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MANAGING THE VPK IMPROVEMENT PLAN APPROVAL PROCESS

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Summary

The Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI), Department of Education (DOE), school districts, and early learning coalitions are responsible for the VPK improvement process. This guidance specifies that, until the promulgation of specific rule, a coalition or school district should continue to have responsibility for management of the VPK improvement process based on general instructions published on the ImproveVPK.org website and this program guidance.

Background

The VPK legislation (ss. 1002.51-1002.79, F.S.) establishes that the Department of Education shall calculate readiness rates annually for each summer and/or school-year VPK provider. The State Board of Education, responsible for setting the minimum readiness rate, set the minimum readiness rate at 201 for program year 2005-2006 at the June 19, 2007 meeting.

A VPK provider has 21 calendar days **from the State Board's adoption of the minimum readiness rate** (until July 10, 2007 for the 2005-2006 rates) to acknowledge status as a low-performing provider by utilizing the ImproveVPK.org website. After

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acknowledging low-performing status, a provider has 30 calendar days to submit an improvement plan to a coalition or school district, as applicable, using the online template available at [ImproveVPK.org](https://www.improvevpk.org). A low-performing provider cannot deliver a new VPK program until the provider's improvement plan has been approved.

Program Guidance

(1) ***Overall Management of Improvement Plan Process.*** The management of the improvement process should be a priority for coalitions and school districts.

a. ***Private Providers and Coalitions.*** A coalition is responsible for the oversight of the private provider's acknowledgement of low-performing status and approval of the improvement plan.

A provider that has not completed the required acknowledgement and improvement process may not receive prepayments or deliver a new VPK session unless a coalition allows a prepayment and assumes responsibility to recoup the extended funds if the VPK provider is ineligible to deliver a VPK program. A coalition may elect to prepay a low performing provider on a case by case basis. If a provider fails to meet the improvement plan requirement, the coalition is responsible for collecting the prepaid funds from the provider. ([See OEL-FG-0042-07, Collection of Delinquent Account](#)). A provider may not be paid retroactively for VPK services delivered before the improvement plan approval date. Ultimately a coalition is responsible for returning any disallowed funds to the Office of Early Learning.

A coalition is responsible for contacting parents who have enrolled a child with a low-performing provider if the provider is at risk of becoming ineligible to deliver the VPK program because of noncompliance.

Best practices for coalitions include:

1. Deciding whether low-performing providers who do not have an approved improvement plan should receive a prepayment. Omitting the provider from the prepayment process will prevent prepayment of a new program year VPK session.
2. Contacting families who are enrolled with a provider that is at risk of becoming ineligible to deliver the VPK program to make sure that parents can make informed alternative plans about the parent's choice of VPK program.

3. Revising a provider's EFS record to allow prepayments, if applicable, after an improvement plan is approved.
 - b. **Schools and School Districts.** A school district is responsible for ensuring that a public school provider acknowledges low-performing status and has an approved improvement plan. A low-performing public school should not receive prepayments or payments for a new VPK program until it complies with the acknowledgement and improvement plan requirements. The school district designee who approves the improvement plans must not be the same designee who acknowledges low performance or submits the improvement plan(s).
- (2) **Summer and School-Year Programs.** The VPK school-year and summer programs are considered two distinct program types for the purposes of establishing kindergarten readiness rates. If a VPK provider delivers both a school-year and a summer program, the provider will receive a readiness rate for each program. A provider may be a low-performing provider for one program type, but still be eligible to deliver the other program. For example, a provider may be a low-performing provider for the school-year program, but is not a low-performing provider for the summer program. In this case, the provider must submit an improvement plan for the school-year program, but does not have to submit an improvement plan for the summer program. If the provider fails to submit an improvement plan for the school-year program, the provider is still eligible to deliver the summer program.
- (3) **VPK Improvement Process Website.** Providers can use the ImproveVPK.org website to acknowledge low-performing provider status, and the ImproveVPK.org to submit improvement plans and to submit periodic reports.
 - a. **Provider Acknowledgement.** The Department of Education monitors a program's compliance with the requirement to acknowledge low-performing provider status.
 - b. **Submission of Improvement Plan.** A VPK provider has 30 calendar days, or no later than August 9, 2007, from the date of acknowledgement as a low-performing provider to submit an improvement plan.
 - c. **Approval of Improvement Plan.** A coalition and school district are responsible for monitoring provider usage by means of the improvement plan website and for approving plans within 10 calendar days after a provider's submission. A plan is complete when it contains activities in at least two target improvement areas, in addition

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to a needs assessment as applicable. Items available on the template's pull down menus have been designated as acceptable.

If a provider creates a different activity by using the "other" pull-down option, the plan should be approved if it is complete, includes a needs assessment, as applicable, and has an improvement strategy and timeline for at least two of the following target areas:

- administrative and management practices
- developmentally appropriate curricula
- classroom learning environment
- classroom instruction practices
- child developmental screenings and assessments
- social-emotional interactions, and family involvement.

- (4) ***Alternative Method of Submission of an Improvement Plan for Private Providers.*** As an alternative to using the website, a private provider may seek approval from the Agency for Workforce Innovation to submit an improvement plan in writing to a coalition using Form AWI-VPK 30 subject to the same timeline restrictions.

The Agency for Workforce Innovation will send a confirmation letter and instructions to the provider and will send a copy of the confirmation letter to the provider's coalition.

Plans submitted using Form AWI-VPK 30 must be entered into the ImproveVPK.org website by a coalition's staff or its designee, and written correspondence including a print-out of the electronic document and confirmation of the status or the submission should be sent by certified mail to the provider.

- (5) ***Disapproval of Improvement Plan.*** A low-performing provider who has been notified that an improvement plan has not been approved is required to resubmit a revised plan within 30 calendar days of notification posted on the ImproveVPK.org website. A provider must have an approved plan before it can provide the type of VPK program (school-year or summer) that received a rate below the minimum acceptable readiness rate.
- (6) ***Periodic Progress Reports.*** A low-performing provider demonstrates implementation of its improvement plan activities by submitting periodic progress reports in November, February, May, and August. Progress reports will include dates of activities and provider comments. A provider submits reports through the ImproveVPK.org website unless it is approved in writing by the Agency for Workforce Innovation to submit paper reports using Form AWI-VPK 31.

- (7) ***Alternative Method of Submission of Periodic Reports for Private Providers.*** As an alternative to using the website, a private provider may seek approval from the Agency for Workforce Innovation to submit periodic reports in writing to a coalition using Form AWI-VPK 31 subject to the same timeline restrictions.

The Agency for Workforce Innovation will send a confirmation letter and instructions to the provider and will send a copy of the confirmation letter to the provider's coalition.

Reports submitted using Form AWI-VPK 31 must be entered into the ImproveVPK.org website by a coalition's staff or its designee, and written correspondence including a print-out of the electronic document and confirmation of the status or the submission should be sent by certified mail to the provider.

- (8) ***Providers Without Improvement Plans.*** A low-performing provider that does not have an approved improvement plan by the 30 calendar day deadline cannot deliver that VPK program type (school-year or summer). A school district should notify the applicable coalition about the status of the low-performing providers in their district which have not completed improvement plans at the end of their improvement plan cycle.

Best practice procedures for a coalition in managing providers without improvement plans would be:

- a. Printing and filing documentation from the ImproveVPK.org website that shows the provider did not comply with the improvement plan requirement.
 - b. Notifying the provider of its non-compliance with the requirements in writing by certified mail.
 - c. Notifying parents and managing the re-enrollment of a child enrolled in current or future sessions of the same program type with that provider.
- (9) ***Improvement Plan Approval Cycle Completion and Documentation.*** An improvement plan approval cycle will end for a coalition when every low performing provider has either (1) submitted an improvement plan that has been approved or (2) has been removed from the program and marked "inactive" in EFS. Documentation of one of these outcomes and copies of correspondence with the provider should be present in each low-performing provider's file and in the EFS system notes.

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- (10) ***Providers Who Seek Approval to Provide VPK After Failing to Meet Criteria.***
AWI will issue further guidance on whether or how a provider that has been removed from eligibility to provide the VPK program can re-apply at a later date to become a VPK provider for that program type (school-year or summer).

Attachments

60BB-8.700(Draft Rule), Low Performing Provider; Voluntary Prekindergarten Improvement Plan and Implementation

6A-1.099821, F.A.C, Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Provider Readiness Rate

QN07.03, Managing Low Performing Providers

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