

MEMORANDUM

TO: School District Superintendents
Early Learning Coalition Executive Directors

FROM: Cari Miller

DATE: October 21, 2024

SUBJECT: Hurricanes Helene and Milton Guidance for Early Learning Programs

Contact Information:

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As you know, Hurricane Helene made landfall on Thursday, September 26, 2024, and Hurricane Milton made landfall on Wednesday, October 9, 2024, causing significant damage to communities along their paths, severely disrupting the operations of many businesses including early learning providers and early learning coalitions, and displacing countless citizens forced to evacuate. To facilitate the rapid response to and recovery from the hurricanes, the following deadline extensions and flexibility are being provided to coalitions and providers impacted by Hurricanes Helene and Milton:

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Program

- (1) The Progress Monitoring 1 (PM1) period in Rule 6M-8.620(1)(b), Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), is extended for an additional ten (10) instructional days for programs that have eighty-three (83) or more instructional days. For programs that have eighty-two (82) or fewer instructional days, PM1 is extended for an additional five (5) instructional days.
- (2) The period for the reporting of student performance results from the coordinated screening and progress monitoring to the students' parents in Rule 6M-8.620(2)(a), F.A.C., is extended to within seven (7) calendar days of reopening the VPK program following a temporary closure due to Hurricanes Helene and Milton.
- (3) The time frame for an observer to enter and save all dimension scores and notes into the Florida Department of Education (FDOE)-approved vendor system in Rule 6M-8.621(2)(c), F.A.C., is extended to ten (10) business days after conducting the classroom observation or ten (10) business days after reopening, whichever is longer. The time frame for a coalition to notify VPK providers of their scores via the Provider Portal as required by Rule 6M-8.621(2)(d), F.A.C., is extended by fourteen (14) calendar days after completing the classroom observation or fourteen (14) calendar days after reopening, whichever is longer.
- (4) The VPK temporary emergency closures in Rule 6M-8.204(4), F.A.C., are extended, as needed, up to October 31, 2024, for VPK providers impacted by Hurricanes Helene and Milton. Providers shall be paid for temporary emergency closures or may choose to revise their class schedule to make-up the instructional days missed in lieu of accepting reimbursement for temporary emergency closure days.

CARI MILLER

CHANCELLOR, DIVISION OF EARLY LEARNING

- (5) The time frame for VPK providers to notify a coalition of a change in schedule in Rule 6M-8.300(2)(c), F.A.C., is extended as a result of the impact of Hurricanes Helene and Milton up to thirty (30) calendar days after the change.
- (6) The monthly attendance verification requirement in Rule 6M-8.305(2), F.A.C., is not required for September and October of 2024, if applicable, where such documentation is not available for enrolled VPK children due to family displacement or provider closure because of Hurricanes Helene and Milton.

School Readiness (SR) Program

- (7) The time frame to submit documentation necessary to validate/verify eligibility in Rule 6M-4.208, F.A.C., is extended to sixty (60) calendar days.
- (8) The time frame for waiting list revalidation in Rule 6M-4.300(4), F.A.C., is extended to sixty (60) calendar days.
- (9) Coalitions are permitted to cover the copayments in Rule 6M-4.400(6), F.A.C., for families impacted by Hurricanes Helene and Milton for the period from September 26 through October 31.
- (10) Families transferring to a new provider before October 31, 2024, because of impacts by Hurricanes Helene and Milton are not required to provide documentation in Rule 6M-4.400(7), F.A.C., from a prior school readiness provider indicating that the copayment has been satisfactorily fulfilled.
- (11) For September and October 2024, as applicable, the monthly reimbursable absences in Rule 6M-4.500(4), F.A.C., are extended up to eight (8) additional days with no written documentation required to justify any absences during this period for families impacted by Hurricanes Helene and Milton.
- (12) The end date of Assessment Period One in Rule 6M-4.500(8)(c), F.A.C., is extended by fourteen (14) calendar days to mitigate the impacts of Hurricanes Helene and Milton.
- (13) The period required for initial screening and subsequent redetermination screenings in Rule 6M-4.720(2), F.A.C., is extended by fourteen (14) calendar days.
- (14) The time frame for an observer to enter and save all dimension scores and notes into the FDOE-approved vendor system in Rule 6M-4.740, F.A.C., is extended to ten (10) business days after conducting the classroom observation or ten (10) business days after reopening, whichever is longer. The time frame for a coalition to notify providers of their scores as required by Rule 6M-4.740(2)(g), F.A.C., is extended by fourteen (14) calendar days after the score is generated or fourteen (14) calendar days after reopening, whichever is longer.

For questions regarding any of the provisions above, please contact Katerina Maroney, Deputy Director of Programs and Policy/Division of Early Learning, at Katerina.Maroney@del.fldoe.org.

The FDOE is committed to working with early learning coalitions and early care and education providers to ensure that children can return to in-person learning.