



Media Alert

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EARLY LEARNING COALITION OPENS SUNSHINE STARS TO PROVIDERS

The Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc., announced the opening of its new quality initiative, Sunshine Stars, on September 1, 2015. This new Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) is part of a nationally-recognized initiative designed to help early education providers, parents and the community identify high-quality early learning programs and foster development among providers.

The goal of Sunshine Stars is to ensure high quality learning experiences for our children by issuing a “star-rating.” Stars will indicate a provider’s level of quality based on easy to understand criteria for both parents and child care providers.

All contracted School Readiness Providers in Pasco and Hernando Counties may participate in Sunshine Stars. Participating providers will be evaluated based on a number of qualitative and quantitative criteria, and given a rating of one through five stars based on the results of their formal validation. Participating providers can raise their Sunshine Star rating level by completing a quality improvement plan.

“Sunshine Stars gives parents and providers an opportunity to easily identify the top-performing child care and early education providers in our community,” Coalition Executive Director Jim Farrelly said. “We need to move from a financially-based initiative to a market-based quality approach meaning the parents of our children need to drive the quality of our early childhood programs.”

Providers interested in participating may download the Provider Manual from www.phelc.org/QRIS.php and follow the enclosed instructions to apply for the program.

For additional information about Sunshine Stars, please contact Program Manager Joe Mascaro at j.mascaro@phelc.org or call the Coalition’s Administrative Office at (727) 233-8291.

Please visit www.phelc.org for additional information about the Coalition and its services.

About the Coalition

The Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. is one of 30 Early Learning Coalitions in Florida. Florida’s Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program is for all children who are four-years old on or before September 1st. School Readiness provides subsidized child care for low-to-moderate income working families. The non-profit serves over 9,000 children between infancy and eight years old, working with more than 300 providers in the counties.