

6M-4.400 Required Parent Copayment.

(1) Sliding fee scale. Each coalition must implement the sliding fee scale issued by the Division of Early Learning (DEL) and its copayment waiver policies, as applicable for families receiving school readiness services. Parent copayments will be set at a level not to exceed seven percent (7%) of the family's income, regardless of the number of children in care during the authorized twelve (12) months of eligibility.

(2) Copayment Assessment. Each family that receives school readiness services will be assessed a copayment based on the family size, hours of care needed and the family's income, according to the sliding fee scale issued by DEL as described in subsection (1).

(a) If a child is authorized for part time care, the parent will be assessed a part time copayment. If a child is authorized for full time care, the parent will be assessed a full time copayment.

(b) When a child's normal schedule of care is based on the school year schedule and the child is authorized school readiness part time care during the school year and attends a full time day at the school readiness program on a school holiday or school closure, the parent will pay the part time copayment. During the summer break, if said child is authorized school readiness full time, the parent will pay the full time copayment.

(c) Copayments for at-risk families as defined in s. 1002.81(1), F.S., must be assessed at the initial child care authorization. A coalition may waive a copayment for an at-risk child in accordance with subsection (6).

(d) A family may submit documentation at any time during the eligibility authorization period to decrease the copayment.

(3) ~~Redetermination~~Graduated Phase-out. At the end of the initial 12-month eligibility period, the coalition will re-evaluate the family's eligibility. If a family's income:

(a) Remains at or below 85% of the State Median Income (SMI), the family will remain eligible pursuant to Rule 6M-4.200, F.A.C., and will enter graduated phase-out. The early learning coalition will authorize school readiness child care funding for 12-months from the redetermination date and assess a copayment based on the DEL issued sliding fee scale and the family's current circumstances. Families in graduated phase-out remain subject to the reporting requirements detailed in subsection 6M-4.200(5), F.A.C. The coalition will adjust the family's copayment based on the reported changes, as needed, and will notify the family and provider of such changes within ten (10) calendar days. At redetermination, if a family's income is above one hundred fifty (150) percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), but at or below eighty five (85) percent of the State Median Income (SMI), the family will enter the graduated phase-out. The parent will be assessed a copayment that gradually increases as the family's income increases and is based on the DEL issued sliding fee scale.

~~1. During graduated phase out, school readiness childcare funding will be authorized for 12 months from the redetermination date. At redetermination the coalition must provide written notice to the family and provider of the required copayment for the 12-month period to be paid by the parent to the provider. The notice shall inform the parent that the copayment will increase as the family's income increases.~~

~~2. During graduated phase out, the family must report any changes in income to the coalition within fourteen (14) calendar days. The coalition will adjust the family's copayment based on the reported information and will notify the family and provider of any changes within ten (10) calendar days. The parent copayment will be increased or decreased based on any reported changes that affect the parent copayment.~~

~~3. During graduated phase out, if the family's income exceeds 85% of the SMI, the family is no longer eligible for the program. The coalition will notify the family that at the family is no longer eligible to receive school readiness services and school readiness services will be discontinued in accordance with Rule 6M-4.200, F.A.C. During the graduated phase out, if the family's income falls below 150% of the FPL, the copayment must be adjusted based on the sliding fee scale and the family will remain in the graduated phase out and continue to receive services for the remainder of the twelve month phase out period.~~

~~(b) Exceeds 85% of the SMI, or the family is otherwise no longer eligible, the coalition must notify the family and provider that the family is no longer eligible to receive school readiness services and school readiness services will be discontinued. For a family that is no longer eligible for the school readiness program due to income exceeding 85% of the SMI, the coalition will notify the family of the School Readiness Plus Program described in Rule 6M-9.200, F.A.C. At the end of the initial 12-month eligibility period at redetermination, if a family's income remains at or below 150% of the FPL, the family will remain eligible pursuant to Rule 6M-4.200, F.A.C. The family's eligibility, copayment, and reporting requirements are subject to the requirements of the initial eligibility period and will not be subject to the graduated phase-out criteria.~~

~~(c) At the end of the initial 12 month eligibility period at redetermination, if a family's income exceeds 85% of the SMI, or the family is otherwise no longer eligible, the coalition must notify the family that the family is no longer eligible to receive school readiness services and school readiness services will be discontinued.~~

(4) Parent and Provider Notification. Prior to a child's enrollment at the child care provider, the coalition will issue a payment certificate to the parent and eligible child care provider. The payment certificate includes the copayment to be paid by the parent to the school readiness provider. The coalition must notify the parent that additional fees charged by the provider may apply. If a child is enrolled with more than one provider or a family has more than one child enrolled in the school readiness program, the family will

make only one copayment to one authorized provider.

(5) Copayment Collection. The copayment amount for which the family is responsible will be subtracted from the provider's reimbursement, prior to payment by the coalition or its designee. Collection of the family's required copayment for school readiness services will be the responsibility of the provider of school readiness services in accordance with s. 1002.88(1), F.S.

(a) The provider must provide written notice of the copayment due date. The parent copayment must be collected within ten (10) calendar days of the provider's payment due date. The provider must give the parent a receipt for each copayment made by the parent and retain receipt records for all child care copayments.

(b) The provider must document outstanding parent copayment balances. The provider must provide written notification to the parent of the current outstanding copayment balance within fifteen (15) calendar days of the provider's payment due date. This notification must be provided at least on a monthly basis as long as there is a copayment balance. Outstanding parent copayments will be subject to the provider's payment policies as acknowledged and agreed upon by the parent. The provider must document the parent's acknowledgement of receipt of payment policies related to the school readiness program prior to the parent enrolling his/her child in the provider's school readiness program. If the provider intends to take action, in accordance with its policy, against a school readiness parent for non-payment of the copayment that includes disenrolling the child from the provider site, the provider must notify the coalition at least five (5) calendar days prior to disenrollment.

(6) Copayment Waivers. The coalition may waive the assessed parent copayment in accordance with Section 1002.84(9), F.S. Each coalition must submit a copayment waiver policy including include a list of qualifying events and outlining the procedure for obtaining a copayment waiver in its coalition plan pursuant to Rule 6M-9.115, F.A.C. Requests for copayment waivers must be documented in the case file.

(7) Transfers. A parent ~~cannot~~ ~~may not~~ transfer any child(ren) in the household to another school readiness program provider until the parent has satisfactorily fulfilled the copayment obligation related to the school readiness program and submitted documentation evidencing fulfillment from the current school readiness program provider responsible for collecting the copayment as described in subsection (5) to the early learning coalition ~~stating that the parent has satisfactorily fulfilled the copayment obligation related to the school readiness program~~. Satisfactory fulfillment of the copayment obligation is defined as immediate payment of the outstanding copayment obligation or establishment of a repayment plan for the outstanding copayment obligation. All transfers must be approved by the coalition.

(a) If the referenced documentation is not available, the coalition must contact the provider to determine compliance and document compliance as reported by the provider. The coalition will complete the transfer once the copayment obligation has been

satisfactorily fulfilled.

(b) If a parent of an at-risk child defined in s. 1002.81(1), F.S., is unable to satisfactorily fulfill the copayment obligation prior to transfer, the provider must attempt to arrange a repayment plan with the at-risk child's parent. If the provider is unable to arrange a payment plan with the at-risk child's parent, the provider must document the repayment attempt and submit to the coalition.

(8) Copayment changes. A parent copayment will not be increased during the initial 12-month eligibility authorization period. The amount of copayment assessed must be in effect for the family's authorized eligibility period, unless:

(a) The parent or referring agency requests and the coalition grants a waiver of the assessed co-payment specified in subsection (5); or

(b) An incorrect co-payment was assessed by the eligibility determiner as a result of an error of the eligibility determiner, program participant error, or program participant fraud, resulting in corrective action to reduce or increase the family's co-payment; or

(c) The parent's employment status, family size or income results in a lower parent copayment; or

(d) The authorized hours of care changes.

(e) Copayments during graduated phase out may be increased or decreased based on the family's income and size.

(9) Coalition Copayment Errors. The coalition will not take action to recover an incorrect copayment made due to an error of the coalition or its designee. Once the error is discovered, the coalition must correct the error and apply the corrected copayment. The coalition must notify the parent within ten (10) calendar days of changes to the copayment. This notification must be documented.

(10) Copayment Recovery. In cases when a provider reimbursement overpayment is caused by an incorrect copayment assessment which resulted from parent error or parent fraud, the coalition must attempt to recover the overpayment from the provider and document attempts. If the coalition is unsuccessful in recovery of the overpayment, the coalition must notify DEL and submit documentation as necessary in accordance with the coalition's approved anti-fraud plan.

(11) Accessibility of Copayment Information. Each coalition must post an electronic copy of its current sliding fee scale and the DEL approved copayment waiver policies to its website in an easily accessible location.

Rulemaking Authority 1001.02(1), (2)(n) FS. Law Implemented 1002.84(9) FS. History—New 2-2-05, Formerly 60BB-4.400, Amended 1-1-15, 3-20-17, 5-13-25, XX-XX-25.