



School Readiness (SR) Sliding Fee Scale and Parent Copayment Waiver Policy and Procedure

Effective Date: April 7, 2026

Subject: Parent Fee Waiver

Background Information:

Effective July 1, 2025, the Early Learning Coalition of Marion County (ELCMC) shall implement a percentage-based Sliding Fee Scale assessing copayments 4% of eligible household income, or 6% of eligible household income based on family size and unit of care, and in no instance exceeding 7% statutory maximum. The sliding fee scales are to be implemented no later than July 1 of the fiscal year or other date specified by DEL.

ELCMC must include a hyperlink to the DEL issued fee scale and Coalition Fee Waiver policy posted on Coalition's website.

Policy: Pursuant to s.1002.84(9), F.S, a Coalition may, on a case-by-case basis waive the copayment for an at-risk child regardless of the family's income. The referring case manager may record the waiver on the referral or provide other written documentation requesting the fee waiver. A child in a family whose income does not exceed the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) or whose family experiences a natural disaster or an event that limits the parent's ability to pay (examples include incarceration, residential treatment, homelessness, an emergency situation, or participating in a parenting class, Early Head Start Program, or Head Start Program).

References: Rule 6M-4.400, s. 1002.84. F.S; Division of Early Learning School Readiness Plan Guide; Division of Early Learning SR Standard Eligibility Review Program Guide.

Procedure: If a referring agency requests a copay waiver for an "at-risk" family regardless of income, the request must be documented during the initial authorization for care and at each redetermination, on the childcare authorization form or in other written documentation. The family copayment will be \$0 initially and the family continues to have a \$0 copayment until redetermination.

If the referring agency does not request a fee waiver and the parent provides no income documentation the copayment will be set at the 85% State Median Income (SMI) initially

to incentivize the family to provide income documentation with the additional enticement of lowering the copayment if the family income is lower than 85% SMI.

If a SR Parent requests a copay waiver, the request must also be documented during the initial authorization and at each redetermination for care.

In addition to the written request, the family must meet at least one of the following: Family income does not exceed the FPL; Family has experienced a natural disaster; or Parent has lost employment and is placed on a three-month period to reestablish purpose of care, limiting ability to pay.

The Client Services Counselor will complete the request to waive the parent copayment form for each written request. If siblings are included, a separate form must be completed for each child.

ELCMC may request additional documentation to justify a waiver for families who do not meet the definition of "at-risk". The waiver must be reviewed and approved by an ELCMC Supervisor before any copayment can be waived.

Upon approval of a copayment waiver, the Client Service Counselor will notify the parent/guardian or referring case manager. The notification will include: the assessed copayment prior to the waiver, the approved copayment amount after the waiver, the effective timeframe of the waiver.

The signed, completed request to waive parent copayment form shall be uploaded to the child's account in the documents tab. This ensures the waiver is properly documented, and accessible for ongoing case management and compliance review.

The sliding fee scale applies to families not meeting the at-risk waiver criteria, with copayments assessed at 4% or 6% based on household size and unit of care and never exceeding 7%.