



**Early Learning
Coalition**
Sarasota County

Florida VPK

Provider Orientation



**Early Learning
Coalition**
Sarasota County

**Orientation must be completed in
order to finalize your VPK contract.**

**Click here to confirm that
you have completed this
orientation.**

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Part One: About VPK

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About Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) is a free, high-quality education program designed to prepare Florida's 4-year-olds for kindergarten and build a foundation for their educational success.

- ✿ High-quality VPK providers deliver age-appropriate curricula, including early literacy and math standards, in manageable class sizes led by qualified instructors.
- ✿ The Division of Early Learning (DEL) partners with 30 Early Learning Coalitions and Redlands Christian Migrant Association to deliver the VPK Program.
- ✿ Florida was one of the first states in the country to offer free prekindergarten for all 4-year-olds regardless of family income. Since the program began in 2005, more than 3.1 million children have benefited from VPK.
- ✿ Data collected by the Florida Department of Education shows that children who participate in VPK are much more ready for kindergarten than children who do not participate in VPK.

Why VPK Matters

Children who attend VPK are more likely to:

- ✿ Enter kindergarten ready to learn
- ✿ Develop strong reading skills early
- ✿ Build confidence in a structured classroom setting
- ✿ Have better school attendance rates
- ✿ Develop lifelong social skills
- ✿ Are more likely to advance to the next grade
- ✿ Are more likely to graduate high school

VPK focuses on building foundational skills, including:

- ✿ Early literacy (letters, sounds, vocabulary)
- ✿ Pre-writing and early math concepts
- ✿ Social-emotional development
- ✿ Classroom routines and independence



Who is Eligible?

To be eligible for VPK, the child must:

- ✿ Live in Florida
- ✿ Turn 4 years old on or before September 1 of the program year
- ✿ Not have already completed a VPK program
- ✿ Families with children born between February 2 and September 1 may postpone enrolling their 4-year-old until the following year when their child is 5

Program Types

After applying and completing the application on the [Family Services Portal](#), parents can choose from private centers and schools, public schools, family child care homes and specialized instructional services providers.

Parents can select from one of the three program available.

School-Year

- 540 Instructional Hours
- Class size is 11 students or fewer with one lead instructor or up to 20 students with a lead instructor and an assistant.
- Instructors must have a minimum of a Florida Child Care Professional Credential.

Summer

- 300 Instructional Hours
- Class size is 12 students or fewer with one lead instructor and an assistant.
- Instructors must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree.

Specialized Instructional Services (SIS)

- Hours Vary Based on Services
- For VPK-age children with current individual educational plans (IEPs).
- Allows parents to choose additional therapy services consistent with the child's IEP in lieu of attending VPK in a traditional classroom setting.

Providers have flexibility to structure daily hours per week to meet the required number of instructional hours.

VPK Eligible Providers

Private Providers

- ✔ Licensed child care facility
- ✔ Licensed family child care home
- ✔ Licensed large family child care home
- ✔ License-exempt nonpublic school (with current Gold Seal designation or accreditation)
- ✔ License-exempt faith-based child care provider (with current Gold Seal designation or accreditation)
- ✔ Accredited child development program operated on a U.S. Dept. of Defense certified military installation

Public School Providers

- ✔ Public schools (including charter schools that include VPK in their charters*)

Charter schools that do not include VPK in their charters must meet private provider requirements to qualify to deliver VPK.



Additional Eligibility Requirements

- Cannot have a public assistance fraud conviction within the last 5 years
- Cannot be on the USDA National Disqualified List
- Comply with any outstanding corrective action from a previous contract
- Provide an E-Verify affidavit
- Have a composite program assessment score of at least a 4.00 (on a 7-point scale), if previously contracted

Instructional Hours

Instructional hours in VPK are the approved hours during which children participate in planned learning experiences under the supervision of qualified instructional staff. These hours make up the official VPK program day and support children's development in language, literacy, math, social-emotional skills, and physical development.

Instructional hours include:

- ✿ Teacher-directed activities
- ✿ Learning centers
- ✿ Small and large group instruction
- ✿ Outdoor learning experiences
- ✿ Mealtimes that include teacher interaction and learning opportunities

Non-instructional periods such as extended care, nap/rest time, or unstructured supervision outside the VPK program schedule do not count toward instructional hours



Program Integrity

- ✿ Ensures the appropriate use of federal and state funding, including:
 - 🍃 Serving eligible families
 - 🍃 Contracting with eligible providers
 - 🍃 Minimizing waste, fraud and abuse
- ✿ Encompasses **both** intentional and unintentional errors



How to Assure Program Integrity

Fiscal Management

Have processes for sound fiscal management

Fraud Detection & Prevention

Identify and address fraud

Improper Payment Reduction

Reduce these types of payments

Eligibility Verification

Document and verify eligible children, providers, services and payments

Monitoring & Oversight

Local – Early learning coalitions monitor providers
State – The Division of Early Learning monitors coalitions
Federal – The Department of Health and Human Services monitors the Division of Early Learning



Governing Laws & Rules

Part V Chapter 1002, Florida Statutes (F.S.)

Chapter 6M-8, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.)

Rule 6A-6.03033, F.A.C.

Part Two: Portal & Contract

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Purpose of the VPK Contract

- Agreement between the provider and its local Early Learning Coalition (ELC)
- Informs provider of the VPK program requirements
- Valid for one program year
- Covers the delivery of a school-year (540 instructional hours) and/or summer program (300 instructional hours)



Provider Portal Single Sign-On (SSO)

The Single Sign-On (SSO) Portal provides users within Florida's educational community with a convenient way to log into multiple state resources with one account.

The Division of Early Learning (DEL) has upgraded the Early Learning Family and Provider Portals with enhanced security features.

All users will be redirected to the FLDOE's new Single Sign-On (SSO)/Multifactor Authorization (MFA) system. Emails were sent out to all Families and Providers with active accounts on how to access your account using the new SSO/MFA system. Please check your email account for an email from FLDOE SSO.

***Please use Google Chrome and Microsoft Edge. They are the recommended internet browsers.**

The Provider Portal User Guide is your go-to resource for step-by-step instructions on completing profiles, contracts, enrollments, and attendance.



Provider Profile: Due Annually *Opens Jan 1st!

- 1** Log on to your Provider Portal Account.
- 2** Choose year 2026 on the top right hand side.
- 3** Click each tab and review the information. Make any necessary updates and verify accuracy of information.
- 4** Submit your profile for coalition review.
- 5** Periodically check for correspondence and the coalition's approval.

Be sure to update your profile throughout the year whenever changes occur!

Setting Up Your Profile

You will need the following documents to set up your profile.

Required

- ✿ DCF License or Exemption Letter
- ✿ E-Verify
- ✿ W-9
- ✿ Child Care Worksheet
- ✿ General Liability Insurance - Must be valid for the entirety of your VPK Contract. Any gap in coverage will not be allowed, and no payments will be made during a gap as you would not be eligible to offer care during that time.

If Applicable

- 🌿 Gold Seal/Accreditation
- 🌿 Worker's Compensation Insurance
- 🌿 Auto Insurance
- 🌿 Sunbiz

Be sure to upload your updated/renewal documents on or before the expiration date!



Part Three: Requirements

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VPK Director Requirements

Section 1022.55(3)(g), Florida Statute and Rule 6M-8.610, Florida Administrative Code, now requires that all VPK directors have a VPK Director Credential or hold a valid certificate in education leadership issued by the Florida Department of Education.

All VPK Directors must have a Directors Credential that is VPK endorsed.

The VPK Director Credential requires the successful completion of the following Division of Early Learning (DEL) course trainings to be endorsed.

- ✿ Implementing the Florida Standards in Preschool Classrooms: 3 Years Old to Kindergarten (online VFSP) 5 hours; 0.5 CEUs or (instructor-led SPC3TK) 3 hours; 0.3 CEUs
- ✿ Emergent Literacy for VPK Instructors (online VPK, VPKR or VPK21) 5 hours; 0.5 CEUs
- ✿ Mathematical Thinking for Early Learners (online MATH) 5 hours; 0.5 CEUs
- ✿ Language and Vocabulary in the VPK Classroom (online LVPK or LVPK21) 5 hours; 0.5 CEUs
- ✿ VPK Director Credential Course (online DVPK) 5 hours; 0.5 CEUs
- ✿ To register, login to your DCF account [here](#).

Additional Requirements:

- ✿ Background screening results
- ✿ Attestation of Good Moral Character



School Year Instructor Requirements

School year instructors must have one of the credentials below:

- 🌿 Florida Childcare Professional Certificate (FCCPC), Child Development Associate (CDA)
- 🌿 Associates Degree
- 🌿 Bachelors Degree

Required Trainings: (All courses are available on the DCF website)

- 🌿 Implementing the Florida Standards in Preschool Classrooms: 3 Years Old to Kindergarten (online VFSP) 5 hours; 0.5 CEUs or (SPC3TK) instructor-led 3 hours; 0.3 CEUs
- 🌿 Three 5-hour Division of Early Learning (DEL) Emergent Literacy courses

[Click here for a complete list of qualifying Emergent Literacy courses](#)

Requirements for Assistants & Substitutes

Assistants and Substitutes must have minimum of:

- ✿ 45 hours
- ✿ Background Screening Results
- ✿ Attestation of Good Moral Character

All VPK staff members need to have on file, in the portal, the most recent Attestation of Good Moral Character form (2024)

- ✿ The name of your program must be written on both pages
- ✿ Requires a witness (director/owner) to sign
- ✿ No notary required
- ✿ Directors cannot witness themselves.



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Summer VPK Program Overview

- ✿ 300 Instructional Hours
- ✿ Must have 4 children (VPK Certificates to start)
- ✿ Classes are not to exceed 12 students with a single lead instructor
- ✿ Instructors must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree
- ✿ Assess children twice during the program – Progress Monitoring 1 and Progress Monitoring 3
- ✿ Program assessment – CLASS assessment



Lead Teacher Requirements

The lead teacher must have one of the credentials below:

- 🌿 Be a certified teacher who holds a valid Educator Certificate
- 🌿 Have a Bachelor's Degree or higher in elementary, prekindergarten or primary education, preschool education or family and consumer science.
- 🌿 Have a Bachelor's Degree or higher in elementary education and has a certification to teach (certificate may be expired)

Required Trainings: (All courses are available on the DCF website)

- 🌿 Implementing the Florida Standards in Preschool Classrooms: 3 Years Old to Kindergarten (online VFSP) 5 hours; 0.5 CEUs or (SPC3TK) instructor-led 3 hours; 0.3 CEUs
- 🌿 Three 5-hour Division of Early Learning (DEL) Emergent Literacy courses

[Click here for a complete list of qualifying Emergent Literacy courses](#)

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Provider Responsibilities

- 🍃 Maintain compliance with contracts and rules
- 🍃 Deliver high-quality instruction
- 🍃 Track attendance and documentation
- 🍃 Administer required assessments



Child Enrollment

- ✿ Enroll **only** children with a Certificate of Eligibility (COE)
- ✿ Follow reenrollment requirements for families who want to transfer to a different provider location
- ✿ No reimbursement for unauthorized care



Child Attendance

Providers create their own Attendance Policy, keeping in mind the 80/20 rule.

- 🌿 The VPK 80/20 rule is an attendance policy mandated by the state of Florida to determine how state funding is distributed. It requires a child to attend at least 80% of their enrolled instructional hours.
- 🌿 For the provider to be fully reimbursed by the state, the child cannot be absent for more than 20% of the time they attend.



Prohibited Child Discipline

- No physical punishment
- No humiliating or frightening discipline
- No withholding of food, rest or toileting
- No denial of active play as a consequence of misbehavior



Supplemental Services & Prohibited Fees

Do not charge for VPK services

- Provider agrees that, in accordance with s. 1002.71(8)(a), F.S., Provider must not require payment of a fee or charge for services provided for a child in the VPK Program during instructional hours reported for funding. Provider must not require a fee or payment as a condition of enrollment or participation in the VPK Program.
- Do not charge for supplemental services (e.g., “wrap-around” services) as a condition of enrollment
- Provider agrees that, in accordance with section 1002.71(8)(b), F.S., provider will not require a child to enroll for, or require the payment of any fee or charge for, supplemental services (e.g., “extended-day,” “extended-year,” “wrap-around,” or “full-day” services) as a condition of admitting the child in the VPK Program.
- Provider agrees to schedule all VPK hours offered for any VPK class so that parents are not constructively required to enroll a child in supplemental services or pay any fee or charge (e.g., scheduling instructional hours in a day with a break in instructional time, for which parents would be required to pay for supplemental services for care)

[Click here to view the VPK contract](#)

Part Six: Accountability & Quality Measures

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Accountability & Quality Measures

Programs are monitored to ensure quality through:

- ✿ Program Monitoring (sample of providers will be determined)
- ✿ Assessments like Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST)
- ✿ Classroom quality tools like CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System)
- ✿ Performance metrics tied to student learning gains

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

The Classroom Scoring System (CLASS) is an evidence-based observational tool used to assess the effectiveness of teacher-child interactions in the classroom, focusing on the following domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support.

Each VPK classroom participates annually in a program assessment observation conducted by coalition observers or approved vendors.

Observations must be:

- ✿ Conducted during instructional VPK hours while children are present (including outdoor activities and lunch)
- ✿ Completed before the program end date

Providers must achieve an annual Program Assessment Composite Score (the average of all VPK classrooms) of at least 4.00 to remain eligible to offer VPK the following year.

[Click here for a FAQ on VPK Program Assessments](#)



FAST - Star Early Literacy

In Florida, the FAST (Florida Assessment of Student Thinking) Star Early Literacy training is a mandatory, annual requirement for any VPK teacher or staff member administering the test. The training ensures the assessment is administered consistently across all programs to measure early literacy and math skills.

Purpose of the Assessment

- Measures student progress in early literacy
- Administered during required windows
- Used to identify student needs
- Guides instructional decisions

Key Training Details

- All VPK programs must have a qualified test administrator who has completed this training before giving the test to students.
- The training certificate is only valid for one year from the date of completion. Test administrators must retake it annually.
- Training is completed online through the [Renaissance Educator Academy Platform](#).

[Click here for a FAQ](#)

FAST Requirements

VPK FAST Star Early Literacy assessments must be administered by a qualified test administrator. Qualified test administrators must be employed by a public or private VPK provider and:

- ✿ Complete the annual VPK FAST Star Early Literacy Test Administrators course on Educator Academy.
- ✿ Complete the Test Administration and Security Agreement.
- ✿ Complete the Test Administrator Prohibited Activities Agreement.
- ✿ Submit proof of training and both signed agreements to the Early Learning Coalition, with your VPK director's help, via the Early Learning Provider Services Portal.



Program Compliance Monitoring

The coalition reviews providers to ensure they are meeting VPK contract requirements and state regulations, including:

- ✿ Staff credentials and background screenings
- ✿ Attendance and enrollment documentation
- ✿ Instructional hours and class size compliance
- ✿ Use of approved curriculum and developmentally appropriate practices
- ✿ VPK documentation and records

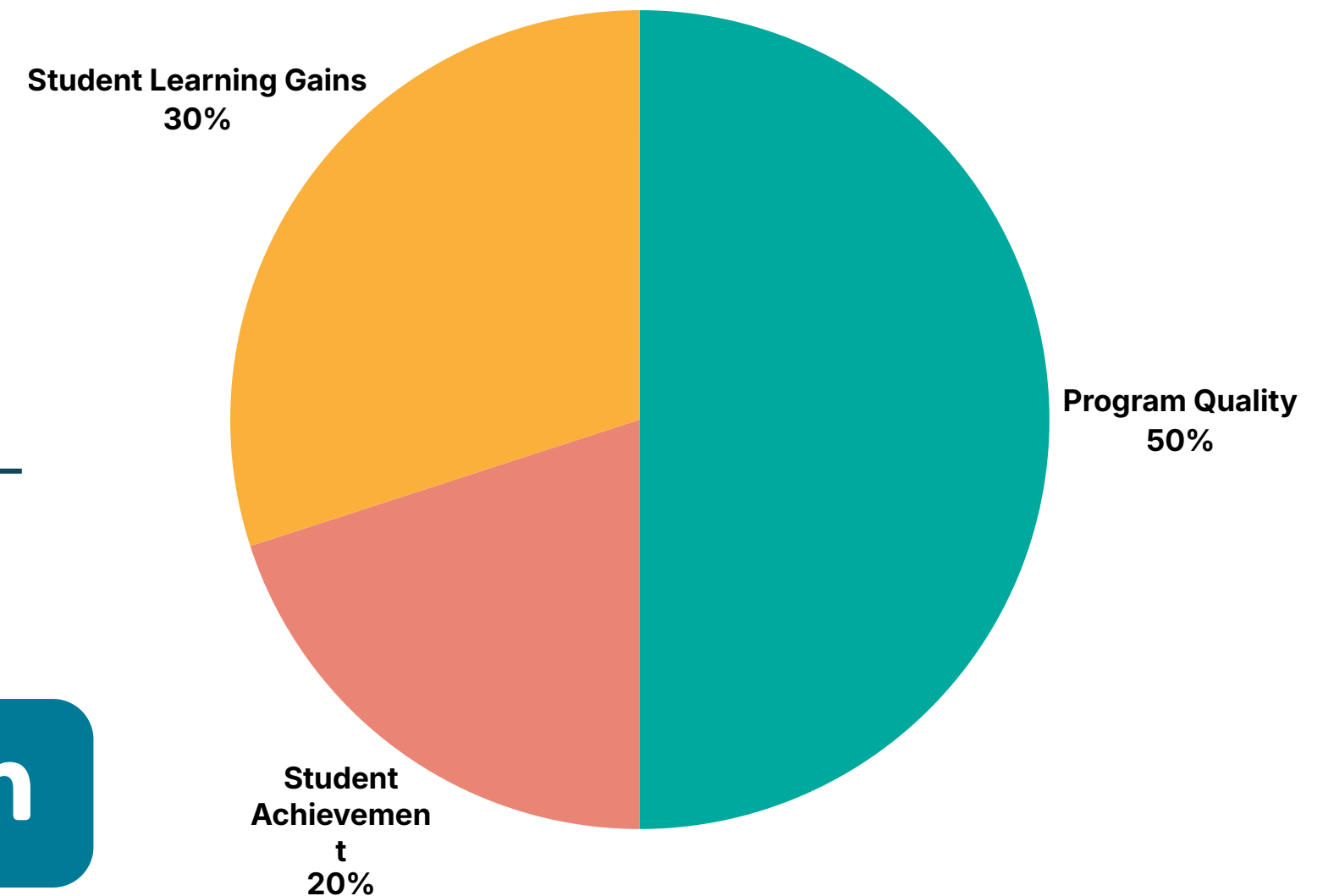
Performance Metrics & Designations

Earn a metric and designation at the end of the program year.
The metric has three parts:

Program Quality Points
Student Achievement Points
+ Student Learning Gains Points

Performance Metric

[Click here for more information](#)





Providers on Probation, Incomplete Status, and Good Cause Exemption

- Complete an improvement plan if you are on probation (earned Below Expectations or Unsatisfactory)
- Complete a technical assistance plan if you have an incomplete status
- Apply for a good cause exemption to continue to offer VPK if you earn Below Expectations or Unsatisfactory 3 years in a row

Curriculum for Providers on Probation (POP)

Provider must:

- ✔ Select or design a curriculum that aligns with the **Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards**
- ✔ Use a Department of Education approved curriculum if on probation

Click [here](#) to view
the list of approved
curriculum.

Part Seven: Documentation & Reporting

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Recordkeeping & Confidentiality

- ✔ Protect the privacy of family and child records
- ✔ Do not share child information, unless it is with coalitions, parents or other approved parties
- ✔ Keep records for at least 5 school years and back up digital files often

Reimbursement

- ✿ Based on base student allocation plus county differential
- ✿ Reimbursed for attendance and allowable absences
- ✿ Receive payment for temporary closures caused by a declared state of emergency
- ✿ Follow requirements for temporary closures not due to a declared state of emergency

Reporting

Event	Coalition Notification Required
Change in ownership	30 calendar days prior
Class transfer within the same location	Within 14 calendar days
Change in insurance	10 calendar days prior
Changes to information on VPK application	Within 14 calendar days
Temporary closure	Initial: 1 st closure day Resumption: within 2 business days
Dismissal of VPK children	Within 14 calendar days
Request for a second program assessment	Within 30 days of score
Unusual incidents	No later than COB the next day; written report within 3 business days
Placed on the USDA disqualified list	Within 5 calendar days
Convicted of public assistance fraud	Within 5 calendar days



Noncompliance and Corrective Action Notice

The ELC of Sarasota will:

- 1 Identify the specific requirement(s) the provider failed to meet
- 2 Describe in detail the required corrective action
- 3 Set a deadline for completion
- 4 Inform the provider of its right to request a review

Corrective Action & Probation

The ELC of Sarasota will impose contractual sanctions as mandated by the most current Division of Early Learning Health and Safety handbook.

	Class I Citation	Class II Citation	Class III Citation
Technical Assistance	Mandatory probation. Technical Assistance will be offered in the form of a CAP and a SR Program Assessment may be scheduled.	1 violation	1 or 2 violations
Corrective Action Plan (CAP)	Will be applied to all employees. Plan consists of Professional Development. Failure to comply may result in contract termination.	2 of the same violation 3 of the same violation 4+ different Class II violations within the same contract year	3 or 4 of the same violation 6+ different Class III
Mandatory 6-Month Probation	1 or 2 Class I Violation	3 of the same violation Failure to comply with CAP 4+ different Class II violations	6+ of the same violation Failure to comply with CAP
Consideration of Contract Termination:	Subsequent violations for the same Class I	Subsequent violations of the same Class II 5+ different Class II violations Failure to comply with probation	Subsequent violations of the same Class III Failure to comply with probation



Appeal Process

Providers participating in the SR and/or VPK programs may request a review of decision made by the Early Learning coalition by following the Due Process Procedures outlined in the Statewide SR and VPK Contract, Exhibit 7, Due Process Procedures.

- If a provider disagrees with an action taken by the ELC under the Statewide SR and/or VPK Contract (i.e. termination of SR/VPK contract), the provider may submit a written request for a review hearing to contracts@elcsarasota.org. The request must have the following information:
 - Provider name and contact information
 - Attorney name and contact information, if applicable
 - The specific action by the ELC provider disputes
 - The specific reason why the provider disputes the action
- The ELC must public notice the review hearing
- The provider will have an opportunity to address the action and present information to the Review Hearing Committee.
- The Review Hearing Committee consists of at least three (3) but no more than five (5) members. One of the members of the Committee must be one of the provider representatives on the board.

For more details, refer to the Statewide SR and VPK Contract, Exhibit 7, Due Process Procedures. Providers may also contact contracts@elcsarasota.org for more information about the appeals process.

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Provider Resources



Warm Line

When challenges show up in the classroom, you don't have to figure it out alone. Our Warm Line gives educators direct access to specialized guidance on real, everyday situations, so you can respond with confidence and clarity.

941-954-4830 x 231 | warmline@elcsarasota.org

[Warm Line Form](#)

Training Calendar

Professional growth should be easy to access and easy to plan. The ELC Training Calendar makes it easy to plan your learning journey. Each listing clearly outlines time commitments, format, and credit eligibility so you can choose what best fits your goals and schedule.

[View Training Calendar](#)



Directors Connection

Each month, the ELC hosts a gathering that unites leaders from across Sarasota County's early education community. These sessions foster collaboration, peer to peer support, and professional growth through ELC updates, training news, and guest speakers who share strategies to strengthen classroom quality and family engagement. View our training calendar for upcoming dates!

Educator Support Hub

The Educator Support Hub brings together the most requested tools and information for early childhood professionals in Sarasota County. Here, you can explore professional development opportunities, access child screening and early intervention resources, view past newsletters, and find helpful forms and tools to support your program.

[View Educator Support Hub](#)



ELC Newsletter

Stay connected with the latest updates on contract compliance, professional development opportunities, local resources, and more by joining our newsletter!

[Click Here to Sign Up for the Director's Newsletter](#)

[Click Here to Sign Up for the Teacher's Newsletter](#)

Missed a newsletter? No worries – you can find past editions anytime on our website [here](#).



We're Here to Help.

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