

By Representative Kosmas

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to school readiness programs;
3 amending s. 411.01, F.S., relating to the
4 Florida Partnership for School Readiness and
5 school readiness coalitions; revising minimum
6 standards and provisions for coalition plans
7 for school readiness programs; specifying
8 ratios for instructional personnel to children;
9 requiring an introductory training course for
10 all personnel; requiring inservice training for
11 child care personnel; providing certification
12 and screening requirements; providing
13 requirements for administrative personnel and
14 child care operators; providing an effective
15 date.

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17 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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19 Section 1. Paragraph (d) of subsection (5) of section
20 411.01, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

21 411.01 Florida Partnership for School Readiness;
22 school readiness coalitions.--

23 (5) CREATION OF SCHOOL READINESS COALITIONS.--

24 (d) Implementation.--

25 1. The school readiness program is to be phased in.
26 Until the coalition implements its plan, the county shall
27 continue to receive the services identified in subsection (3)
28 through the various agencies that would be responsible for
29 delivering those services under current law. Plan
30 implementation is subject to approval of the coalition and the
31 plan by the Florida Partnership for School Readiness.

1 2. Each school readiness coalition shall develop a
2 plan for implementing the school readiness program to meet the
3 requirements of this section and the performance standards and
4 outcome measures established by the partnership. The plan must
5 include a written description of the role of the program in
6 the coalition's effort to meet the first state education goal,
7 readiness to start school, including a description of the plan
8 to involve the prekindergarten early intervention programs,
9 Head Start Programs, programs offered by public or private
10 providers of child care, preschool programs for children with
11 disabilities, programs for migrant children, Title I programs,
12 subsidized child care programs, and teen parent programs. The
13 plan must also demonstrate how the program will ensure that
14 each 3-year-old and 4-year-old child in a publicly funded
15 school readiness program receives scheduled activities and
16 instruction designed to prepare children to enter kindergarten
17 ready to learn. Prior to implementation of the program, the
18 school readiness coalition must submit the plan to the
19 partnership for approval. The partnership may approve the
20 plan, reject the plan, or approve the plan with conditions.
21 The Florida Partnership for School Readiness shall review
22 coalition plans at least annually.

23 3. The plan for the school readiness program must
24 include the following minimum standards and provisions:

25 a. A sliding fee scale establishing a copayment for
26 parents based upon their ability to pay, which is the same for
27 all program providers, to be implemented and reflected in each
28 program's budget.

29 b. A choice of settings and locations in licensed,
30 registered, religious-exempt, or school-based programs to be
31 provided to parents.

1 c. A ratio of direct instructional personnel to
2 children of 1 adult to 10 3-year-old and 4-year-old children,
3 or a lower ratio. Upon written request from a school readiness
4 coalition, the partnership may grant permission for a ratio of
5 up to 1 adult to 15 3-year-old and 4-year-old children for
6 individual schools or centers for which a 1 to 10 ratio is not
7 feasible.

8 d. For all personnel, completion of an approved
9 40-clock-hour introductory training course planned jointly by
10 the Department of Education and the Department of Children and
11 Family Services to include the following areas: state and
12 local rules that govern child care, health, safety, and
13 nutrition; identification and report of child abuse and
14 neglect; child growth and development, including typical and
15 atypical language, cognitive, motor, social, and self-help
16 skills development; observation of developmental behaviors,
17 using a checklist or other similar observation tools and
18 techniques to determine a child's developmental age level; use
19 of developmentally appropriate early childhood curricula; and
20 avoidance of income-based, race-based, and gender-based
21 stereotyping. The introductory training course shall stress,
22 to the extent possible, an interdisciplinary approach to the
23 study of children. Within 90 days after employment, child care
24 personnel must begin the introductory training course and,
25 within 1 year after the date on which the training course
26 began, complete such training. Exemption from all or a portion
27 of the introductory training course shall be granted to child
28 care personnel based upon educational credentials or passage
29 of competency examinations.

30 e. For child care personnel who have completed the
31 introductory training course, completion of an additional

1 approved 8 clock hours of inservice training, or an equivalent
2 as determined by the Department of Children and Family
3 Services, on an annual basis to improve child care skills and,
4 if appropriate, administrative skills.

5 f. When individual classrooms are staffed by certified
6 teachers, certification of those teachers for the appropriate
7 grade levels under s. 231.17 and State Board of Education
8 rules. Teachers who are not certified for the appropriate
9 grade levels must obtain proper certification within 2 years.
10 However, the partnership may make an exception on an
11 individual basis when the requirements are not met because of
12 serious illness, injury, or other extraordinary, extenuating
13 circumstance.

14 g. When individual classrooms are staffed by
15 noncertified teachers, the regularly scheduled direct contact
16 with each classroom of a program director or lead teacher who
17 is eligible for certification or certified for the appropriate
18 grade levels pursuant to s. 231.17 and State Board of
19 Education rules. Notwithstanding the provisions of s. 231.15,
20 such classrooms must be staffed by at least one person who
21 has, at a minimum, a child development associate credential
22 (CDA) or an amount of training determined by the Commissioner
23 of Education to be equivalent to or to exceed the minimum,
24 such as an associate in science degree in the area of early
25 childhood education.

26 h. For administrative and supervisory personnel with
27 direct responsibility for the program, demonstration of
28 knowledge of prekindergarten education programs that increase
29 children's chances of achieving future educational success and
30 becoming productive members of society in a manner established
31 by State Board of Education rule.

1 i. For all personnel who are not certified under s.
2 231.17, compliance with screening requirements under s.
3 231.02.
4 j. For child care operators, completion of basic
5 training in serving children with disabilities within 5 years
6 after employment, either as a part of the introductory
7 training course or the annual 8 hours of inservice training.
8 ~~c.~~ ~~Instructional staff who have completed the training~~
9 ~~course as required in s. 402.305(2)(d)1., as well as staff who~~
10 ~~have additional training or credentials as required by the~~
11 ~~partnership. The plan must provide a method for assuring the~~
12 ~~qualifications of all personnel in all program settings.~~
13 ~~k.d.~~ Specific eligibility priorities for children
14 within the coalition's county pursuant to subsection (6).
15 ~~l.e.~~ Performance standards and outcome measures
16 established by the partnership or alternatively, standards and
17 outcome measures to be used until such time as the partnership
18 adopts such standards and outcome measures.
19 ~~m.f.~~ Reimbursement rates that have been developed by
20 the coalition. Reimbursement rates shall not have the effect
21 of limiting parental choice or creating standards or levels of
22 services that have not been authorized by the Legislature.
23 ~~n.g.~~ Systems support services, including a central
24 agency, child care resource and referral, eligibility
25 determinations, training of providers, and parent support and
26 involvement.
27 ~~o.h.~~ Direct enhancement services to families and
28 children. System support and direct enhancement services shall
29 be in addition to payments for the placement of children in
30 school readiness programs.
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1 ~~p.i.~~ A business plan, which must include the contract
2 with a school readiness agent if the coalition is not a
3 legally established corporate entity. Coalitions may contract
4 with other coalitions to achieve efficiency in multiple-county
5 services, and such contracts may be part of the coalition's
6 business plan.

7 ~~q.j.~~ Strategies to meet the needs of unique
8 populations, such as migrant workers.

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10 As part of the plan, the coalition may request the Governor to
11 apply for a waiver to allow the coalition to administer the
12 Head Start Program to accomplish the purposes of the school
13 readiness program. If any school readiness plan can
14 demonstrate that specific statutory goals can be achieved more
15 effectively by using procedures that require modification of
16 existing rules, policies, or procedures, a request for a
17 waiver to the partnership may be made as part of the plan.
18 Upon review, the partnership may grant the proposed
19 modification.

20 4. Persons with an early childhood teaching
21 certificate may provide support and supervision to other staff
22 in the school readiness program.

23 5. The coalition may not implement its plan until it
24 submits the plan to and receives approval from the
25 partnership. Once the plan has been approved, the plan and the
26 services provided under the plan shall be controlled by the
27 coalition rather than by the state agencies or departments.
28 The plan shall be reviewed and revised as necessary, but at
29 least biennially.

30 6. The following statutes will not apply to local
31 coalitions with approved plans: ss. 125.901(2)(a)3., 411.221,

1 and 411.232. To facilitate innovative practices and to allow
2 local establishment of school readiness programs, a school
3 readiness coalition may apply to the Governor and Cabinet for
4 a waiver of, and the Governor and Cabinet may waive, any of
5 the provisions of ss. 230.23166, 411.223, and 411.232, if the
6 waiver is necessary for implementation of the coalition's
7 school readiness plan.

8 7. Two or more counties may join for the purpose of
9 planning and implementing a school readiness program.

10 8. A coalition may, subject to approval of the
11 partnership as part of the coalition's plan, receive
12 subsidized child care funds for all children eligible for any
13 federal subsidized child care program and be the provider of
14 the program services.

15 9. Coalitions are authorized to enter into multiparty
16 contracts with multicounty service providers in order to meet
17 the needs of unique populations such as migrant workers.

18 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2002.

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21 HOUSE SUMMARY

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23 Revises minimum standards and provisions that must be
24 included in school readiness coalition plans for
25 implementation of school readiness programs. Includes
26 ratios for instructional personnel to children, required
27 training for personnel, and certification and screening
28 requirements.

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