



Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Program Provider Orientation

Understanding Your Responsibilities & Requirements



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About the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Program

- Free, high-quality education program designed to prepare Florida's 4-year-olds for kindergarten.
- Several program options available in different educational settings from private and public providers and specialized instructional services providers.
- Highly qualified instructors
- Developmentally appropriate curriculum aligned to the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards (FELDS)

Florida **VPK**

What is 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

Program integrity is important in everything we do. We are to deliver child care assistance fairly and accurately. This means we comply with federal and state requirements.

An example of an **intentional** error is fraud. An example of an **unintentional** error is a data entry mistake or incomplete documentation.

How to Assure Program Integrity

- Fiscal management
 - Have processes for sound fiscal management
- Fraud detection and prevention
 - Identify and address fraud
- Improper payment reduction
 - Reduce these types of payments
- Eligibility verification
 - Document and verify eligible children, providers, services and payments

Let's look at program integrity in more detail. There are 5 key elements, starting with the 4th on this slide.

Remember that fraud is an intentional error. This could look like billing for children who don't exist or for always perfect attendance for every child.

Improper payment might happen when there are incomplete documents. This could look like missing absence notes.

How to Assure Program Integrity (continued)

- Monitoring and 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

And here's the 5th element of program integrity. Remember the slide *What is Program Integrity* a couple slides back? It said that **appropriate use of funds** is important, right? How do we confirm that everyone is using funds appropriately? Through monitoring.

Program integrity, including monitoring, happens at **every** level—local, state and federal.

Monitoring includes desk and onsite reviews, quality assurance and corrective action. We'll discuss this in more detail later during this orientation.

Purpose of the VPK Contract

- Agreement between the provider and its local early learning coalition (ELC)
- Informs 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)

The purpose of the VPK Contract is to formally outline the requirements, responsibilities and standards that a provider must follow to participate in Florida's state-funded VPK program.

- Providers are eligible for reimbursement for VPK services only **after** full contract execution and for the term of the contract.
- VPK contracts are not transferrable. A change in ownership requires execution of a new contract.

Provider Responsibilities in the VPK Program

- Deliver high-quality early learning services that support child development and kindergarten readiness
- Partner with families, early learning coalitions and the Division of Early Learning to support child growth and development
- Maintain program integrity and compliance with VPK Program requirements outlined in the contract

As a VPK provider, you are responsible for ensuring children receive safe, nurturing, and high-quality care. Accurate recordkeeping, collaboration with early learning coalitions and clear communication with families are essential for program integrity and compliance and child success.

The remainder of this orientation focuses on the VPK Provider Contract.

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.



These laws and rules govern all provisions in the contract. They ensure consistent implementation of the VPK program statewide.

They include:

- Florida Statutes for the VPK program: Chapter 1002, Florida Statutes, Part V
- VPK Rules: Chapter 6M-8
- Rule 6A-6.03033, Florida Administrative Code, *Specialized Instructional Services (SIS) for VPK Children with Disabilities*

VPK Eligible Providers

🏠 Private Providers	🏫 Public School Providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

Here are the entities that qualify as either a private provider or a public school provider.

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

Core Provider Responsibilities Overview

- Child Enrollment
- Child Assessment
- Program Assessment
- Instruction
 - Curriculum
 - Instructor Requirements
 - Class Size
- Documentation
- Reporting

Your responsibilities fall into these major categories.

Note: The topic of documentation covers attendance and other reimbursement related documentation as well as SR child records.

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

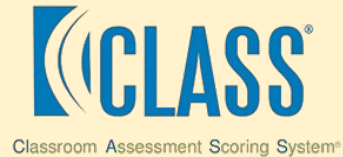
Assessment

VPK providers must participate in two forms of assessment.

Child Assessment



Program Assessment



VPK providers must administer the child assessment, also known as the coordinated screening and progress monitoring (CSPM) program or VPK FAST.

VPK providers must also participate in program assessment. Coalitions observe VPK classrooms using the CLASS tool, which stands for Classroom Assessment Scoring System.

Child Assessment

- Administer VPK FAST during Progress Monitoring (PM) windows
- Assess all children unless they meet the requirements for a non-participation status
- Check with your coalition to find your PM window dates

School-year VPK has 3 PM windows and summer VPK has 2.

Program Assessment

- Earn a minimum composite score of 4.00
- Request another observation at your own expense if you score below 4.00
- If your new score is still below 4.00, sit out for a full program year and complete the reentry pathway

Coalitions observe all VPK classrooms.

Instruction

Curriculum

- 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
- Find the list of approved curricula on the VPK Curriculum webpage

Instruction

Instructor Requirements

- **School-year:** Hold at least a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or equivalent
- **Summer:** Hold at least a bachelor's degree in a related field
- **Both:** Complete a Level 2 background screening
- **Both:** Complete training on VPK standards and emergent literacy
- **Both:** Do not use a substitute for more than 30% of VPK hours

The emergent literacy training requirement is 15 hours of initial training and one additional course every 5 years thereafter.

Instruction

Class Size

- **Minimum:** 4 enrolled students
- **Maximum for School Year:** Up to 11 enrolled students with one credentialed instructor **or** up to 20 students with an added assistant
- **Maximum for Summer:** Up to 12 enrolled students with one credentialed instructor

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

Discipline must always be developmentally appropriate and never punitive or harmful.

Documentation

Attendance

- Have an attendance policy that requires parents to verify attendance
- Give a copy to the coalition before signing the contract
- Provide a copy to parents during child enrollment
- Do not change the policy during the contract period
- Track attendance daily and submit monthly

If a provider offers school-year and summer VPK, each program has its own attendance policy.

Supplemental Services and Prohibited Fees

- Do not charge for VPK services
- Do not charge for supplemental services (e.g., “wrap-around” services) as a condition of enrollment

Documentation

Reimbursement Basics

- Based on base student allocation plus county differential
- Choose whether to receive monthly advance payments
- 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

Documentation

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 years and back up digital files often

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

VPK providers must notify coalitions when certain events occur.

Performance Metrics and Designations

- Earn a metric and designation at the end of the program year. The metric has three parts :
 - 50% Program Quality
 - 20% Student Achievement
 - 30% Student Learning Gains

The department calculates a provider's summer and school-year programs separately.

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

The department assigns a provider an Incomplete status if it did not have enough data to calculate a metric.

Coalition Responsibilities & Monitoring

- Provides training and technical assistance
- Does not require more than what is in the contract
- Monitors for compliance
- Accesses sites and records during business hours

Noncompliance and Corrective Action Notice

Early learning coalition:

- Identifies the specific requirement(s) the provider failed to meet
- Describes in detail the required corrective action
- Sets a deadline for completion
- Informs the provider of its right to request a review

Questions

Contact the Provider Relations team at the Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County with questions about your VPK contract.

(941) 757-2913

providerrelations@elc-manatee.org



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