

EMERGENCY ORDER RELATED TO THE IMPACT OF HURRICANE IRMA

As a result of the devastating effects of Hurricane Irma, many residents have been displaced, suffered a loss of income, or are in need of early learning program services. Additionally, many child care providers and public schools were closed or damaged. Some families have sought to transfer or enroll their children in early learning programs but lack proper documentation because records were destroyed or cannot be located. In addition to the impact on families, the storm affected child care providers and public schools' ability to meet deadlines for administering assessments, submitting records and completing training. Therefore, in accordance with Executive Order 17-235, Section 4B, Section 252.46, Florida Statutes, as directed by the State Coordinating Officer, I order the following statutes and rules waived to allow providers to enroll children and provide other relief so as not to impede recovery from the hurricane:

1. Provisions of law and rule related to the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Program

- The provisions of subsections (1)(b) and (3)(a) Rule 6M-8.620, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), related to the Florida VPK Assessment to the extent necessary to extend the Assessment Period 1 (AP1) for an additional 30 calendar days to permit sufficient time for the administration of the assessment.
- The provisions of subsection (3)(c) Rule 6M-8.620, F.A.C., related to the reporting of student data from the Florida VPK Assessment to the extent necessary to extend an additional 30 days to permit sufficient time for providers and school districts to enter and submit data for the AP1 on the Bright Beginnings website.
- Rule 6M-8.204(5)(a)1, F.A.C., to the extent necessary to allow a student to be considered in attendance for all VPK program hours offered during a temporary emergency closure for a combined total of seven instructional days, rather than five days.
- Rule 6M-8.204(5)(a)3, F.A.C., to allow a private provider or school district to revise its class schedule to restore VPK instructional days which are lost due to temporary closures caused by emergency circumstances in excess of seven instructional days, rather than five days.
- Rule 6M-8.300(2)(c), F.A.C., to the extent that a VPK provider may notify a coalition of a change in schedule as a result of the impact of Hurricane Irma up to 30 days after the change.

2. Provisions of law and rule related to the School Readiness Program

- The provisions of Rule 6M-4.200, F.A.C., requiring a 12-month eligibility period.
- The provisions of Rule 6M-4.208, F.A.C., to the extent that applicants may be deemed eligible and enroll in the School Readiness Program without having

provided the documentation required in subsection (4) of the rule for an initial temporary eligibility period of up to three months. At the end of the initial temporary eligibility period, the coalition may redetermine continued eligibility on a case-by-case basis subject to the family's displaced status, documentation and funding availability.

- The provisions of Rule 6M-4.400(6), F.A.C., and Section 1002.84(8), Florida Statutes, regarding a coalition's authority to waive the required copayment on a case-by-case basis for a child whose family income is at or below the federal poverty level and whose family experiences a natural disaster, to the extent that a coalition may waive the copayment regardless of family income, including those children whose family income is above the federal poverty level.
- The provisions of Rule 6M-4.400(7), F.A.C., requiring a parent to submit documentation from a prior school readiness provider that the copayment has been satisfactorily fulfilled before the parent can transfer to the new provider.
- The provisions of Rule 6M-4.500, F.A.C., requiring that reimbursement shall be authorized for no more than three absences per calendar month per child except in the event of extraordinary circumstances in which case the coalition or its designee shall provide written approval for payment based on written documentation provided by the parent justifying the excessive absence for up to an additional seven days. For families displaced by Hurricane Irma, the absences for extraordinary circumstances will be increased from seven days to 12 days. The written documentation of these absences is still required.
- The provisions of Rule 6M-4.620, F.A.C., requiring School Readiness personnel to complete preservice training requirements within the first 90 days of employment, to the extent that for those personnel whose 90-day time period expired between September 1 and October 31, 2017, the time period shall be extended an additional 45 days from the date of the original expiration date. During the extension, the personnel must continue to be supervised until the training requirements are met.
- The provisions of Rule 6M-4.720, F.A.C., requiring screenings for children enrolled in the program, to the extent that children must undergo initial screening within 60 calendar days, rather than 45 days, and subsequent screenings within 30 days after redetermination (if screenings are done by coalitions) or within 30 days after the child's birth month (if screenings are done by the child care provider).

ORDERED in Tallahassee, Florida, this 11 day of October, 2017.



Pam Stewart, Commissioner of Education