



Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and
Hernando Counties, Inc.
Program Observation Guidelines



INTRODUCTION:

The Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. is required to provide a comprehensive program of early learning services to children age birth to twelve. The Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. (ELCPH) contracts with Childhood Development Services, Inc. to provide a wide array of services to the children, families, and providers of Pasco and Hernando Counties including assessment of early learning programs.

The ELCPH must implement a comprehensive program of early learning services that enhance the cognitive, social and physical development of children to achieve the performance standards and outcome measures.

It is the goal of the ELCPH to provide a quality education and care program that provides a safe, healthy environment to foster the growth of children's self esteem, along with developing large and small motor skills, literacy and math skills, communication skills, social development and cognitive development. The coalition recognizes the importance of school readiness, and seeks to assist all children in entering school ready to learn.

A critical component of quality education and care is program observations. Not only do program observations measure the level of quality provided in Pasco and Hernando Counties, but also provides the opportunity for program directors and teachers to request technical assistance, training, and resources that will improve their services. The results of the observations also assist the coalition in determining the strengths and areas where development is needed within the child care industry in Pasco and Hernando Counties.

SECTION I:

Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. Program Observation

The Coalition realizes that on-going quality early education is crucial for the development of children. Young children need the stability and opportunities that quality care provides, in order to enter school to learn. The Program Observation has been designed to help providers that hold a certificate of agreement with the coalition, through the central agency, to maintain the quality of their programs.

The Observation instrument has been designed to encompass all of the quality indicators that are present in the Initial Assessment Tool. It is noted that all of the providers who have entered into a certificate of agreement have already had an acceptable score on the Initial Assessment Tool. The observation is designed to assist the early learning provider in continuing to offer high quality services to the children in their care. By joint effort between the owner/directors, teachers, and observers, each programs' strengths can be expanded and their areas of development can be improved. Throughout the contract year, each early learning provider will be observed a minimum of eight to twelve times per year and technical

assistance will be provided as needed to maintain high quality educational services for the children.

At the end of the contract year, a summary report will be written by the observer, for each early learning provider, based on the observations throughout the year. The summary will address all of the quality areas present in the observation instrument. The narrative will describe the strengths of each program, as well as the areas for development. The report will be based on the overall strengths of the program, not based on a single, snapshot view of only a few days. The summary will demonstrate if the certificate provider is continuing to offer quality services that are up to the standards required by the ELCPH.

OBSERVER ROLE:

It is the responsibility of the observer to visit the facility on a regular basis throughout the contract year. The observer will spend time with each owner/director and with each teacher. Visits will be made often enough that the observer has familiarity with the day-to-day operations of the facility. The observer will make the judgment of how many visits are needed to build this familiarity. At a minimum, each facility will be visited eight (8) times per year for formal observations. Central Agency staff members will also visit each facility as needed throughout the year for informal assistance.

The observer is the main contact for technical assistance requests. By conducting regular observations of each program, the observer will be able to affirm the strengths of the program and note the areas that need further assistance. If the technical assistance is out of the expertise of the observer, the central agency program manager may choose to assign another staff member to provide assistance.

The observer will strive to build a professional working relationship with each owner/director and teacher. The owner/directors and teachers should view the observer as someone who is available for assistance, not as someone who is trying to find fault. The goal of both the facility staff and the observer is to provide the highest quality of education and care for the children. The observer should keep in mind that the early learning provider, the early learning coalition, and the central agency are a TEAM, working together for the best interests of the children.

OBSERVATION GUIDELINES:

The observer will visit each facility at least eight times per year to conduct formal observations. The observer will utilize the Program Observation for each site. The observer will visit at various times of the day, often enough throughout the year that an accurate impression can be formed of the overall quality of the program offered to the children in each classroom and facility.

The observer will visit each classroom in the facility, completing the program observation instrument. If a particular quality area cannot be observed during a visit, the area can be marked with a not applicable with a note that the particular area could not be observed that day. Since the observer will be visiting each site numerous throughout the year, observations will be made at all parts of the day. All quality areas will be rated enough so that an overall picture of quality of the facility and classroom will be obtained. There is space on the form for the observer to write additional comments. The observer will complete one Program Observation Instrument during each observation.

The Program Observation consists of different components. Each component contains a compliance, non-compliance, and not applicable section. An overall percentage will be given after each component of the observation is marked, and the scoring system is as follows:

- Compliance – The provider meets the guidelines
- Non-Compliance – The provider does not meet the guidelines
- Not Applicable – The particular area does not apply to the provider, or the area cannot be observed at the time the observation is conducted.

When the observation is completed, the observer will add up the total compliance areas checked, and the total compliance areas met. The total compliance areas met will then be divided by the total compliance areas checked, and a percentage will be given as a score for the observation conducted that day.

For the summary report due at the end of the fiscal year, the observer will give the average percent that the provider scored for the year.

SECTION II:

Corrective Action

According to the Certificate of Agreement and Coalition Plan, the early learning provider must score 80% or above on the Program Observation. If the provider scores below 80%, a corrective action plan will be implemented. The corrective action plan is formatted similar to the observation instrument. Areas that are not in compliance will be brought to the attention to the provider, and a Corrective Action plan for each non-compliance will be documented on the Corrective Action form. Both the observer and provider will network together to create an action plan to assist the provider in reaching a compliance on the observation. The observer, with input from the provider, will set an appropriate time limit for the action plan to be completed; the provider will have maximum of thirty (30) days from the time the observation is conducted, to complete the action plan.

If the provider does not meet the minimum score after the Corrective Action, a letter will be submitted to the Quality Assurance Committee to conduct a review of what further action needs to be taken with the early learning program.

SECTION III:

Observation Exit Interview

When all classrooms have been completed, the observer will complete the scoring section. The observer will meet the program representative and review all areas. The scoring section will be signed by both the observer and program representative.