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Membership Information

Early Learning Coalition of Polk County

Vision Statement

All children enter school healthy, ready and eager for life long learning with the collaborative support of parents, families, educators, and the community.

Mission Statement

The Coalition will provide leadership, direction, and integrated resource management for quality services that support our vision of success for children.

BACKGROUND

In an effort to enhance the school readiness of all our children, the Governor and the Florida legislators in 1999 enacted School Readiness legislation. Then in December 2004, at its 2004 Special Session, the Legislature enacted House Bill 1-A, which changed the names of the coalitions to early learning coalitions and created the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Program. These legislative actions have brought private sector representatives, publicly funded early childhood education professionals, child care industry representatives, and community and government leaders together to ensure consistent quality in early childhood education programs. The members of the Coalition are responsible for allocating school readiness and VPK funds.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Florida Statute 411.01 established the School Readiness program and Florida Statute 1002.51 established the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program. The early learning coalitions are under the guidance of the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI)/Office of Early Learning (OEL).

Coalition Membership

The Coalition consists of at least 18 but not more than 35 members including:

The Governor appoints the chair and two other members of each early learning coalition. These members must each meet the same qualifications as private sector business members.

Each early learning coalition must include the following members:

- A Department of Child and Family Services District Administrator or his/her designee
- A district superintendent of schools or his/her designee
- A regional workforce development board director or his/her designee
- A county health department director or his/her designee
- A children's services council or juvenile welfare board chair or executive director, if applicable
- A child care licensing agency head
- A president of a community college or his/her designee
- One member appointed by a board of county commissioners
- A central child care agency administrator
- A Head Start director
- A representative of private child care providers
- A representative of faith-based child care providers
- A representative of programs for children with disabilities

Other Requirements

Including the members appointed by the Governor, more than one-third of the Coalition members must be from the private business sector and neither they nor their families may earn an income from the early education and child care industry or the VPK program.

Each private sector business member must reside in Florida and must be an owner, a manager, or employee with a private sector business entity conducting business in the Coalition's region.

Coalition Membership

MEMBERSHIP TERM OF SERVICE

The Early Learning Coalition has staggered terms of membership. Membership terms are determined by designated term vacancies at the time of membership recruitment. Terms are a four-year commitment. Members may serve a maximum of two consecutive terms.

STATUTE REQUIREMENTS

Members of the Coalition are subject to the ethics and other provisions in Florida Statutes, Part III of Chapter 1. Each member is also subject to the standards of conduct for public officers (ss.112.313), restriction on employment of relatives (ss.112.3135), voting conflicts (ss.112.3143), and the Government in the Sunshine Laws.

TIME COMMITMENT

The Coalition meets once a month for approximately 90 minutes per meeting. Members may also be asked to serve on sub-committees or act as an officer of the Coalition. Members are asked to commit to maintaining an active Coalition membership status.

MEMBERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

New Members

- Commit time for an Early Learning Coalition *New Member Orientation*
- Become familiar with the Early Learning Coalition of Polk County Plan
- Become familiar with all aspects of related state and federal grants, legislative requirements, and other pertinent school readiness information

Members

- Cannot miss three consecutive meetings without cause during a year. Meetings are currently held on the third Wednesday of each month at 8:30 a.m.
- Actively participate in discussions and the decision making process of Coalition business
- Serve on subcommittees as needed
- Act as a public relations arm of the Coalition in educating the community about school readiness and VPK

If you have an interest in becoming a member of the Early Learning Coalition of Polk County, please mail or fax the enclosed member application to:

Kris Giordano
Early Learning Coalition of Polk County
1765 N. Broadway Avenue
Bartow, Florida 33830
Phone: (863) 733-9064
Fax: (863) 733-9081
Email: KrisGiordano@elcpolk.org
www.elcpolk.org