**SRBR13 Reimbursement for Children with Special Needs**

**Policy and Procedures**

**Policy:**

A childcare provider may be reimbursed by the coalition at a higher rate if caring for any school readiness child with special needs requiring additional care beyond services required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). A special needs rate may be negotiated up to twenty (20) percent above the maximum approved base reimbursement rate established for infant care by the coalition. However, any amount that exceeds the providers private pay rate for infant care shall be classified as a quality expenditure.

A special needs child is defined as a child who has been determined eligible as a child with a disability in accordance with Chapter 6A-6, F.A.C., and is participating in a program for children with disabilities provided by the school district or a child who has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Family Support Plan (FSP), which may include physical, mental, emotional, or behavioral conditions that require a higher level of care in the child care setting. The special need child’s condition must be validated by a licensed health, mental health, education, or social service professional other than the child’s parent or person employed by the childcare provider.

To receive a special needs rate, in addition to the base rate, a provider must submit the Episcopal Children’s Services (ECS) locally developed School Readiness Special Needs Rate Request Form that includes a list of the special needs services that is provided for each special needs child in addition to regular school readiness services. A copy of the documentation of the child’s physical, mental, emotional, or behavior condition that requires a higher level of care in the child care setting which may include a copy of the child’s IEP, FSP, and/or other validation documentation by a licensed health, mental health, education, or social service professional other than the child’s parent or person employed by the child care provider is required to be submitted along with this form.

 **Procedures:**

Providers requesting a Special Needs Rate can request the Special Needs Rate Request Form from by emailing contracts@ecs4kids.org or by downloading a copy from the ECS website provider services page (<https://www.ecs4kids.org/programs/provider-services/>). Once the child care provider has completed the request form, the provider should then submit the form along with the supporting documentation to the contracts@ecs4kids.org for review.

A designated team of reviewers will then review the documentation submitted and together decide if the provider would qualify for a Special Needs Rate of ten (10) percent, fifteen (15) percent, or twenty (20) percent. The reviewing team can include, but is not limited to, staff from any of the following departments: SR Education, Family Services and Provider Services. The names of the reviewers will be listed on the request form as this team can change based on availability.

If the child care provider does not fully complete the request form and/or does not provide supporting documentation, the request will automatically be denied. The child care provider may resubmit the form again with the appropriate documentation attached. If the form is fully completed and the required documentation is attached, a team of reviewers will review the documents to determine the appropriateness of the accommodations based on the child’s IEP, FSP, or professional validation documentation to determine if the provider qualifies for a special needs rate of ten (10) percent, fifteen (15) percent, or twenty (20) percent. To determine the rate of payment, the reviewing team will use the Tiers outlined on the request form. These tiers were created by using B-Piece and the quality indicators in best practices in inclusive early childhood education.

If the reviewing team needs additional clarification in determining if the accommodations are considered above and beyond ADA requirements, the team can either email the ADA Q&A at [https://www.ada.gov/childqanda.htm](https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ada.gov%2Fchildqanda.htm&data=05%7C01%7CBrittney.Spangler%40ecs4kids.org%7C51e5fe8ce54c4dd3389108da9b07bfe6%7Cacb86faef9504f8bb59e8a1b8373b0b8%7C1%7C0%7C637992755217383478%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=xVKr9ftb4VlD9K9nS53BAEsIzwbiUpO%2FNKF%2BCSxv%2FT0%3D&reserved=0) or by phone at 800-514-0301 to request assistance in this determination. All communication discussed will remain confidential.

Staff will either approve the request or notify the provider of the appropriate accommodations that would need to be provided to match the child’s needs and give the provider an opportunity to resubmit the list of accommodations if they do not meet the child’s specific needs in accordance with their IEP, FSP, or other professional validation documentation.

If the application is approved, the approval we be valid until the child’s School Readiness eligibility redetermination date. Prior to the redetermination date, the provider should update their original application with any changes and sign and date it. The updated application will go through the review process described above. If the provider has submitted the updated application but the review team has not approved it by the redetermination date, the special needs rate will continue during the review period.

Prior to the approval of the request, the Contracts Department will need to review the provider’s profile and School Readiness Contract to verify the child care provider has an infant rate listed, as the differential for special needs is based on the SR Daily Infant Rate. If a rate is not listed, an amendment to the School Readiness Contract will need to be completed before the provider can receive the special needs differential. The child care provider is also required to have marked on the Services tab of the profile for #10 “Yes” that they are equipped to care for children with special needs. If #10 says “No” then the Contract team will also need to have the provider update it.

The approval of the request, along with the approved rate and any necessary updates needed to the child care provider’s profile and/or contract, will then be sent to the child care provider through the contracts@ecs4kids.org email. The reviewing team will also inform the Family Services Coordinator(s) of the approval along with details of the start date, approved rate, child’s information, and the child care provider approved. Please note: if the child attends more than one child care provider, each provider must request the special needs rate separately through the approval process outlined in this policy.

The ELC of North Florida’s contractor, Episcopal Children’s Services (ECS), has up to thirty (30) calendar days from the date of the request to complete the review process. If approved, the special needs rate may be backdated to the date when special needs services began or the date of the special needs application whichever is later, as long as the child was enrolled in School Readiness on that date. After the approval, the special needs designation of the child will be updated by the Family Services staff to document the child’s enrollment as Special Needs, and the new approved rate. An Internal Payment Correction (IPC) request will also be submitted by the Family Services staff, if a backdate is needed. The provider and parent/guardian will then be notified of the enrollment and payment rate change via email with the request to sign the updated Child Care Certificate.