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December 7, 2010

An open letter to child care providers in Miami-Dade:

On Monday, December 6, 2010, the Early Learning Coalition's board of directors approved two important new policies.

One policy, the School Readiness Funded Provider license Policy, requires School Readiness providers who receive federal and state funds in Miami-Dade County to become licensed by July 1, 2011. The goal of this policy is to ensure that all providers meet minimum licensing standards. Most providers in Miami-Dade County are already licensed and many are also accredited, so this policy applies to before/after-school care programs and child enrichment centers currently operating without a state license.

Providers in this category who elect to be licensed in order to continue serving children who participate in the School Readiness Program will receive technical assistance from the Department of Children and Families licensing office and the Early Learning Coalition upon request. Providers who elect not to be licensed can continue to operate with children whose parents or caregivers are paying directly for the services. Programs operated directly by Miami-Dade County Public Schools, faith-based providers and informal providers are exempt from the policy.

The other policy, Child Safety and Licensing Policy, involves providers with Class I and Class II licensing Violations. Providers who have one Class I violation or two Class II violations within a twelve month period beginning July 1, 2011, will receive a letter of intent to suspend from the School Readiness Program. The provider will then have an opportunity to follow the Coalition's grievance procedure and have the grievance heard by the Provider Services Committee (made up of Coalition board members, including the provider representative) who will make a recommendation of final agency action to the full board. The purpose of this policy is to have the board review serious licensing violations and to ensure child safety, not to penalize providers who are running safe and accountable programs. The expected outcome of the policy is that only the most serious violations will result in suspension from the program. Again, the goal of this policy is to ensure child safety.

We realize that any new policy creates a certain level of anxiety and concern. Please know that you are not alone in this process and that Coalition staff are committed to work with all providers to assist them in meeting the new policy requirements. We value and support your efforts to provide a high-quality early care education and high-quality before/after school care services to our community's children.

Please contact School Readiness Program Director Jackye Russell at 305 646-7220 if you have any questions, require technical assistance, or additional information.

I sincerely thank you for your dedication and commitment.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Evelio C. Torres".

Evelio C. Torres, M.P.A.
President/CEO