

**Screening Children in the School Readiness Program
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
May 2013**

Overview

1) What is the child screening rule?

In November 2012, the Office of Early Learning promulgated Rule 6M-4.720, F.A.C., Screening of Children in the School Readiness Program, establishing a unified approach for child developmental screening and individualized supports as an integral part of school readiness. This rule is intended to standardize developmental screening processes in school readiness programs. By July 1, 2013, each early learning coalition is required to implement processes consistent with the text of the rule.

2) What is child developmental screening?

Developmental screening is defined as activities to identify children who may have concerns and who may need individualized supports.

3) Where can I find the child screening rule and applicable form on the Office of Early Learning website?

You can find the rule on the Office of Early Learning's website at <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com>. Click on the following links for [Rule 6M-4.720](#) and [Form OEL-SR 24 Parent Option to Decline Child Screening](#).

Screening Process

4) Who conducts child screenings and when are they conducted?

Each early learning coalition determines how the screening process will be conducted with their providers and parents. Either parents (with coalitions available to assist) or childcare providers must screen children no later than 45 calendar days after initial enrollment, or enrollment again after being terminated or withdrawn from the program. Subsequently, child screenings should be conducted at least annually, either by parents upon school readiness program redetermination or by childcare providers in the month of the child's birthday. Screening is not required if the child meets exceptions as in rule or if a parent declines to have a child screened.

5) Are all school readiness children required to be screened?

No. Only children from six weeks of age to age of kindergarten eligibility who are in the school readiness program are required to be screened. The only exceptions are children in this age group who have been screened in the last year and whose results have been given to the early learning coalition or those whose parents have declined screening.

6) Does the rule require coalitions to use one process for screening? For example, must screening be done by either parents or providers?

No. Rule 6M-4.720, FAC., provides for an initial screening and a subsequent screening process. Each of these processes can be completed by parents, coalitions or providers. The processes do not need to be the same for the initial and subsequent screenings. For example, a coalition could have parents screen initially and have providers conduct subsequent screenings in children's birth months. The decision about how to conduct the screening process is up to the discretion of the early learning coalition.

7) If a child is enrolled in the school readiness program again after prior termination or withdrawal, but was screened before leaving the program, must he or she be screened again?

No. If a child is enrolled again, the coalition has no later than 45 calendar days from that enrollment either to screen the child or determine if the child has been screened per rule requirement. If the last developmental screening in the child's record is dated less than 12 months from the current date, the child is not required to be screened again. Coalitions and providers may conduct additional screens at their discretion.

8) What does the phrase "age of kindergarten eligibility" mean?

This is based on the age of Florida public school kindergarten admission. Florida law (Section 1003.21(1)(a) 2, Florida Statutes) specifies that children who five years of age on or before September 1 of the school year are eligible for admission to public kindergarten during that school year. Therefore, children in the school readiness program who turned five on or before September 1 in a school year are not required to be screened.

9) The language in the rule in subparagraph (2)(c)1 states that the coalition shall request the parent screen the child on-site. What is meant by the term "request"?

Request means to ask a parent to screen their child on-site in the coalition office or at the childcare provider's location. Parents are not required to screen children on-site; they may complete the screening questionnaire at home or online. This may be done in place of having the child screened by the childcare provider or as part of the initial enrollment process.

10) What if a parent declines to have his or her child screened?

The rule provides [Form OEL-SR 24, Parent Option to Decline Child Screening](#) for parents who choose not to have their child screened. A parent who declines must submit this form to the coalition or childcare provider. If received by the provider, they must submit a copy of the completed form to the coalition within 30 days of receiving it. A parent's screening decision remains in effect even if the child changes school readiness providers within a coalition's service delivery area. A coalition cannot deny or terminate eligibility if the parent meets the school readiness program criteria but does not want his or her child to be screened.

11) Is it mandatory for coalitions to use the [Parent Option to Decline Child Screening](#) form (OEL-SR 24)?

Yes. Coalitions must have the parent complete [Form OEL-SR 24, Parent Option to Decline Child Screening](#) to decline having his or her child screened.

12) Is there a "consent" form as well as the Parent Option to Decline Child Screening form?

No. Consistent with the rule, parents are not required to sign a consent form although early learning coalitions may include such forms in their screening processes. After July 1, 2013, all children in the school readiness program between the ages of six weeks and kindergarten eligibility must be screened unless [Form OEL-SR 24 Parent Option to Decline Child Screening](#) is completed by the parent (or if exceptions are met per rule).

Instruments

13) What screening instruments are used for child developmental screening?

Consistent with the requirements of Rule 6M-4.720, FAC., each early learning coalition must select an instrument (or instruments) that

- Are appropriate to screen children ages six weeks to the age of kindergarten eligibility.
- Address each of the developmental domains established in the performance standards adopted by the Office of Early Learning in Rule 6M-4.700, F.A.C.
- Take 30 minutes or less (on average) to complete per child.
- Are research-proven (for validity and reliability).

- Are available at least in English and Spanish.
- Are appropriate to be administered by a parent, provider or other professional.
- Yield scoring results that can be entered into data fields in an electronic data system.

14) Can coalitions continue to use the Ages & Stages Questionnaires[®], Third Edition (ASQ-3[™])?

Yes. Currently, most coalitions have chosen to use the instrument ASQ-3 for child screening. Some are using ASQ-3 alone and some are using both ASQ-3 and Ages & Stages Questionnaires: Social-Emotional (ASQ: SE). The ASQ-3 meets the criteria specified in the rule and therefore may be used. Please note that coalitions are not limited to using this screening tool. ASQ: SE is a supplemental screening instrument and its use is permitted when used in conjunction with another screening instrument that meets the criteria above. For example, ASQ: SE may be used in conjunction with the BDI-2 screener. Any other instrument(s) that meet the requirements per rule may be used for child developmental screening.

Exceptions

15) What if a parent reports their child has already been screened?

A child in the school readiness program would have an exception to screening if the following circumstances have been met:

- The child has been screened in another program within the preceding 12 months.
- His or her scores were shared with the coalition by the due date established for initial or subsequent timeframes for screening.
- The screening tool used meets the criteria in the rule.

However, a coalition may choose to have a child screened again.

16) What if a child already has an individualized family support plan (IFSP) or individual educational plan (IEP)?

If a child in a school readiness program is receiving specialized services in accordance with an IFSP or IEP that has been developed and reviewed within the last 12 months by a school district, early intervention program or other state agency that provides special education and related services, he or she does not need to be screened as long as the IFSP or IEP has been provided to the coalition within the initial or subsequent timeframes according to rule.

Individualized Supports

17) How do we respond to developmental concerns identified through child screening?

Each early learning coalition must initiate individualized supports no later than 60 calendar days after screening for a child who shows developmental concerns based on his or her screening results. These supports for the child must include at least one of the following, but a coalition may initiate multiple individualized supports as indicated:

- Additional screening or assessment.
- Individualized learning plan.
- Suggested developmental activities for parents or providers.
- Observations and accommodations in the early learning program.
- Parent education.
- Referral to early intervention or specialized care.

18) Who must be notified if a coalition refers a child for further evaluations or follow-up?

When a coalition refers a child to the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System Child Find or the Children's Medical Services Early Steps program, the coalition must notify (or the coalition may require the childcare provider to notify) the child's parent in writing and include, at a minimum, the areas of screening that are of concern and contact information for the local agency with the referral service. When providing a referral for a child, the coalition must ask the parent if they would like the coalition staff to contact the agency on their behalf. Either the coalition or the childcare provider must document the parent's choice of "yes" (please contact the agency on my behalf) or "no" (I am not requesting help), the name of the parent, the name of the child, and the date this conversation took place. Some coalitions go beyond this requirement and ask the parents to sign a consent form that allows screening information to be shared with the referral agency. This is not required per rule and is an individual coalition decision.

19) Is a parent's signature required when documenting "yes" or "no" regarding receipt of additional help in contacting the referral agency?

No. A coalition staff member or childcare staff member could have a conversation with a parent and document the parent's choice, the name of the parent, the name of the child and the date. This documentation is required, but a parent signature is not. In some cases, there could be documentation of several attempts to contact parents about assistance in contacting the referral agency. No response from a parent should not be considered as an answer of "no" (I am not requesting help).

20) Throughout the rule, the phrase "in writing" is used. Does this mean, for example, that a printed copy must be provided and delivered either in person or by mail?

In the rule, "in writing" means a printed copy given in person or delivered by postal mail or by electronic means such as email.

Data

21) When are child screening data required to be entered and who must enter it?

The early learning coalition should enter, or require the childcare provider to enter, the child screening data into an electronic system no later than 60 calendar days after the screening was conducted. If concerns are noted on the screening and individualized supports are initiated, the coalition has 30 calendar days to enter data about individualized supports into an electronic data system.

22) What child screening and individualized supports data are required to be captured electronically?

At least the following elements are required to be entered into an electronic data system:

1. Child name, date of birth, age at screening.
2. Child ID number, if available.
3. Parent name and contact information, to include mailing address, email address and phone number.
4. Date of enrollment in the school readiness program.
5. Date(s) of screening(s), if screened.
6. Reason for not being screened, if applicable, which may include
 - i. Parental objection to the screening.
 - ii. Exceptions to being screened in the school readiness program.
7. Screening results that include a summary of areas where the child shows concerns based on the screening.
8. Date individualized supports were initiated.
9. Type of individualized supports initiated.
10. Date of referral.
11. Whether the parent received additional help from the coalition to contact the referral agency.

Additional Information

If you have a question related to the information in this document, please contact Screening Coordinator Danielle Jennings at the Office of Early Learning, via email at Danielle.Jennings@oel.myflorida.com or toll-free phone at 1-866-357-3239.