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## **SLIDING FEE SCALE AND FEE WAIVER POLICY**

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### **POLICY**

The Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. has established a sliding fee scale that provides opportunity for economically disadvantaged families to have equal access to early learning programs currently available to families who do not qualify for financial assistance for School Readiness (SR) services due to their income level. Families of an economically disadvantaged child must pay a parent fee, established by the sliding fee scale.

### **PROCEDURE**

- A. The sliding fee scale establishes a parent fee (co-payment) for parents based upon their family size and their family income.
- B. The parent fee will be in effect for the family's eligibility period unless:
  - a. A subsequent redetermination is conducted;
  - b. The referring case manager and/or parent/guardian requests and is granted a waiver of the parent fee due to special circumstances.
  - c. An incorrect parent fee was assessed due to a processing error or due to program participant fraud, resulting in a corrective action to reduce or increase the family's parent fee.
  - d. A change in employment status, income or family size results in a lower parent fee.
  - e. The authorized hours of care changes.
  - f. Parent fees during Graduated Phase Out may be increased or decreased based on the family's income and size.
- C. Sliding fee scales are based on the most recent report of the Federal Poverty Levels (FPL).
- D. When the FPL is released by the Florida Division of Early Learning (DEL), the Coalition must adopt a new sliding fee schedule no later than July 1 of each year.
- E. Family Services staff will ensure the child's parent and child care provider are notified of any changes to the respective parent fee the next time the child's eligibility is determined.
- F. Parents are required to share in the cost of child care by paying the parent fee as arranged with the SR provider. Providers are statutorily required to collect and document the receipt of the parent fee.
- G. Parents may not transfer from one SR provider to another until it is verified that parent fee payments are current for the most recent thirty (30) days.

- H. If a SR provider terminates the child care based on the parent's failure to comply with payment of parent fees, the child may not be placed in another SR program until the parent and provider have come to a mutually agreed upon payment plan. If the family of an at-risk child is unable to satisfy a copayment obligation or arrange a payment plan prior to provider transfer, the referring case manager may request the transfer to be completed without this requirement being met.
- I. Requests for temporary reduction or waiver of parental fees completed by the case manager will be considered by the Coalition on a case-by-case basis under the circumstances listed below in Section J.
- J. A waiver of parent fees may be granted by the Coalition under the following documented circumstances:
  - a. Parent/guardian is in prison.
  - b. Parent/guardian is in the hospital or residential treatment facility.
  - c. Parent/guardian is attending parenting classes.
  - d. Family's income is at or below the federal poverty level.
  - e. Parent/guardian is homeless or living in a shelter.
  - f. Parent/guardian experienced an emergency (i.e., natural disaster, fire, etc.)
  - g. The child is participating in an Early Head Start program or Head Start program.
- K. Unless circumstances otherwise warrant, referring case managers must make a written request to the Coalition for a reduction in parent fees as soon as the need exists. Proof of need for reduction must be submitted with the written request and must be approved by the Coalition prior to implementation.
- L. The reduction in parent fees is limited to the time period the parent/guardian is unable to make the required payment. A beginning and end date will be assigned the Family Services staff.
- M. Family Services staff will document the fee waiver and send a notice to the provider and the parent/guardian.