**ECS Parental Access / Choice Policy:**

ECS will ensure that child care service providers who receive School Readiness funding allow parents unlimited access to their children and to the providers caring for their children. Child care provides must grant this access during normal provider operation hours and whenever the children are in the providers care. ECS will monitor providers to ensure that this policy is followed and will investigate any complaints that custodial parents and guardians are not allowed unlimited access to their children or their providers. If it is found that a provider is out of compliance with this policy, corrective action will be issued in accordance to ELC policy and the provider contract.

Custodial parent or guardian access to children while in the care of any legally operating provider, regardless of whether receiving financial assistance through the Child Care and Development Fund, is an enforceable requirement of ss. 402.305, 402.313 and 402.3131, F. S.; Chapters 65C-20 and 65C-22, FAC; each grant award with early learning coalitions.

ECS will reserve parental choice by permitting parents to choose from a variety of child care categories, including center-based care, family child care and informal child care to the extent authorized in the state’s Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Plan as the United States Department of Health and Human Services approved, based on 45 CFR s. 98.18. None of the categories may limit or exclude a faith-based provider’s care and curriculum.

ECS will offer child care certificate as defined in § [98.2](http://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/45/98.2). Such choice shall be offered any time that child care services are made available to a parent.

1. In cases in which a parent elects to use a child care certificate, such certificate:

* Will be issued directly to the parent;
* Shall be of a value commensurate with the subsidy value of the child care services provided under paragraph (a)(1) of this section;
* May be used as a deposit for child care services if such a deposit is required of other children being cared for by the provider;
* May be used for child care services provided by a sectarian organization or agency, including those that engage in religious activities, if those services are chosen by the parent;
* May be expended by providers for any sectarian purpose or activity that is part of the child care services, including sectarian worship or instruction;
* Shall not be considered a grant or contract to a provider but shall be considered assistance to the parent.
* Child care certificates shall be made available to any parents offered child care services. For child care services, certificates shall permit parents to choose from a variety of child care categories, including –
  + Center-based child care;
  + Group home child care;
  + Family child care;

ECS will provide information regarding the range of provider options under paragraph (e)(1) of this section, including care by sectarian providers and relatives, to families offered child care services.

1. With respect to State and local regulatory requirements under § [98.40](http://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/45/98.40), health and safety requirements under § [98.41](http://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/45/98.41), and payment rates under § [98.43](http://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/45/98.43), State or local rules, procedures or other requirements promulgated for purposes of the CCDF will not significantly restrict parental choice by –

* Expressly or effectively excluding –
* Any category of care or type of provider, as defined in § [98.2](http://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/45/98.2); or
* Any type of provider within a category of care; or
* Having the effect of limiting parental access to or choice from among such categories of care or types of providers, as defined in § [98.2](http://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/45/98.2); or
* Excluding a significant number of providers in any category of care or of any type as defined in § [98.2](http://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/45/98.2).



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| School Readiness Terms and Conditions |
| **Your Choice of Child Care Services** |
| You may choose from all available, legally operating, child care arrangements and providers including: licensed centers, licensed homes, registered homes, faith-based centers, school based programs, in-home care, relative care or other informal arrangements. You are guaranteed the right of “parental choice” in selecting a child care provider. Children in DCF’s custody or who receive care under the Rilya Wilson Act must attend a licensed, registered, or public school child care provider. Use of School Readiness funds is limited to contracted providers. Your child will not be placed in any child care arrangement without your approval. |
| **Your access to children in care** |
| Your child care provider must allow you to visit your child during normal hours of provider operation and at any time while they are in care. |
| **You may lose your child care if you:** |
| 1. Fail to comply with your WAGES work requirements, or 2. Do not provide documents or information required by your parent counselor, or 3. Fail to pay your “parent fee” to the child care provider, or 4. Exceed 30 days without employment, or 5. Inappropriate conduct by you or your child at a child care facility or at the School Readiness Agency, or 6. Knowingly provide false information during the application or redetermination process, or 7. Fail to notify your parent counselor of changes in your participation, employment, income or family circumstances including change of address and changes in family composition within 10 calendar days. |
| **Parent/Guardian Statement...** |
| **I understand that:** |
| In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) policy, this institution is prohibited from discrimination on the basis of race, color, religious affiliation or creed, national origin, ethnic background, sex, age, political belief or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, contact USDA or HHS. USDA and HHS are equal opportunity providers and employers.  All children for whom I am seeking care are ⁮ citizens of the U.S. or are ⁮ lawfully entered aliens (Check which box(es) apply). I understand I may need to submit proof of my children’s legal residency status.  For all children not yet enrolled in school, the School Readiness program will provide screenings and assessments. The purpose of a developmental screening is to identify children who should receive a more thorough assessment for potential developmental delays. Early detection of delays can improve the health and well-being of children, as well as aide in the developmentally appropriate education for all children. I consent to this screening with the understanding that I will receive the results of that screening and will be informed of any recommendations.  If I choose to place my child in in-home care, I am responsible for ensuring that minimum wage and other labor laws are met. |
| School readiness services are subject to availability of funding and enrollment priorities. At any time, school readiness funding may be discontinued. I have a right to be notified of funding changes or changes in my parent fees. Episcopal Children’s Services will notify me a minimum of 10 days in advance prior to my child(ren)’s disenrollment in the school readiness-funded program, unless the referring agency’s policies allow for less than 10 days notice. |
| Continuation of child care services will require me to provide appropriate verification of employment and all other household income including but not limited to child support and alimony (where applicable) within required timeframe. I understand that I will not be able to continue receiving services if I fail to provide to ECS in the required timeframe appropriate verification of employment and all household income, proof of residency and other information as required. I understand it is my responsibility to provide this information, and it is not the responsibility of ECS to collect this information. I understand I have 10 days to report changes in residency, new sources of income or changes to income sources such as the amount of my pay, frequency of my pay or place of employment. I also understand that I must report all earned or unearned income. If I fail to report changes or income and this results in a program loss, I could be prosecuted for a 3rd degree felony leading to possible incarceration, and/or expected to repay the lost program benefits received to which I was not entitled. |
| I have a right to confidentiality of child information and the right to inspect, review and request a copy of my child’s SR record. I may request a case review by the child care agency and the district office if I am found ineligible for child care services or if my childcare services are terminated, suspended or reduced. I have the right to appeal decisions and am aware of the ECS Grievance Policy which defines this process. ECS Grievance Policy can be reviewed online by visiting the website [www.ecs4kids.org](http://www.ecs4kids.org). |
| I give consent to the Office of Early Learning, the Early Learning Coalition, ECS and/or the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (aka DFS-DPAF) to request all information relating to my eligibility and to make inquiry into all statements or information given in the application. I understand that if I give false information, sign inaccurate attendance documents or fail to report changes in my circumstances, my case may be referred to the Florida Department of Financial Services, Division of Public Assistance Fraud for possible prosecution. |
| I will be asked to provide information about the race/ethnicity background and sex for myself and all persons for whom I want assistance. This information is used to make sure that benefits are provided without regard to race/ethnicity, color or national origin. It will not affect my eligibility or benefit amount. |
| Under the Privacy Act, individuals may only be required to disclose their Social Security numbers when such disclosure is required by federal statute, or when a state maintains a system of records in existence and operating before January 1, 1975, and the disclosure of the Social Security Number (SSN) was required under statute or regulation adopted prior to the date to verify the identity of an individual. **As a result, SSN is not required for child care eligibility and that eligibility will not be denied due to failure to provide SSN.** |
| If I voluntarily provide my SSN, it or the assigned ID# will be used:   * To maintain confidentiality * To collect data * To establish a unique identifier   **I authorize the Early Learning Coalition and ECS to initiate and/or receive data either through direct contact or an automated data exchange or electronic interface process for the purpose of establishing eligibility and parent fees Some examples include: employment records, unemployment benefits, TANF, Child Support, etc.)**  ***By signing I acknowledge that I have read and agree to the conditions stated above.***  **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**  **Parent/Guardian/Caregiver Signature Date** |