

Early Learning Passes

As the 2013 session wound down, early learning advocates became more and more concerned that the session's key early learning bill might succumb to time. Fortunately, in the final hours the bill passed. [CS/HB 7165](#) addresses numerous issues related to governance, accountability, transparency and fraud prevention.

Two key issues addressed in the bill relate to governance and Early Learning Coalition administrative expenses:

- **Early Learning Coalition Administrative Expenses** – No more than five percent of the funds may be used by Early Learning Coalitions for administrative costs and no more than 22 percent of the funds may be used in any fiscal year for any combination of administrative costs, quality activities, and nondirect services.
- **Governance**
 - The Office of Early Learning (OEL) is placed in the Department of Education's Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice;
 - OEL is administered by a director fully accountable to the Education Commissioner;
 - OEL shall not be considered part of the K-20 system; and
 - OEL shall administer the VPK and SR programs and develop rules for their implementation.

Other provisions in the bill:

- require OEL to:
 - adopt a list of approved curricula and a process for review and approval of a provider's curriculum that meets the performance standards;
 - identify a pre-assessment and post-assessment for School Readiness participants;
 - adopt a statewide, standardized contract to be used by coalitions with each school readiness provider; and
 - coordinate with other agencies to perform data matches on individuals or families participating in the school readiness program.
- remove the requirement for OEL to submit an annual funding formula and provides for allocation in the General Appropriations Act;
- revise the methodology for calculating the market rate schedule to require that the OEL biennially calculate the market rate at the average of the market rate by program care level and provider type in a predetermined geographic market;



Legislative Link

A legislative update provided by the United Way of Florida

- include provisions for fraud investigations and penalties for school readiness providers and parents who knowingly submit false information related to child eligibility and attendance in a school readiness program;
- require private prekindergarten providers to maintain liability insurance coverage and the necessary business requirements to legally operate a business in the state, including any required worker's compensation and unemployment compensation;
- require the Early Learning Advisory Council to periodically analyze and provide recommendations to OEL on the effective and efficient use of local, state and federal funds; the content of instructor training programs; and best practices for the development and implementation of coalition plans;
- clarify that care and curriculum by a "faith-based" provider, rather than a "sectarian" provider, may not be limited or excluded when offering parents choices in providers;
- expand existing School Readiness Program eligibility and priority enrollment requirements to allow providers to serve school-age children and siblings;
- prohibit the OEL and ELCs from requiring providers to administer pre-assessments or post-assessments;
- revise the duties of the Child Care Executive Partnership to include making recommendations concerning implementation and coordination of the School Readiness Program; and
- encourage providers to include specific activities that enhance brain development in infants and toddlers.

For additional information, please contact
the United Way of Florida at: (850) 488-8276.

GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.
LIVE UNITED 