

Subject: Co-Payment Fee Waiver Policy	
Policy #: SRP002	Category: School Readiness Program
Effective Date: 4/13/2026	Replaces: SCC1 1.XX – 10/2/2017 (Parent Fee Assessment, Waivers, and Graduated Phase Out Procedures)
Approved by CEO: A. Fraga — 4/10/2026	
Authority Reference: Florida Statute §1002.84(8), F.S.; Florida Administrative Code Rule 6M-4.400; Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF); Florida Department of Education — Division of Early Learning	

Approved by: The Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County’s Chief Executive Officer for all internal procedures. The Board and/or Executive Committee-Delegated CEO Discretionary Waiver Authority (Section II) is Board policy and has been reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors and/or its Executive Committee on April 13, 2026, as a separate board action.

Policy Statement:

ELCSC reviews this policy on a regular basis and updates it as necessary to ensure compliance with current federal and state requirements governing the School Readiness Program. When applicable laws, administrative rules, or official guidance change, ELCSC will revise its procedures accordingly.

Definitions:

Parent Copayment – The amount a family is responsible for paying toward the cost of child care services under the School Readiness Program. ELCSC determines the parent copayment using the current Division of Early Learning (DEL) issued sliding fee scale based on the family's verified eligibility. A family's assessed parent copayment will not exceed seven percent (7%) of its household income, as required by state law.

At-Risk - refers to children at risk of abuse, neglect, abandonment and/or exploitation. This includes children under protective services, in Foster Care, shelters and homelessness.

Procedure Statement:

ELCSC determines each family's School Readiness (SR) parent copayment using the DEL issued sliding fee scale, taking into consideration the family's size, annual gross income, and authorized hours of care. In situations where a family meets ELCSC's established criteria for a copayment waiver, the coalition may reduce or waive the family's copayment in accordance with applicable state requirements. Families requesting a copayment waiver must provide the required supporting documentation, and all waiver determinations will be recorded in the family's case file.

Section I: Temporary Waiver of Parent Fee

ELCSC may temporarily reduce or waive a family's required School Readiness parent copayment when the family meets one or more of the coalition's approved fee waiver criteria, as authorized by Section 1002.84(9), F.S. Each request is evaluated on an individual basis, and the determination is supported by documentation maintained in the family's case record. Qualifying circumstances include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Child's parents/guardians are incarcerated
- Child's parents/guardians are in residential treatment
- Child's parents are homeless
- Child's parents are participating in an approved parenting class
- Child's parents are enrolled in a federally funded Early Head Start or Head Start program
- Child's parents/guardians experience a natural disaster (storm, hurricane, earthquake, etc.)

- Child's parents/guardians experience an emergency, unplanned life event, or financial hardship such as a fire or robbery that requires substantial financial commitment for a short period

All waiver requests and approvals must be documented in the family's file and the state data system. The reason for the fee waiver and the length of time must be documented in the case file.

Section I.A: At-Risk Co-Payment Waivers

In accordance with section 1002.84(9), F.S., the Coalition may waive the parent copayment for children determined to be at risk. Families referred by an authorized agency under protective services, foster care, diversion, homelessness, or domestic violence categories may be eligible for a full copayment waiver. A valid referral must be maintained in the case file and verified at each redetermination. The referring agency may include the waiver request on the referral form.

At-Risk Families Without Income Documentation:

When an at-risk family does not provide income documentation at the time of eligibility determination, ELCSC will set the copayment at \$0 initially. The family will continue to have a \$0 copayment until the next eligibility redetermination.

Section II: Board and/or Executive Committee-Delegated CEO Discretionary Waiver Authority

The Board of Directors and/or its Executive Committee delegates to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) the authority to waive parent copayments for enrolled families when funding is available. This authority may only be exercised when ALL of the following conditions are met:

Condition	Requirement
Board and/or Executive Committee Authorization	The Board of Directors and/or the Executive Committee must authorize this authority by resolution for the applicable fiscal period and specify a maximum dollar cap on total discretionary waivers.
Available Funding	The CFO must certify that adequate discretionary funds are available and sufficient to cover projected waivers for the applicable period.
Regulatory Compliance	Waivers shall not conflict with Florida Statute §1002.84(8), Rule 6M-4.400, F.A.C., or applicable CCDF requirements.
Board and/or Executive Committee Reporting	The CEO shall report waiver activity (number of waivers, amounts, and funding source) to the Board of Directors and/or Executive Committee on a regular basis aligned with the Finance Committee meeting schedule.

Discretionary waivers may be granted for up to six (6) months and are renewable upon continued Board and/or Executive Committee authorization. The CEO may suspend discretionary waivers at any time if funding becomes insufficient, with no less than 10 to 14 business days written notice to affected families and child care providers. All authorizing resolutions and the CFO's written funding certification shall be retained in the coalition's administrative records.

Policy Location:

Shared Drive: Early Learning Coalition Of Sarasota County\Shared - Documents\General\Eligibility\Policies & Procedures - CURRENT