



Early Learning Coalition
School Readiness
Attendance Reimbursement Manual
2009 – 2010

Dear School Readiness Provider:

This Attendance Reimbursement Manual (Manual) serves as your guide for the attendance and reimbursement process for payment of School Readiness Services adopted by the Early Learning Coalition of Northwest Florida (Coalition).

While the Coalition is responsible for providing training and technical assistance on this process, School Readiness Providers contracted with the Coalition have the sole responsibility to read and abide by the information herein.

The Coalition has created this Manual with the intent of making the Attendance and Reimbursement process as simplified as possible. However, if at any time you have questions regarding the information contained in this Manual, please contact the Coalition and we will assist and support you.

School Readiness Providers must be determined to be eligible to deliver the School Readiness Program annually through the application process. All new applicants must attend School Readiness Provider Orientation training with the Coalition before any School Readiness children are placed in the Provider's care.

The Orientation reviews the School Readiness Provider Contract, Private Rate Statement and Reimbursement Rate Schedules, Provider Reimbursement Process, Compliance and Monitoring, Program Evaluations, and available Training and Assistance.

The Provider acknowledges that the Coalition is not responsible for payment of any child who is not approved for services. Authorization for payment is based on the issuance of a valid Eligibility and Enrollment Form for School Readiness Services and Terms and Conditions Release of Information Form which provides specific dates of approval. Any child care services provided prior to, or after, the authorized dates, remain the responsibility of the parent or legal guardian.

This Manual is a living document that will be revised by the Coalition as needed.

The Coalition would like to thank all providers for striving for excellence as you serve the children and families in our communities.

I. COALITION RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Provider Payment Rates

1. The Coalition is responsible for determining Reimbursement Rates with School Readiness Providers, including gold seal and special needs rates, in accordance with State and Coalition policy.
2. The School Readiness Provider is responsible for providing the Coalition written information of their child care rates charged to all parents regardless of status, in the Private Rate Statement.
3. The Coalition will not reimburse the School Readiness Provider at a rate; including the gold seal increased percentage that exceeds the amounts listed on the Private Rate Statement.
4. The maximum actual amount of Reimbursement to be paid for a specific child will be based on the Reimbursement Rate Schedule (Attachment B & B1) minus the Coalition assessed parent co-payment.

(For more information concerning Reimbursement Rate schedules, refer to the School Readiness Provider Contract; Section VII Compensation and Funding: 29, 30, and 31)

B. Parent/Guardian Eligibility Determination for School Readiness Services

The Coalition is responsible for establishing parent/guardians' eligibility for School Readiness Services, according to federal, state, and local guidelines and procedures.

1. If a parent/guardian has been approved by the Coalition for Full Time (FT) care, then they are eligible for a maximum of eleven (11) hours in a twenty-four (24) hour period.
2. If a parent/guardian has been approved by the Coalition for Part Time (PT) care, then they are eligible for a maximum which cannot exceed 6 hours in a twenty-four (24) hour period (Part Time care is defined as less than 6 hours of care per day).

C. Parent/Guardian Co-Payment

The Coalition is responsible for establishing the parent co-payment for each child based on the Coalition's approved Sliding Fee Schedule and Agency for Workforce Innovation Office of Early Learning (AWI/OEL) guidelines.

1. The School Readiness Provider is responsible for collecting the Coalition assigned parent/guardian co-payment and will certify on a monthly basis that the co-payment has been collected and/or demonstrate what attempts have been made.
(School Readiness Provider Contract; Section V Provider Responsibility to Parents: 23)
2. The Coalition will reduce the School Readiness Provider's reimbursement by the amount of the parent/guardian co-payment whether or not the co-payment is actually collected by the School Readiness Provider.

(School Readiness Provider Contract; Section V Provider Responsibility to Parents: 23)

3. Non-payment of parent/guardian co-payment is a reason for termination of School Readiness services; except in the case of an At Risk (BG1) child where the primary purpose of care is PROTECTION.
4. In the event of a change in a parent/guardian's eligibility status, transfer, and or termination of School Readiness services, the Coalition will only hold the parent/guardian responsible for no more than thirty (30) days of past due parent/guardian co-payments.
(School Readiness Provider Contract; Section V Provider Responsibility to Parents: 24)

D. School Readiness Reimbursement Requirements

The Coalition will ensure the following:

1. The maximum actual amount of Reimbursement to be paid for a specific child will be based on the Reimbursement Rate Schedule (Attachment B & B1) minus the Coalition assessed parent co-payment.
2. School Readiness Providers will be reimbursed for FULL and/or PART time daily rates as listed on the Reimbursement Rate Schedule Attachment B & B1 as determined by the Eligibility and Enrollment form that the parent gives to the School Readiness Provider. Changes for the child's age and care level are made by the Enhanced Field System (EFS) on a monthly basis.
3. School Readiness Providers will be reimbursed for claimed absences that meet the requirements designated by the Agency for Workforce Innovation Office of Early Learning (AWI/OEL) and Coalition guidelines.
4. School Readiness Providers will be reimbursed for services based on the submission of an accurately completed Enrollment/Attendance Certification for School Readiness (Attendance Roster).
5. Monthly Attendance Rosters submitted after designated time period, and/or completed incorrectly may not be processed for reimbursement until the next reimbursement cycle unless authorized by the Coalition's Executive Director or designee.
6. If a program chooses to provide School Readiness Services for a family WITHOUT the Coalition's Eligibility and Enrollment and Terms and Conditions forms, the Coalition will not reimburse the School Readiness Provider for the care.

E. Reimbursement for Documented Absences

1. Reimbursement shall be authorized for no more than (3) absences per calendar month per child except in the event of extraordinary circumstances in which case the Coalition shall provide written approval for payment based on written documentation provided by the parent justifying the excessive absence for up to an additional seven (7) days.

2. Excused Absences: A child is absent and is approved for payment for no more than three (3) days and no written documentation is required.
3. Authorized Absences: A child is absent beyond three (3) days. Written documentation is required by the parent justifying the excessive absences for up to an additional seven (7) days. The COALITION will determine if the documentation is acceptable and will provide written authorization for payment.
4. Examples of Extraordinary Circumstances and documentation include the following:
 - a. Hospitalization of the child or parent with appropriate documentation (i.e. statement from the hospital and/or physician stating patient's proper name, admit date, release date);
 - b. Illness of child documented by doctor's note with the child's proper name, date the child was seen, the date child is allowed to return to school and signature of the physician/physician's staff;
 - c. Death in the immediate family with appropriate documentation (i.e. obituary, death certificate, that lists parent and/or child's name);
 - d. Court ordered visitation with appropriate documentation (i.e. court order with dates of visitation reflecting dates absent); or
 - e. Unforeseen documented military deployment or exercise of the parent (i.e. deployment orders).

**All documentation must include specific dates when child was absent, child's name and a date when the child can return to the childcare facility*

5. School Readiness Provider must ensure submission of the Extraordinary Circumstance documentation listed on the Attendance Roster and attach to the Reimbursement Drop off checklist form.
6. Total monthly-reimbursed absences may not exceed ten (10) calendar days.
7. School Readiness Providers must contact a Family Support Specialist at the local Coalition Office when any School Readiness child has five (5) or more unexcused consecutive absences, in order for the Coalition to determine parent's need for care. This will allow needed slots to be opened rather than holding a slot for a child who is not going to attend. (School Readiness Provider Contract; Section VII Compensation and Funding: 37d)
8. Should a School Readiness Provider independently decide to "hold" a slot for a child beyond the allowable number of absences, due to a prolonged illness or other family circumstances, such days would be considered non-reimbursable by the Coalition.

F. Attendance Reporting Requirements for At Risk (BG1) Children

1. Rilya Wilson Act – The Rilya Wilson legislation requires coordination by Department of Children and Families (DCF) staff and Community-Based Care Provider staff with Local School Readiness Coalitions and licensed early education or child care providers.
2. The activities required by the law are designed to ensure the safety and well-being of specified children who are receiving licensed early education or child care services. This law also provides priority for child care services for specified

children who are at risk of abuse, neglect or abandonment. Additionally, the law requires a study of licensed early education and child care services and how they may or may not enhance child safety.

3. Referrals for children “at-risk” of abuse and/or neglect are placed into care under the BG1 category (Billing Group -1) into licensed private providers who are contracted with the Coalition to provide School Readiness services, unless otherwise designated by Department of Children and Families or Community Based Care Provider.
4. School Readiness Providers are required to strictly adhere to the Rilya Wilson Attendance and Absence Reporting requirements, as designated by the Coalition and listed in the School Readiness Provider Contract.
5. School Readiness Providers are required to immediately notify the Department of Children and Families’ assigned Family Services Counselor or Community based Care Case Manager or supervisor by telephone or fax when a child designated as being At-Risk (BG1) has one (1) unexcused absence or seven (7) consecutive days of excused absences from a School Readiness program.
6. While the Rilya Wilson Act establishes these reporting requirements for children 3 to 5 years old, the Coalition applies this rule to all children of any age, determined to be At Risk (BG1).
7. School Readiness Providers must use the Coalition’s approved documentation form and maintain documentation of absences reported to the Department of Children and Families and/or the Community Based care lead Agency, each time a report is made. This documentation must be available to the Coalition for monitoring purposes at any time.
8. Completed documentation of Rilya Wilson Absentee reporting must be submitted with Attendance Rosters. Failure to provide documentation may result in nonpayment of attendance for designated children.
9. Children enrolled under the At Risk (BG1) category may not be terminated or transferred without written approval from Department of Children and Families and/or Community Based Care organization.

G. Guidelines for Reimbursement Processing

1. The Coalition processes reimbursement payments for School Readiness Services according to State, Federal, and Coalition policies and procedures and guidance from the Agency for Workforce Innovation Office of Early Learning (AWI/OEL).
2. School Readiness Providers are reimbursed on or about the 25th calendar day of the month, following the month services were rendered.

H. Guidelines for Desk Review of School Readiness Invoices and Documentation

1. The School Readiness Provider will maintain Attendance Rosters, computer printouts, and other relevant documentation, for a period of no less than five (5) years, from the child’s last day of attendance, or until any audits are completed whichever is later. (School Readiness Provider Contract; Section VII Compensation and Funding: 49)

2. The School Readiness Provider must use a Coalition approved Attendance Roster. Attendance Roster/paperwork or computer printouts used to validate attendance must include, at a minimum, the following information:
 - a. Child's proper name
 - b. School Readiness Provider name
 - c. Appropriately marked attendance for each child
 3. The Coalition shall complete Attendance Desk reviews AND/OR on-site monitoring of School Readiness Providers' DAILY attendance documentation and process.
 4. The Coalition will maintain audit documentation necessary for billing purposes and claims under the Child Care and Development Fund, TANF Block Grant and state general revenue requirements. This does not reduce the School Readiness Providers' responsibility for maintaining audit documentation.
- I. Grounds for Parental and School Readiness Service Termination
1. Falsification of enrollment and/or attendance requirements or information by a parent/guardian may be considered grounds for termination from School Readiness Services.
 2. Abuse of the enrollment and/or attendance requirements by a School Readiness Provider will be considered a Breach of Contract and grounds for termination of the School Readiness Provider Contract and may result in the School Readiness Provider having to return funding.

II. SCHOOL READINESS REIMBURSEMENT PROCEDURES

- A. School Readiness Provider Attendance Roster General Information
1. School Readiness Providers will receive an Attendance Roster for the new month:
 - a. When submitting Attendance Roster Invoice in person at the Coalition Regional Offices, the School Readiness Provider will receive the Attendance Rosters for the next month.
 - b. School Readiness Provider may request Attendance Rosters be provided via Email. Attendance Rosters e-mailed will be sent securely. (password protected)
 - c. School Readiness Provider may request Attendance Rosters be provided via Mail.
 2. White-out must not be used anywhere on the forms. If an error is made, Providers must mark through the error and write-in the correct entry and initial.
 3. When a child is enrolled and is not listed on the printed attendance sheet, the Provider must write in the child's information from the School Readiness Eligibility and Enrollment form provided by the parent/guardian.
 4. All Attendance Rosters submitted to the Coalition's Regional Office Three (Panama City) must be submitted by 4:00 pm CST of the 2nd business day of each month.

5. All Attendance Rosters submitted to the Coalition's Regional Office One (Marianna) must be submitted by 10:00 am CST of the 2nd business day of each month.
 6. Attendance Rosters may only be faxed to Regional Office Three (Panama City). The Provider agrees that they may present a faxed copy of the original attendance roster (Enrollment/Attendance Certification for School Readiness) as an invoice for payment to the Coalition. The Provider agrees to ensure their faxed invoice is received by the Coalition no later than 4:00 PM (CST) on the second (2nd) business day of each month for School Readiness children served during the previous month; however, the PROVIDER must follow up and ensure the original invoice is also received by the Coalition no later than 4:00 PM (CST) on the tenth (10th) calendar day of the month (note: if the tenth (10th) calendar day falls on a weekend and/or holiday, the deadline will be the previous calendar day). Should the Provider fail to meet these deadlines, the Provider's invoice will not be processed until the next reimbursement period unless authorized by the Coalition's Executive Director or designee.
 7. If Attendance Rosters are not submitted according to Coalition timeframes, Reimbursement will not be processed for those rosters until the next reimbursement cycle, unless authorized by Executive Director or designee.
 8. Submission of Attendance Rosters are the sole responsibility of the School Readiness Provider and include the following document requirement:
 - a. Original Attendance Roster
 - b. Copy of approved sign in/out sheets,
 - c. Copy absentee documentation
 - d. Any other relevant documentation to ensure a timely reimbursement
 9. School Readiness Providers must obtain a receipt from any Coalition staff when submitting Attendance Rosters and documentation.
 - a. Coalition staff may review submitted rosters for completeness but not correctness at the time of submission.
 - b. Coalition staff will document all items given to the School Readiness Provider and all items received from the Provider. It is the School Readiness Provider's responsibility to ensure that all paperwork and documentation is received accurately and timely.
- B. Submission Format for School Readiness Providers Attendance Rosters
 Attendance Rosters must be submitted in the following format. Attendance Rosters determined incorrect or incomplete at the time of submission or receipt may not be paid until the next reimbursement cycle and/or until the Attendance Roster has been corrected:
1. White-out must not be used anywhere on the forms.
 2. All documentation must be legible.
 3. Attendance Rosters must be completed in blue/black INK.
 4. Attach Extraordinary Circumstance Absentee Documentation .

5. Use of approved Attendance Roster Codes is required. Failure to use Attendance Codes as listed on the Roster Legend may result in nonpayment.
6. Attendance Rosters will be printed according to Billing Groups effective October 2009
7. If Coalition staff cannot determine what a mark is, an E will be given. If the child has more than three E's the School Readiness Provider will not be paid for undeterminable days.
8. Coalition MUST COMPLETE the DAYS ATTEND column on the Attendance Roster (Please leave this column blank)

C. Cover Sheet for Reimbursement Packet Submission

The School Readiness Providers must complete and attach the Reimbursement Drop-Off Checklist according to the following format:

1. School Readiness Provider Proper Name and Address
2. Authorized official as listed on School Readiness Provider Contract
3. Person completing Attendance Roster
4. Listing of submitted documents, according to the Reimbursement Drop off Checklist
5. Listing of Absentee Information by child for Extraordinary Circumstance absences (those beyond 3 days)

D. Sign In/Out Sheets Submission Format

1. As a documentation and verification tool, School Readiness Providers are required to maintain sign-in/out sheets for each child enrolled in care through the Coalition.
2. Siblings must have separate sheets.
3. The sign-in/out sheets provide verification by the parent that their children were actually in care on any given day.
4. The sign-in/out sheets must include the date, child's proper name, time the child came in with parent/guardian signature and the time the child was picked up with parent/guardian signature.
5. Anyone other than the parent/guardian authorized to bring the child in or pick the child up, must follow the same procedure for signing the child in and out that the parent follows.
6. Parent/Guardian/Authorized designee's proper signatures must be legible and contain no initials, no nicknames, no alias. If the signature is not legible, the Provider is responsible for putting in place a policy which addresses the signature so that the signature is accepted by the Coalition for Reimbursement/Monitoring purposes.
7. Ditto marks, lines, brackets, or arrows on the Sign-in/out sheet will not be accepted for dates, times, or signatures.

8. School age children who are authorized for before and after school care will be:
 - a. Signed in by the parent/guardian in the morning when the child is brought to the School Readiness Provider.
 - b. Signed out by the School Readiness Provider with time, signature and "BUS" when the child catches the bus for school.
 - c. Signed in by the School Readiness Provider with time, signature and "BUS" when the child returns from school.
 - d. Signed out by the parent/guardian with time and signature when the child is picked up for the day.
9. Children enrolled for after school care only will be:
 - a. Signed in by the School Readiness Provider with time and signature and "BUS."
 - b. Signed out with time and signature by the parent/guardian when the child is picked up for the day.
10. Providers who transport children enrolled in their facility are:
 - a. Required to have the van/bus driver sign the children in with time and signature when they pick the children up.
 - b. Required to have the parent/guardian sign the children out with time and signature when taken off the van/bus when the children are transported back home. Providers who do not adhere to the above may have the reimbursement for the day reclaimed by the Coalition during any type of audit procedure.
11. Providers who use a computerized sign in/out system are:
 - a. Required to have the parents/guardians generate the arrival and departure times on a daily basis, reflecting the days the children are in care.
 - b. Required to have parents/guardians log children in individually and not batched by family.
 - c. Required to give each person authorized to bring the child in or pick the child up their own individual codes for the system.
 - d. Electronic attendance is printed by child's name and signed by parent/guardian for reimbursement documentation.
12. All Providers must maintain the sign-in/out sheets in their files according to the requirement of the School Readiness Provider Contract. School Readiness Providers must ensure that:
 - a. ONLY Coalition APPROVED Sign in/out Sheets or Electronic Sign in/out Sheets are used.
 - b. A sign in/out sheet is completed for each child.
 - c. All sign in/out sheets are EASILY legible.

- d. All sign in/out sheets are completed in Blue/Black Ink.
- e. Electronic attendance is printed by child's name and signed by parent for reimbursement documentation.

E. Non-reimbursed Absences

Absent days, either within the first three or extraordinary, will not be reimbursed if:

- 1. School Readiness/child care is not authorized
- 2. School Readiness/child care is provided and reimbursed elsewhere
- 3. School Readiness/child care exceeds the maximum authorized days of attendance
- 4. School Readiness child does not have physical attendance during the month
- 5. School Readiness Provider is closed and/or unavailable/unable to offer care

F. Terminations

- 1. If the School Readiness Provider terminates a child, the attendance form must be marked with a "T" following the child's last day of attendance.
- 2. Once terminated, the child will not be reimbursed for attendance unless the child has been re-enrolled by a Coalition Family Support Specialist, and the parent provides an updated Eligibility and Enrollment Form authorizing care to the provider.
- 3. If a child is terminated by the Coalition, care is not authorized and will not be reimbursed.

G. Adjustments

- 1. Once the School Readiness Provider receives their reimbursement paperwork, they should thoroughly review the *Final Provider Reimbursement Report* to ensure proper payment. (for example: correct reimbursement rate, parent co-payments, child's care level, why a child's care was not reimbursed, etc.)
- 2. If applicable, a written adjustment (corrections to the paid reimbursement) request may be submitted in one of three formats:
 - a. Original request signed by the School Readiness Provider
 - b. Faxed request signed by the School Readiness Provider (**fax number 850-747-5450**), or
 - c. E-Mail request from the School Readiness Provider
- 3. Telephone calls or voicemail messages will not be accepted for adjustment requests.
- 4. The adjustment request must include appropriate written documentation, for example, sign-in/out sheet, parent work schedules, etc., to verify the claim for the day and be submitted prior to the 10th calendar day of the month to be processed in the current month's reimbursement cycle.

5. The School Readiness Provider is responsible for reviewing the reimbursement summary provided by the Coalition each month with the reimbursement check or electronic payment receipt.
 - a. The School Readiness Provider is responsible for reporting in writing to the Coalition any discrepancy or underpayment within thirty (30) calendar days from the date the reimbursement was deposited or mailed. Any underpayments reported after thirty (30) days will not be honored. (School Readiness Provider Contract; Section V II Compensation and Funding: 44)
 - b. The School Readiness Provider must return to the Coalition any overpayment due to unearned funds or as a result of error or funds disallowed. If the School Readiness Provider discovers an overpayment, the School Readiness Provider must repay the overpayment within ten (10) business days to the Coalition without prior notification from the Coalition. (School Readiness Provider Contract; Section V II Compensation and Funding: 45)
6. All adjustments will be paid or overpayments deducted during the next payment period regardless of the amount. In the event the overpayment amount exceeds the School Readiness Provider's next reimbursement amount, the overpayment will be deducted from subsequent reimbursements until said overpayment is paid in-full to the Coalition. In the event that the School Readiness Provider is no longer receiving payment from the Coalition, the School Readiness Provider will receive a statement for the overpayment amount, which must be paid in-full by the School Readiness Provider or the School Readiness Provider risks legal action.

H. Audits, Reviews, and/or Monitoring

1. Post attendance/reimbursement reviews and/or monitoring will be conducted for all School Readiness Providers at least once per year. New School Readiness Providers shall be added to the review pool after their third month of providing services. All reviews/visits will be unannounced.
2. If the School Readiness Provider is not on premises during established business hours when the Coalition monitor arrives to conduct an on-site attendance review, a card will be left on the Provider's door for them to contact staff. If contact is not made, the Provider's reimbursement could be delayed until the review is completed. (School Readiness Provider Contract; Section XIII Compliance Verification: 85 and 86)
3. The purpose of the review is to ensure that School Readiness Providers are maintaining verifiable records of attendance and that the records support the totals on the attendance sheets submitted to the Coalition for reimbursement. Technical assistance is provided in areas found deficient.
4. The post attendance/reimbursement review is based on the reimbursement request of the School Readiness Provider for a previous month at the selection of the Coalition. The monitor will compare the reimbursement request to the School Readiness Provider's attendance records (sign-in/sign-out sheets).

I. Miscellaneous

1. The eligibility expiration or redetermination date is printed in the right hand column of the attendance roster.
2. If the parent does not contact the Coalition to renew their eligibility before that date, care provided past that date would not be processed for reimbursement.
3. As a reminder to the School Readiness Provider, an asterisk (*) appears to the right of any child's name whose parent's redetermination date is due during the current month.
4. Coalition Family Support Eligibility staff will give School Readiness Providers copies of parent/guardian redetermination (recertification) letters at Attendance Roster Drop off.