



## **Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County** **Fee Waiver Policy and Procedure**

Title: Fee Waiver Policy and Procedure

- 1.0 PURPOSE:** This policy is required to ensure practices and policy application regarding fee waivers for parents, relatives, non-relatives, and foster parents who have At-Risk or Non-At-Risk children and are in compliance with related DEL, State, and Federal Regulations.
- 2.0 SCOPE:** This policy applies to all eligible parents, relatives, non-relatives, and foster parents that have At-Risk or Non-At-Risk children in receiving temporary fee waivers.
- 3.0 DOCUMENTATION:** For parents who have faced a hardship or have experienced an emergency, they must provide documentation of the emergency or hardship, including their current income, to show proof of hardship. For At-Risk relatives, non-relatives, and foster parents, the referral is proof the child is placed with an out-of-home guardian and also lists the biological parent's information (if available).
- 4.0 RESPONSIBILITY / AUTHORITY:** The Eligibility Specialist is responsible for determining if the parent qualifies for a temporary Parental Fee Waiver. The Eligibility Specialist is responsible for determining if the parent, relative, non-relative, or foster parent qualifies for a temporary Out of Home Fee Waiver. The Eligibility Director is responsible for final approval of the fee waiver.
- 5.0 PROCEDURES:**

For At Risk Parents:

For At-Risk Parents, if no Fee Waiver Form is provided, the standard parent co-payment will be assessed. If the parent is employed, they must submit income documentation, and the co-payment will be assessed based on that income. If the parent reports income but does not provide documentation, the parent co-payment will be assessed at 85% of the State Median Income (SMI). Once the parent submits the required income documentation, the co-payment will be adjusted accordingly, if applicable.

Parent has been identified as meeting the following criteria in receiving a temporary Fee Waiver

- a.) Parent(s) are in the hospital or residential treatment facility.
- b.) Parent(s) are unemployed.
- c.) Parent(s) are unable to work due to illness or incapacitation.
- d.) Death of a parent.
- e.) Parent(s) are homeless or living in a shelter.
- f.) Parent(s) are over-extended or a type of financial hardship
- g.) Parent(s) experienced an emergency (i.e. natural disaster, fire, etc.)

Once the Eligibility Specialist has determined if a parent meets any of the following criteria, he/she will complete the Request for Coalition Waiver form and include documentation of hardship, emergency, parent's total income etc.

Request for Coalition Waiver form and supporting documentation is submitted to Eligibility Director for final approval.

Once the fee waiver has been approved, the form and supporting documentation are uploaded to the client's EFSM file

Eligibility specialist will contact the parent and provider via phone and email with new parental fee and time limit of this fee.

At end of the time-period, Eligibility Specialist will terminate the reduced parental fee and reassess the new parent fee and a new payment certificate will be issued to the parent and provider.

For At Risk Relatives/Non-Relatives/Foster Parents:

For At-Risk Relatives, Non-Relatives, and Foster Parents, only the child's income is counted when assessing the co-payment. If the Relative, Non-Relative, or Foster Parent reports the child income but does not submit the required documentation, the co-payment will be assessed at 85% of the State Median Income (SMI). Once the Relative, Non-Relative, or Foster Parent submits the income documentation, the co-payment will be adjusted accordingly, if applicable.

Relatives, non-relatives, and foster parents are eligible for a waived parental fee if the parent meets any of the following criteria:

- a.) Parent(s) are incarcerated.
- b.) Parent(s) are in the hospital or residential treatment facility.
- c.) Parent(s) are unemployed.
- d.) Parent(s) are unable to work due to illness or incapacitation.
- e.) Death of a parent.
- f.) Parent(s) are homeless or living in a shelter.
- g.) Parent(s) are over-extended or type of financial hardship
- h.) Parent(s) experienced an emergency (i.e. natural disaster, fire, etc.)
- i.) Whereabouts of parent(s) are unknown.
- j.) Parental rights have been terminated (TPR).

For Non At Risk Parents:

Parents are eligible for a waived parental fee if the parent meets any of the following criteria:

- a.) Parent(s) who are experiencing financial hardship such as loss of employment
- b.) Parent(s) who experienced emergency (such as natural disaster, fire etc.)
- c.) Parent(s) have not entered the gradual phase out period and parent fee cannot be increased.
- d.) Homeless shelter/living arrangements.
- e.) The parent participation in a parenting class or in an Early Head Start Program or Head Start Program.

The Eligibility Director will give final approval for At-Risk and Non At Risk parents, guardians, and relatives. If the fee waiver request is denied, the Eligibility Director will enter the reason on the appropriate fee waiver form and in case notes in the EFSM parent file.

If the Fee Waiver has been approved, the Eligibility Specialist will enter the reduced or waived fee into EFSM in the Eligibility Assignment Screen.

The Eligibility Specialist will upload the approved fee waiver to the parents file in EFSM. The Eligibility Specialist will enter case notes in the client EFSM file.

References

Rule 6M-4.400, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) – Required Parent Co-payment

Section 1002.84(9), Florida Statutes – School Readiness Program Accountability

<i>Revision Date</i>	<i>Change Description</i>
02/13/2025	Added to the ELC School Readiness Eligibility Policy & Procedure Manual
02/20/2025	Updated & added policy for at-risk families that do not have income documentation and References
05/14/2026	Updated policy and removed natural inability