

# Florida's School Readiness Program

## Fact Sheet for Families



Florida's School Readiness Program offers financial assistance to low-income families for early education and care so their young children can do well in school in the future and the families can become financially self-sufficient.

The program is designed to give children who might be at a disadvantage access to the kind of opportunities that help prepare them for school. Being ready for school starts early and draws on understanding how young children learn, establishing sensible expectations for what children should know and be able to do when they start school, and then helping them get there.

### What does “school readiness” mean?

School readiness means ensuring that every child, regardless of family income status, has the tools and support to be ready for school. It takes into account a child's physical, social, emotional and intellectual development. The program establishes parents as a child's first teacher, and provides resources and assistance to families so they are able to give their children the nurturing relationships and experiences that promote school readiness.

### What are the benefits?

Florida's School Readiness Program works to

- Prepare young children to start kindergarten ready to learn.
- Help working families afford quality early learning services.
- Keep parents in the workforce and/or participating in educational or training activities.
- Help families become financially independent.
- Provide parents information about child development and family well-being.

### Early Learning Matters



Children learn more quickly during their early years than any other time in life.



In the first few years of life, more than one million new neural connections are formed every second.



Young children learn best in an environment that addresses their educational, social, emotional and physical needs.



Early education helps lessen educational disparities between children from low-income families and their peers.



High-quality early learning environments make a difference in children's lifelong academic and social success.

Source: National Association for the Education of Young Children

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### What kind of child care providers offer the School Readiness Program?

Services vary based on individual need and range from extended day to extended year and school-age care in some instances. Parents can choose from private centers and schools, public schools and family child care homes.

All providers must meet certain quality standards established by the Office of Early Learning as well as state and federal health and safety requirements.



### Which children are eligible?

There are three primary eligibility requirements:

- Parent(s)/guardian(s) must be working or participating in an educational activity such as attending college or trade school at least 20 hours/week.

- Gross income must be at or below 150 percent of federal poverty level for family size.
- Families must pay a copayment for child care based on income and family size.

Other children may be eligible if they have special needs, are at risk of abuse, neglect or abandonment, their parents are homeless, victims of domestic violence or are low-income migrant families or farm workers.

### How do I apply for the School Readiness Program?

You can apply online from a computer, laptop, tablet or cell phone. Go to [familyservices.floridaeearlylearning.com](http://familyservices.floridaeearlylearning.com). If you have specific questions about the program, contact your local early learning coalition. You will find a map of all 30 coalitions in Florida on the early learning website at [www.floridaeearlylearning.com](http://www.floridaeearlylearning.com).

You can also receive more information about the School Readiness Program and how to apply by calling the toll-free family line at the Office of Early Learning 1-866-357-3239 (TTY: 711).



5

Florida's rank among states in number of children and families benefiting from school readiness.

62

Percent of families in Florida getting school readiness services and in the workforce.

7,676

School readiness providers in Florida in 2017-18.

201,608

Children in school readiness programs in Florida in 2017-18.