

124D.15 SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAMS.

Subdivision 1. **Establishment; purpose.** A district or a group of districts may establish a school readiness program for children age three to kindergarten entrance. The purpose of a school readiness program is to prepare children to enter kindergarten.

Subd. 2. [Repealed, 1Sp2005 c 5 art 7 s 21]

Subd. 3. **Program requirements.** A school readiness program provider must:

(1) assess each child's cognitive and language skills with a comprehensive child assessment instrument when the child enters and again before the child leaves the program to improve program planning and implementation, communicate with parents, and promote kindergarten readiness;

(2) provide comprehensive program content and intentional instructional practice aligned with the state early childhood learning guidelines and kindergarten standards and based on early childhood research and professional practice that is focused on children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills and development and prepares children for the transition to kindergarten, including early literacy and language skills;

(3) coordinate appropriate kindergarten transition with parents and kindergarten teachers;

(4) involve parents in program planning and decision making;

(5) coordinate with relevant community-based services;

(6) cooperate with adult basic education programs and other adult literacy programs;

(7) ensure staff-child ratios of one-to-ten and maximum group size of 20 children with the first staff required to be a teacher; and

(8) have teachers knowledgeable in early childhood curriculum content, assessment, native and English language development programs, and instruction.

Subd. 3a. **Application and reporting requirements.** (a) A school readiness program provider must submit a biennial plan for approval by the commissioner before receiving aid under section 124D.16. The plan must describe how the program meets the program requirements under subdivision 3. A school district by April 1 must submit the plan for approval by the commissioner in the form and manner prescribed by the commissioner. One-half the districts must first submit the plan by April 1, 2006, and one-half the districts must first submit the plan by April 1, 2007, as determined by the commissioner.

(b) Programs receiving school readiness funds annually must submit a report to the department.

Subd. 4. [Repealed, 1Sp2005 c 5 art 7 s 21]

Subd. 5. **Services with new or existing providers.** A district may contract with a charter school or community-based organization to provide eligible children developmentally appropriate services that meet the program requirements in subdivision 3. In the alternative, a district may pay tuition or fees to place an eligible child in an existing program. A district may establish a new program where no existing, reasonably accessible program meets the program requirements in subdivision 3. Districts must submit a copy of each contract to the commissioner with the biennial plan. Services may be provided in a site-based program or in the home of the child or a combination of both. The district may not restrict participation to district residents.

Subd. 6. [Repealed, 1Sp2005 c 5 art 7 s 21]

Subd. 7. [Repealed, 1Sp2005 c 5 art 7 s 21]

Subd. 8. [Repealed, 1Sp2005 c 5 art 7 s 21]

Subd. 9. [Repealed, 1Sp2005 c 5 art 7 s 21]

Subd. 10. **Supervision.** A program provided by a board must be supervised by a licensed early childhood teacher, a certified early childhood educator, or a licensed parent educator.

Subd. 11. [Repealed, 1Sp2005 c 5 art 7 s 21]

Subd. 12. **Program fees.** A district must adopt a sliding fee schedule based on a family's income but must waive a fee for a participant unable to pay. School districts must use school readiness aid for eligible children. Children who do not meet the eligibility requirements in subdivision 15 may participate on a fee-for-service basis.

Subd. 13. [Repealed, 1Sp2005 c 5 art 7 s 21]

Subd. 14. **Assistance.** The department must assist districts, upon request, with programs under this section.

Subd. 15. **Eligibility.** A child is eligible to participate in a school readiness program if the child:

(1) is at least three years old on September 1;

(2) has completed health and developmental screening within 90 days of program enrollment under sections 121A.16 to 121A.19; and

(3) has one or more of the following risk factors:

(i) qualifies for free or reduced-price lunch;

(ii) is an English learner;

(iii) is homeless;

(iv) has an individualized education program (IEP) or an individual interagency intervention plan (IIIP);

(v) is identified, through health and developmental screenings under sections 121A.16 to 121A.19, with a potential risk factor that may influence learning; or

(vi) is defined as at-risk by the school district.

History: 1991 c 265 art 7 s 6; 1993 c 224 art 4 s 8; 1994 c 647 art 4 s 11; 1997 c 162 art 1 s 3,4; 1998 c 397 art 3 s 20-27,103; art 11 s 3; 1999 c 205 art 1 s 70; 1Sp2003 c 9 art 7 s 8; 1Sp2005 c 5 art 7 s 6-12; 2007 c 146 art 9 s 13; 2009 c 96 art 6 s 5; 2010 c 346 art 1 s 6-8; 2012 c 239 art 1 s 33; 2014 c 272 art 1 s 32