

## **The Voluntary Prekindergarten Provider Application Process**

### **How do I become an approved VPK Provider?**

You will need to submit a two part application. One VPK – 10 is required for each site and one VPK – 11 is required for each classroom.

### **Where can I locate the VPK – 10 and VPK -11 forms?**

Visit [www.childcarepinellas.org](http://www.childcarepinellas.org) to download the forms. At the home screen you will click on “Voluntary Prekindergarten” in the green box on the left. Then click on “VPK Provider Information’. You will have access to both the VPK -10 and VPK -11 forms and instructions for completing the forms. You may complete the forms on line, but you will have to print a hard copy to submit to Coordinated Child Care of Pinellas, Inc. (CCC)

**-Or-**

You may call the Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas Inc. at (727) 548-1439 or Coordinated Child Care at (727) 547-2923 to request these forms be mailed to you.

### **Once I have completed forms VPK- 10 and VPK- 11 where do I send them?**

Coordinated Child Care of Pinellas, Inc.  
Attention: Provider Services Department  
10601 Belcher Road South  
Largo, Florida 33777

### **Is there anything else I should send with my application?**

Yes. To help expedite the process you will want to submit copies of the following with your application:

- Certificate of Accreditation (if applicable)
- Educational credentials for all VPK teachers
- Proof of 5.0 hour literacy training attended by VPK teachers  
(If applicable)
- Background screening information for all VPK teachers
  - ✓ FBI Letter
  - ✓ FDLE Report
  - ✓ Local screening
  - ✓ Affidavit of Good Moral Character
  - ✓ Verification of work history

### **What can I expect to happen next?**

If your application is complete, you will be notified and two VPK Agreements will be mailed to you. Please sign both copies and return them to CCC. One will be returned to you after the Executive Director of the Early Learning Coalition has signed. We will contact you if additional information is required.

### **How long must a program commit to being a VPK Provider?**

Best practices would suggest that a provider complete the current VPK session before discontinuing the program.

### **If I must discontinue my VPK program, what is the process?**

Coordinated Child Care of Pinellas, Inc. should receive written notice at least 30 days prior to the closing of your program. Parents will need notification and children will need to be transferred to another VPK provider.

## **The Voluntary Prekindergarten Schedule**

### **How many hours must a VPK program operate?**

VPK programs that operate during the local public school year must consist of 540 hours, no more, no less. Programs operating during the summer must consist of 300 hours, no more, no less.

What about daily hours?

This decision is up to you. Many providers are choosing to operate a 3.0 hour per day schedule. However, some have chosen a 4, 5, or even a 6 hour day.

### **How many days must I operate my program to meet the 540 hour requirement?**

3.0 hours per day = 180 day program

4.0 hours per day = 135 day program

5.0 hours per day = 108 day program

6.0 hours per day = 90 day program

### **How do I calculate the number of hours my program is operating?**

Use the chart above to determine how many days your program must operate based on your hours per day total. Take your start day and begin counting days you offer VPK until you reach your end date. Be sure to subtract the holidays you have identified on the VPK 11 forms. If you have too few or too many hours, you will need to adjust your start and/or end date or revise your holiday schedule.

### **Are there any restrictions to start and end dates?**

Yes, programs operating during the public school year may not begin prior to the first day of school, except that, if the school year begins on a day other than Monday the VPK program can begin on or after the Monday immediately before the first day of school. The 540 hours must be completed by the last day of school.

Programs operating during the summer can begin May 1 but must end prior to the start of the public school year.

### **Does a VPK program have to be offered daily?**

No, you can choose to offer a Monday, Wednesday, Friday or some other configuration of days, but the total program must consist of 540 hours or 300 for summer programs.

## **VPK Teacher Requirements**

### **What requirements must VPK teachers meet in a 540 hour program?**

The lead teach must have a Child Development Associate (CDA) issued by the National Credentialing Program or a credential approved by the Department of Children and Families as being equivalent (CDAE) or greater than the national credential.

**Or**

Hold one of the following:

- ❑ Bachelor's Degree or higher in early childhood education, prekindergarten or primary education, preschool education, or family and consumer science.
- ❑ Bachelors or higher degree in elementary education, with certification to teach children any age from birth through age 6. The certification does not have to be current.
- ❑ An Associate's or higher degree in child development
- ❑ An Associate's or higher degree in an unrelated field, with at least six (6) hours in early childhood education or child development and at least 480 hours of experience teaching or providing care of children birth through 8 years of age.
- ❑ An educational credential approved by the Department of Education as being equivalent or greater to the educational credential described above.

The assistant teacher must possess a high school diploma or GED certificate.

**Are the teacher requirements different for a 300 hour summer program?**

Yes, teachers must have a Florida Educator's Certificate **or** one of the following:

A Bachelor's or higher degree in early childhood education, prekindergarten or primary education, preschool education or family and consumer science.

A Bachelor's or higher degree in elementary education, if the instructor has been certified to teach children any age from birth through 6<sup>th</sup> grade regardless of whether the instructor's educator certificate is current.

**Are there any other requirements VPK teachers must meet?**

Yes, lead teachers who qualify with a CDA/CDAE only (i.e. not a higher level degree) must show evidence that they have completed approved 5.0 hour literacy training.

**How do I know if a literacy training has been approved?**

Go to [www.myflorida.com/childcaretraining](http://www.myflorida.com/childcaretraining) for a list of approved literacy training. Click on "Early Literacy", and then click on "View".

**If the VPK teacher becomes ill or goes on vacation does his/her replacements have to meet the same credential requirements?**

Yes, teachers must meet at least the minimum qualifications at all times.

**CDA/CDAE Credential Information**

**Do teachers who have a CDAE have to renew this credential?**

Yes, for purposes of VPK participation, individuals with a Florida CDAE credential that was issued on or before July 1, 2001 must renew their CDAE by July 1, 2006. Individuals with a Florida CDAE credential that was issued after July 1, 2006, must renew their CDAE within 5 years after the date the CDAE credential was issued.

Where can I find more information about CDAE renewals?

You can contact the Department of Children and Families Child Care Credential Unit at 1-866-320-9710.

Or

[www.myflorida.com/childcare](http://www.myflorida.com/childcare)

Click on “Training Requirements” and “Florida CDAE”. You will find frequently asked questions related to the CDAE renewal requirements.

### Group Size Information

Number of Children	School Year Program	Summer Program
Minimum	4	4
Maximum	18	10

What is the ratio of children to teachers in a VPK program?

4 – 10 Children: 1 Teacher

11 – 18 Children: 2 Teachers or one teacher and an assistant/aide

#### **Can I have mixed age group in my VPK program?**

Yes, however only children who meet VPK age requirements and have been certified eligible will receive VPK state funds. VPK child/teacher ratios must be followed at all times during the VPK core program. There must still be at least four VPK eligible children in the group.

#### **What curriculum should I use in my VPK classroom(s)?**

Providers may design or select their own curriculum. Curriculum should be developmentally appropriate, and align with Florida’s Early Learning Standards for Four – Year – Old Children.

#### **Where can I find information about curriculum and the Early Learning Standards?**

[www.myfloridaeducation.com/earlylearning](http://www.myfloridaeducation.com/earlylearning)

#### **Is there on-site technical assistance available for questions/concerns I may have about my VPK program?**

If you are subcontracted with Coordinated Child Care your Provider Consultant is available for technical assistance. If not, Coordinated Child Care has a Resource Coordinator on staff who can assist you in areas such as lesson planning, transitions, learning centers, literacy activities, outside time and much more. Please contact the Provider Services Department of Coordinated Child Care for more information.

### **Reporting Changes to Your VPK Program**

#### **I have a new lead teacher in my VPK class, what do I need to do?**

You will need to complete a “VPK” Change Request Form’. This form is available on-line or by calling the Provider Services Department of CCC. To access the form on-line go to [www.childcarepinellas.org](http://www.childcarepinellas.org) click on “Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten” in the green box on the left. Click on “VPK Provider Information” and then click on “VPK Change Request Form”. Complete the section titled “Notification of New Teacher”, then click submit.

*NOTE: When making a teacher change in a VPK classroom please mail or fax educational credentials, background screening information and proof of literacy training, if applicable. See page 1 for a complete list of the necessary items, mailing address and fax number.*

**What if I have changes to my schedule?**

Follow the same procedure above by completing the section titled “Notification of Schedule Changes.”

**What if my program has a new site director?**

The VPK Change Request Form can be used for this purpose also.

## **Eligibility & Enrolling Children**

**What requirements must a child meet to be eligible for VPK?**

- A child must be four years old by September 1<sup>st</sup>, of the VPK school year.
- A child must be a resident of the State of Florida.
- Parent / Guardian must apply at CCC and the child must be certified eligible.
- Children who have been certified eligible must attend an approved VPK program.

*Note: The above must be verified through a “face to face” contact with CCC staff.*

**How do I know if a child has been certified eligible?**

When a child is determined to be eligible, a “Certificate of Eligibility” form (AWI VPK 02) is issued to the parent/guardian. When a family visits your program and expresses an interest in enrolling, ask for the Certificate of Eligibility. If the family does not have this information, direct them to CCC. If they do have it, you may enroll the child into your VPK program. Keep the certificate in the child’s file.

**A parent gave me their child’s Certificate of Eligibility but never started my VPK Program. Now they want their certificate back. What should I do?**

If the child never attended your program you may give the certificate back to them or CCC will issue another one to the parent/guardian. If the child did begin your VPK program refer the parent to CCC where they will need to request a transfer.

**Can a child live in one county and attend a VPK program in another?**

Yes, but the parent/guardian must apply in the county in which the child will be attending VPK. The Certificate of Eligibility will be issued from the county in which the child will be attending VPK.

**Can I enroll a child after my VPK program start date?**

Yes, as long as there is still 10% or more remaining of your program you can enroll children. The parent/guardian of the child will be required to sign the “Informed Parental Consent for Delayed Enrollment” form (AWI –VPK 04).

**Can I require a parent to enroll their child in my before and/or after care program?**

A private pre-kindergarten provider or public school may not require a parent to enroll his or her child in, or require payment of fees or charges for supplemental services (e.g., “extended-day”, “extended-year”, and “wrap-around” or “full-day” services) as a condition of admitting the child in the VPK program.

## **Absences**

**How many days can a child be absent from a VPK program?**

Absences are calculated based on a percentage of the program rather than the number of days. Once a child's absence exceeds 15% of your total VPK program you will only be paid for days they are present. You will now be paid for days they are absent. 15% equates to 81 hours for a 540 hour program and 45 hours for a 300 hour program. Absence are counted from when a child begins attending a program; not necessarily the first day of the program.

**Do I use a special form to document the attendance of the children in my VPK program?**

Yes, the Enrollment/Attendance Verification form is used for VPK attendance purposes. This form will be mailed to you each month and will have the children's names printed on it.

**Do the parents/guardians verify their child's attendance?**

Yes, parents are required to sign their children in and out each day and sign form AWI-VPK 03 (Student Attendance and Parental Choice Certificate) at the end of each month verifying their child's attendance in your VPK program.

**Where do I submit my monthly VPK Attendance Roster? When is it due?**

Coordinated Child Care of Pinellas, Inc.

Attention: Finance

6698 68<sup>th</sup> Avenue North

Pinellas Park, Florida 33781

Or by Fax (727) 547-9539

Attendance rosters are due by the 3<sup>rd</sup> of each month.

**Transfers**

**Can a child transfer out of my VPK program and attend another?**

Yes, each child is granted one allowable transfer from one VPK program to another with "good cause"; however, a child may not transfer to another VPK program if he/she has completed 60% or more of the VPK instructional hours (absences do not count as completed hours).

**What does "good cause in the answer above mean?**

Some examples of good cause" are: the facility is no longer convenient due to a move, teacher/child conflict; parent is not pleased with the program or any other legitimate reason.

**Is there a cut off point when I cannot enroll a child into my VPK program?**

Yes, a child may not begin a VPK program if there is less then 10% of VPK instructional hours remaining.

**Does moving a child from on VPK classroom to another within the same program count as a transfer?**

No, a child may change classrooms without it counting as their one allowable transfer.

## **Payment & Fees**

### **Can I charge parent fee for registration, activities and/ or supplies?**

No, as an approved VPK provider you may not charge parents any additional fees during the VPK core day. You may charge for care you provide before or after the VPK core day.

### **How will I be paid and by whom?**

VPK programs are paid monthly using an advance payment methodology. Coordinated Child Care of Pinellas will prepare checks and pay providers. Electronic Funds Transfers are available to the banking institution of your choice.

The answers above say I will be paid in advance for the children in my program. What happens if a child leaves my program and I have already received payment? You will see an adjustment to your next payment.

## **Evaluating School Readiness**

### **What tool/instrument will be used to evaluate students to determine their school readiness?**

At this time when a child enters the public school kindergarten program they are assessed to determine their level of school readiness. This is not new. The School Readiness Uniform Screening System (SRUSS) requires public schools to use standardized tools such as the ESI-K. These tools are used statewide.

The 4 year old performance standards were developed based upon the readiness for kindergarten criteria. If you do not have a copy of these standards they are downloadable at the website [www.schoolreadiness.org](http://www.schoolreadiness.org) ~ click on "Resources".

### **What happens if children from a VPK site do not meet the expectations for School Readiness when they reach kindergarten?**

If a VPK provider's kindergarten readiness rate falls below the minimum satisfactory rate for two consecutive years, the provider or school is placed on probation and loses the privilege of selecting or designing its own curricula. While on probation the provider must use curricula reviewed and approved by DOE.

## **Statewide VPK Policies**

### **Where can I find a complete list and explanation of the most current VPK statewide policies?**

The Office of Early Learning policy updates can be found at:  
[www.floridajobs.org/earlylearning](http://www.floridajobs.org/earlylearning)

Click on "Resources" then "Information Policy Memo" and scroll down to section 500-599 for VPK Policies.

### **Are there any local resources that will keep me informed of statewide VPK policies?**

Yes, the Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas County publishes a quarterly newsletter, "VPK News", available by email and postal mail. The "VPK News" also gives

information about upcoming training, important dates, and messages from the Executive Director, Janet Chapman.

If you are not currently on their mailing list and would like to be, please contact the Early Learning Office at (727) 548-1439 and ask to be placed on the "VPK News" mailing list.