination date. Written notification must include a reason and identify the contract revocation period. For the 2020-21 School Readiness contract year only, an exception shall be made for providers that score a 3.00-3.49 and do not receive a contract minimum score of 3.5 on a voluntary second assessment, shall receive a School Readiness Contract if they agree to participate in a Quality Improvement Plan as prescribed in subsection (6) of this rule. The Quality Improvement Plan strategies the provider must participate in are CLASS Group Coaching Training and Certified Coaching Visits, as defined in Exhibit 3 of The State of Florida Statewide School Readiness Provider Contract, Form OEL-SR 20, incorporated by reference in Rule 6M-4.610, F.A.C. If the selected teacher has previously participated in CLASS Group Coaching Training, the coalition shall select a different strategy from Exhibit 3 of the School Readiness contract.

(j) For the 2021-22 contract year only, a provider's eligibility to contract may be based on the score received from a program assessment conducted in fiscal years 2018-19, 2019-20 or 2020-21. At the time of contracting, the coalition shall use the most recent program assessment score.

(3) Exemptions.

(a) Providers meeting one of the following shall be exempt from the annual program assessment requirement:

1. A provider that has not received one Class I or more than three of the same Class II School Readiness health and safety violations as cited by the Department of Children and Families or local licensing agency, as applicable, in the two year period prior to contract execution and is a:

a. Child care center with 20 percent or less of all filled School Readiness child care slots out of the maximum capacity as defined in Forms OEL-SR-6202, OEL-SR-6204, and OEL-SR-6206 as incorporated by reference in Rule 6M-4.620, F.A.C.

b. Family child care homes with two or fewer of filled School Readiness child care slots out of maximum capacity as defined in Forms OEL-SR-6202, OEL-SR-6204, and OEL-SR-6206 as incorporated by reference in Rule 6M-4.620, F.A.C.

2. Providers that offer only overnight School Readiness services.

(b) When a provider's violations cited by the Department of Children and Families or local licensing agency, as applicable, and filled School Readiness child care slots meet or exceed the exemption threshold in paragraph (3)(a) of this rule, during the operating hours from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., per its provider type, the provider shall no longer be exempt under this section. A coalition shall monitor violations cited by the Department of Children and Families or local licensing agency, as applicable, and filled School Readiness child care slots monthly and notify to provider within 21 calendar days if the provider's filled slots meet or exceed the exemption threshold in paragraph (3)(a) of this rule or if the provider is cited for disqualifying licensing violations. A provider must receive a program assessment pursuant to subsection (2) of this rule within 30 calendar days of notification to continue contracting for School Readiness services.

(c) Exempt providers may opt to participate in program assessment requirements by submitting a request in writing to the coalition prior to contracting for the School Readiness Program. The coalition shall coordinate a program assessment within 60 calendar days of receipt of the notice. The request to participate in program assessment shall constitute a waiver of the exemption and subjects the provider to all of the requirements of this rule.

(d) If a school-age only provider changes the current care levels served to include any children ages birth-kindergarten entry, and does not require a new contract to be executed, they are exempt from the program assessment requirement until they cross the enrollment threshold of paragraph (3)(a) of this rule. Once this threshold is met or exceeded, the program assessment must be conducted in accordance with paragraph (3)(b) of this rule.

(4) Frequency.

(a) All participating School Readiness Program providers shall receive an annual program assessment prior to executing a School Readiness Contract.

(b) In the event of a change where the provider is considered a new provider and must execute a new School Readiness Contract per subsection 6M-4.610(4), F.A.C., the provider may request, prior to executing a new contract, to retain the most recent program assessment score without having to conduct a new assessment if the provider can provide documentation to the coalition that it has retained 80% of personnel listed in the OEL-defined system, and there is no change in capacity or classrooms from when the previous assessment was conducted for the remainder of the contract period. Examples of acceptable documentation include current payroll time sheets and evidence in CARES of monitored personnel during the pre-contractual health and safety inspection, classroom rosters, or attendance documentation. The coalition shall determine if the provider meets the requirements of this paragraph, if requested.

(c) Providers that achieve a program assessment result as identified in subsection 6M-4.741(3), F.A.C., shall have a program assessment conducted biennially. The provider shall not receive one Class I or more than three of the same Class II School Readiness health and safety violations as cited by the Department of Children and Families or local licensing agency, as applicable, during the biennial period and must retain 80% of personnel listed in the OEL-defined system for the remainder of contract term to continue to have assessments conducted biennially.

(d) Providers that have had multiple program assessments conducted shall use the most recent program assessment data for contracting purposes.

(e) Program assessments conducted during participation in other quality initiatives that meet requirements as defined in Form OEL-SR 740, Program Assessment Requirements Handbook, may be used for meeting Contract Minimum Threshold requirements provided it was conducted for the purpose of overall teacher/child interaction, is the most recent program assessment score available, was conducted within the fiscal year applicable for contracting and reduces duplication of effort.

(5) Program Assessment Composite Score Calculation.

(a) 50% of the classrooms in every care level (ages infant-PreK) served by the provider must be assessed to determine the program assessment composite score.

1. If there is an odd number of classrooms in a care level, the required number of classrooms shall be rounded up.

(b) Program assessment scores shall be calculated using the combined average of the dimension scores, excluding negative climate scores, from each selected composite classroom's assessment.

1. All composite classrooms must be assessed before a calculation can be made to determine the final composite program assessment score.

2. After the dimension scores have been averaged, final program assessment composite scores will be rounded to two decimal places.

(6) Quality Improvement Plans. The Quality Improvement Plan will include performance goals and quality improvement strategies as provided for in Form OEL-SR 20, incorporated by reference in Rule 6M-4.610, F.A.C. Coalitions may choose quality improvement strategies as indicated in the coalition's approved School Readiness Plan pursuant to Rule 6M-9.115, F.A.C., to develop Quality Improvement Plans for providers that need to increase program assessment scores.

(a) Providers that have been on a Quality Improvement Plan for 12 months and do not meet the Quality Improvement Threshold at the next annual program assessment will have their School Readiness contract terminated by the coalition. The coalition shall terminate the contract and may revoke the provider's eligibility for up to five years. Written notice of termination will be sent to the provider from the coalition at least thirty (30) calendar days before the termination date. Written notification must include a reason and identify the contract revocation period.

(b) Providers that have not previously been placed on a Quality Improvement Plan that have program assessment results that fall below the Quality Improvement Threshold will be placed on a Quality Improvement Plan for 12 months. Providers shall not be on a Quality Improvement plan for more than one consecutive 12 month period.

(c) The 12 month Quality Improvement Plan period may extend beyond the contract year depending on its start date and is applied for purposes of executing a new contract.

(d) Providers who were on a Quality Improvement Plan for the 2019-2020 School Readiness contract year that do not meet the Quality Improvement Threshold but score at or above the Contract Minimum Threshold for the 2020-21 contract year are permitted to be on a Quality Improvement Plan for two (2) consecutive 12 month periods.

(e) Providers placed on a Quality Improvement Plan in the 2019-20 contract year and subsequent years, shall not have a Quality Improvement Plan for more than two years within a five-year period. Providers that surpass this number will not be eligible to contract for the School Readiness Program for a period of up to five years as determined by the coalition.

(f) Providers that have been determined to be essential to meeting child care capacity needs per subsection (2) of this rule and have an active Quality Improvement Plan shall not have a Quality Improvement Plan for more than three consecutive years. Providers that surpass this number will not be eligible to contract for the School Readiness Program for a period of up to five years as determined by the coalition.

Rulemaking Authority 1001.213, 1002.82 FS. Law Implemented 1002.82(2)(n) FS. History—New 11-29-18, Amended 5-5-20, 4-15-21.