

School Readiness Plus Program

Frequently Asked Questions

The purpose of this FAQ is to provide information and guidance on implementation of the School Readiness Plus (SR Plus) Program.

Program Purpose

1. What is the purpose of the SR Plus Program?

The SR Plus program helps low-income families pay for child care while also lessening the effect of the “benefits cliff” when they are deemed no longer eligible for the full subsidy under the School Readiness (SR) Program. The intent of the program is to ensure SR families are economically self-sufficient and are capable of taking on the full cost of child care when they exit the SR program by paying an increased portion towards the cost of their child care as their income increases. In essence, it supports a family with accepting a promotion while not losing the entire child care subsidy.

2. Who is the SR Plus Program for?

SR Plus is for families that received SR child care services and recently exited the SR program due to a family income exceeding 85% of the State Median Income (SMI).

3. How is the SR Plus Program funded?

SR Plus is a State of Florida child care subsidy program. Funding is provided by legislative appropriation per section 1002.935, Florida Statutes (F.S.). No Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) funding is used.

4. How does the SR Plus Program benefit families exiting the SR program due to their family incomes exceeding 85% SMI?

The SR Plus program will continue to assist families with the cost of child care after they are no longer eligible for the SR program.

5. When is the SR Plus Program effective?

The effective date of the rule and program is September 24, 2024.

6. Will enrollment into the SR Plus Program be retroactive for eligible families terminated from the School Readiness Program prior to the effective date of SR Plus?

No, enrollment will not be retroactive.

Family Eligibility

1. What are the minimum eligibility criteria for families entering the SR Plus Program?

There are two main eligibility requirements for families: termination from the SR program and family income above 85% of the SMI and at or below 100% of the SMI.

2. What is the purpose for care for SR Plus families?

Families can maintain the same purpose for care as the SR program.

3. If an SR family reports an income change during the 12-month authorization period that puts them between 85-100% SMI, can they be enrolled into the SR Plus Program?

Yes. Any time an SR family reports a family income over 85% SMI, whether at annual redetermination or during its SR authorization period, the ELC is to evaluate the family's eligibility for the SR Plus Program.

4. What eligibility documentation must be collected for SR Plus Program participants?

Documentation verified at eligibility determination and redetermination includes:

- Purpose for care. The parent(s) has an eligible purpose for care and submits the documentation identified in subparagraph 6M-4.208(4)(f)6., F.A.C., as applicable.
- Family income. Family income is above 85% and at or below 100% SMI and the parent submits the documentation identified in subparagraph 6M-4.208(4)(f)6., F.A.C.
- Age. The family unit has at least one child between the ages of birth up to thirteen (13) years of age and the family unit submits documentation identified in subparagraphs 6M-4.208(4)(a)1.-6., and 9., F.A.C.
- Citizenship. Each child receiving services is a U.S. citizen or qualified non-citizen and the family submits documentation that complies with subparagraphs 6M-4.208(4)(b)1.-5., F.A.C.
- Parent status. The parent(s) meets the definition of parent or person in loco parentis in paragraph 6M-4.200(1)(d), F.A.C., and submits documentation that complies with paragraph 6M-4.208(4)(d), F.A.C.
- Residency. The family resides within the county in which the parent applied for services and submits documentation identified in subparagraphs 6M-4.208(4)(c)1.-5., 7. and 8., F.A.C.
- Family size. The parent(s) identifies each child and adult included in the family size, in accordance with paragraph 6M-4.208(4)(e), F.A.C.

5. If a parent experiences a loss in purpose for care for the SR Plus Program, will a 3-month reestablishment period apply?

Yes. The family must meet purpose for care by the end of the 3-month period. SR Plus Program services will be terminated when a family no longer meets purpose for care requirements.

6. When is a SR Plus Program participant terminated from the program?

Qualifying events for termination include:

- Excessive unexplained absences that exceed 10 calendar days during a total month of attendance. The coalition shall document three attempts to contact the family and the provider regarding excessive absences prior to disenrollment.
- Substantiated fraud or intentional program violation determined by the coalition pursuant Section 1002.91, F.S.

- A change in residency outside of the State of Florida.
- A family no longer meets purpose for care requirements.
- The family is determined ineligible at the time of redetermination.
- Family income is outside the range of income eligibility for the SR Plus Program.

7. When should a termination notice be issued to a SR Plus Program participant?

The family and provider will be notified of disenrollment a minimum of 2 weeks prior to termination of services or at the end of the current authorization period, whichever comes first. The notification to the parent must include the reason for termination.

8. Can a family that is terminated from the SR Plus Program reapply?

Families terminated from SR Plus cannot reapply to the SR Plus Program.

9. Can a family whose income drops below 85% of the SMI reapply to SR?

Yes, a family whose income meets requirements for the SR program can reapply for the SR Program; waiting list requirements may apply.

10. Can SR Plus Program services be transferred?

Yes, SR Plus Program services can be transferred when there is a change in provider or change in residency within the state to a different coalition service area. Subsection 6M-4.400(7), F.A.C., and paragraph 6M-4.200(7)(a), F.A.C., apply.

11. What are the reporting requirements for SR Plus participants?

A parent must notify the coalition within 14 calendar days of any change in address, purpose for care, family size or family income.

Coalition Responsibilities

1. Where can we access the benefit management and career planning tool mentioned in paragraph 6M-9.200(3)(c), F.A.C.?

The State of Florida’s workforce development benefits management and career planning tool, identified in Section 445.009(1)(k), F.S., is available on the Family and Coalition Portals and is available at the following link: <https://analytics.careersourceflorida.com/cliff>.

2. How will families know how to use the benefit management and career planning tool?

Families will receive an email from the Family Portal that provides a link to the tool and directs them to contact their coalition to connect with their local Workforce office for help using the tool. Early Learning Coalitions (ELCs) are to reinforce to SR Plus families the value of connecting with CareerSource Florida to understand how any public benefits they receive may change based upon changes to their income.

3. What is the authorization period for the SR Plus Program?

Families are authorized for 12 months of SR Plus services.

4. In the attendance processing for the coalition, will there be a drop down for SRPLS?

The Coalition User Guide has been updated to include details for processing SR Plus attendance. Note: Both “SR” and “SR Plus” children are included in the attendance roster.

5. Will all families see the SR Plus term within the terms and conditions?

Yes. The terms and conditions will include both SR and SR Plus information and be visible to SR and SR Plus families.

6. Will there be a separate payment certificate for SR Plus?

No. The payment certificate indicates both the SR and SR Plus Programs.

Provider Reimbursements and Parent Copayments

1. Where is the SR Plus Program sliding fee scale?

It is available within the Coalition Portal and a copy is attached to this document.

2. If a family’s income changes during their 12-month authorization period, would their SR Plus Program copayment also change?

The assessed SR Plus copayment will increase based on reported changes that affect the parent copayment. The copayment will increase at the time of redetermination or when self reported mid-authorization period should the family’s income move to a higher bracket. SR Plus copayments cannot be decreased during the authorization period. A decrease in copayment will only occur during redetermination.

3. Will providers participating in the SR Plus Program be eligible for registration fee reimbursements or other differentials?

An eligible SR program provider may receive reimbursement for registration fees, differential rates for quality performance incentives (QPI), Gold Seal (GS), child assessment, caring for children with special needs and participation in the contracted slots program, as applicable.

4. Will provider reimbursements be based on current SR reimbursement rates or will SR Plus have separate reimbursement rates?

The provider reimbursement rates are the same for both programs.

5. Will VPK wrap rates apply to children who are dually enrolled in VPK and SR Plus Program?

Yes.

6. Can SR Match payments be made for enrolled SR Plus children?

No. SR Match funding is strictly applied to the CCDF SR program.

Provider Responsibilities

1. Will child developmental screenings be conducted for children enrolled in SR Plus?

Yes. Providers or ELCs shall conduct child screenings in accordance with Rule 6M-4.720, F.A.C., and provisions within the SR provider contract.

2. Are paid SR Plus child care slots included in the count of children for program assessment?

No.

EFS Mod

1. Is there a new billing group assigned to families participating in SR Plus?

Yes. The billing group is BG-SRPLS.

2. Will the ELCs use the same EFSM processes for enrolling children, verifying attendance, and reimbursing providers for SR Plus as for SR?

Yes.