



The School Readiness Program and Victims of Domestic Violence

Child Care for Victims of Domestic Violence

The Office of Early Learning (OEL) is dedicated to providing accessible, affordable and quality early learning services for Florida's children and families through the School Readiness Program. The School Readiness Program is intended to increase future educational success for children and to enable parents to work and become financially self-sufficient.

[House Bill 7165](#) expands the School Readiness Program to incorporate victims of domestic violence, effective August 1, 2013. The bill amends the definition of an "at-risk child" to include, "A child in the custody of a parent who is a victim of domestic violence, residing in a certified domestic violence center." (s. 1002.81(1)(e), Florida Statutes (F.S.)). Through the School Readiness Program, OEL will collaborate with the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) to serve victims of domestic violence. A memorandum of agreement between early learning coalitions and certified domestic violence centers will establish the process for collecting the required eligibility documentation.

Eligible Children

Children are eligible if they are in the custody of a parent who is a victim of domestic violence who resides in a DCF-certified domestic violence center. Eligible children must be younger than 13 years of age and be a U.S. citizen or a qualified alien. Domestic violence is described as any assault, aggravated assault, battery, aggravated battery, sexual assault, sexual battery, stalking, aggravated stalking, kidnapping, false imprisonment, or any criminal offense resulting in physical injury or death of one family or household member by another family or household member ([s. 741.28\(2\), F.S.](#)). A victim means the spouse, ex-spouse, co-habitant in an intimate relationship, individual who shares a child in common with a batterer or who has or had a dating relationship with the batterer who has perpetrated an act, alleged act, or attempted act of violence against them for the purpose of exercising power and control ([Rule 65H-1.011\(18\), Florida Administrative Code](#)).

Qualifying for School Readiness Services

DCF's Domestic Violence Program operates as the central clearinghouse for state and federal funding initiatives for the prevention of and intervention in domestic violence. The program works with the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence (FCADV) to certify, monitor and fund the state's [42 certified domestic violence centers](#), which provide crisis intervention and support services free of charge to victims of domestic violence and their children. The centers provide an information hotline, safety planning, counseling, case management, child assessments, information and referrals, education for community awareness, and training for law enforcement and other professionals. Families work with certified domestic violence center advocates, who act as case managers, at certified domestic violence centers. In accordance with [s. 90.5036\(1\)\(d\) and \(2\), F.S.](#), communication between a certified domestic violence center advocate and a victim is confidential if it relates to the incident of domestic violence for which the victim is seeking assistance and if it is not intended to be disclosed to third persons other than those persons present to further the interest of the victim in the consultation, assessment or interview.

The certified domestic violence center advocate with whom the family is working will initiate the referral process if he or she determines that the family needs child care. The certified domestic violence center advocate may request school readiness services for the referred families in increments of three months or less. Once the referral is complete, the certified domestic violence center advocate will refer the family to the appropriate early learning coalition for school readiness services and child care resource and referral services. In order to qualify and remain qualified for school readiness services, the child's parent(s) must actively participate in case management services through a DCF-certified domestic violence center.

How to Apply

To apply for the School Readiness Program, parents should contact the early learning coalition or the certified domestic violence center in their local community.

Useful Links

FCADV list of certified domestic violence centers— <http://www.fcadv.org/centers/local-centers>

List of early learning coalitions— http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/OEL_Coalitions_Map.html

Head Start Program— <http://www.floridaheadstart.org/program%20directory.html>