

Attendance Guidelines

For School Readiness Providers

Effective July 2016



Early Learning
Coalition
of Santa Rosa County

Positive Beginnings for Promising Futures

DEAR PROVIDER:

This document serves as your guide for the attendance and reimbursement policies and procedures for school readiness services adopted by the Early Learning Coalition of Santa Rosa County (Coalition). The Coalition is responsible for providing training on this process but as a child care provider under contract with the Coalition, it is your responsibility to read and abide by the information herein. We have tried to make the attendance and reimbursement system as simplified as possible; however, if at any time you have questions regarding the information, please contact the Coalition and our staff will be happy to assist you.

PRIOR TO ENROLLMENTS

Before the Early Learning Coalition of Santa Rosa County (Coalition) can enroll a child with a child care provider (Provider) for the first time, they must become a contracted provider through the evaluation and training process required. This process includes monitoring and training on the attendance/reimbursement requirements. No enrollments will be made until the contract procedure is completed and the contract is approved. In addition, the Provider must not enroll any child in their program for School Readiness Services until the parent/guardian has completed the eligibility process and has presented the Provider with the Child Care Certificate from the Early Learning Coalition of Santa Rosa County.

REIMBURSEMENT RATES

The amount of reimbursement to be paid for a specific child will be based on the provider rate schedule for each contract year, beginning July 1 until June 30 of the following year, as approved by the COALITION. The PROVIDER must complete an Exhibit 3: *Provider Reimbursement Rates* in the Statewide School Readiness Provider Contract. The PROVIDER'S rates listed in the contract must be the same as the rates submitted with the Childcare Resource and Referral Provider Update.

SIGN-IN/OUT SHEETS

As a documentation and verification tool, Providers are required to maintain sign-in/out sheets (Exhibit 1) for each child enrolled in care through the Coalition. Siblings must have separate sheets. The sign-in/out sheets provide verification by the parent that their children were actually in care on any given day.

The sign-in/out sheets will include the date, child's name, time the child came in with parent signature and the time the child was picked up with parent signature. 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 using their signature.

At no time should someone else sign the parent's/guardian's signature on the sign-in/out sheets. This is considered fraud and is subject to being referred to the Department of Finance, Public Assistance Fraud Division for further investigation as outlined in the Provider Contract under Section XII Commitment of Intent Statewide School Readiness Provider Contract (OEL-SR2), Section 63 Fraud.

On the daily sign-in sheets, siblings cannot be connected with lines or brackets; each child must be signed in and out separately. Ditto marks, lines, brackets, or arrows on the sign-in sheet will not be accepted for times or signatures.

School age children who are authorized for before and after school care will be:

1. signed in by the parent/authorized person in the morning when the child is brought to the Provider;
2. signed out by the provider with time, signature or "BUS" when the child catches the bus for school;
3. signed in by the provider with time, signature or "BUS" when the child returns from school;
4. signed out by the parent/authorized person with time and signature when the child is picked up for the day.

Children enrolled for after school care only will be:

1. signed in by the provider with time and signature or "BUS"
2. signed out by the parent/authorized person with time and signature when the child is picked up for the day.

Providers who transport children enrolled in their facility are required to have:

1. the van/bus driver will have the parent/authorized person sign the children onto the van/bus with time and signature when the children are picked up.
2. the parent/authorized person sign the children out with time and signature when taken off the van/bus when the children are transported back home. Children who are not signed off the van/bus by the parent/authorized person may have the reimbursement for the day reclaimed by the Coalition during any type of audit procedure.

Providers who use the computer sign in/out system are required to have:

1. the parents generate the arrival and departure times on a daily basis, reflecting the days the children are in care.
2. parents log children in individually and not batched by family.
3. individual codes for each person authorized to bring the child in or pick the child up.
4. a backup system for signing children in and out if computer system fails.

All Providers must maintain the sign-in/out sheets in their files for a minimum of five years for post attendance/reimbursement review purposes and submit their monthly sign-in / sign-out sheets at the time of their attendance sheet submission.

ATTENDANCE SHEETS

Enrollment/Attendance Verification forms/sheets (Exhibit 2) are required to verify days a child is/is not in attendance and to process the provider's reimbursement for the child for the month.

Attendance sheets must be completed in black or blue ink, not pencil, **utilizing the provider sign in/out sheets to ensure the attendance is recorded properly for each**

day of the month. 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.

If white-out or pencil is noticed on any attendance sheet, the Provider will be contacted to come to the Coalition's main office to initial or correct each place white-out or pencil was found on the sheets. If the Provider does not come in to initial or correct the sheets, reimbursement will be delayed until corrections are made.

When a child is enrolled and is not listed on the printed attendance sheet, the child's name and ID number should be listed on any of the attendance sheets that have blank spaces or a blank attendance sheet if provided.

The following codes must be used to mark the Enrollment/Attendance form:

Scenario	Code to Use
Child Enrolled/Present	X
Excused Absence (limited to 3, no documentation required)	E
Authorized Absence (4-10 days; absent form/documentation required)	A
Coalition Reimbursable Provider Holiday	H
Child Terminated	T
Child Enrolled/Non-Reimbursable Day	N
Emergency Closure (reason for closure documented & submitted)	C

No other codes will be accepted.

The Provider must sign each of the attendance sheets in the bottom right corner before it is submitted for reimbursement. Unsigned sheets may result in a delay of the Provider's payment. When an unsigned sheet is noticed, the Provider will be contacted to come to the Coalition's main office to sign the sheet(s) before the payment will be released.

ABSENCES

Providers will be reimbursed for no more than three (3) child absences per month **without documentation** and should mark the first three (3) absences on the attendance form with an "E" (excused absence). Three absences per month will be reimbursed according to the care authorized per the Child Care Certificate. Absences will be counted consecutively from the beginning of the month. **For children with two (2) providers, absences will still be counted consecutively from the beginning of the month.**

If a child arrives at the Provider's site but the Provider refuses the child's attendance, the Provider must record the day as a non-reimbursable day and not an absence.

Teen Parent Program (STP) enrollments will be reimbursed for no more than eight (8) absences per month without documentation.

EXTRAORDINARY ABSENCES

Additional absences beyond the first three (3) should be marked with an "A" on the attendance sheet and will be processed for reimbursement when considered extraordinary. These

additional absences must be documented on the *Request for Reimbursement for Extraordinary Circumstances Absences* form (Exhibit 3) and submitted with the attendance sheets for reimbursement. Absences will be counted consecutively from the beginning of the month; for example, absence numbers 4 through 10 would be the ones documented on the *Request for Reimbursement for Extraordinary Circumstances Absences* form. Total monthly reimbursed absences shall not exceed ten (10) calendar days per child per month.

The provider is responsible for submitting a correctly completed *Request for Reimbursement for Extraordinary Circumstances Absences* form and supporting documentation with the attendance sheet. The form must include the nature of the excuse, and be signed by the parent and Provider before it will be reviewed. **For children with two (2) providers, both providers may be responsible for submitting the *Request for Reimbursement for Extraordinary Circumstances Absences* form. Children with two (2) providers may have absences divided equally based on the child's schedule for each provider.**

Any forms not submitted with the attendance sheets will be held for processing with the next payment cycle. The Coalition's designee will review all requests for reimbursements for extraordinary absences and a decision regarding payment will be made prior to the upcoming payment cycle as long as all documents are submitted as required.

All providers must have an absence policy in place and must make the policy available for all families served through the Coalition. Absences will only be reimbursed for those facilities that have an absence policy in place. Providers will be reimbursed only for absences for children who have actually attended the program during the month.

If a child is terminated, either by the Provider or the Coalition, absences will not be reimbursed after the child's last day of attendance.

NON-REIMBURSED ABSENCES

Absent days will not be reimbursed:

1. *prior to the first day of attendance for a new enrollment*
2. *if care is not authorized*
3. *if care is provided and reimbursed elsewhere*
4. *if care exceeds the maximum authorized days of attendance*
5. *if child does not have physical attendance during the month*
6. *if child care Provider is closed and/or unavailable/unable to offer care*
7. *if child/family is on vacation/**attending recreational activity***
8. ***after the last day of attendance if terminated***

REPORTING ABSENCES

In the event that a child is absent for five (5) consecutive days with no contact from the parent, the PROVIDER must notify the Coalition to determine the need for continued care. The Provider shall terminate any School Readiness Child with ten (10) days of consecutive absences and no contact from the parent. If a termination is filed, a notice will be provided to the referring agency, if applicable.

When an at-risk (BG1--Protective Service) child has an unexcused absent or has seven (7) consecutive excused absences, the Provider must notify the Early Learning Coalition immediately (within 24 hours).

Absences should be reported by completing and faxing the *School Readiness Absence Report* form (Exhibit 4) to the Coalition's Milton Office at 850-983-5445.

ADDITIONAL WORK HOURS

If the parent's work/activity schedule changes anytime during the month, the parent and Provider must complete the Certification of Additional Work Hours/Child Care Provided form (Exhibit 5) for reimbursement. The form must be complete and signed by both the parent and Provider to be considered valid for reimbursement.

The Certification of Additional Work Hours/Child Care Provided form cannot be used to claim reimbursement for any days the child does not attend, for example, holidays or absences. If more than two Certification of Additional Work Hours forms are submitted for the same child within the same month, the Family Services Specialist will be notified and the parent may be contacted for a redetermination appointment. The parent may also be contacted for redetermination if the hours of care provided are consistently more or less than the hours authorized.

SUBMITTING REIMBURSEMENT FORMS

The attendance sheets and sign in/out sheets, along with the Extraordinary Absence and Certification of Additional Work Hours/Child Care Provided forms, if applicable, should be returned to one of the Coalition's following locations:

6460 Justice Ave., Milton (office hours 8 am – 5 pm)
3188 Gulf Breeze Parkway, Gulf Breeze (office hours 8 am – 4 pm)

Attendance must be submitted by the third (3rd) working day of the month. If one of the three (3) days is a holiday, the Provider will have two (2) remaining days to submit the attendance packet. If the reimbursement forms are faxed, the original should be mailed to:

Early Learning Coalition of Santa Rosa County
C/O Reimbursement Processing
6460 Justice Avenue
Milton, FL 32570

Payments will not be released until the original signed forms are received. Providers must understand that attendance sheets and supporting forms are legal records of a child's attendance at a Provider's site and are official documentation for payments to Providers.

Anyone who misrepresents information, supplies false information, or who alters the information will have payments disallowed and may be prosecuted for fraud as outlined in the Statewide School Readiness Provider Contract, under Section 63 Fraud.XII Commitment of Intent.

HOLIDAYS

Providers may be reimbursed for up to 12 holidays per contract year based on the approved Coalition *Holiday Schedule* (Exhibit 6 reference only). The Provider **must** complete Exhibit 4: Holiday Schedule of the Statewide School Readiness Provider Contract. The attendance sheet must be marked with an "H" on the appropriate day for the holiday to be processed for reimbursement.

The Coalition allows for three holidays each year that may be changed to accommodate the preference of the Provider. Requests for approval of exceptions must be presented in writing to the Coalition no less than 30 days prior to the date of the existing holiday or of the date the Provider wishes to change it to, whichever comes first. The Provider understands that closings made without prior approval will not be reimbursed. The Provider must have parents sign documentation stating that they are aware of the scheduled holidays each fiscal year.

Holidays will not be reimbursed:

1. **prior to a child's attendance for new enrollments**
2. if care is not authorized
3. if care is provided and reimbursed elsewhere
4. if care exceeds the maximum authorized days of attendance
5. if child does not have physical attendance during the month
6. **after the last day of attendance if terminated**
7. if the day was not declared by the Provider and approved by the Coalition at least 30 days prior to the closing

TERMINATIONS

If the PROVIDER terminates a child, the attendance form must be marked with a "T". If terminated, the child cannot return unless the child has been re-enrolled by a Coalition Parent Services Specialist, and the parent provides an updated Child Care Certificate authorizing care. If a child is terminated by the Coalition, care is not authorized and will not be reimbursed. **Absences will not be reimbursed after the child's last day of attendance.**

ADJUSTMENTS

Once the PROVIDER receives their reimbursement paperwork, they should thoroughly review the Trial Provider Reimbursement Report (Exhibit 7) and the Summary of Non-Reimbursed Days form (Exhibit 8) to ensure proper payment, for example: correct provider rate, parent fees, child's care level, why a child's care was not reimbursed, etc.

If applicable, an adjustment (corrections to the paid reimbursement) request may be submitted in one of two formats:

1. Original request signed by the Provider either mailed or hand delivered, or
2. Faxed request signed by the Provider (fax number 850-983-5554).

Telephone calls or voicemail messages will not be accepted for adjustment requests.

The adjustment request must include appropriate written documentation, for example, sign in sheet, parent work schedules, etc., to verify the claim for the day and be submitted by

close of business 60 days after the Provider is reimbursed for the period in question. Providers will be notified in writing by Coalition staff of any denied requests for adjustments and the reasons for the denial.

The adjustment period for June will be shortened due to the end of the fiscal year. Adjustment requests for June are due no later than the last business day in July by close of business. No adjustment requests will be accepted after the last business day in July.

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 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 Provider is no longer receiving payment from the Coalition, the Provider will receive a statement for the overpayment amount, which must be paid in-full by the Provider or Provider risks legal action.

REVIEWS/MONITORS

Post attendance/reimbursement reviews will be conducted for all Providers at least once per year. New Providers shall be added to the review pool after their third month of providing services. **Reviews will be conducted as part of the Provider's School Readiness Monitor.**

The Provider will be notified by the Specialist for Compliance when the review/monitor will be scheduled so that the Provider can gather the information required for the monitoring.

The purpose of the review is to ensure that Providers are maintaining verifiable records of contract management and attendance. Technical assistance is provided in areas found deficient.

The monitoring tool is completed and reviewed with the Provider. The Provider is faxed a copy of the completed monitoring tool, a report and a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) if required.

RECORD RETENTION

Providers are required to retain all records relating to the School Readiness Program for a period of five (5) years from June 30 of the contract year for audit purposes. This includes, but is not limited to, documentation in the child's enrollment file, attendance records including sign in/out sheets, attendance sheets, absence documentation, proof of parent's co-payment, reimbursement summaries and other fiscal records.

If the Provider should choose not to contract with the Coalition, all records should continue to be accessible to the Early Learning Coalition for the five (5) year retention period from when the contract ended. If the Provider should close completely, the records covering the five (5) year retention period must be transferred to the Early Learning Coalition upon permanent closure.

MISCELLANEOUS

For the purposes of these procedures and the reimbursement process, a week is defined as seven (7) consecutive days beginning on Monday and ending on Sunday.

The eligibility expiration date is printed in the right hand column of the attendance sheet. 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. As a reminder to the Provider, an asterisk (*) appears to the right of any child's name whose parent's redetermination date is due during the current month.

It is the Provider's responsibility to collect the daily parent fee. In the event the parent fees are past due, the Provider should contact a Family Services Specialist.

For purposes of reimbursement, child care will be authorized for the following blocks of time:

Full Time (FT)	6 hours to 11 hours
Part Time (PT)	More than 0 hours to less than 6 hours
Full Time Part Time (FTPT)	More than 11 hours to less than 16 hours

WHO TO CONTACT

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Coalition reimbursement staff at 850-983-4710 or 850-983-5313.

EXHIBIT LIST

Exhibit 1	Sign-In/Sign-Out Sheet (Example Only)
Exhibit 2	Enrollment/Attendance Verification (Example Only)
Exhibit 3	Extraordinary Circumstances Absence Form
Exhibit 4	School Readiness Absence Report
Exhibit 5	Certification of Additional Hours Worked / Child Care Provided
Exhibit 6	Provider Holiday Schedule (Reference Only)
Exhibit 7	Trial Provider Reimbursement Report
Exhibit 8	Summary of Non-Reimbursed Days