



VPK School Year PROVIDER REFRESHER 2026-2027 Fiscal Year

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PROVIDER RELATIONS



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OUR VISION

ALL children are prepared for success in school.

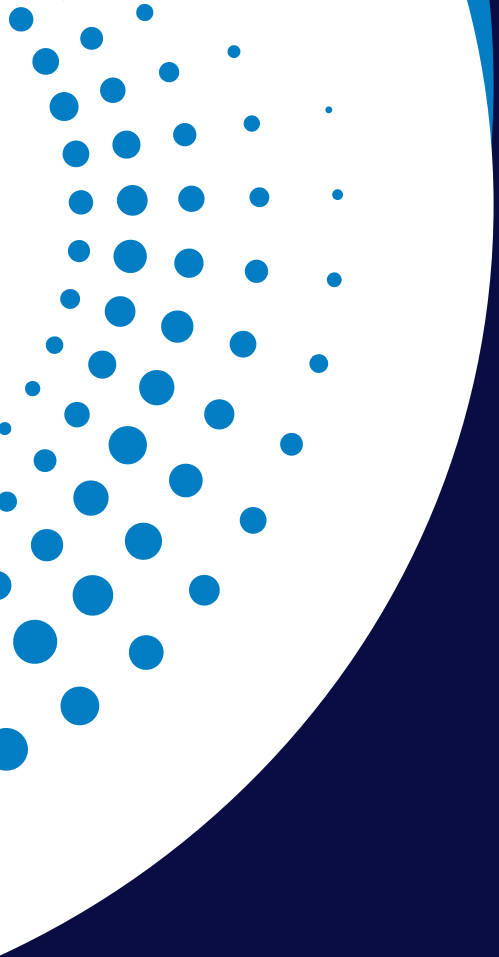
OUR MISSION

Provide leadership and advocacy that builds a community where all children are prepared for success in school.

OUR PURPOSE

1. PREPARE children for school.
2. Place children in healthy and safe, contracted child care centers that ELC monitors annually.
3. Provide eligible families with assistance paying for child care, so parents can work and/or attend school.
4. Guide child care providers in implementing quality supports to improve child outcomes.





WHAT WE DO

Help prepare children for success in school and support families' ability to work, through administration of the School Readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten programs.

WHO WE SERVE

Children, families, and child care providers in Leon, Gadsden, Liberty, Jefferson, Wakulla, Madison, and Taylor counties.

What is VPK?



Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program is designed to provide a strong early learning foundation for all four-year-olds to ensure they enter kindergarten fully prepared to succeed

VPK is available at no cost to any child that resides in Florida and will be 4 years of age on or before September 1st of the program year

Basic Eligibility Requirements for School Year Programs

Provider Type

- Licensed Center
- Licensed Family Child Care Home
- Public School
- Private School

Staff

- Director/Principal
- Lead Instructors
- Aides
- Substitutes

Instructional Hours

- 540 instructional hours
- Cannot start until public school begins
- Must end by June 30

Curriculum

Each VPK provider must use curriculum that is developmentally appropriate, designed to prepare a student for early literacy, enhance the age-appropriate progress of students in attaining the state-adopted performance standards, and prepare students for success in kindergarten. Providers may select or design the curriculum for their classrooms, unless on probation for failure to meet kindergarten readiness rates. Then, a DOE-approved curriculum must be implemented.

VPK Provider Insurance Requirements

Liability Insurance Policy

1. Minimum of \$100,000 General Liability coverage per occurrence
2. Minimum of \$300,000 General Aggregate coverage
3. Transportation coverage, if provider transports children
4. ELC of the Big Bend Region must be named as a certificate holder AND an additional insured

Workers' Compensation Re-Employment

Obtain and maintain any required workers' compensation insurance and/or re-employment assistance or unemployment compensation coverage

Documentation of Screening & Credentials

Level II Background Screening

- DCF Clearinghouse Letter must be current or done within the last 5 years
- Completed Attestation of Good Moral Character
- Public Schools submit documentation from the district

Director Credentials

- Director Credential Certificate VPK endorsement
- DCF Transcript
- 5-hour Emergent Literacy course (2021)
- Implementing the Florida Standards in Preschool Classrooms 3 Years Old to Kindergarten

Educational Credentials

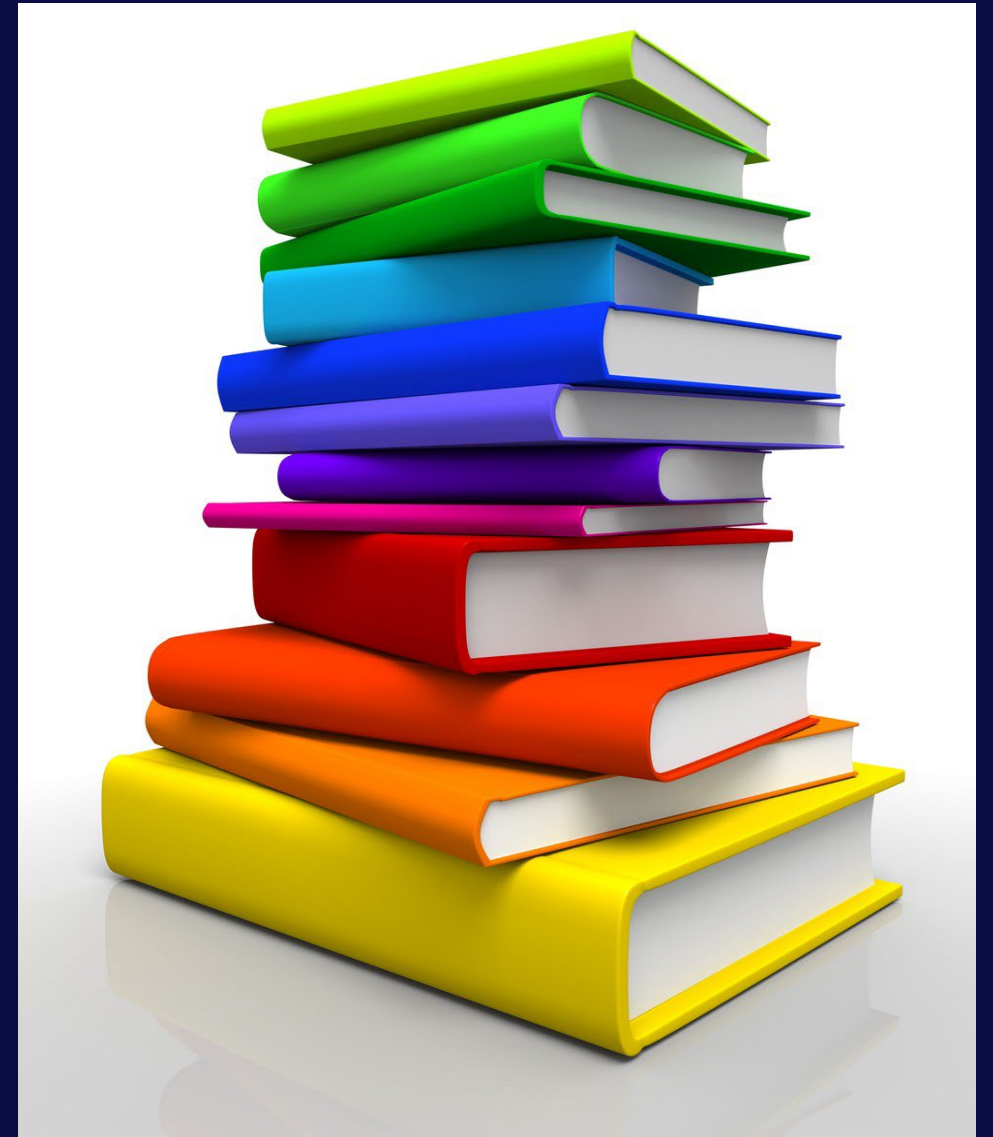
- Staff Credential Verification form
- DCF Transcript
- Public Schools submit documentation from the district
- 5-hour Emergent Literacy course (2021)
- Implementing the Florida Standards in Preschool Classrooms 3 Years Old to Kindergarten

Resources:

<https://www.fldoe.org/schools/early-learning/providers/pro-learning.stml>

Level II Background Screening and AGMC

- All VPK staff including directors, instructors, aides, and substitute instructors must be background screened in accordance with Florida Statutes Section 435.04 before employment and re-screened at least once every 5 years
- Background screens are conducted through the DCF Background Screening Clearinghouse
- VPK staff must complete an Affidavit of Good Moral Character (CF-FSP 1649A Child Care Affidavit of Good Moral Character, June 2025 edition) and must not be ineligible to teach in public school because an educator certificate is suspended or revoked



VPK Director

VPK Providers must have a Director with a VPK Endorsement

The training requirements for a VPK Director Credential are:

- Accredited High School Diploma or G.E.D.
- 30 Hour Part 1 Department of Children and Families Introductory Child Care Training
- A minimum of eight hours in-service training regarding children with disabilities
- Active Staff Credential Verification (DCF Form CF-FSP 5206)
- Completion of the following courses:
 1. An approved “Overview of Child Care Management” course
 2. VPK Director Credential course
 3. Emergent Literacy for VPK Instructors
 4. Implementing the Florida Standards in Preschool Classrooms: 3 Years Old to Kindergarten
 5. Mathematical Thinking for Early Learners
 6. Language and Vocabulary in the VPK Classroom

VPK Instructor Educational Requirements

Type 1

1. Active CDA, FCCPC, or NECC
2. Completion of the Implementing the Florida Standards in Preschool Classrooms: 3 Years Old to Kindergarten course
**This class was previously known as VPK Standards for 4-Year-Olds*
3. Completion of 3 Emergent Literacy for VPK Instructors courses

Type 2

- An associate's degree or higher in Child Development
- An associate's degree or higher in an unrelated field, with at least 6 hours in Early Childhood Education or Child Development and at least 480 hours of experience teaching or providing care for children ages birth through 8
- A bachelor's degree or higher in Early Childhood Education, Prekindergarten or Primary Education, Preschool Education, or Family and Consumer Sciences (formerly Home Economics)
- A bachelor's degree or higher in Elementary Education, with certification to teach children any age from birth through grade 6

Provider Relations staff cannot evaluate college transcripts or degrees. All VPK lead instructors must provide a DCF Staff Credential Verification Form with the VPK Provider Application as verification they are qualified to teach VPK.

VPK Aides

- Must be at least 18 years of age
- Aides are only required in VPK classrooms of 12-20 students
- Aides cannot substitute for the VPK instructor unless the aide has a verified appropriate credential and VPK ratio is maintained



VPK Substitutes



Acceptable Educational Credentials

- Completion of a 30-clock-hour Family Child Care Home training for an operator of a large family child care home or for an operator of a family child care home
- Completion of a 40-clock-hour Introductory Child Care training course for personnel of a child care facility
- Completion of a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential issued by the National Credentialing Program of the Council for Professional Recognition
- Completion of a credential approved by DCF as being equivalent to or greater than the national CDA
- Completion of an associate's degree or higher in any field of study

VPK Substitutes

Maximum Substitute Hours

Substitute instructors may not be assigned for an absent, credentialed instructor exceeding 30% of the program hours (162 hours for the school year).

Providers must document each time a substitute instructor is used.

- All substitutes must be approved by ELC before they are authorized to be in the VPK classroom
- A substitute may not be assigned when the credentialed instructor remains on the provider's premises to offer instruction in another classroom
- In the event a lead VPK instructor will be out for more than 30% of program hours, a new credentialed lead VPK instructor must be assigned to replace the absent instructor
- A VPK class cannot begin instruction on first day of class calendar with a substitute

Class Size and Ratio

Each VPK class must start with at least 4 children

- Providers without valid VPK Certificates of Enrollment for the minimum 4 students cannot begin their VPK program. The VPK calendar must be adjusted to begin the first day there are 4 VPK eligible children enrolled and in attendance. Providers should contact their Provider Relations Specialist for assistance.

VPK classes can combine VPK and non-VPK children as a blended class

- The blended class cannot exceed the maximum class size, the teacher to child ratio, or the licensed room capacity
- A blended class may include children of any age but must not interfere with VPK instruction, and VPK instruction must continue to occur

Class Size and Ratio

Each VPK classroom of up to 11 children must have at least 1 lead instructor.

A secondary instructor or aide is required for each VPK class with 12-20 children enrolled.



VPK Calendars

Instructional Days

- Days that the VPK program is in session
- Instructors must actively engage VPK students in making progress in the learning and developmental standards of the VPK program
- Nap and rest time cannot occur during VPK instructional hours on instructional days

Non-Instructional Days

- Days the provider chooses not to offer VPK
- Days the provider is closed
- If the provider offers School Readiness, the provider should verify that their School Readiness closures align with their VPK non-instructional days



VPK Calendars

Providers have flexibility in structuring their VPK calendars and schedules, assuming the program meets the 540 instructional hour requirement – the provider can choose their schedule

- VPK providers are required to submit their program calendar indicating the start and end dates of the program and instructional days and hours; providers enter calendar information as part of the VPK Provider Application process
- The program calendar must be carefully planned as only **two calendar** changes per year are permitted
- Providers who adjust their calendars without prior notification to ELC will be required to make up the missing instructional hours

VPK Calendar Examples

Example	Days Per Week	Hours Per Day	Total Number of Days	Total Hours
Example A Traditional School Year	5	3	180	540
Example B	5	4	135	540
Example C	5	5	108	540
Example D	5	4.5	120	540
Example E	3	5	180	540

Emergency & Temporary Closures

- During states of emergency declared by federal, state, or local officials, VPK providers may be paid for closures up to 5 days and not required to make up those hours
- The 5 days are cumulative, meaning if only 3 of the 5 are used, the other 2 of the 5 days would still be available to use in a different state of emergency
- This time period may be extended by the state based on the circumstances of the emergency
- Temporary closures require documentation





QUIZ TIME!

Question #1

How many lead instructor(s) must be in a VPK classroom of 10 children?

- a. 0...A substitute and aide are enough!
- b. 1
- c. 2
- d. Trick question...Call the Provider Relations Team!

Question #1

How many lead instructor(s) must be in a VPK classroom of 10 children?

~~a. 0...A substitute and aide are enough!~~

b. 1

~~c. 2~~

~~d. Trick question...Call the Provider Relations Team!~~

Question #2

Which of the following is NOT true for VPK Aides?

- a. Must be at least 18 years of age
- b. Required in VPK classrooms of 12-20 students
- c. Needs verified appropriate credential to sub for a VPK instructor
- d. Can only work in VPK School Year programs

Question #2

Which of the following is NOT true for VPK Aides?

- a. Must be at least 18 years of age
- b. Required in VPK classrooms of 12-20 students
- c. Needs verified appropriate credential to sub for a VPK instructor
- ~~d. Can only work in VPK School Year programs~~



**GIVEAWAY
TIME!**

Child Eligibility

Any child that is a Florida resident and is four years old on or before September 1st of the program year is eligible for VPK

- Parents of younger 4-year-olds have the option to defer VPK enrollment for one year:
 - Children with birthdays from February 2nd through September 1st in a calendar year may enroll in VPK for that program year or wait until the following year when the child is 5.
 - This is an option that is selected by the parent in the Family Portal
- Parents must complete a VPK application in the Family Portal:
<https://familyservices.floridaearlylearning.com>
- The Certificate of Eligibility (COE) does not need to be uploaded or sent to ELC; however, the provider is required to keep all VPK records for 5 years.

Certificate of Eligibility (COE)

- When ELC approves the VPK application, the parent receives their Certificate of Eligibility (COE) through the Family Portal
- The COE must be provided to a contracted VPK provider before the child begins attending the program. The provider completes the COE, and the parent must sign the COE prior to enrolling. The child's VPK attendance start date cannot be before the COE issue date.
- Upon receipt and completion of the COE, the provider requests the enrollment in the Provider Portal, using the information on the certificate, and should be done as soon as possible to ensure the provider is paid timely



Re-Enrollment



- Any movement of a child from one provider to another is considered a Re-Enrollment, and each child is allowed one re-enrollment to a different provider within the State of Florida
- A parent must complete a “Re-Enrollment Application” in the Family Portal prior to transferring their child to a different VPK provider
- Any child who has completed more than 70% of the VPK program is ineligible for re-enrollment
- The child’s remaining VPK hours will be available to use at the new provider
- Transfers from one classroom to another in the same provider are not re-enrollments, but there is a process that must be completed in the Provider Portal, so the children appear on the correct classroom roster

VPK Fees

VPK is a FREE program!

- VPK providers may not require a parent to enroll his or her child in or require payment of fees or charges for supplemental services (i.e., extended-day, extended-year, wrap-around, or full-day services) as a condition of enrolling the child in the VPK program
- A VPK provider may not charge a registration fee, a fee to “hold a space” for VPK enrollment, or require materials for VPK-only children
- VPK providers may not charge parents for any activities done during the VPK program; fees or materials required for activities provided outside of the VPK program are at the provider’s discretion
- VPK providers may charge fees for early drop off or late pick up to parents of children enrolled in VPK only, but these fees must be outlined in the policy handbook given to parents before enrollment

Attendance Policy

VPK providers must provide a copy of their attendance policy to parents of each VPK child at time of enrollment, and this policy cannot be amended during the VPK program year

Attendance Policy Recommendations

- Start and end dates of VPK program
- Hours and days of week of VPK instruction
- VPK calendar or listing of all non-instructional days
- Tardy policy
- Absence policy
- Policy for reporting absences
- Early drop off/late pick up fee(s)
- Signature page acknowledging parent has received a copy of the Attendance Policy

Attendance Acknowledgment

Parents are required to complete the VPK Attendance Verification forms monthly:
Short DEL-VPK 03S or Long DEL-VPK 03L

USE THE
SHORT
FORM
IF:

Parents sign in/out daily

USE THE
LONG
FORM
IF:

Any method other than a daily
sign in/out form is used, such
as a roll sheet or roster

Absences

- A provider is paid for every day a child attends the VPK program, even if a child arrives late or leaves early
- Providers are paid for all absences if a child is not absent more than 20% of the VPK program's instructional hours
- If a child is absent more than 20% of the instructional hours, providers are paid for up to 20% of the absences
- If a child is absent more than 20% of the instructional hours during a specific month, but is absent for less than 20% of the total time attended in the VPK program, the provider will receive an 80/20 absence adjustment payment with the program's final VPK reconciliation



Payment

- Providers have the option of being reimbursed or receiving advance payment, and the option to choose it is in the VPK contract
- Reimbursed payment is based off actual enrollments submitted at the end of the month
 - Example: Payment is issued the middle of September for the previous month of August. The payment amount is based on actual attendance submitted. No further reconciliation is needed.
- Advance Payment is based on an estimate of enrollments and is then reconciled the following month
 - Example: Advance Payment is issued at the end of August for the month of September. The prepayment amount is based on the number of VPK enrollments in August. If there are fewer enrollments in September, the prepayment amount will be reconciled with the actual amount the provider is owed, based on the number of children who received services.

VPK Monitoring

VPK providers will be monitored by the Provider Relations Team for compliance with program requirements, including:

- Valid credentials and background screenings
- Current license or eligible provider type documentation
- Correct and authorized VPK staff in classrooms
- Assessment documentation and submission
- Use of curriculum reported by the provider on the VPK Provider Application
- Attendance documentation and record keeping
- VPK instruction occurring during the provider's scheduled VPK days and hours



VPK Non-Compliance

- VPK Providers must stay in compliance with all contract requirements for the duration of the contract
- Failure to follow the requirements of the VPK program will result in corrective action
- ELC assigns corrective action and technical assistance specific to the circumstances and situation
- Financial consequences may be assessed due to program non-compliance
- Providers have the right to request a review hearing if they dispute ELC's decision regarding the contract, as outlined in Exhibit 2 of the Statewide Voluntary Prekindergarten Provider Contract



Contract Termination

- ELC does all it can to work with providers to resolve non-compliance issues through corrective action
- In circumstances where corrective action either cannot resolve the issue or has not been successful in resolving the issue, contract termination may occur
- Emergency contract terminations will occur if ELC receives notification from DCF or an accrediting agency that the actions or inactions of the provider pose an immediate and serious danger to the health, safety, or welfare of children
- Depending on the situation leading to contract termination, ELC may elect to remove a provider from eligibility to offer VPK for a period of 5 years



**GIVEAWAY
TIME!**

VPK Assessment STAR Early Literacy

VPK providers are required to administer the STAR Early Literacy must be completed 3 times annually for all VPK students

Assessments 1 , 2, and 3 are ALL mandatory

- VPK assessments should be administered by the lead VPK instructor or staff that meets the qualifications for VPK Lead Instructor
- Early Literacy STAR is an online-only assessment; therefore, it is automatically input into the system
- PM1 is administered the first 30 instructional days of a VPK class
- PM2 is administered after 40% of the instructional hours are completed
- PM3 is administered during the last 30 instructional days of a VPK class

VPK Assessment STAR Early Literacy

- New assessments are being referred to as Florida's Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) using STAR Early Literacy
- Providers are required to complete these assessments on a touchscreen device
- Each instructor/assessor will be required to complete training tailored to the administration of the assessment
- ELC will monitor to ensure the training has been completed

Accountability

Florida Statutes Section 1002.69 requires the Office of Early Learning to adopt a minimum readiness rate that demonstrates a provider has satisfactorily delivered the VPK program.

Determination of VPK Readiness Rates:

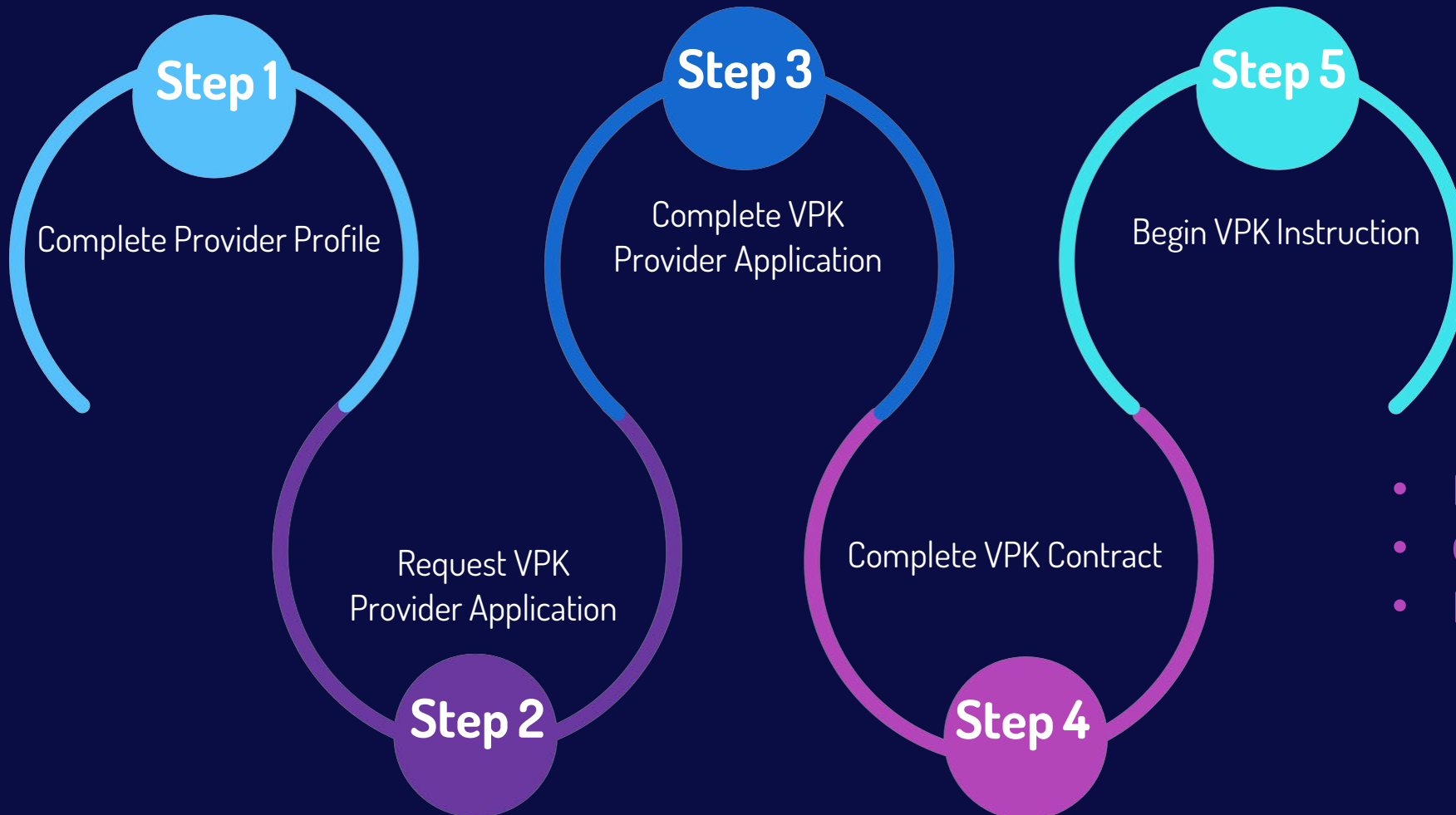
- VPK Readiness Rates are determined by the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS); this assessment is administered to children within the first 30 days of kindergarten
- Children must score a minimum of 500 to be considered “ready for kindergarten”
- Since 2022-23, a small percentage of learning gains demonstrated by VPK Assessment results is incorporated in VPK Readiness Rates calculation
- Providers who score below 60 are considered low performing and placed on probation
- Providers On Probation (POP) must implement an improvement plan, which is monitored by ELC

Reporting Program Changes

Notification regarding changes to calendars, staff, and schedules must be provided within 14 calendar days of the change

CHANGE OR ACTION REQUIRING ELC NOTIFICATION	PROVIDER MUST NOTIFY ELC
UNUSUAL INCIDENT	BY CLOSE OF BUSINESS ON NEXT BUSINESS DAY
OWNERSHIP CHANGE	30 CALENDAR DAYS IN ADVANCE
CHANGES TO LIABILITY INSURANCE POLICY	10 CALENDAR DAYS IN ADVANCE
CANCELLATION OF LIABILITY INSURANCE POLICY	10 CALENDAR DAYS IN ADVANCE
TEMPORARY OR EMERGENCY CLOSURE	WITHIN 2 CALENDAR DAYS OF REOPENING
USDA DISQUALIFICATION	WITHIN 5 CALENDAR DAYS
FRAUD	WITHIN 5 CALENDAR DAYS
CHANGES TO REQUIRED FORMS	PRIOR TO CHANGE
ADMITTING A CHILD INTO VPK PROGRAM	UPON ADMITTANCE
TERMINATION OF CONTRACT BY PROVIDER	30 CALENDAR DAYS IN ADVANCE

VPK Contract Process



- Deliver VPK Instruction
- Complete VPK Assessments
- Have a Great School Year!

Provider Profile



VPK Providers must complete the annual Provider Profile update



VPK Provider Applications cannot be initiated by ELC until a provider has an updated and approved profile for the upcoming program year



When the provider profile is approved by ELC and shows as Active in the Provider Portal, the provider contacts their Provider Relations Specialist to request a VPK Provider Application



VPK Provider Application

Attendance
Policy

Background
Screenings &
AGMC's

Educational
Credentials

Calendar,
Schedule &
Classroom

Most providers have submitted licenses, accreditation, and insurance documentation when editing the Provider Profile.

If these documents are not submitted, upload them to the Provider Profile.

Providers should verify that the uploaded W9 is current. If not, contact ELC to make an update.



VPK Contract



- Completing the VPK Provider Application does not authorize the VPK program to begin – the VPK Contract must be in place too
- The provider must log in to the Provider Portal and complete the VPK Contract
- When the Provider Relations Specialist approves the VPK Provider Application, ELC initiates the VPK Contract
- Failure to complete the contract will result in a delayed start of the VPK program, and the provider will be ineligible for payment during the time without a contract

Questions?

- An FAQ will be developed and sent out for any remaining questions from this presentation
- Handouts will include this presentation, the Provider Portal User Guide with VPK Provider Application instructions, and a packet with reference materials for each provider
- The updated VPK Provider Handbook for school year VPK programs will be available **June 29** and will be sent to all current and potential VPK providers participating in this orientation

Contact the Provider Relations Team:
ProviderRelations@elcbigbend.org





**QUIZ
TIME!**

Question #3

A provider is paid for every day a child attends VPK, but only if the child is present for the entire VPK day.

- a. True
- b. False

Question #3

A provider is paid for every day a child attends VPK, but only if the child is present for the entire VPK day.

- a. ~~True~~
- b. False

Question #4

Once a provider initially submits a VPK Provider Application, VPK instruction can immediately start.

- a. True
- b. False

Question #4

Once a provider initially submits a VPK Provider Application, VPK instruction can immediately start.

- a. ~~True~~
- b. False