

Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Heartland, Inc.

2006-2007 Annual Report

Introduction

The School Readiness Act (FS 411.01), passed by the Florida Legislature in 1999, mandated the creation of School Readiness programs and the establishment of local School Readiness Coalitions within the state of Florida. The purpose of the law was to oversee program implementation, monitor budgets and expenditures and the development of local projects intended to raise the quality of childcare delivered in each county.

Passed into law in 2003 and implemented in 2005, the Early Learning Act mandated that small Coalitions serving fewer than 2000 School Readiness children merge with one or more Coalitions to form a regional Coalition and that the new free Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) education program be implemented in each county during the fall of 2005. In keeping with these mandates, the Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Heartland, Inc. (ELCFH) was created on July 1, 2005 by merging the Early Learning Coalition of Charlotte and DeSoto Counties, Early Learning Coalition of Hardee County, and Early Learning Coalition of Highlands County. The ELC of Charlotte and DeSoto Counties acted as their own service provider and fiscal agent prior to the merger which created a foundation for the merged Coalition to build upon.

The Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Heartland, Inc. is a 501(c) (3) and acts as its own service provider and fiscal agent. Services include: Resource and Referral, eligibility determination, School Readiness contracting and provider payments, provider technical assistance and training, parent support and involvement, Inclusion warm line, Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten provider certification and reimbursements, Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten eligibility and child certification.

The ELCFH Board of Directors currently consists of 21 members representing Charlotte, DeSoto, Hardee and Highlands Counties. Quorum was established at 13 of the 13 meetings held. ELCFH offices are located in Port Charlotte (Charlotte County), Arcadia (DeSoto County), Wauchula (Hardee County) and Sebring (Highlands County) with 45 staff members. One full time Executive Director was hired by the ELCFH Board in November, 2006 to manage the offices within the four counties.

Mission and Vision Statement

The Mission of the Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Heartland, Inc. is primarily to facilitate access to high quality early education and care and to provide Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten and School Readiness programs for children ages birth to five through an integrated system of services that include linkage to health care and parenting support. Furthermore, the Coalition may facilitate access to safe child care for school age children eligible for services as described in the Florida Administrative Code. The vision of the ELCFH is that all children will enter school healthy and prepared to succeed in school, and in life.

Programs



Positive, supportive adult interactions enhance the early education experience for young children.

School Readiness

Operating as its own service provider, the Coalition was afforded the opportunity to enhance the quality of early childhood education at school readiness sites.

Accomplishments at a Glance

- 168 providers signed Early Learning Contracts with the Coalition to provide education and care to eligible families.
- Approximately 3,500 unduplicated children received scholarship services through the Coalition (2127 per month).
- The Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) is conducted annually on all school readiness programs. If expected outcomes are not achieved, an improvement plan is written, and a second recheck visit is made to these sites. Scores can range from 1.0 to 7.0. Expectations are adjusted according to the following three criteria; programs who enroll at-risk children must achieve a score of 5.0 without any scores of one; programs enrolled in the accreditation program should score over a 6.0 without any sub-scores of 1.0; and all other programs must demonstrate improvement each year. ERS baseline scores were established for all contracted sites throughout the ELCFH. The scores ranged from 3.24 to 7.0 which showed general improvement throughout the four counties. Each contracted site has agreed to diligently work towards establishing a minimum score of 5.0.
- The Accreditation Program is highly regarded in the service area. At the end of the fiscal year there was one(1) program who was pending their validator visit results and an additional (eight) 8 programs were registered in the program. In this fiscal year, two (2) family child care homes received accreditation with the support from the ELCFH

Accreditation Program. A meeting for those interested in accreditation was held in Hardee.

- Ages and Stages Questionnaire Screenings are conducted by the parent and reviewed by the child care provider. If the parent fails to conduct the screening as requested, then the child care program is responsible for conducting it. 83 % of the child care programs were using the screening according to procedures. Based on the outcomes of the screenings, children were referred for further evaluation as needed.
- Children at approved school readiness sites received free development assessments using the E-Lap or Lap-3. Due to staff changes and/or turn over and ELCFH changes, all children in School Readiness sites were not screened. New procedures are now in place to ensure all children are screened.
- Free vision screening and hearing screenings were also conducted. Also included were height, weight and BMI measurements in all counties except Hardee. The equipment is being purchased to allow BMI measurements to be done in Hardee. All screening results were reviewed by child care providers and/or the children's parents.
- The Inclusion Specialists across the four counties maintains the "warm line", which providers can call for technical assistance. This past year the program received over 105 calls from providers. The specialists also made on-site technical assistance visits.
- 158 out of the 161 Programs had a Program Monitor visit. Out of the 158 programs, 26 were in compliance with all 24 monitor items. Only 2 programs showed areas of no improvement after a recheck.
- Two literacy programs were offered in three of the four counties. *Start with the Arts* was offered in Charlotte, DeSoto and Hardee counties and *Doors to Discovery* was offered in Charlotte and DeSoto.
 - There were 13 participants in Charlotte County and 11 in DeSoto County at the start of the *Doors to Discovery* Literacy program and ended with 11 participants in Charlotte and 8 participants in DeSoto. The loss of participants was a result of their change of employment. The program consisted of 8 on-site visits. During these visits observations, role modeling and technical assistance were provided. The participant was given parent handouts and a themed prop box to use until the next visit which included books, props, music and additional resources, A pre and post literacy environmental checklist and read aloud check list was conducted.
 - In the 2006-2007 *Start with the Arts* Literacy Program there were 66 participants in Charlotte, DeSoto and Hardee Counties. There were 20 participants who did not complete the program. The loss of participants was a result of changes in life situations such as moving out of the area or changing jobs. This program consisted of an initial two hour training to introduce the program and four on-site visits. At the two hour introductory workshop participants were given the *Start*

with the Arts curriculum and four books to implement the curriculum. The participants received handouts and on-site technical assistance throughout the program. Participants gained knowledge of how to use visual arts, drama, dance and movement and music in the daily lesson planning through this program.

- Family Child Care Home Start up mini grants assisted nine new family child care homes in meeting the cost of opening their new businesses. These grant dollars were done by application process followed by a site visit. Grant dollars were used to pay for background screening, swimming pool alarms, fencing etc. up to \$400.
- CDAE Program: There were 18 graduates from three CDAE Classes, one Infant/Toddler and two Preschool, which ended in January 2006. One preschool class was held in Charlotte and the other in DeSoto. The Infant/Toddler class was held in Charlotte. Upon completion of class, CDAE Bonuses were awarded to five Family Child Care Providers, totaling \$1500. One new class started in April, These classes are now called FCCPC (Florida Child Care Professional Credential) and cover training for teachers of children birth to 5 years with a total of 18 students. Educational grants were provided for completion of CDAE for two providers in Hardee. Highlands County offered mini grants to providers for staff education, reading parties, parent involvement, field trips, and quality enhancement.
- Placement of children outside of the Scholarship Program: At times children, usually because of parental choice, are placed in programs that have either not signed the School Readiness Contract or are outside of the ELCFH service area. In FY 06-07, there was an average of 25 such placements. All providers who care for these children, must pass an on-site health and safety inspection.
- Health & Safety Inspections: All licensed-exempt providers in the ELCFH service area counties have annual health and safety inspections by ELCFH staff. All inspections were satisfactory and improvement plans were written by staff as a technical assistance tool.

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten

The ELCFH collaborated with private providers and public school systems to establish a strong foundation of high quality education within the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program beginning in August 2005.

Accomplishments at a Glance

- 63 private providers and three (3) school districts within the four (4) counties delivered the 540 hour school year VPK program. Twelve (12) private providers and all four (4) school districts delivered the 300 hour summer VPK program.
- Over 1,437 four year old children participated in the VPK program during the school year and summer VPK program. This figure is lower than anticipated, averaging 120 children served monthly.
- VPK standards trainings were held for providers in all four counties as well as curriculum trainings which were conducted with VPK teachers in attendance. Each site received a Creative Curriculum Literacy Kit. Standards trainings were held throughout the four county region for VPK providers.
- VPK Early Learning Standards trainings were completed by the VPK Facilitator to assist providers in implementing the standards in daily classroom instructions.



*Children are innately curious;
the first five years of life are a time of learning and wonder.*

Quality Initiatives and Best Practices

Innovative and new quality initiatives were implemented as a means to increase the quality of education at the provider site. The initiatives are included in the details outlined below.

Accomplishments at a Glance

- Educational Scholarships were granted to teachers that continued to pursue higher education degrees and/or certificates.
- The Coalition offered the following courses at minimal or no cost to providers:
 - Beyond Centers and Circle Time
 - Beyond Cribs and Rattles
 - Numerous in-service trainings and CEU certificates
 - Infant and Toddler CDAE courses
 - Pre-school CDAE courses
 - First Aid and CPR courses
 - State Mandated courses
- The Hardee Office hosted the 3rd Annual Children’s Christmas Party with donations and gifts from local organizations and businesses.
- The Highlands Office hosted a Christmas Party for the Highlands County Safe House.
- The ELCFH collaborated with South Florida Community College in sponsoring the Annual Fall and Spring Conferences in Highlands and Hardee Counties. The ELCFH reimbursed providers for half or all registration cost.
- Collaboration: The staff from the Quality Department attended meetings in the community and during the past year worked with the local institutes of higher education, the Community Inclusion Committee, and our local provider associations. Additional efforts included other local agencies for Back to School events, Walk America, and “Chef’s Auction”.
- Workshops and Presentations: Numerous trainings scheduled during the past year, which attracted various community participants. The highlights of the scheduled trainings offered by staff and presenters were the *Start With the Arts, M³⁺* (Music and Movement in Multicultural Settings) and Extending Reading Involvement, *Beyond Centers & Circle Time, Beyond Cribs and Rattles, Legal Issues, Healing The Hurt,* and *Infant Mental Health*. CEU’s were offered to the providers when they attended trainings that were over five hours. Providers received training, technical assistance and materials.
- Connect for Kids: 5,000 informational cards, “Connect for Kids”, were printed and distributed to parents at parent meetings, fairs, appointments, and community meetings.

The card includes informational and emergency phone numbers for both Charlotte and DeSoto Counties.

- Staff Training: The following are outside trainings and conferences that were attended by Quality Staff: ERS Trainings, One Goal Summer Conference, Florida Family Child Care Home Association Conference, Music for the Classroom, Inclusion and Infant Massage, Infant/Toddler Conference and VPK Standards Trainings, Florida Early Learning Quality Initiative Symposium, Screening and Assessment: Strategies for Improving Practice. Early Literacy: A Family's Role in Their Children's Success, Birth to Three standards Train the Trainer, Ten components of Quality for Infant /Toddler Programs, BCCT-Beyond Differences and Diagnosis, Positive Guidance, High Scope Movement and Music, VPK Emergent Literacy training.

Major Coalition Changes

The Coalition experienced some changes throughout the fiscal year. Brief descriptions of those changes are noted below.

- The ELCFH established itself as a truly merged Coalition, thinking as “one” for the benefit of young children in the four county service area.
- One Executive Director was hired as of November 1, 2006. The Executive Director is responsible for overseeing all operational functions of the ELCFH.
- The ELCFH developed and adopted a new organizational chart which transposed some staffing patterns to ensure greater efficiency and delivery of services.
- The Articles of Incorporation were amended and restated to reflect the merged coalition name as the Early Learning Coalition of Florida’s Heartland, Inc. The ELCFH Bylaws were also revised to reflect the merged Coalition.
- The ELCFH held a Strategic Planning Session in April, 2007 to further discuss and refine its focus regarding best possible support and service for young children.
- Needed policies were identified, drafted by staff, approved by the Board and implemented. The process of developing, approving and implementing needed policy to support ELCFH business is on-going.

Single Point of Entry/Resource and Referral

All clients who request services enter through the single point of entry system. If the client is seeking scholarship assistance, and funding is available, the appropriate forms are given with instruction for completion and an appointment is scheduled. Application forms are available in both English and Spanish and parents can also apply online at <https://spe.schoolreadiness.org/pe/>. If funding is not currently available, the client will complete the SPE/UWL application and be placed on the wait list. Parents can fax the application, mail it or use the drop boxes at any of the offices. The SPE/UWL form can also be emailed as needed. Client Service Specialists are blended positions that provide client eligibility services and Resource and Referral Services.

The ELCFH collaborates with the Head Start and Early Head Start programs and also the Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK), so that those parents served in other funded programs could have access to wrap-around service, holiday and summer coverage, or could be placed on the wait list until they need care. Frequent communication with the Head Start programs occurs so that parents are served without duplicating the wait list in both places depending on the services that parent was requesting. The ELCFH uses a form for the SPE/UWL that is both Head Start and Scholarship friendly. Copies of the application were made available to other agencies, based on the parent need. Parents who are on the wait list are notified every other month, if they want to continue to be active. No response from parents by the closing date results in their names being deleted from the wait list. The wait list is closely monitored so that the ELCFH always has the most current numbers when needing to make important decisions regarding enrollments, rate increases and mandated placements.

The year began with the School Readiness slots being overutilized and wait lists were begun. The priority of the Coalition has been to serve children birth to kindergarten entry age. No new school age children were enrolled in this fiscal year. The ELCFH Board developed a plan of action to manage slot utilization, and has begun to research the availability of additional dollars to be used for child care services. Through the course of the year, due to an aggressive redetermination schedule, the ELCFH was able to open enrollments in Hardee County and to begin to open enrollments in both Charlotte and DeSoto Counties. In the new fiscal year, the wait list in Highlands County will also be opened based on the Board established priorities.

Resource and Referral services were administered to 3,419 families in 2006-2007.

Utilization of School Readiness Funds

A total of \$7,052,669.47 was used as slot expenditures for eligible families. These funds were paid directly to providers as a cost reimbursement with local match dollars included. The unduplicated count of children served last year in all four (4) counties was 3,526.

The chart below provides slot utilization details by county. Working, low income families (BG 8) category represent more than half our service population with a total amount of \$4,861,782.45 of the budget being utilized.

	Charlotte	% of Total	DeSoto	% of Total	Hardee	% of Total	Highlands	% of Total	Totals
BG1	301,745.81	23.65%	245,325.14	19.22%	176,646.66	13.84%	552,494.88	43.29%	1,276,212.49
BG3	54,238.65	28.22%	15,397.20	8.01%	22,165.60	11.53%	100,415.80	52.24%	192,217.25
BG3R	49,856.93	22.50%	72,049.95	32.51%	68,178.51	30.77%	31,521.86	14.22%	221,607.25
BG3W	3,535.90	6.10%	7,468.42	12.88%	9,591.70	16.54%	37,385.93	64.48%	57,981.95
BG5	47,536.30	18.53%	23,859.70	9.30%	28,304.59	11.03%	156,865.26	61.14%	256,565.85
BG5T		0.00%		0.00%	3,708.64	12.62%	25,679.82	87.38%	29,388.46
BG8	1,664,217.44	34.23%	664,256.24	13.66%	806,816.08	16.60%	1,726,492.69	35.51%	4,861,782.45
GSD	89,724.40	57.18%	19,805.94	12.62%		0.00%	47,383.43	30.20%	156,913.77
Totals Slots	2,210,855.43	31.35%	1,048,162.59	14.86%	1,115,411.78	15.82%	2,678,239.67	37.97%	7,052,669.47

	Charlotte	DeSoto	Hardee	Highlands	Total
Unduplicated Child Count	974	436	697	1,419	3,526



High quality child care services are vital to a family's system of support.

Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS)
Overall Program Performance

The ECHOS observation is used to measure a child's performance across seven areas of development. All of these areas are aligned with VPK standards. During FY 06-07, a total of 2788 children within the ELCFH service area were screened, with 42% showing consistent demonstration. This percentage aligns with the state wide average:

ECHOS	Charlotte County	DeSoto County	Hardee County	Highlands County	State Wide
Total screened	1063	403	414	918	184,124
Consistently Demonstrating	56%	33%	29%	50%	42%
Emerging/Progressing	35%	42%	48%	35%	44%
Not Yet Demonstrating	10%	25%	23%	15%	14%

An average of 57% of children within the ELCFH service area entered school with greater letter naming skills (a gain of nearly 5% from the previous fiscal year). Three of the four counties showed an increase in the percentage of children in low to average risk category. The table below shows the DIBELS Letter Naming Fluency Percent Change from 2005-06 to 2006-07 in all four counties and across the state:

DIBELS Letter Naming	Charlotte County		DeSoto County		Hardee County		Highlands County		State Wide	
	06/07	05/06	06/07	05/06	06/07	05/06	06/07	05/06	06/07	05/06
Total screened	1050	930	406	385	375	368	929	807	182,278	178,953
Low - Average Risk	76%	69%	52%	44%	40%	43%	62%	54%	69.9%	64.35%
Moderate – High Risk	24%	32%	48%	45%	60%	57%	38%	47%	30.1%	35.65%

An average of 58% of children within the ELCFH service area entered with greater initial sound fluency (a gain of approximately 2% from the previous fiscal year). Three of the four counties showed an increase in the percentage of children in the low to average risk category. The table below shows the DIBELS Initial Sound Fluency Percent Change from 2005-06 to 2006-07:

DIBELS Initial Sound Fluency	Charlotte County		DeSoto County		Hardee County		Highlands County		State Wide	
	06/07	05/06	06/07	05/06	06/07	05/06	06/07	05/06	06/07	05/06
Total screened	1036	901	387	384	363	368	910	803	176,957	172,901
Low - Average Risk	65%	65%	58%	47%	47%	54%	61%	57%	63.44%	60.15%
Moderate – High Risk	35%	35%	42%	53%	53%	46%	39%	43%	36.57%	39.85%

Analysis

The Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Heartland, Inc. has completed FY 06-07 with changes, challenges, and major accomplishments:

- The ELCFH went into a mode of overutilization of slots dollars early into FY 06-07. Intense conversation and action on the part of the ELCFH Board resulted in a plan for managing down the overspent dollars without disenrollment of families. Important results of this issue include the development of a strong policy for effective utilization management as well as a tool for staff and Board member monitoring of utilization on a monthly basis.
- The wait list was opened in October, 2006 in response to the overutilization of slot dollars. The ELCFH continued to serve all mandated referrals and used accelerated redeterminations as an opportunity to ensure all families receiving services were eligible.
- The ELCFH facilitated an Environmental Rating Scale/ School Readiness Monitor Award to acknowledge the efforts providers have demonstrated towards attaining quality. Funds were utilized by providers to further enhance their early learning environments and to support professional development,

Fiscal Impact: Coalition Budgets and Allocations

School Readiness

The Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Heartland, Inc. received \$9,253,438 in grant allocations from the Agency of Workforce Innovations and Office of Early Learning in 2006-2007. Listed below are the actual expenditures by program.

OCA Category	Billing Group	FY 06/07 Expenditures	% to Total
97BBA	Coalition Administration Direct/NonDirect	295,316.54	3.08%
97BBD	Administration Quality Initiatives (both CA/SRC)	337,693.49	3.52%
97Q00	Resource and Referral	1,040,622.53	10.84%
97QI4	Inclusion Services	175,013.00	1.82%
97QIN	Eligibility Determination	24,896.00	0.26%
97BDE	Infant/Toddler	530,481.99	5.53%
97INT	Protective Services	140,000.00	1.46%
97R00	Working TANF/transition	1,276,212.49	13.30%
97G00	Gold Seal	343,936.26	3.58%
97GSD	Working Poor	156,913.77	1.64%
97P00	TANF	4,861,782.45	50.66%
97GNW		413,824.50	4.31%
TOTALS		\$9,596,693.02	100.00%

As indicated above, the ELCFH administrative cost was well below the five percent state maximum amount. The Quality initiatives expenditures, which were down from last year by approximately ¼ million, still exceeded the 4% minimum amount allocated by AWI/OEL. The Coalition expenditures totaled \$7,052,670.17 for school readiness slots which was an increase of over ¾ million from last fiscal year.

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten

The Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Heartland, Inc. received \$6,841,427 in grant allocations from the Agency of Workforce Innovations and Office of Early Learning in 2006-2007. Actual expenditures by program are reflected below.

	Charlotte	% of Total	DeSoto	% of Total	Hardee	% of Total	Highlands	% of Total	Totals
VPADM	28,086.71	43.59%	4,794.25	7.44%	4,180.55	6.49%	27,373.88	42.48%	64,435.39
VPENR	40,408.95	50.85%	10,582.09	13.32%	4,848.80	6.10%	23,625.01	29.73%	79,464.85
VPMON	8,262.48	38.37%	1,891.81	8.79%	894.18	4.15%	10,483.46	48.69%	21,531.93
VPPRS	1,533,838.29	45.96%	345,049.68	10.34%	229,183.90	6.87%	1,229,348.30	36.83%	3,337,420.17
Totals	1,610,596.43	45.98%	362,317.83	10.34%	239,107.43	6.83%	1,290,830.65	36.85%	3,502,852.34

The Coalition also received \$10,250 dollars for planning and implementation. This Outreach and Awareness grant was not included in the grant allocation and were used to purchase signage to promote the VPK Program.

Local Cash Match Contribution

Coalitions are required to raise match contributions from its local community in order pay child care providers at 100% of their approved cost. For families who are served under the Working Poor category the provider is paid .94 for every dollar of service. Matching funds make the dollar whole to the provider.

During 2006-2007, the Coalition received match contributions from organization listed below.

- Charlotte County received \$115,500 in local match from Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners.
- DeSoto County received \$5,000 in local match from DeSoto County Board of County Commissioners and an additional \$2,000 from United Way of Sarasota County.
- Hardee County received \$39,500 from United Way of Central Florida for local match.
- Highlands County received \$20,000 from local match funds from United Way of Central Florida and \$40,000 from the Hospital District Board.

Although the Coalition received a total of \$222,000 in local match contributions, it fell short of the stated requirements and was granted a match waiver for DeSoto, Hardee and Highlands Counties.

Summary

- The Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Heartland, Inc. was established on July 1, 2005 as a result of a successful merger between three existing Early Learning Coalitions from Charlotte and DeSoto Counties, Hardee County, and Highlands County. The Board of Directors consists of 21 members from all four counties. Quorum was met at 13 of the 13 board meetings last year. Coalition offices are located in Port Charlotte, Arcadia, Wauchula, and Sebring.
- On average, 3500 children received School Readiness services last year. 168 child care providers signed contracts with the Coalition to deliver School Readiness services.
- Numerous trainings and educational opportunities were offered to School Readiness and VPK providers throughout last year.
- Provider efforts towards increasing Environment Rating Scales (ERS) and School Readiness Monitor scores were acknowledged through quality awards.
- The Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) program was offered via 63 private and public school providers. Approximately 1437 children received VPK services.

Scholarship/Resource and Referral

- All Client Services staff have copies of the ELCFH Eligibility Manual which include Office of Early Learning Rules and Standard Codes, Coalition approved policies and mandates, day to day forms for scholarship services, and steps to input clients in EFS system. All of this information is also available to all Client Services staff on the shared drive of the Coalition computer system. The Client Services Team is in process of updating the Eligibility Manual annually.
- In Resource and Referral services, four (4) Client Service Specialists were certified as Level I Analysts and six (6) Client Service Specialists were certified as Level II Analysts and also two staff were certified as R&R Coordinator Level II.
- Ongoing Client Services staff training is scheduled with emphasis on the changes in the VPK and Scholarship programs, including community services awareness and customer service.
- Scholarship services were offered to eligible families and their children from the Unified Waitlist for all ages up to the age of twelve, and special needs through age 19.
- Parent fees were updated as of June, 2006 for all participating scholarship families.
- All Client Service Specialists serve as public notaries to better complete application packets and be accessible to families.
- All school aged children were served at a reduced rate for eligible families.
- Allowing providers to fax, mail or drop off attendance sheets to local offices and in doing so the ELCFH is able to process attendance sheets within a minimum number of days, with few errors, leading to fewer adjustments. The ELCFH continues to work upon the enrollment process to catch any entry errors, lack of reimbursement rate etc., to avoid adjustments to the reimbursement.
- Adapting local Coalition policy on a 60 day time frame for processing late attendance sheets and adjustments has allowed better maintenance of utilization and encouraged providers to submit attendance sheets in a timely manor.
- Continued with redetermination by mail which has been successful in allowing parents to submit packets into without having to set up appointments. Appointments are always

available to parents who prefer to complete the redetermination process with a Client Services Specialist.

- Analyst and reception staff who are bilingual in all offices are available to accommodate non-English speaking clients.

Community Collaboration

Attending meetings, serving on committees, giving presentations, and participating in events have been a means of community collaboration. The ELCFH feels strongly about being a community partner to better serve the children and families in their communities. The Coalition maintains connection with the following:

- Chamber of Commerce (Charlotte, Englewood and Highlands)
- Healthy Start
- March of Dimes
- Department of Children and Families
- CCPS Early Education Program and Policy Council
- Teen Pregnancy Prevention Alliance (TPPA) (Hardee and Highlands)
- Hardee and Highlands County Drug Prevention Coalition
- Immunization Task Force
- Healthy Families (Charlotte)
- South Florida Community College- Conference Planning
- Better Jobs/Better Wages Committee
- Child Care Professional Associations which include center based care and family child care.

Presentations

- ELCFH Informational Presentations were given at Chamber of Commerce meetings, Board of County Commission, School Boards, Kiwanis, United Way of Central Florida, and the Lions Club.
- Provider and parent workshops on VPK applications and School Readiness Contracts.

Distribution of Information

- Over 4,000 flyers about Resource and Referral (R&R), and Scholarship services were distributed in many locations within the ELCFH service area which included physicians' offices, low income housing, health departments, libraries, business offices, Chamber of Commerce offices, etc. Acrylic racks were provided where appropriate. In addition, over 1,000 fliers are given per year to the New Mom's Tote Bag project through the local hospitals and the Healthy Start programs for each new parent.
- Child Care Directory: This initiative has been very successful in reaching a population of parents and families who do not use ELCFH services for scholarship care, but who are researching child care options. Resource & Referral information, as well as quality measurements, and a parent check list to assist in choosing quality child care, is included.

Directories will be completed for the four county area that the Coalition serves by the end of 2007.

- Coalition brochures are distributed regularly to community organizations and parents.

Events

- The Coalition participated in community parades and local community fairs, and various Chamber events.
- The Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners announced a proclamation to honor quality early child care educators and to recognize the Annual National Provider Day in May.
- Participation in Back to School events.
- Participation in Early Education and Teen Parent events.
- The Coalition celebrated The Week of the Young Child with children's creations on display in the local offices.



High quality early care and education positively contributes to the young child's overall growth and development.