



OFFICE OF
Early Learning
LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE.

As part of the Florida Department of Education, the Office of Early Learning (OEL) dedicates its people, time and energy to ensuring access, affordability and quality of early learning services for the state's children and families. The following are just a few of the initiatives OEL is currently working on that we would welcome support for from the Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council:

Contracted Slots

Child Care Deserts are defined as those areas where the demand or need for high-quality child care exceeds the current availability or infrastructure. In tandem with identifying child care deserts, a 2021-2022 pilot program, similar to the K-12 Schools of Hope, is proposed to stabilize funding for selected providers with funds from the PDGR. This project will stabilize the funding stream for selected providers by paying for a set number of slots regardless of whether School Readiness children are in attendance. PDG funds will pay for the difference between the contracted number of slots and the traditional payment based on attendance. This project will allow families' equal access to quality early learning providers while assisting providers with consistent funding.

Upskilling the Workforce

Currently School Readiness instructors are only required to have obtained minimal training in health and safety and child development to teach our youngest and most vulnerable population. Many instructors have obtained a high school diploma or a Child Development Associate (CDA). The OEL will work with selected early learning coalitions, local colleges, workforce education, and school district technical colleges to collaborate on specific pathways to upskill the lowest level instructors in the highest need areas. This initiative will focus on helping School Readiness instructors complete a formal career pathway by building upon existing initiatives and programs with community partners.

Mental Health Supports Sub Grant

OEL recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic has added stress to the lives of many children, families and early learning providers. These sub grants are designed to meet the unique and pressing needs of these communities. In response, OEL provided an additional \$3.6 million to provide mental health supports to local early learning coalitions. The sub-grant allows local early learning coalitions to offer mental health and/or social-emotional supports for School Readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten children, their families, contracted providers. Coalitions were encouraged to conduct a local needs assessment to identify available local resources and target their efforts to provide support to the most vulnerable populations in their area. Many coalitions are using their funding to purchase curriculum that focuses on social and emotional development, trauma and challenging behaviors, and provide access to mental health consultants that will support providers in the classroom and trauma-informed care training. Coalitions are also focusing on building their local capacity of available professionals to support providers by offering professional development opportunities to providers and staff to obtain certifications in Support Professional Certification in Trauma and Resilience, an online certification through FSU, Positive Behavior Support, Trauma Informed Care or Conscious Discipline trainings.