

## Early Learning Coalition Alachua Policy

Policy Title: Parent Co-payment Waivers and Adjustments

Effective Date: 2017

Revised Date: March 2026

Responsible Department: Eligibility/Family Services

### 1. Purpose

In accordance with Florida Statute 1002.84(9), the Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County (Coalition) is responsible for defining a list of qualifying events and outlining a process for requesting a copayment (parent fee) reduction or waiver.

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear guidelines for when and how parent co-payments may be waived, reduced, or temporarily suspended for families participating in the School Readiness (SR) Program. This ensures compliance with state law and administrative rule while supporting families facing hardship or participating in at-risk programs.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all families enrolled in the School Readiness Program and to all coalition staff responsible for determining eligibility, calculating parent fees, and processing waiver requests.

### 3. Policy Statement

- Parent co-payments are required as part of the School Readiness Program.
- Co-payments will remain unchanged during the 12-month eligibility authorization period except under specific circumstances outlined below.
- Waivers or temporary reductions may be approved on a case-by-case basis in accordance with Rule 6M-4.400, F.A.C. and section 1002.84(9), F.S.
- All approvals, denials, and changes must be fully documented in the family's case record and within the state's data system.

### 4. Procedures

#### 4.1 Co-payment Adjustments

Parent co-payments may only be adjusted before the end of the eligibility period when:

1. The coalition approves a waiver due to qualifying hardship.
2. A miscalculation occurred due to staff error, family error, or verified fraud.
3. A change in income, family size, or employment reduces the co-payment.
4. The number of authorized care hours changes.
5. A family is in the graduated phase-out stage and the co-payment must be revised.

Parents must notify the coalition if income exceeds 85% of the state median income, which makes the family ineligible for continued services.

#### 4.2 At-Risk Co-payment Waivers

A co-payment may be waived on a case-by-case basis for families participating in an at-risk program as defined in 6M-4.4 F.A.C. and Section 1002.84(9), F.S.

- Families referred by an authorized agency under protective services, foster care, diversion, homelessness, or domestic violence categories may receive a full co-payment waiver.
- Waivers must be documented with a valid referral and renewed at each re-determination.

Qualifying examples include:

- Out-of-home or relative/non-relative placements.
- Parent/guardian is incarcerated, in treatment, incapacitated, or deceased.
- Homelessness, domestic violence shelter, or unstable living conditions.
- Natural disasters, fires, or emergencies affecting the family.
- Household income at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).

If no waiver form is provided, the standard co-payment must be applied.

If a parent reports income in the system but does not provide the required income documentation at the time of eligibility determination or redetermination, the parent will be served and will be assessed a copayment based on the information below until documentation is received.

\*At-risk children must be served regardless, even if parents do not provide income information\*

For **full-time care**, the temporary copayment will be set at **6% of household income based on household size**.

For **part-time care**, the temporary copayment will be set at **3% of household income based on household size**.

Once the parent submits the document the copayment will be adjusted if applicable.

A waiver may be requested each time the family is re-determined. Such requests must accompany referrals received from the appropriate referring agency. In the event that changes are made, staff will document the information received from the agency, including the date and time the information is given and the name and current title of the referring worker or authorized staff providing the information.

#### 4.3 Temporary / Special Circumstance Co-payment Waivers

- Families with income at or below 100% of the FPL may request a temporary waiver when an unexpected event prevents them from paying.
- Parents must submit:
  - Documentation of the qualifying event.
- Waivers are valid only for the authorized eligibility period and may be reassessed at each re-determination.

#### Extreme family crisis

1. When an adult in the original SR application:

- a. Is granted a medical interruption in services, such as maternity leave
- b. Loss of employment

#### Medical Interruption:

- A. The parent/guardian must submit proof that no income will be paid by their employer during the medical interruption. The Coalition, upon approval, may recalculate the household income, excluding the income from employment.
- B. The income of any other adult included in the original SR application in the home will be included in the recalculation.
- C. The reduced copayment or waiver will only be authorized for the duration of the medical interruption for a maximum of ninety (90) days.

#### Loss of Employment:

- A. The parent/guardian must submit proof of loss of employment.
- B. The reduced copayment or waiver will only be authorized for the period the parent is not working for a maximum of ninety (90) days.

If a parent/guardian is requesting a copayment reduction or waiver due to extreme family crisis, the Coalition may request additional documentation to support the stated crisis.

All waiver requests and approvals must be documented in the family's file and the state data system.

#### 6. References

- Rule 6M-4.400, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) – Required Parent Co-payment
- Section 1002.84(9), Florida Statutes – School Readiness Program

