

DIVISION OF EARLY LEARNING



ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

Everyone has an opportunity to succeed when they have access to high-quality early care and education services.



The annual report for the Division of Early Learning is required by Section 1002.82, Florida Statutes. Copies are available to download from www.floridaearlylearning.com or by contacting the division at 850-717-8550.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is provided by the Florida Department of Education's (FDOE) Division of Early Learning (DEL) as an overview of the division's financial and program activities in fiscal year (FY) 2023-24, including an overview of the 30 early learning coalitions (ELCs) and Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA). The division partners with these entities to administer the School Readiness (SR) program, the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) education program, and the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) program.

The ELCs and RCMA work to meet the early care and education needs of local communities by planning services based on area needs, creating networks of public and private providers, establishing partnerships to leverage economies of scale, and collecting match dollars to serve additional families. The ELCs and RCMA are governed by federal grant program requirements and state laws.

Enclosed you will find summaries and overviews of:

- Expenditures associated with the programs the division administers.
- Fraud referrals made by FDOE's Inspector General's Office.
- Information about the activities of Florida's ELCs and RCMA.

For more information about DEL, please visit <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/>.

GENERAL FUNCTIONS

Early Care and Education

DEL is dedicated to providing accessible, affordable and quality early learning services for the state's children and families. In partnership with the state's ELCs and RCMA, DEL administers the following three programs:

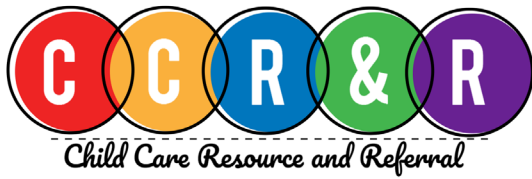
- **Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)** is a network that helps families identify and select quality child care options that best meet their needs.
- The **School Readiness Program (SR)** offers financial assistance to low-income families for early education and care so they can become financially self-sufficient and their young children can be successful in school in the future.
- **Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)** is a free educational program that prepares 4-year-olds for success in kindergarten and beyond.

DEL governs operations of early learning programs for the state and administers funds to ELCs and statewide contractors. Other duties related to early learning programs are outlined in federal and/or state regulations including federal reporting requirements, programmatic/financial monitoring and oversight tasks.

Customer Service Satisfaction

With the goal of enhancing the service experience for those participating in early learning programs and strengthening community engagement, House Bill 419 was passed in 2021 to establish a coalition customer satisfaction survey. The survey results are an element of the coalition performance standards in Section (s). 1002.82(3)(a), Florida Statutes (F.S.). In 2022, a workgroup provided recommendations on the survey questions to gauge the customer service experience at all 30 ELCs and RCMA locations across the state. In January 2023, monthly outreach began to clients who requested CCR&R services, families eligible for SR and VPK programs, providers contracted to serve those SR and VPK families, and coalition and RCMA board members.

Initial survey implementation in fiscal year (FY) 2022-23 laid the groundwork for future enhancements to each survey, distribution and algorithm to evaluate answers, while working to increase the number of responses. Survey results from FY 2023-24 established baseline data. In FY 2024-25, DEL will calculate annually each ELC's survey results to determine whether each ELC meets or exceeds the required customer satisfaction survey threshold and oversee corrective action as needed.



Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)

DEL is responsible for the statewide resource and referral network and contracts with ELCs and RCMA for services in each of Florida’s 67 counties. Each ELC is responsible for providing services at no cost to families and providers in their communities.

Each ELC has a designated CCR&R coordinator to train and manage CCR&R specialists’ delivery of the CCR&R program at their organization. To support this vital role, the CCR&R State Network revised the CCR&R Reference Guide which serves as the primary training resource for CCR&R specialists. The guide covers program rules and regulations, expectations, customer service tips and essential consumer education and community resources for families and providers. The designated CCR&R coordinator utilizes the guide to train CCR&R specialists and prepare them for completing the CCR&R Specialist Evaluation and achieving CCR&R specialist certification.

In FY 2023-24, the CCR&R State Network (Network) held four new CCR&R Coordinator Orientations, offered to every new CCR&R coordinator. The training focuses on best practices, technology resources, family engagement, assistance for potential and current providers, staff development and training, customer service and quality assurance.

The Network also provided ongoing training to ELCs and their subcontractors, facilitating five CCR&R leadership webinars that focused on the early identification and referral process, establishing customized plans that promote economic self-sufficiency and community collaboration, comprehensive social services available in Head Start, programmatic monitoring and requirements, family engagement, data integrity, service delivery trends, provider updates, and market rate and consumer education.

FY 2023-24 CCR&R Service Requests

23,512	Number of requests for assistance through the State CCR&R’s toll-free number and CCR&R’s Help Inbox.
354,664	Number of CCR&R Family Intake Forms completed in DEL’s single statewide information system.
901	Number of CCR&R Provider Intake Forms completed in DEL’s single statewide information system.
10,533	Number of legally operating child care providers maintained in a directory by ELCs.



School Readiness (SR) Program

Florida's SR program offers low-income families financial assistance to facilitate access to high-quality child care and early education for their children while parents work or participate in job training and/or educational activities.

DEL administers the program at the state level while ELCs administer the SR program at the county and regional levels. Funding comes from four sources – the Child Care and Development Block Grant, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant, the Social Services Block Grant, and the State of Florida.

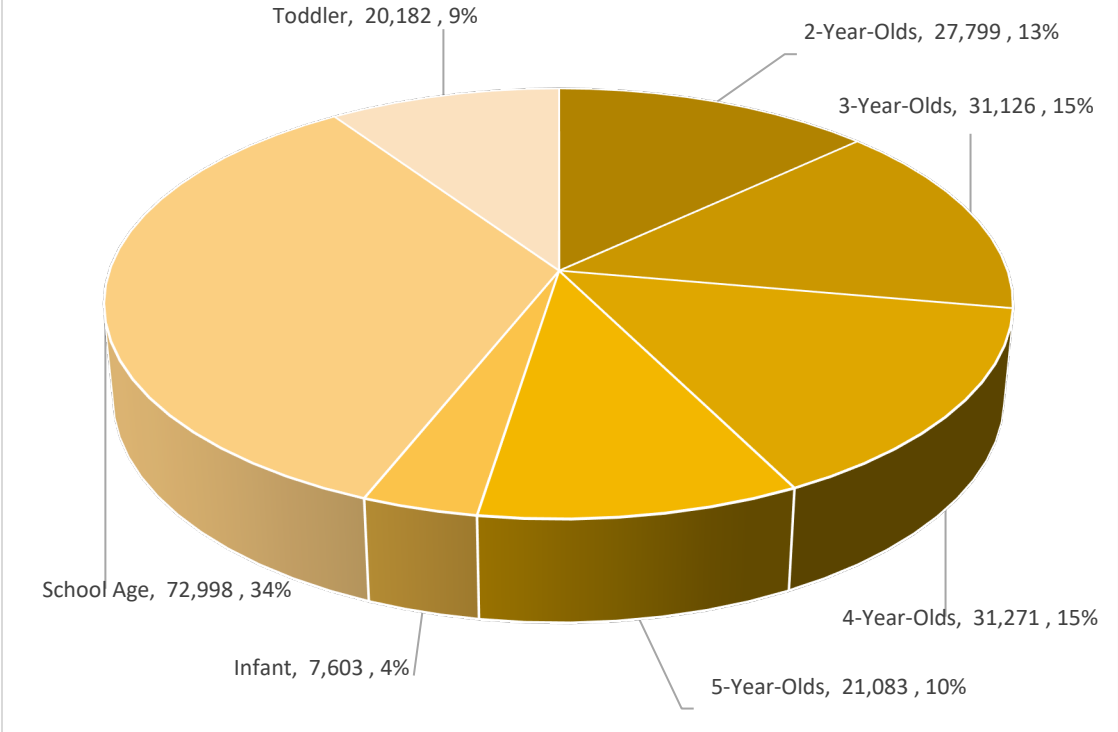
The program's two main goals are to help families become financially self-sufficient and help each child from a qualifying family develop school readiness skills. The program gives children access to a quality early learning environment and supports parents with information about child development and family engagement. Each SR provider's quality of instruction is measured by administering a widely recognized program assessment, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS), that assesses the quality of interactions between adults and children in the classroom.

Florida's SR Program works to:

- Prepare young children to start kindergarten ready to learn.
- Help working families afford quality early learning services.
- Keep parents in the workforce and/or participating in education or training activities.
- Help families become financially independent.
- Provide parents information about child development and family well-being.

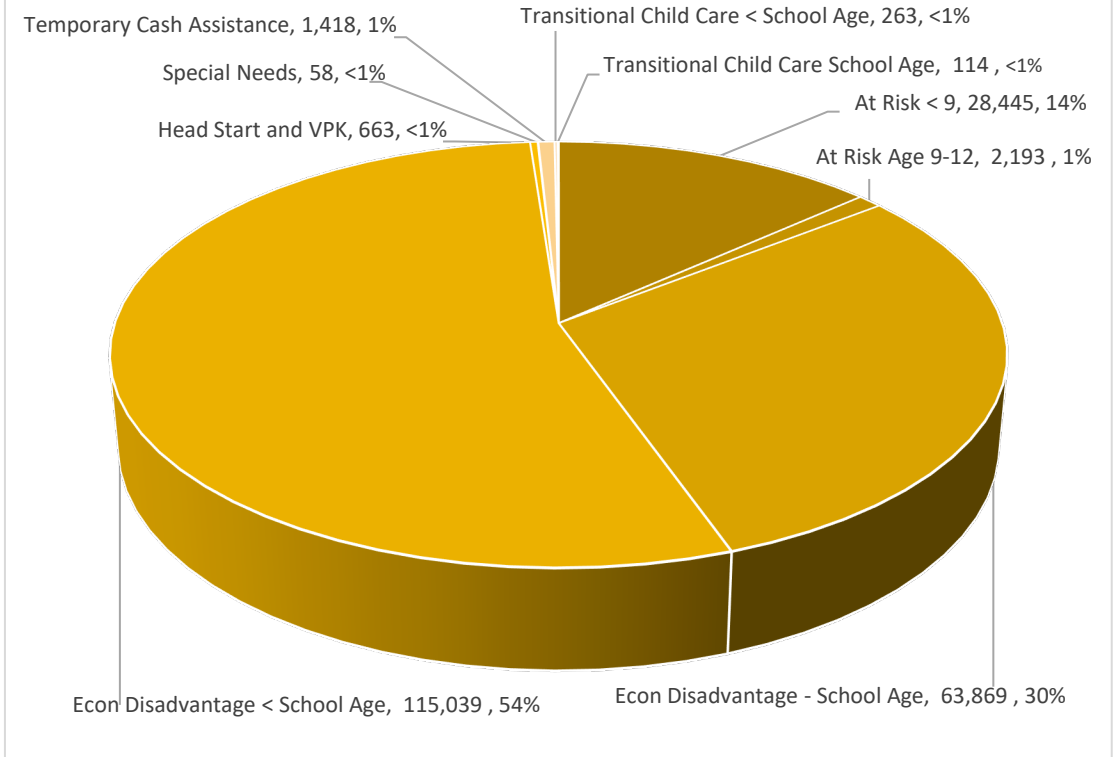
In FY 2023-24, there were 212,062 children enrolled with 6,889 early learning providers in Florida's SR program.

**School Readiness Enrollments
by Age Group FY 2023-24 (212,062)**



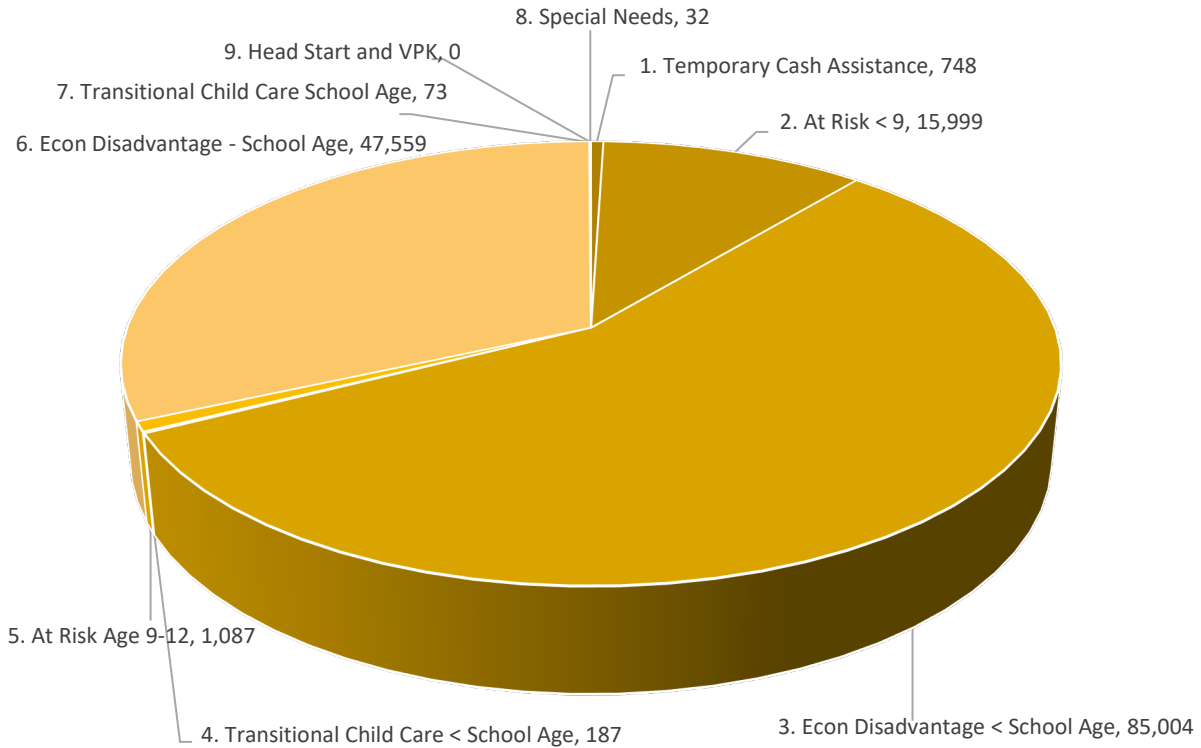
Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2024.

**School Readiness Enrollments
by Priority Group: FY 2023-24 (212,062)**



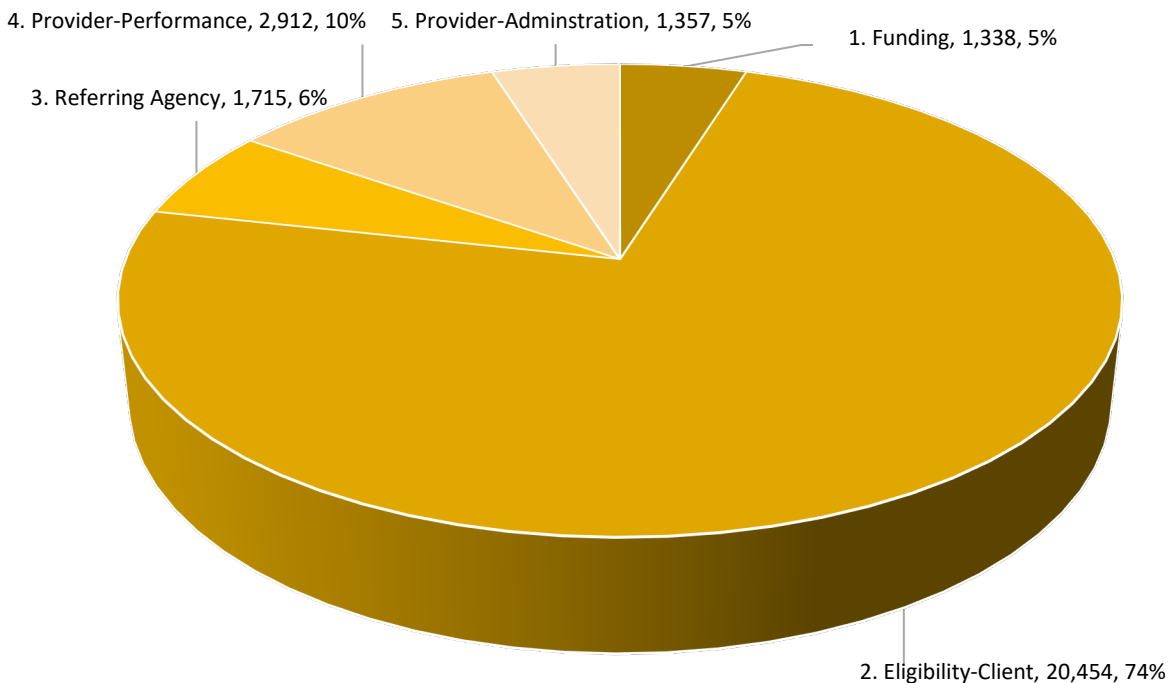
Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2024.

School Readiness Enrollments Monthly Averages by Priority Group FY 2023-24 (150,689)



Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2024.

School Readiness Disenrollments by Source of Action FY 2023-24 (27,776)



Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2024.

FY 2023-24 SR Enrollment Count by Coalition and RCMA

Coalition	Child Count
Alachua	2,448
Big Bend	5,666
Brevard	5,877
Broward	20,462
Duval	12,178
Emerald Coast	1,909
Escambia	3,576
Flagler and Volusia	5,998
Florida's Gateway	2,529
Florida's Heartland	2,176
Hillsborough	18,731
Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee (IRMO)	2,286
Lake	2,785
Manatee	3,805
Marion	3,304
Miami-Dade/Monroe	25,800
Nature Coast	2,552
North Florida	5,529
Northwest Florida	3,495
Orange	15,756
Osceola	3,623
Palm Beach	19,857
Pasco-Hernando	5,426
Pinellas	8,700
Polk	7,790
Santa Rosa	1,141
Sarasota	1,773
Seminole	3,221
Southwest Florida	7,045
St. Lucie	4,658
RCMA	1,966
Total	212,062

FY 2023-24 School Readiness Program - Waiting List History

Pursuant to Rule 6M-4.300, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), when a parent applies for the SR program they answer a prequalifying questionnaire, complete an initial application and provide limited supporting documentation of the reason they need care (just one of the program’s eligibility criteria).

After the parent submits the application, coalitions review and determine if the family is potentially eligible, based on the limited information available. If the family is determined potentially eligible, the coalition places the child(ren) on the waitlist. The parent is notified that they are on the waiting list.

To help families waiting for SR services, DEL works with local CCR&R specialists to provide families with information about other programs they may be eligible for, such as Head Start, Early Head Start, and other locally funded programs that offer free or reduced-priced child care. Local CCR&R programs also provide families with lists of locally funded community resources to help families until SR program funding becomes available.

FY 2023-2024 School Readiness Waiting List	
Month	Children Waiting
July	9,190
August	12,591
September	15,645
October	16,031
November	14,262
December	14,416
January	11,292
February	9,432
March	8,610
April	7,495
May	9,173
June	10,817
Monthly Average	11,580
Maximum for the FY	16,031
Minimum for the FY	7,495

Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2024.

Monthly counts represent the number of children waiting for School Readiness services on the last day of the month.

SR Program Assessments

Florida continues to lead the nation with our commitment to building the foundation for success of our young Floridians. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS) is the program assessment used to measure the quality of teacher-child interactions in both SR and VPK programs. In FY 2023-24, 4,699 SR providers participated in CLASS. The quality environment of each SR provider has been assessed by the administration of CLASS since 2018.

HISTORICAL SR PROGRAM ASSESSMENT CONTRACTING THRESHOLDS	
Program Year	Minimum Contracting
2019-2020	2.51
2020-2021	3.50
2021-2022	3.50
2022-2023	4.00
2023-2024	4.00

Providers, unless exempt, must receive a score of at least 4.00 on the CLASS to be eligible to receive an SR contract. Contracted SR providers can receive up to a 10-percent differential reimbursement rate based on their program assessment scores. In FY 2023-24, 1,315 providers with CLASS assessment composite scores of 4.50 to 4.99 received a 4-percent differential; 2,476 providers with composite scores of 5.00 to 5.99 received a 7-percent differential; and 278 providers with composite scores of 6.00 to 7.00 received a 10-percent differential.

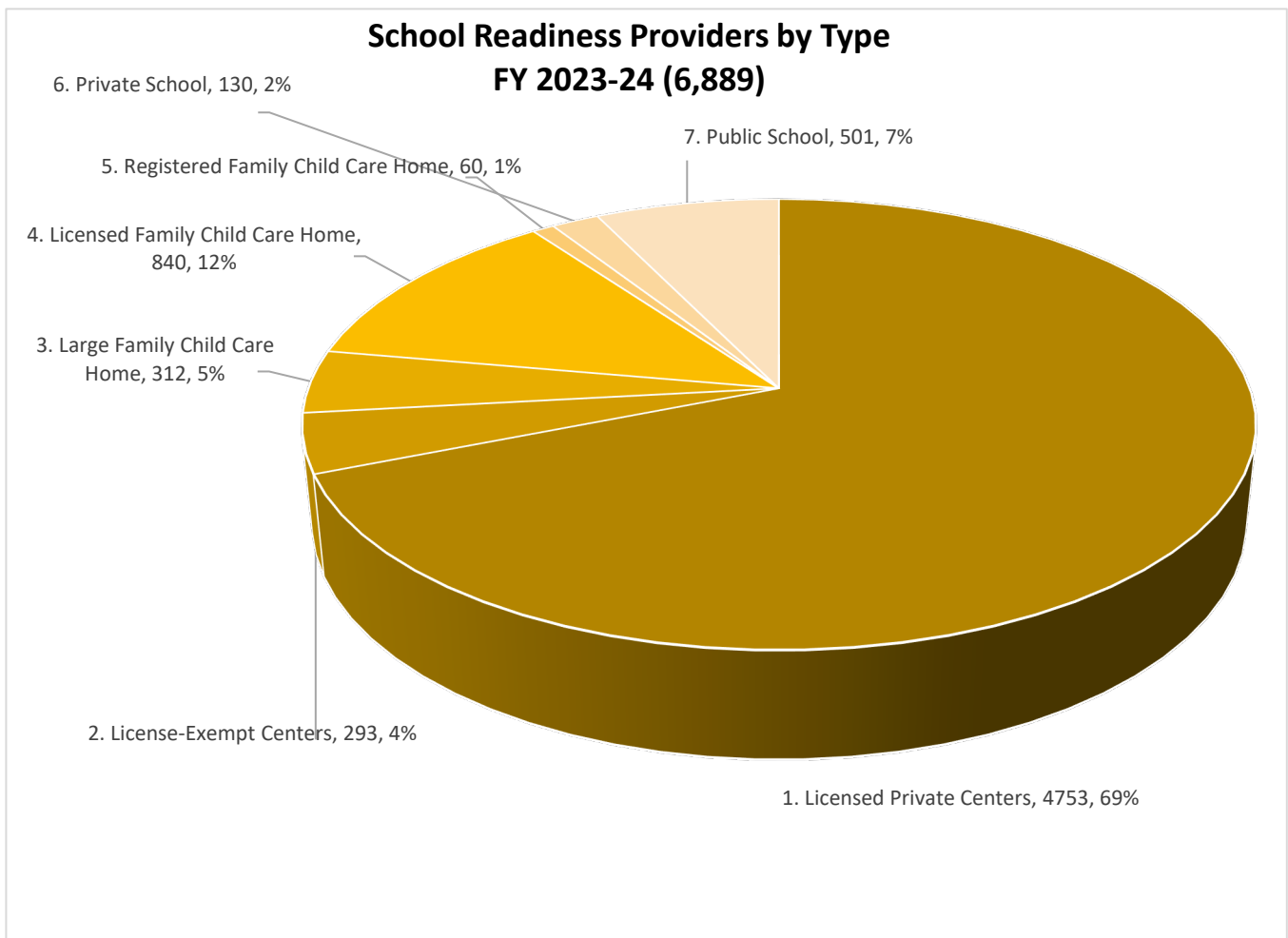
In FY 2023-24, almost 99 percent (4,642) of participating SR providers met the minimum contracting threshold by scoring 4.00 or higher on CLASS with a CLASS average score of 5.11. Of that number, more than 98 percent of participating providers received a CLASS composite score higher than 4.50 making them eligible to receive a quality performance incentive. Providers who receive a score below 4.00 can no longer contract as a SR provider. However, if the provider is in a child care desert, the ELC may waive the program assessment if the provider agrees to be on a quality improvement plan (QIP) for 12 months. During the fiscal year, 77 QIPs were created. Of the 77 SR providers on a QIP, there were 32 completed, 42 in progress and three that had not started. Additionally, 35 providers who scored below the threshold no longer contract as an SR provider.

SR CLASS Assessment Results - July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024

SR:
 Almost 99% of SR providers
 scored 4.00 or higher
 CLASS Average: 5.11

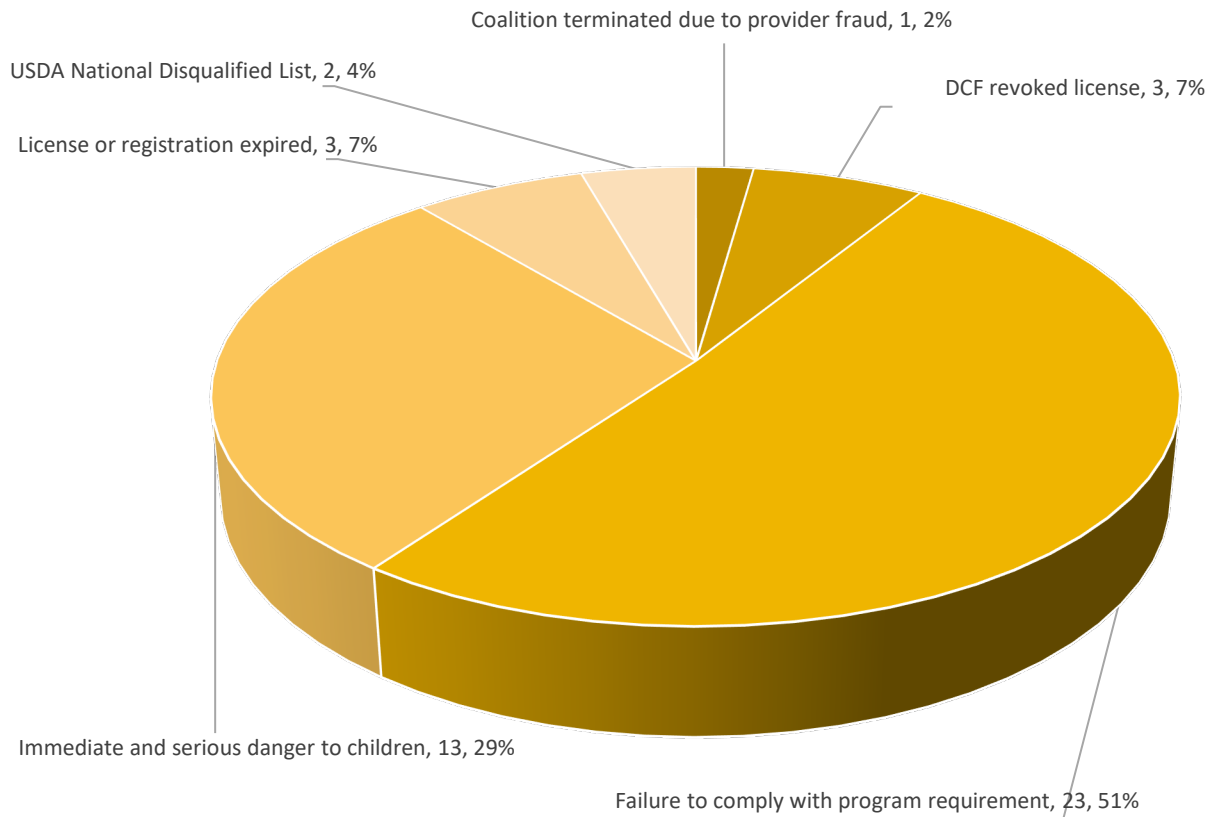
Overall Score Group	Count of SR Providers
Below 3.00	5
3.00 to 3.49	10
3.50 to 3.99	42
4.00 to 4.49	573
4.50 to 4.99	1,315
5.00 to 5.49	1,574
5.50 to 5.99	902
6.00 to 6.49	247
6.50 and above	31
Grand Total	4,699

Total does not include providers exempt from CLASS.



Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2024.

School Readiness Provider Contracts Revoked by Cause: FY 2023-24 (45)



Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2024.

Warm Line Services

Each ELC offers Warm Line services for consultations with a coordinator. This is designed to assist parents and providers by offering information regarding disabilities and special health care needs to children from birth to age 5. The coordinators are responsible for ensuring that developmental screenings are performed and that any necessary referrals are made. Developmental screening involves systematic observation and monitoring of potential delays in one or more areas of a young child’s development.

The Warm Line Network is comprised of more than 120 members, which includes early childhood coordinators from all 30 ELCs and RCMA. DEL organizes meetings and technical assistance sessions within the network to facilitate information sharing, engage with guest speakers, and address the current needs of children with developmental delays and disabilities. Each ELC provides access to Warm Line services as part of their early learning offerings, aimed at assisting parents and providers with information and referrals for child evaluations and services.

Coordinators act following a developmental screening that reveals areas of concern or in response to inquiries received through the Warm Line. They offer technical assistance to both providers and parents, identify targeted interventions for individual children needing extra support and facilitate early interventions for children before they enter kindergarten.

For FY 2023-24, the ELCs recorded the following:

- 55,835 observations and strategies were provided to child care programs to address developmental concerns so all children are engaged in the learning process in all settings.
- 5,407 observations were provided to child care programs related to individual educational plans for each child.
- 211 observations were provided to child care programs concerning children with medical issues.
- 23,697 observations were provided to child care programs to support early learning programs, which included assistance for teachers, guidance on classroom management, curriculum support and environmental modifications.
- 145,021 technical assistance sessions were provided to child care programs.
- 17,100 referrals were made to other agencies for children who needed additional services.

Rule 6M-4.620, F.A.C., Health and Safety for School Readiness Providers

Florida has reduced bureaucratic processes for the child care sector by successfully amending Rule 6M-4.620, F.A.C., Health and Safety for School Readiness Providers. The DEL significantly revised this rule to better align with the health and safety standards set by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and to update preservice training courses in accordance with federal requirements. DEL consolidated three provider-specific handbooks, three provider-specific checklists and 13 additional incorporated forms and documents into two new forms: DEL-SR 6200A, the School Readiness Program Health and Safety Standards Handbook, and DEL-SR 6200B, the School Readiness Program Health and Safety Checklist, which delineate standards specific to the SR program for all types of providers. This revised rule took effect on September 26, 2023.

Health and Safety Preservice Training Courses

Two SR Health and Safety Preservice Training Courses were created and three existing courses revised to more effectively meet the requirements of the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), the primary funding source for SR. The courses became available online in the Florida Early Childhood Professional Development Registry on January 1, 2024. They are free of charge and exams are embedded within the courses. Existing SR personnel were required to complete the two new courses by June 30, 2024. All new SR personnel are mandated to complete all applicable courses within 90 days.

Health and Safety Preservice Training Course Completion through June 30, 2024		
Course Name	New or Revised	Course Completions
Health and Nutrition in the School Readiness Program	New	73,000
Safety Practices in the School Readiness Program	New	70,949
Safe Sleep Practices in Child Care	Revised	28,931
Child Development in the School Readiness Program	Revised	28,730
Transportation Safety in Child Care Programs	Revised	24,784

Screening and Assessment Practices

Early identification and intervention play a crucial role in addressing developmental concerns in children. DEL continued to increase screening practices for children 6 weeks to 60 months enrolled in the SR program. The number of Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)-3 screenings has risen from 88,985 in 2022-23 to 118,525 in 2023-24.

Providers have the option to participate in child assessments that are used to measure a child's growth across the core domains of early childhood development. Participating providers receive a 5-percent differential payment per eligible child, per assessment period. In FY 2023-24, nearly 600 SR providers received this differential.

Child assessment remains an integral component of the quality differential for SR providers. Since the program's inception, DEL has observed a steady rise in provider participation and the overall number of children assessed. In the 2019-20 program year, 447 providers were involved, impacting 8,139 children, while the 2023-24 program year recorded 586 participating providers, benefiting 14,295 children.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Initiatives

DEL used ARPA funds to launch several large initiatives, such as Build a World Class Workforce and Strengthen Adult-Child Interaction, that included support for SR providers and staff impacted by workforce challenges. The Elevate Florida's Early Learning Workforce initiative provided ELCs with additional funding to positively affect outcomes for children by improving teacher-child interactions through training to support CLASS implementation. Additionally, Continuous Quality Improvement Grants were offered to support effective local interactions, business and leadership practices, and child assessment and screening with reliability.

Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Early Learning Professional Learning in Florida

The University of Florida (UF) Lastinger Center for Learning conducted a research study, Effectiveness of Early Learning Professional Learning in the State of Florida, which evaluated the professional learning opportunities offered by ELCs and RCMA and professional learning's impact on educators' scores on the CLASS observation tool. The findings from these analyses suggest that certified coaching visits, CLASS Group Coaching and coalition approved strategies are most effective at increasing CLASS scores for providers who have a quality improvement plan (QIP). Findings also indicate that training had a small but statistically significant positive effect on CLASS composite scores for providers both with and without QIPs.

Emergent Literacy Coach Specialization

The UF Lastinger Center for Learning developed the Emergent Literacy Coach Specialization to provide training aimed at enhancing the knowledge and skills necessary for effective coaching in early learning practices, specifically targeting content areas that promote kindergarten readiness. Participants working toward the Emergent Literacy Coach Specialization earn an Early Childhood Technical Assistance Coaching Certification and the Emergent Literacy Micro-Credential. During the September 2023-June 2024 contract period, a total of 60 Emergent Literacy Coach Specialization participants successfully completed all project requirements, earned the Emergent Literacy Micro-Credential and achieved coaching certification.

Instructional Support Course

The UF Lastinger Center for Learning also developed an online instructional support course titled "Supporting Learning in Preschool Classrooms." The course is tailored to assist educators in understanding the significance of interactions and in planning and executing strategies within the classroom to improve scores in the Instructional Support domain of the

CLASS. This course launched on June 10, 2024, and 170 participants completed the course by the contract end date of June 30, 2024.

Informal Career Pathway Research

The Early Childhood Policy Research Group (ECPRG) at the UF Anita Zucker Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Studies (AZCEECS) developed recommendations and modifications for an informal career pathway. A Statewide Advisory Committee was created to assist with analyzing, reviewing and providing feedback throughout the research and framework development process. This collaborative effort aims to ensure compliance with statutory requirements and to create a competency-based, stackable framework that spans from onboarding to micro-credentials and summative credentials for professionals working with children from birth to age 5.

In addition to the Statewide Advisory Committee, the ECPRG sought to ensure comprehensive representation from early childhood education stakeholders by conducting focus groups, surveys and interviews with teachers, directors and owners. A new framework was developed and articulates the vision for an informal pathway for early childhood educators to grow professionally.



Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program

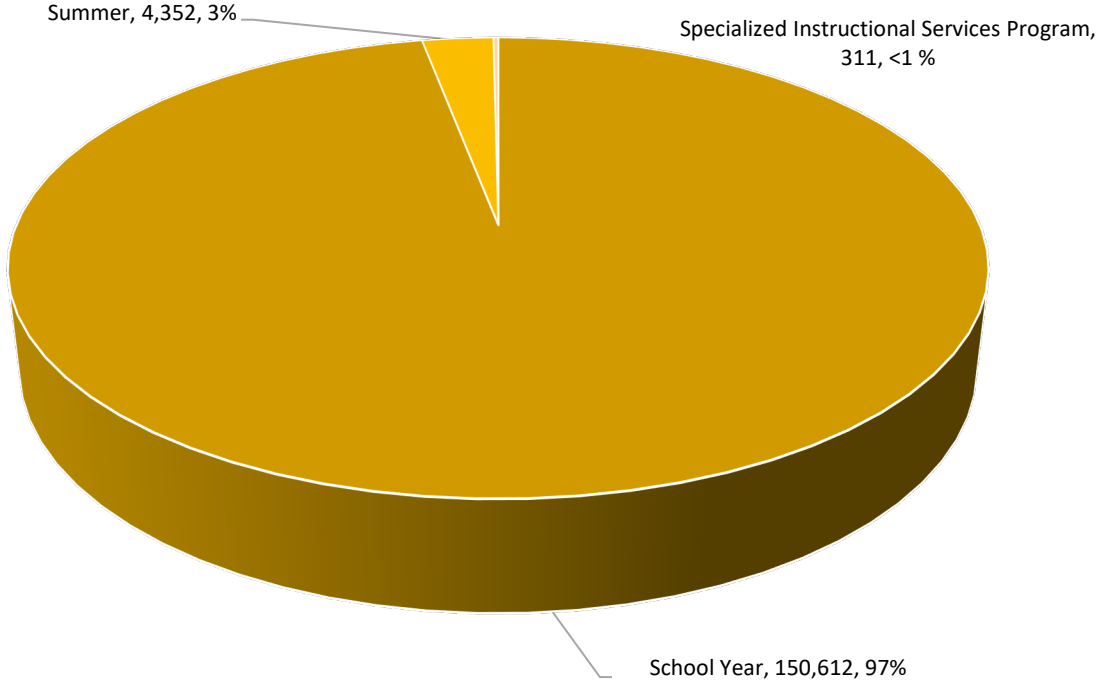
The VPK program prepares children for success in school and in life. The program is a free, high-quality education program available to all 4-year-old children residing in the state. Parents of 4-year-olds with birthdays from February 2 through September 1 may wait to enroll their child the following year when they are 5.

DEL administers VPK program operations at the state level. Mandated by the Florida Constitution, the program originated in 2002 from a ballot initiative proposing an amendment. Data collected by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) show that children who participate in VPK are better prepared to enter kindergarten ready for school. Parents can select from one of several VPK program options available from private and public providers. Providers have flexibility to structure daily hours per week to meet the required number of instructional hours: School-Year Program - 540 instructional hours; Summer Program - 300 instructional hours.

VPK Specialized Instructional Services is a program option available for VPK-age children with current individual educational plans (IEPs). This option allows parents of a VPK-age child to choose additional therapy services consistent with the child's IEP in lieu of attending VPK in a traditional classroom setting. Providers must be approved by FDOE and meet specific licensing or certification requirements based on the type of specialized service they provide.

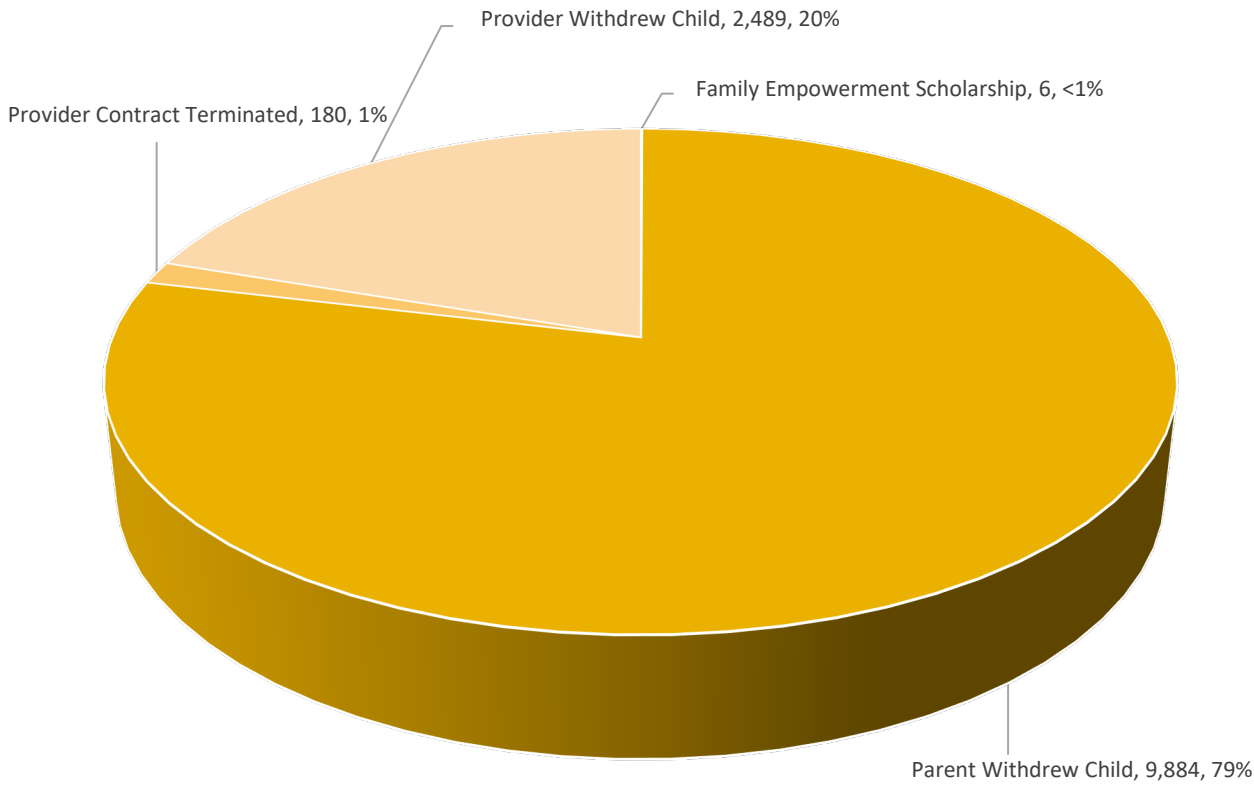
In 2023-24, there were 155,275 children enrolled with 6,247 providers in Florida's VPK program.

Children Enrolled in VPK FY 2023-24 (155,275)



Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2024.

Voluntary Prekindergarten Disenrollments by Source of Action FY 2023-24 (12,559)



Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2024.

FY 2023-24 VPK Child Count by Coalition and RCMA

Coalition	Child Count
Alachua	1,536
Big Bend	2,741
Brevard	4,574
Broward	13,768
Duval	8,823
Emerald Coast	2,207
Escambia	1,809
Flagler and Volusia	4,187
Florida's Gateway	1,121
Florida's Heartland	1,684
Hillsborough	11,470
IRMO	2,285
Lake	2,650
Manatee	2,954
Marion	2,161
Miami-Dade/ Monroe	20,988
Nature Coast	1,832
North Florida	6,180
Northwest Florida	1,764
Orange	12,213
Osceola	3,549
Palm Beach	10,911
Pasco-Hernando	6,107
Pinellas	5,440
Polk	4,566
Santa Rosa	1,210
Sarasota	1,692
Seminole	4,237
Southwest Florida	7,393
St. Lucie	2,512
RCMA	711
Total	155,275

Coordinated Screening and Progress Monitoring

The 2023-24 program year was the second year of implementation of the Coordinated Screening and Progress Monitoring program. This statewide, standardized program is known as the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) Star Early Literacy. FAST Star Early

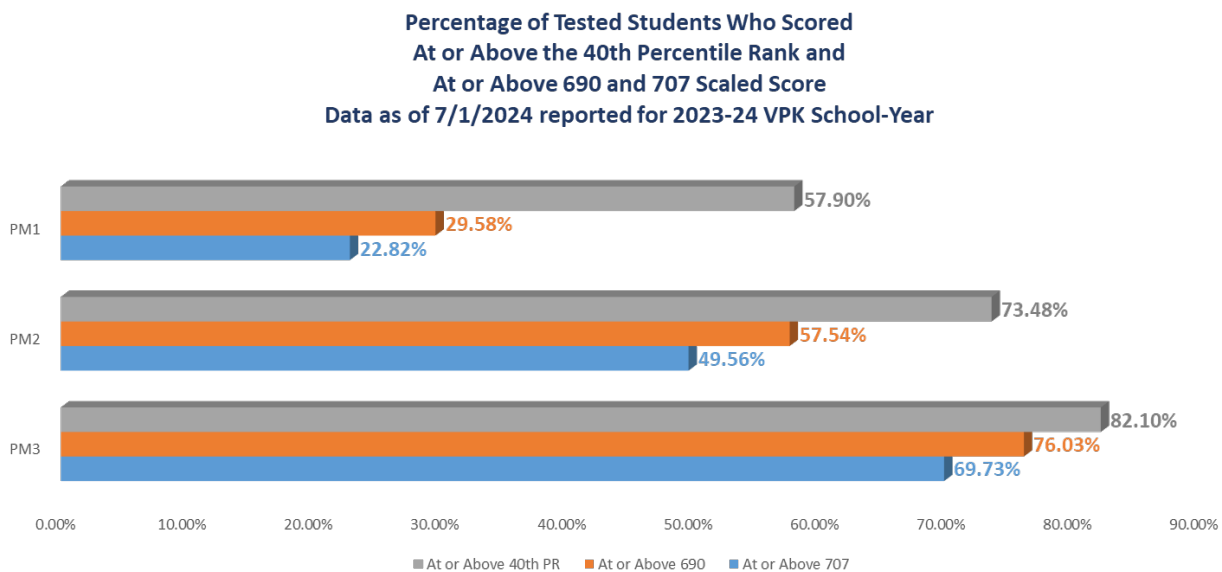
Literacy is a computer-adaptive assessment administered a minimum of three times a year, designed to assess and monitor VPK student achievement and learning gains of the performance standards in early literacy and mathematics.

FAST Star Early Literacy VPK Results

For the 2023-24 VPK program year, the chart below displays FAST Star Early Literacy results. The chart shows the percentage of students who scored at or above the 40th percentile rank and at or above a scaled score of 690 by each progress monitoring (PM) period. In August 2024, the State Board of Education adopted a new scaled score indicating kindergarten readiness. A scaled score of 707 will be the new cut score for determining kindergarten readiness, starting in the 24-25 school year.

By the end of the 2023-24 VPK program year’s third and final progress monitoring (PM3), roughly 82 percent of VPK students scored at or above the 40th percentile and almost 76 percent of students scored at or above the 690 scaled score, meeting the 2023-24 cut score for kindergarten readiness.

2023-24 FAST Star Early Literacy VPK Results



VPK Program Assessments

The 2023-24 program year also was the second year of implementation of the program assessment, CLASS, in all VPK programs as part of Florida’s new accountability system. In 2023-24 program year, more than 99 percent of participating VPK providers met the minimum contracting threshold by scoring 4.00 or higher on CLASS, with a CLASS average

score of 5.21. Eighty-nine percent of participating providers received a CLASS composite score higher than 4.50.

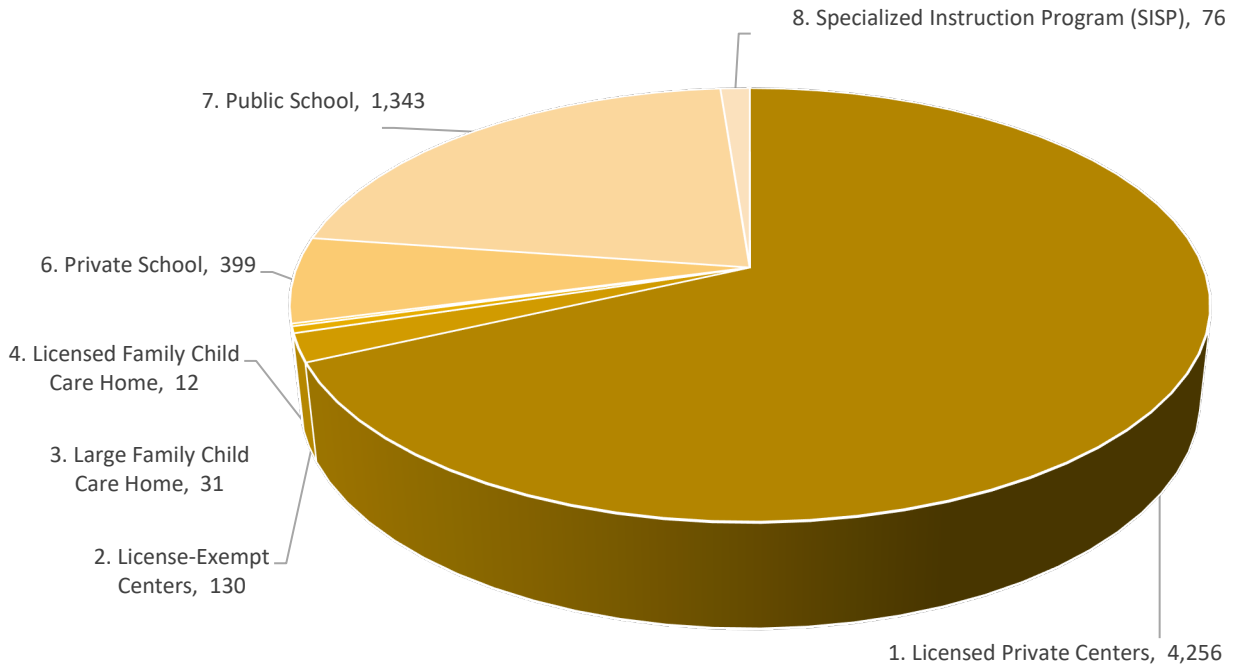
Section 1002.68(5)(a), F.S., stipulates that providers who do not meet the minimum contracting threshold by scoring 4.00 or higher on CLASS may not participate in the VPK program. During the 2023-24 program year, 22 providers did not meet the minimum contracting threshold.

VPK CLASS Assessment Results - July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024

Overall Score Group	Count of VPK Providers
Below 3.00	2
3.00 to 3.49	2
3.50 to 3.99	18
4.00 to 4.49	639
4.50 to 4.99	1,399
5.00 to 5.49	2,035
5.50 to 5.99	1,477
6.00 to 6.49	390
6.50 and above	50
Grand Total	6,012

VPK:
 More than 99% of VPK providers
 scored 4.00 or higher
 CLASS Average: 5.21

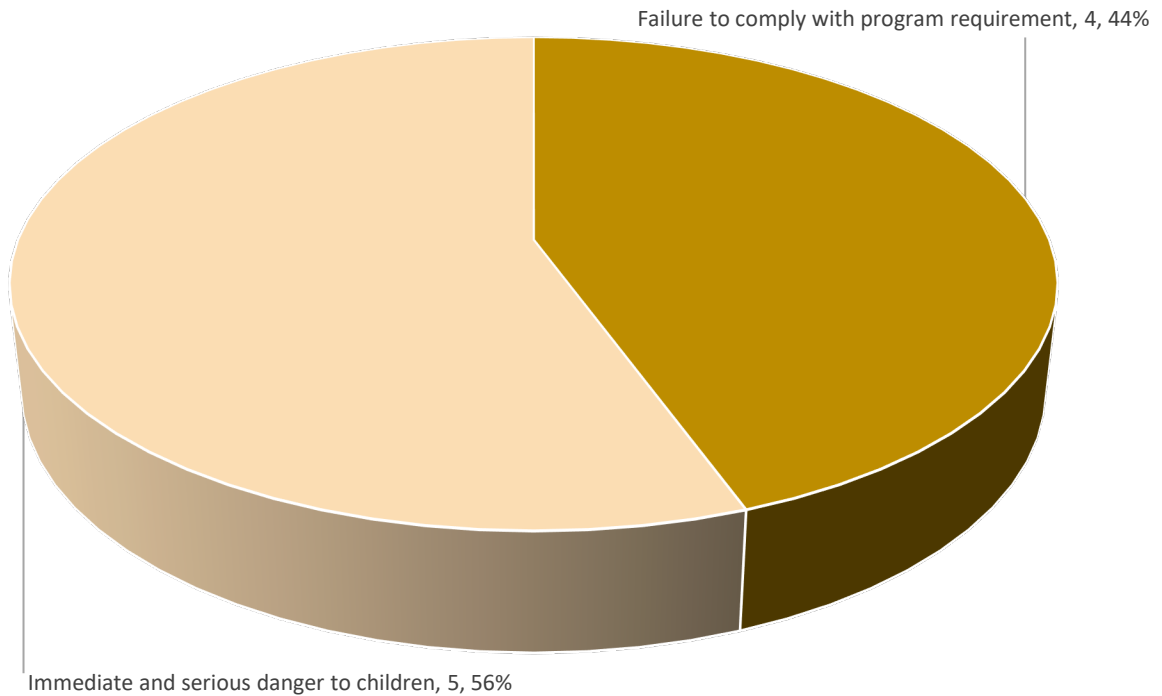
VPK Providers by Type FY 2023-24 (6,247)



*No VPK children were served in a Registered Family Child Care Home.

Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2024.

VPK Provider Contracts Revoked by Cause: FY 2023-24 (9)



Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2024.

Good Cause Exemptions (GCE) for VPK Providers

Prior to current statute delineating a new methodology for VPK program accountability, VPK providers received readiness rates based upon administration of the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS). Providers who received readiness rates below the minimum rate were placed on probation. Providers who remained on probation for two consecutive years or more and subsequently failed to meet the minimum rate could request FDOE to issue a good cause exemption which, if granted, would ask the provider to continue providing the VPK program. The exemption is valid for one year and may be renewed through the same application process annually.

The chart below includes the number of VPK providers on probation operating under a good cause exemption for the 2024-25 VPK program year.

2024-2025 GCE Eligible VPK Providers	
School Year	53
Summer	8

VPK Accountability

During the 2023-24 program year, FDOE adopted the methodology for calculating a VPK provider's performance metric using a combination of data points, including:

- Program assessment composite scores;
- Student learning gains from the initial and final progress monitoring results; and
- Student learning outcomes as determined by the final progress monitoring results.

The VPK provider performance metric and designations earned by providers represent the quality of the instruction provided in the VPK program, child learning growth and kindergarten readiness. Data gathered from both FAST Star Early Literacy and CLASS will be used to increase knowledge and skills of early learning professionals through targeted professional learning and coaching supports.

If a VPK provider's performance designation is above expectations, providers will earn recognition funds, pending legislative appropriation. If a VPK provider's performance designation falls below the adopted minimum performance designation, the provider will be placed on probation and required to take corrective action including the use of an approved curriculum and a staff development plan adopted by FDOE.

The new calculation and designations for VPK accountability will be applied at the end of the 2024-25 program year.

New Worlds Reading Initiative and New Worlds Scholarship Accounts

The New Worlds Reading Initiative expanded learning opportunities to eligible VPK children during the 2023-24 program year. The Initiative delivers a free book and family tips each month of the school year directly to a student’s home to strengthen their literacy skills, build confidence and foster a lifelong love of reading. VPK children who score below the 40th percentile on FAST Star Early Literacy are eligible to participate and remain enrolled in the program through fifth grade. Additionally, New Worlds Scholarship Accounts (NWSAs) were expanded to VPK children with a substantial deficiency in early literacy or mathematics skills. NWSAs benefit VPK children by providing families with a scholarship account, worth \$1,200 each, which families can use to pay for programs and materials designed to boost early literacy and math skills.

Emergent Literacy Micro-Credential

Created in partnership with the UF Lastinger Center for Learning, the Emergent Literacy Micro-Credential is available at no cost to Florida early educators to create accessible and on-demand emergent literacy professional learning. The Emergent Literacy Micro-Credential prepares early learning educators to:

- Support child outcomes for school readiness;
- Identify emergent literacy needs of children;
- Apply evidence-based practices; and
- Engage in effective progress monitoring and instruction.

As of June 30, 2024	
Participants who fully completed the Emergent Literacy Micro-Credential	11,143
Participants who were in the process of completing the Emergent Literacy Micro-Credential courses at the end of June 2024	971

Gold Seal Quality Care Program

In 2021, House Bill 419 facilitated a type two transfer of the Gold Seal Quality Care Program from DCF to FDOE. Established in 1996, the Gold Seal program recognizes child care facilities and family day care homes that exceed the minimum licensing standards by achieving accreditation from recognized agencies that uphold high-quality care and supervision for children.

Participation in this program is optional and open to all types of providers that fit the definition of child care, with the exception of specific license-exempt school-age programs outlined in Rule 65C-22.008(3), F.A.C. The Gold Seal program offers various advantages to participating providers, including tax exemptions on certain educational materials and property taxes, as well as increased reimbursement rates for SR providers.

During the FY 2023-24 there were:

- 16 Gold Seal approved accrediting associations.
- 1,861 Gold Seal designated child care providers, of which 1,519 are contracted for SR and 1,591 are contracted for VPK.
- 23 providers removed from the Gold Seal program due to licensing regulation violations.

Head Start Collaboration Office

The Florida Head Start State Collaboration Office operates within DEL and works to support and improve the collaboration between Early Head Start/Head Start and other providers of educational, medical and social services in Florida to support the state's most vulnerable children and families. The office coordinates federal, state and local policy to help ensure a high-quality and unified early care and education system for the state. In partnership with DEL and the Florida Head Start Association (FHSA), the Collaboration Office works to coordinate activities within key state agencies and other early childhood associations and advocacy groups to support the comprehensive services provided by Head Start programs.

Florida offers a total of 129 programs, which include 56 Head Start programs, 69 Early Head Start programs, two Seasonal and Migrant Head Start programs, and two Seasonal and Migrant Early Head Start programs. During the 2023-24 school year, 40,539 students and their families were served across all programs.

Financial Review

Descriptions of Expenditure Classifications

School Readiness Program expenditures are classified in accordance with federal regulations (45 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) section 98) and state statutes (s. 1002.82, F.S.). The following table describes the expenditure classifications for tracking and reporting program expenditures.

Direct Costs	Costs for direct payments to child care facilities for child care.
Gold Seal Costs	Costs related to the Gold Seal Quality Care program, which allows higher reimbursement per child for providers that are accredited by nationally recognized agencies and meet quality standards.
Administrative Costs	<p>Cost identified in federal regulations that include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Salaries and related costs to staff engaged in administering and implementing programs. – Developing agreements. – Evaluating program results. – Procurement and contract management. – Providing local officials and the public with program information. – Fiscal and budgetary activities. – Legal services. – Resolution of audit findings.
Non-Direct Costs	<p>Costs for services not classified as administrative or direct payment for child care services. These services include, but are not limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Helping families complete required application and eligibility documentation. – Determining child and family eligibility. – Recruiting eligible child care providers. – Processing and tracking attendance records. – Developing and maintaining a statewide child care information system.
Quality Costs	<p>Costs related to activities to improve child care quality such as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Developing, establishing, expanding, operating, and coordinating resource and referral programs specifically related to the provision of comprehensive consumer education to parents and the public to promote informed child care choices. – Awarding grants and providing financial support to SR providers and their staff to assist them in meeting applicable state requirements for the program assessment, child care performance standards, implementing developmentally appropriate curricula and related classroom resources that support curricula, providing literacy supports, and providing continued professional learning and training. – Providing training, technical assistance and financial support to SR providers, staff and parents on standards; child screenings; child assessments; child development research and best practices; developmentally appropriate curricula; character development; teacher-child interactions; age-appropriate discipline practices; health and safety; nutrition; first aid; cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR); the recognition of communicable diseases; and child abuse detection, prevention and reporting. – Providing, from among the above funds, adequate funding for infants and toddlers as necessary to meet federal requirements related to expenditures for quality activities for infant and toddler care. – Improving the monitoring of compliance with, and enforcement of, applicable state and local requirements. – Responding to Warm Line requests by providers and parents, including providing developmental and health screenings to SR program children.

The following tables show program expenditures in support of the SR and VPK programs during FY 2023-24.

FY 2023-24 School Readiness Quality Expenditures

<i>Quality and Enhancement Activities as described in s. 1002.89 (4)(b), F.S.</i>					
Comprehensive Consumer Education	Provider Financial Supports	Training and Technical Assistance	Quality Activities for Infant and Toddler Care	Responding to Warm Line Requests	Statewide Total*
\$14,780,516	\$51,687,079	\$109,907,680	\$6,192,960	\$4,935,934	\$187,504,169

Source: DEL SR Expenditure Workbooks FY 2023-24 data as of November 1, 2024; does not reflect final expenditure reconciliations.

*FDOE transferred \$11,557,072.86 to DCF for the remaining activity to improve the monitoring of compliance with, and enforcement of, applicable state and local requirements.

FY 2023-24 Coalition and RCMA School Readiness Program Expenditures

Coalition	Total Expenditures w/ Cash Match	Direct Services Expenditure Percentage	Administrative Expenditure Percentage	Non-Direct Services Expenditure Percentage	Quality Expenditure Percentage
Alachua	\$10,811,136	78.52%	3.80%	9.73%	7.94%
Big Bend	\$22,434,522	82.13%	4.96%	5.98%	6.23%
Brevard	\$25,692,827	86.62%	4.38%	4.05%	4.31%
Broward	\$108,412,717	83.48%	3.55%	6.82%	4.82%
Duval	\$59,429,220	80.91%	2.93%	4.57%	10.63%
Emerald Coast	\$8,047,353	81.03%	3.83%	7.04%	7.75%
Escambia	\$16,069,889	81.57%	2.62%	6.16%	8.64%
Flagler and Volusia	\$29,901,180	81.01%	2.80%	2.97%	12.75%
Gateway	\$11,536,910	80.42%	4.26%	6.69%	7.43%
Heartland	\$11,798,111	81.92%	3.76%	7.63%	5.75%
Hillsborough	\$72,820,312	81.52%	3.25%	7.48%	7.37%
IRMO	\$10,071,699	82.84%	3.29%	6.82%	6.73%
Lake	\$11,440,502	77.76%	4.68%	5.04%	12.18%
Manatee	\$18,361,600	80.86%	4.72%	4.42%	10.00%
Marion	\$13,381,649	78.82%	5.22%	7.10%	7.99%
Miami-Dade/ Monroe	\$131,719,332	81.45%	3.63%	6.85%	7.05%
Nature Coast	\$10,983,346	77.48%	4.22%	7.88%	9.99%
North Florida	\$21,427,248	80.23%	3.73%	5.07%	10.05%
Northwest Florida	\$18,022,122	81.89%	2.96%	5.21%	9.94%
Orange	\$77,646,933	83.44%	4.24%	4.41%	7.55%
Osceola	\$17,910,872	79.13%	3.66%	4.98%	12.22%
Palm Beach	\$89,075,147	80.81%	3.55%	5.67%	8.49%
Pasco-Hernando	\$17,428,419	81.04%	4.05%	7.97%	6.56%
Pinellas	\$37,480,959	78.71%	4.04%	6.60%	9.60%
Polk	\$40,910,902	78.41%	3.19%	7.45%	10.33%
Santa Rosa	\$5,119,926	81.16%	4.58%	7.24%	6.84%
Sarasota	\$10,554,187	84.82%	2.59%	4.52%	6.59%
Seminole	\$17,147,673	78.20%	1.19%	3.82%	16.51%
Southwest Florida	\$31,457,767	82.55%	3.42%	4.06%	8.73%
St. Lucie	\$19,825,804	86.82%	3.62%	2.82%	5.71%
RCMA	\$13,206,422	81.72%	3.70%	10.98%	2.64%
Statewide	\$990,126,685	81.55%	3.61%	5.97%	8.04%

Source: DEL SR Expenditure Workbooks FY 2023-24 data as of November 1, 2024; does not reflect final expenditure reconciliations.

FY 2023-24 Coalition Voluntary Prekindergarten Program Expenditures

Coalition	Total Administrative Expenditures	Total Direct Services Expenditures	Total All Expenditures	% for Admin
Alachua	\$133,055	\$3,822,657	\$3,955,712	3.36%
Big Bend	\$71,961	\$6,651,051	\$6,723,012	1.07%
Brevard	\$498,727	\$12,517,914	\$13,016,641	3.83%
Broward	\$1,236,630	\$37,421,655	\$38,658,286	3.20%
Duval	\$916,414	\$23,786,184	\$24,702,598	3.71%
Emerald Coast	\$229,280	\$5,816,020	\$6,045,300	3.79%
Escambia	\$169,774	\$4,687,560	\$4,857,335	3.50%
Flagler and Volusia	\$419,671	\$10,553,832	\$10,973,503	3.82%
Gateway	\$111,290	\$2,785,194	\$2,896,484	3.84%
Heartland	\$167,892	\$4,206,245	\$4,374,138	3.84%
Hillsborough	\$725,103	\$29,205,411	\$29,930,515	2.42%
IRMO	\$139,577	\$6,214,674	\$6,354,251	2.20%
Lake	\$277,842	\$6,984,099	\$7,261,941	3.83%
Manatee	\$308,691	\$7,809,238	\$8,117,929	3.80%
Marion	\$204,721	\$4,967,815	\$5,172,536	3.96%
Miami-Dade/Monroe	\$1,357,468	\$56,950,173	\$58,307,641	2.33%
Nature Coast	\$183,501	\$4,601,585	\$4,785,086	3.83%
North Florida	\$608,152	\$16,301,646	\$16,909,798	3.60%
Northwest Florida	\$175,765	\$4,410,612	\$4,586,376	3.83%
Orange	\$979,388	\$32,729,204	\$33,708,592	2.91%
Osceola	\$352,834	\$8,991,091	\$9,343,925	3.78%
Palm Beach	\$1,216,498	\$30,707,885	\$31,924,383	3.81%
Pasco-Hernando	\$598,915	\$15,809,911	\$16,408,826	3.65%
Pinellas	\$569,650	\$14,318,736	\$14,888,385	3.83%
Polk	\$442,084	\$11,485,332	\$11,927,416	3.71%
Santa Rosa	\$96,523	\$3,049,326	\$3,145,849	3.07%
Sarasota	\$119,306	\$4,459,670	\$4,578,976	2.61%
Seminole	\$442,917	\$11,129,122	\$11,572,039	3.83%
Southwest Florida*	\$761,784	\$22,063,058	\$22,824,841	3.34%
St. Lucie	\$98,235	\$6,509,796	\$6,608,031	1.49%
Statewide	\$13,613,649	\$410,946,696	\$424,560,345	3.21%

Source: DEL VPK Expenditure Workbooks FY 2023-24 data as of November 1, 2024; does not reflect final expenditure reconciliations.

*Includes RCMA

Fraud Prevention

The Fraud Prevention Unit focuses on providing technical assistance, sharing best practices and partnering with other government agencies to identify potentially fraudulent activity.

The Fraud Prevention Unit reviewed and forwarded suspected fraud cases identified by the coalitions for the SR and VPK programs to the Florida Department of Financial Services Division of Public Assistance Fraud (DPAF) for criminal investigation. In turn, DPAF referred cases to the appropriate State Attorney’s Office for criminal prosecution.

During FY 2023-24, the restitution ordered for fraud referral cases filed by the State Attorney’s offices totaled \$35,342.68. In FY 2023-24, DEL collected \$81,065.51 in restitution payments from recipient cases referred in 2023-24 and prior fiscal years. Additionally, the ELCs collected \$65,341.49 from overpayments due to suspected fraud. No provider cases referred in FY 2023-24 were closed as of year-end.

FY 2023-24 Provider Fraud Case Referrals and Status	
SR/VPK providers DEL referred to DPAF for investigation.	8
Provider cases being screened by DPAF.	2
Provider cases DPAF did not investigate.	4
Provider cases pending assignment to a DPAF investigator.	2
Provider cases DPAF was actively investigating at year-end.	4

FY 2023-24 Recipient Fraud Case Referrals and Status	
Number of SR recipients referred to DPAF for criminal investigation.	158
Number of SR recipient cases DPAF did not investigate.	92
Number of cases in screening status or pending assignment to a DPAF investigator.	49
Number of SR cases that DPAF is actively investigating, or a request was made for overpayment/over-issuance assistance.	17
Number of SR recipient cases sent to DPAF that are still awaiting status.	0

Source: Fraud Referral System as of July 1, 2024.

EARLY LEARNING COALITIONS

The following summaries are examples of the type of ELC activities to effectively implement CCR&R, SR, VPK and early learning initiatives.

Comprehensive Consumer Education

Marion County

The ELC of Marion County provided comprehensive consumer education to parents and the public to promote informed child care choices through:

- Providing an “Early Learning Guide” in the April/May issues of *Family Times* magazine that included full-page ads about coalition programs and activities, such as free diaper and portable crib give-aways, and a 10-page provider directory, reaching approximately 30,000 readers.
- Distribution of 4,000 Countdown to kindergarten family activity calendars to families with preschoolers. The calendars included a description of all coalition programs and activities.
- Participation in 33 community events, disseminating information and resources.

Miami-Dade/Monroe

The ELC of Miami-Dade Monroe provided extensive outreach, including grassroots campaigns, partnerships, and events to raise awareness of early learning through:

- Presenting more than 40 in-person outreach events to inform parents about available programs.
- Generating more than 28,000 customized child care listings along with a quality checklist on how to select a provider of choice; information on SR, VPK and Early Head Start/Head Start; and local community resources and contact information.
- Responding to more than 106,100 calls from families seeking financial assistance and community resources.

Seminole

ELC of Seminole partnered with Seminole County Public Schools (SCPS) to host the first Connecting Classrooms event. The event was held to build a bridge between the ELC’s private VPK providers and SCPS to strengthen the transition for children from the VPK classroom to kindergarten. By empowering VPK teachers with details of the kindergarten enrollment process, timeline and choices, including highlighting magnet schools, teachers can inform families of their options to help make the transition stress-free.

Provider Financial Supports

Florida's Gateway

The ELC of Florida's Gateway (ELCFG) provided wage incentives for the completion of training for Infant/Toddler CLASS Group Coaching and Prekindergarten CLASS Group Coaching. ELCFG also provided educational scholarships for Florida Child Care Professional Credential, Directors Credential, and Associate of Science and Bachelor of Science degrees in Early Childhood Education. This ELC is an authorized International Accreditors for Continuing Education and Training provider and always offers training CEU's free to practitioners.

Hillsborough

The ELC of Hillsborough County launched several new grants aimed at recruiting, upskilling and retaining early childhood staff. The V'locity Master Class and Accreditation Academy engaged 12 providers, awarding \$20,000 to help them develop tailored business plans and earn \$1,000 achievement bonuses for accreditation. Additionally, the United Way Quality Childcare Initiative collaborated with the coalition to award \$27,345 to sites improving educational outcomes for children from low-income families. In FY 2023-24, 10 of 12 participating providers received stipends for attending approved courses and conferences.

Duval

The ELC of Duval maintains the Guiding Stars of Duval, a quality rating and improvement system for child care providers who commit to higher standards, engage in ongoing professional learning, commit to continuous quality improvement and pledge to ensure children in their care thrive. The coalition distributed more than \$2 million to 609 qualifying educators as wage incentives for participating in this program.

Training and Technical Assistance

Indian River, Martin and Okeechobee

The ELC of Indian River, Martin and Okeechobee's Provider Services and Early Childhood specialists delivered numerous trainings.

- The Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards were the focus of many technical assistance visits and were addressed during multiple professional learning trainings. Directors, teachers and families were able to deepen their understanding of age-appropriate expectations across early childhood.
- Quality Specialists provided technical assistance on initial visits, SR monitoring, VPK monitoring, standards and curriculum monitoring, character development, mock

CLASS observations, Florida's Child Care Provider Search reports, Quality Performance System, health and safety, teacher-child interactions, and more. Among four Quality Specialists, an average of 160 technical assistance visits were made each month.

Palm Beach

The ELC of Palm Beach County offered 226 training sessions with 3,772 participants, pairing professional learning with technical assistance to support in-classroom practice. The coalition also offered coaching to ensure maximum provider accessibility, providing 7,100 coaching hours to 1,100 classrooms. In addition, the coalition responded to providers' requests for support with First Aid and CPR and offered multiple sessions of First Aid/CPR/Automated External Defibrillator training at no cost throughout the county.

Pasco and Hernando

The ELC of Pasco and Hernando Counties continued and expanded its credentialing programs for early childhood educators. Highlights include the Early Childhood Education Apprenticeship, which has supported 52 apprentices to earn their Florida Staff Credential through on-the-job training, and an 18-week program that supported 17 students in achieving their Early Childhood Professional Certification. Additionally, 96 educators received the Florida Director Credential through targeted training. These initiatives enhance educator qualifications and improve the overall quality of early childhood education in our counties.

Polk

The ELC of Polk County's 2023-24 Training Incentives Program had 200 registrants successfully complete mastery in selected course work. Stipends totaling \$118,000 (\$590 per person) were provided for more than 8,000 hours of study and coursework, and 10 instructors led the program. In addition, six coalition staff conducted a Business Coaching Pilot for child care providers. Fourteen participants (owners and directors) earned 15 training hours each at 12 sites, for a combined 210 total training hours specific to strengthening fiscal and operational management skills.

Quality Activities for Infant and Toddler Care

Emerald Coast

The ELC of Emerald Coast supported providers in creating and maintaining quality environments and offered targeted resources, assistance and training. The coalition conducted sessions for educators focusing on infant and toddler development. A CLASS Group Coaching Infant and Toddler Cohort provided an in-depth exploration of the CLASS

system to enhance teacher-child interactions, while an Intro to CLASS training introduced providers to the CLASS Observation Tool and strategies tailored for both infants and toddlers, with ongoing support made available.

Northwest Florida

The ELC of Northwest Florida's Books, Balls, and Blocks (BBB) Quality Initiative emphasized the teacher providing care in the classroom, utilizing the Florida State University 10 Components of Quality Care for Infants and Toddlers. Thirteen infant or toddler teachers and program directors were selected to participate in the BBB Quality Initiative. Ten were awarded stipends for their commitment to the initiative, implementation of a continuity of care model and implementation of practices suggested by coaches.

Sarasota

The ELC of Sarasota's 4th annual Storybook Street event was a free, literacy-meets-the-arts extravaganza featuring 20 local arts and science agencies bringing books to life. In a record-breaking crowd, with more than 1,300 people in attendance, the coalition distributed more than 6,600 books in two hours. Each family walked away with 20 new books. Designed for children ages birth to 5, the event offered age-appropriate activities with the aim of fostering a love of literacy in an intentional, meaningful and magical way.

Warm Line Services

Broward

The ELC of Broward (ELCB) provided training and technical assistance on developmental screening (Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ)) to child care professionals. The coalition also supported early childhood educators with training and support for classroom environments for students with disabilities, providing resources and assistance to families with children in child care and to those seeking child care. ELCB also observed classrooms and provided technical assistance, strategies and resources to teachers to support their classroom environment, delivering weekly interactive sessions remotely which provided behavior strategies to approximately 332 early childhood educators.

ELCB also funded two new positions for Peer Support Specialists. Their role was to help families through the referral process. Supports ranged from listening, helping families' complete referrals, providing reminders for appointments and assistance with completing required paperwork for partner agencies. The specialists connected with 362 families through the process.

Florida's Gateway

The ELC of Florida's Gateway (ELCFG) formed the Health Matters Children's Council, which meets biannually to create a comprehensive early childhood system in Columbia, Hamilton, Lafayette, Suwannee and Union counties to provide every child with the support and services necessary to succeed in school and in life. The ELCFG Health Matters Children's Council is comprised of professionals in education, health care, child welfare and mental health who represent local and state agencies and organizations concerned with the well-being of young children and their families.

Miami-Dade/Monroe

The ELC of Miami-Dade Monroe's Warm Line, Screening and Child Assessment Team supported early learning programs by facilitating developmental screenings, connecting families to early intervention, and offering technical assistance.

- Over 13,000 ASQ-3 and 9,000 ASQ: SE 2 screenings identified nearly 5,000 children for individualized follow-up.
- The coalition's Warm Line responded to more than 5,600 requests for support, addressing children's developmental, emotional and physical needs.
- The coalition supported more than 100 partners with targeted technical assistance.

These efforts enhanced early intervention, fostered best practices to ensure that children with special needs received timely, individualized support.

Appendix - Percentage of Children in School Readiness Compared to Children in Poverty by Early Learning Coalition

Percent of Eligible Children in School Readiness Program Paid Enrollments* by Early Learning Coalition: FY 2023-24

Early Learning Coalition/RCMA	School Readiness Enrollments Ages 0-4*	Number of Children Ages 0-4 Below 150 Percent of Federal Poverty Level	Percent of Children Ages 0-4 Compared to Number Below 150 Percent of Federal Poverty Level
State	117,981	357,199	33%
ELC of Alachua County	1,432	3,639	39%
ELC of Brevard	3,309	7,797	42%
ELC of Broward County	10,958	29,852	37%
ELC of Duval County	7,806	21,323	37%
ELC of Escambia County	1,844	6,635	28%
ELC of Flagler & Volusia Counties	3,945	8,560	46%
ELC of Florida's Gateway	1,237	2,959	42%
ELC of Florida's Heartland	1,242	6,135	20%
ELC of Hillsborough County	9,894	27,500	36%
ELC of IRMO Counties	1,376	4,605	30%
ELC of Lake County	2,042	6,463	32%
ELC of Manatee County	2,309	6,494	36%
ELC of Marion County	1,836	6,419	29%
ELC of Miami-Dade/Monroe Counties	13,298	51,529	26%
ELC of North Florida/Episcopal Children's Services	3,121	9,549	33%
ELC of Northwest Florida	2,171	6,210	35%
ELC of Orange County	9,276	26,140	35%
ELC of Osceola County	2,161	8,453	26%
ELC of Palm Beach County	9,307	21,806	43%
ELC of Pasco and Hernando Counties	3,168	11,962	26%
ELC of Pinellas County	4,695	11,445	41%
ELC of Polk County	4,459	18,574	24%
ELC of Santa Rosa County	571	2,942	19%
ELC of Sarasota County	1,344	3,256	41%
ELC of Seminole County	1,689	4,881	35%
ELC of Southwest Florida	4,016	18,449	22%
ELC of St. Lucie County	2,534	6,267	40%
ELC of the Big Bend Region	3,338	6,973	48%
ELC of the Emerald Coast	1,124	5,289	21%
ELC of the Nature Coast	1,378	5,093	27%
RCMA**	1,101	NA	NA

Sources: Population data from the Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research, November 12, 2024.

Source: Division of Early Learning, EFS Modernization School Readiness enrollment data.

* School Readiness paid enrollments include infants, toddlers, 2-year-olds, preschool 3-year-olds, and 4-year-olds.

**RCMA serves children in multiple counties covered by Early Learning Coalitions.

The criteria for the traditional SR program includes 1) Gross income must be at or below 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for initial eligibility and at or below 85 percent of the State Median Income (SMI) for continued eligibility; 2) Parent(s)/guardian(s) must work or participate in an educational activity such as attending college or trade school at least 20 hours per week; and 3) Families must pay a copayment for child care based on income and family size.

DEL is committed to ensuring Florida’s early care and education providers and teachers have access to the best resources and support to serve Florida’s children and families.

