

6M-4.208 Documenting Eligibility for the School Readiness Program.

(1) Each early learning coalition or designated contractor must determine eligibility for each applicant applying for the School Readiness Program in accordance with section 1002.87(1), F.S., and rule 6M-4.200, F.A.C. All child eligibility documentation shall be maintained by the coalition, as applicable. Each coalition is responsible for implementing a records retention policy ensuring that all documentation is maintained in accordance with law. The coalition or the designated contractor ~~its designee~~, where applicable, must conduct annual internal file monitoring activities to ensure the accuracy of eligibility determinations.

(2) Notwithstanding their inability to provide full documentation at the initial eligibility determination, a coalition shall permit enrollment after initial eligibility determination to children experiencing homelessness as verified by a Department of Children and Families (DCF) certified homeless shelter.

(3) Each applicant must have a completed, signed and dated Form OEL-SR 01, School Readiness Application for each initial eligibility determination in the statewide information system. Form OEL-SR 01, is adopted in and incorporated by reference in rule 6M-4.300, F.A.C. ~~The signature and date may be electronic if the application is available in the statewide information system.~~

(4) Documentation required for school readiness services eligibility. During the initial determination and redetermination an applicant must submit documentation, as applicable, to verify compliance with eligibility requirements. An office visit shall not be required for the submission of eligibility documentation or establishment of eligibility. Prior to the eligibility determination and enrollment, new applicants shall submit required documentation within 30 calendar days from the date on the funding notification. Redetermining applicants shall submit required documentation through the statewide information system prior to the redetermination date. The coalition shall determine eligibility within ten (10) calendar days of receipt of the documentation.

(a) Age. Verification of age must be established for each child eligible for the school readiness program in accordance with section 1002.87(1), F.S. The coalition shall keep a record of at least one of the following supporting documents that shows the child's name and date of birth:

1. ~~An original or certified copy of the child's birth record filed according to law with the appropriate public officer.~~
2. ~~An original or certified copy of the child's certificate of baptism or other religious record of the child's birth, accompanied by an affidavit stating that the certificate is true and correct, sworn to or affirmed by the child's parent.~~
3. An insurance policy on the child's life which has been in force for at least 2 years.
4. A passport or certificate of the child's arrival in the United States.
5. An immunization record signed by a public health officer or licensed practicing physician, or
6. A valid military dependent identification card.

7. For Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) families identified in section 1002.87(1), F.S., the child's age, as indicated on a child care authorization submitted by the referring agency, is sufficient to establish the child's age as verified by the parent.

8. For children identified in sections 1002.81(1)(a)-(d), F.S., the child's age, as indicated on a child care authorization submitted by the referring agency, is sufficient to establish age as verified by the parent.

9. If no supporting documents listed in subparagraphs (a)1.-8. above are available, a parent's notarized statement of the child's age accompanied by a certificate of age signed by a public health officer or licensed physician stating that the child's age shown in the affidavit is true and correct may be accepted.

(b) Citizenship. Each child receiving services must be a U.S. citizen or qualified alien. Verification of U.S. citizenship or a qualified noncitizen status must be obtained for each child prior to authorizing school readiness services. The coalition shall keep a record of at least one of the following supporting documents establishing citizenship for each child:

1. U.S birth certificate.
2. An original or certified copy of the child's U.S. birth record filed according to law with the appropriate public officer.
3. U.S. passport.
4. Lawfully admitted alien document (e.g. Forms I-94, I-94A, I-197, I-551 & I-766) with non-U.S. passport.
5. Certificate of U.S. citizenship or naturalization.
6. Documentation of the child's Medicaid eligible status with the exception of Medicaid benefits received through the emergency medical assistance program as a non-citizen or non-qualified alien.

~~7.~~ For TANF children identified in section 1002.87(1)(a), F.S., the child's status as a TANF recipient, as indicated on a child care authorization submitted by the referring agency, is sufficient to establish the child's citizenship.

~~8. If no supporting documents listed in subparagraphs (b)1.-7., above, are available, for a homeless child as defined in section 1003.01, F.S., a coalition can accept a notarized statement provided by the child's parent or homeless shelter to establish a child's citizenship.~~

~~7. For children identified in sections 1002.81(1)(a)-(d), F.S., the Medicaid-eligible status, as indicated on a child care authorization submitted by the referring agency, is sufficient to establish the child's citizenship.~~

(c) Residency. Each applicant must submit verification of current residency to qualify for the program in the county in which the applicant applied. The coalition shall keep a record of at least one of the following supporting documents that shows the name and current residential address of a parent with whom the child resides:

1. Utility bill (electric, gas, water), cable, internet or landline phone bill dated within 12 months of the date the child application is submitted.

2. Pay stub from a current employer dated within 12 months of the date the child application is submitted.

3. Current and signed residential rental agreement or receipt from rental payment dated within 12 months of the date the child application is submitted.

4. Government-issued document (e.g., ~~or a current~~ property tax assessment, dated within 12 months of eligibility determination, showing a homestead exemption, a Florida driver's license or Florida identification card), ~~or~~

5. Military order showing that the child's parent is a service member in the United States Armed Forces and is assigned to duty and resides in Florida when the child attends the school readiness program (e.g., permanent change of station).

6. For children identified in section 1002.87, F.S., the child's status as a TANF recipient, as indicated on a child care authorization submitted by the referring agency, is sufficient to establish the child's residency.

7. For children identified in sections 1002.81(1)(a)-(d), F.S., the child's Medicaid-eligible status, as indicated on a child care authorization submitted by the referring agency, is sufficient to establish the child's residency.

8. If no supporting documents listed in subparagraphs (c)1.-7., above, are available, a coalition may accept a notarized statement provided by the child's parent and a letter from a landlord or property owner which confirms that the child resides at the address shown in the notarized statement. Documentation cannot be accepted by the coalition more than one time to determine eligibility.

9. If no supporting documents listed in subparagraphs (c)1.-7., above, are available, for a homeless child as defined in ~~S~~section 1003.01, F.S., a coalition shall document residency based on other supporting documents showing that the child is homeless and resides in Florida (e.g., letter from a shelter or a notarized statement provided by the child's parent).

(d) Parent Status. Each applicant must meet the definition of parent in subsection 6M-4.200(1), F.A.C., and submit government-issued ID and documentation of guardianship. Additionally, the coalition shall keep a record of at least one of the following supporting documents to verify the parental relationship:

1. A copy of the child's birth certificate, which includes the parent's name or maiden name, if applicable.

2. A court order or other legal documentation that substantiates the adult's relationship to the child(ren).

3. A valid DCF or Workforce Child Care Authorization Form that bears the name of the child and the parent.

4. Documentation the applicant is in receipt of ~~R~~relative ~~C~~caregiver payment, Guardianship Assistance payment or TANF benefits on behalf of the child.

5. A notarized statement provided by the child's parent listing the person designated to be responsible for care of the child.

6. Official public or non-public school records.

7. A notarized statement from a medical professional.

(e) Family Size. Each applicant must identify each child and adult included in the school readiness family size, in accordance with section 1002.81(9), F.S.

1. Family size includes the parent(s) and the child(ren) currently residing together in the same dwelling unit (persons who are parents of a child in common regardless of whether they have been married and all children in their care) or person standing in loco parentis.

2. Children with a child care authorization who are in a licensed out-of-home placement or relative/non-relative placement must be listed as a child only case in the statewide information system. A family unit shall include an individual child referred or related sibling group referred in a licensed out-of-home placement or relative/non-relative placement.

3. The family size for a family that includes a child(ren) in receipt of Relative Caregiver or Guardianship Assistance payment shall only include the child(ren) in receipt of the Relative Caregiver or Guardianship Assistance payment.

4. The family size for a family that includes a child(ren) in receipt of TANF child only benefits shall only include the child(ren) if the child(ren) resides with a guardian. If the child(ren) resides with a parent, the parent must be included in the family size.

5. A teen parent will be considered a separate household, unless the teen and their child(ren) are included in their parent's School Readiness family size. Eligibility and income will be determined consistent with the procedures for other households.

6. The coalition shall keep a record of at least one of the following supporting documents, as applicable, to establish family size:

a. A statewide information system generated form or locally developed form documenting the applicant's family size including a statement from the parent certifying that the household information is true and correct. In cases where the coalition suspects fraud, the coalition may request additional documentation to establish family size.

b. For TANF families identified in section 1002.87(1), F.S., the child's family size as a TANF recipient, as indicated on a child care authorization submitted by the referring agency as verified by the parent, is sufficient to establish family size.

c. For children identified in sections 1002.81(1)(a)-(f), F.S., the child's family size on a child care authorization submitted by the referring agency as verified by the parent, is sufficient to establish family size.

(f) Purpose for Care. Each applicant must meet the purpose for care requirements of the program in accordance with sections 1002.81(1), (7), (16) and 1002.87(1), F.S. The coalition shall keep a record of at least one of the following supporting documents establishing purpose for care for the authorization period:

1. For children identified in sections 1002.81(1)(a)-(f), F.S., the child's purpose for care, as indicated on a child care authorization

submitted by the referring agency, is sufficient to meet this requirement. If income documentation (earned and unearned) is available during the initial and subsequent eligibility verification, it must be submitted at that time by the family or the referring agency. A child is eligible under the relative caregiver program category if, the guardian is in receipt of Relative Caregiver Assistance payments or Guardianship Assistance payments from the Florida Department of Children and Families.

2. For children identified in section 1002.87(1)(a), F.S., the child's status as a TANF recipient, as indicated on a child care authorization submitted by the referring agency, is sufficient to establish purpose for care.

3. For income eligible families, purpose for care is established by the parent's work schedule as verified on one of the income documents listed below in subparagraph (4)(f)6.

4. Education. Each applicant requesting services in order to attend an approved educational activity in accordance with section 1002.81(16), F.S., shall provide an official school schedule and proof of enrollment from an accredited education institution. Use of educational activities as a purpose for care shall be limited to GED programs, secondary education programs, technical or vocational programs, associate of arts, associate of science, bachelor of arts, and bachelor of science programs.

5. Documentation for exemptions to work requirements due to disability or age:

a. Disability – In order to be exempt from work requirements due to disability, a parent must submit documentation from a physician licensed under chapter 458 or 459, F.S., or a disability award letter from the U.S. Social Security Administration.

b. Age – In order to be exempt from work requirements due to age, a parent must submit proof of receipt of retirement income benefits from the U.S. Social Security Administration or documentation from a physician licensed under chapter 458 or 459, F.S.

6. Income. Each applicant must submit documentation of earned and unearned income in accordance with paragraphs (a)-(g), below. This applies to at-risk children identified in section 1002.81(1), F.S., if available. If income documentation is not available for at-risk children, the coalition shall still process the eligibility determination under the at-risk child care authorization.

a. All earned income and unearned income not excluded by section 1002.81(8), F.S, and employment, shall be documented.

b. For all applicants, other than those who are self-employed, each source of earned income, at a minimum, shall be documented by hours of employment and rate of pay based on:

I. Four (4) weekly, two (2) biweekly, two (2) semi-monthly, or one (1) monthly pay stubs that are current and consecutive; or

II. A signed statement by the employer dated within 4 weeks of applying for SR child care funding; or

III. A signed contract for employment that has a termination date of not less than 9 months from the date of applying for SR child care funding.

c. Each source of unearned income, as defined by section 1002.81(15), F.S., shall be documented at a minimum by:

I. Source documentation establishing receipt of unearned income such as, but not limited to, alimony, social security benefits, supplemental security income, worker's compensation benefits, reemployment assistance, veteran's benefits, retirement benefits, temporary cash assistance under chapter 414, F.S., and regularly received cash gifts.

II. For child support, verification from the child support enforcement office or a written statement from the absent parent or parent in receipt of child support payments ~~household member~~.

III. For varied amounts of unearned income, the parent must provide a minimum of four (4) weekly, two (2) biweekly, two (2) semi-monthly, or one (1) monthly source of unearned income documentation.

d. Income Fluctuations. For families that have irregular earnings (fluctuations) due to seasonal or other types of work schedules such as retail employment during the holidays or tourism in the summer, the coalition or contracted designee must:

I. Calculate the average income for the previous 12 months. The average must reflect income changes that occur during the eligibility period, including situations in which a family had monthly income above 85 percent of the State Median Income (SMI), for part of the year and lower income in other months.

II. For instances where a family, upon redetermination, may not have 12 months of pay stubs, use an employer verification statement that affirms the average annual income.

e. Self-Employment. For purposes of income verification, self-employment is defined as work activities that produce income that an individual uses to meet daily living expenses. The self-employment activity must contribute to the applicant's livelihood and the time and effort put into the activity will indicate intent to make a profit. Passive or casual activities that can be more appropriately qualified as "hobbies" or volunteer work do not meet this criterion. † Self-employed applicants shall provide appropriate documentation sufficient to determine a minimum of 20 hours worked per week and income, such as: business account ledgers, written documentation from customers, contractors, or federal tax returns.

~~II. For initial eligibility determination, eligibility shall not be denied solely because the applicant makes less than the minimum wage. If an applicant makes less than minimum wage at initial eligibility determination, the authorized eligibility period shall be twelve (12) months. However, subsequent eligibility authorizations will be dependent on whether or not the participant can document that self-employment activities generate consistent business gains. Once minimum wage is established by self-employment activities, subsequent eligibility may continue to be authorized for twelve (12) months.~~

(g) An acknowledgement of income and family size used to establish the family copayment in accordance with rule 6M-4.400, F.A.C., if applicable, shall be documented by every family applying for school readiness service, including families of children identified in section 1002.81(1), F.S. This acknowledgement shall be made and documented at each determination of eligibility. The

acknowledgement may be recorded on locally created income worksheets that includes the information listed on the income worksheet generated by the statewide information system or worksheets generated by the statewide information system, if available.

Rulemaking Authority 1001.213(2) FS. Law Implemented 1002.81(1), (8), (16), 1002.82(2)(f), 1002.84(7), 1002.87(1), (5), (6) FS. History—New 4-21-03, Formerly 60BB-4.208, Amended 12-18-16, 8-20-18.