

School-Age Care

(Licensed or Exempt)

A school-age child is one who is at least five years of age by September 1st and who is attending kindergarten through fifth grade. A school-age program is a licensed or license-exempt program that serves only school-age children. The setting for a school-age program may be a public or private school, private center, family child care home, faith-based facility, or community/recreation program. School-age programs may be open before and after school as well as full days during teacher planning days, spring, winter, and summer breaks.

Licensed Programs

Must pass an initial inspection to ensure that all standards required by statute have been met, and must:

- ◆ Meet physical facility requirements
- ◆ Follow health, safety and nutrition guidelines
- ◆ Maintain enrollment and attendance records
- ◆ Allow parents/guardians access to their children in care at all times
- ◆ Comply with annual inspections schedules
- ◆ Receive 45 hours of training initially, plus a minimum of 10 hours annually thereafter
- ◆ Submit screening and background checks of all employees/caregivers
- ◆ Comply with a 1:25 adult/child ratio
- ◆ Have a supervisor/director holding an Administrator's Credential (multi-site supervision at school-age child care programs is permitted)

Licensed Exempt Centers

The following programs are exempt from school-age care licensure, but must meet city/county health and safety regulations (exempt programs are not government inspected):

- ◆ Public schools and non-public schools and their integral programs
- ◆ Summer camps having children in full-time residence
- ◆ Summer day camps
- ◆ Programs that are in integral part of a faith-based school
- ◆ Religious education programs conducted during vacation periods
- ◆ Operators of temporary establishments (e.g. hurricane shelters)

Note: Some counties may have more restrictive requirements than those



Unregulated Care

Care that does not require state licensure or regulated inspections by the state

Informal Care

Takes place in the person's home where one adult cares for children from only one family. The person is often a relative, neighbor and/or friend. This type of care has no state guidelines or inspections. Informal providers may qualify to participate in the School Readiness program after completion of a six-hour health and safety course and by meeting early learning coalition requirements.

Au-Pair Care

Au-pairs provide families with intercultural, individualized, live-in child care. Most Au-pairs are a member of an international Au-pair organization which is regulated by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Exchange Visitor Program. Nannies may also be hired by families locally to care for the children of one family and may live in or out of the family's home.

Summer Camps & Recreational Programs

Operate only during summer breaks from educational institutions. Summer care is provided for children in Kindergarten and above; adult/child ratios vary. This type of care requires no state inspections. Personnel other than owners/operators are not required to be fingerprinted but must comply with all other screening requirements.

Membership Organizations

Not-for-profit organization associated/certified with national organizations. These are not considered early learning facilities and therefore their personnel are not required to be screened. Examples of these organizations are the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club.

Resort/Hotel Care

Establishments that provide care solely for guests; all staff caring for children must be screened.

Note: Some counties may have more restrictive guidelines.

Partner Agencies



Agency for Workforce Innovation



Children's Services Council of Martin County

Children's Services Council of Okeechobee County



Children's Services Advisory Council of Indian River County

United Way of Indian River and Okeechobee Counties



A Family Guide

For Selecting Quality Early Learning Programs



Helpful Tips

- ◆ Choose Wisely—This pamphlet is designed to help you make choices about quality programs to find a good match for you and your child.
- ◆ Do Your Research—It's a good idea to visit and compare at least three early learning settings. Use the Quality Checklist included with this brochure for guidance.
- ◆ Be a Smart Shopper—The facility license should be current and they should provide you with written policies and procedures.
- ◆ Make an Informed Decision—Every program will have positive features, but you must decide which things are most important for you and your child, and prioritize accordingly.
- ◆ Use Child Care Resources and Referral Services—CCR&R is a service provided by your county's early learning coalition. Trained staff can provide you with referrals to programs that are customized to meet your family's needs, as well as referrals to other services in your community. CCR&R services are free to anyone residing or seeking early learning services in Florida.

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Early Learning Centers

Centers may be licensed or exempt and are usually located in spaces adapted for early learning purposes. These include stand-alone centers and those located in businesses, apartment complexes, universities, public schools, hospitals, and faith-based facilities. Prekindergarten programs (both school-based and non school-based), Head Start programs, on-site employee early learning centers and faith-based centers are some of the types of centers that are available.

State Adult to Child Ratios

- ◆ Birth-12 months (1:4)
- ◆ 12-24 months (1:6)
- ◆ 2-year-olds (1:11)
- ◆ 3-year-olds (1:15)
- ◆ 4/5-year olds (1:20)
- ◆ 4 year olds in Voluntary Prekindergarten programs (Fall-1:10; Summer-1:12)
- ◆ School-age children (1:25)

Licensed Centers

Must pass an initial inspection to ensure that all standards have been met, and must:

- ◆ Meet physical facility requirements
- ◆ Follow health, safety and nutrition guidelines
- ◆ Maintain enrollment and attendance records
- ◆ Allow parents/guardians access to their children in care at all times
- ◆ Comply with three routine inspections per year
- ◆ Receive 45 hours of training initially, 10 hours annually thereafter
- ◆ Submit screenings and background checks of all employees/teachers
- ◆ Keep current immunization records of children on file
- ◆ Comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and make reasonable accommodations for children with special needs.

Religious Exempt Centers

Are not government inspected, must be an integral part of a faith-based school, and must:

- ◆ Be accredited by a state recognized accrediting body
- ◆ Pass federal background check
- ◆ Meet city/county health and safety regulations
- ◆ Maintain enrollment and attendance records
- ◆ Maintain current certification of CPR and first aid
- ◆ Comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and make reasonable accommodations for children with special needs.

Family Child Care Home

(Licensed or Registered Homes)

Family child care is regulated care that takes place in a person's home for children from more than one family. Group size may vary according to family child care provider preferences and state/local regulations. Ages often vary, although some providers service only a specific age group (e.g., infants, toddlers or preschoolers).

State Adult to Child Ratios

A family child care provider may care for one of the following groups of children, including the provider's own children younger than age 13.

- ◆ Birth to 12 months of age (1:4)
- ◆ No more than three of the children are under 12 months (1:6)
- ◆ At least five of the children are school age and no more than two are under 12 months of age; or all 10 can be school-age (1:10)
- ◆ Large family child care homes, a maximum of 12 children, no more than four children under 24 months (2:12)
- ◆ 4 year olds in Voluntary Prekindergarten programs (1:10)

Note: Ratios in parenthesis represent the number of children that one adult may supervise for each group. Some counties may have more restrictive ratios than those mandated by the state.

Registered Homes

Are not required to meet state requirements, except as follows:

- ◆ Register annually
- ◆ Complete and provide to parents an annual health and safety home inspection checklist.
- ◆ Provide proof of substitute care
- ◆ Provide proof of screening/background checks of adults in households
- ◆ Keep current immunization records of children on file
- ◆ Complete a 30-hour family child care course prior to caring for children
- ◆ Complete 10 clock hours of training annually

Note: Standards of care for registered homes participating in the School Readiness program are regulated by local early learning coalitions.

Licensed Homes

Must meet all requirements for registration, and must:

- ◆ Follow health, safety and nutrition guidelines
- ◆ Maintain enrollment and attendance records
- ◆ Comply with licensing standards of local and state governments
- ◆ Maintain current certification of CPR and first aid
- ◆ Pass an initial inspection prior to receiving a license
- ◆ Comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and make reasonable accommodations for children with special needs.
- ◆ Comply with two routine inspections per year

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)

The Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) legislation was signed into law by Governor Jeb Bush on January 2, 2005. This law created a program to prepare every four-year-old in Florida for kindergarten and build a strong foundation for their continued educational success. The VPK program provides each child the opportunity to perform better in school and through life with quality programs that include high literacy standards, accountability, appropriate curricula, substantial instruction periods, manageable class sizes and qualified instructors.

VPK Highlights

- ◆ High quality educational program with an early literacy focus
- ◆ FREE for all children who live in Florida and turn four years old by September 1st

Program Options

- ◆ VPK School Year Program—540 instructional hours
 - ⇒ Part-day from fall to spring;
 - ⇒ Or full-day during fall or spring
- ◆ VPK Summer Program—300 instructional hours during summer

Providers

- ◆ All VPK providers must meet high standards required by Florida law
- ◆ Parents have the option of choosing the provider that meets their own family's needs
- ◆ Options for parents include: public schools, private centers and licensed family child care homes

Instructors

- ◆ All VPK instructors must have a minimum of a CDA for the school year program or a bachelor's degree for the summer program
- ◆ Ratio is one teacher to 10 children and class size will not exceed 18 children
- ◆ Ratio for Summer is one teacher to 12 children.

Curriculum

- ◆ Must be developmentally appropriate and focus on early literacy skills
- ◆ Prepare the child to be ready for kindergarten based on standards adopted by the state Department of Education

Transportation

- ◆ Parents are responsible for their child's transportation

