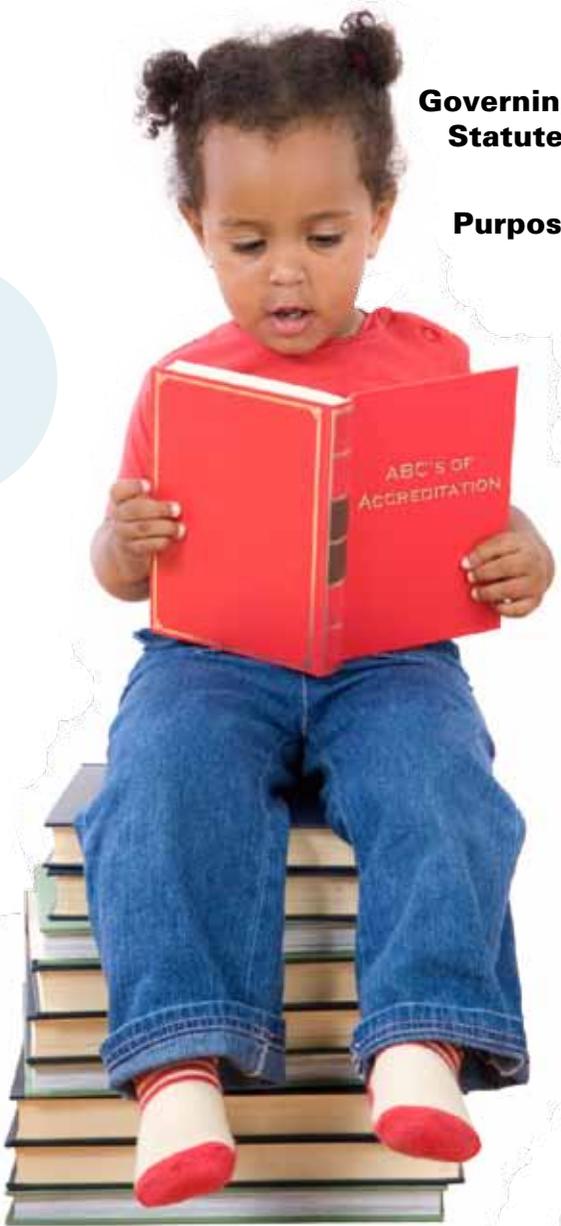


# Accreditation for . . .



## Gold Seal Quality Care Program

## Religious Exemption from Licensure

## Voluntary Pre-kindergarten

**Governing Statutes**

Section 402.281, Florida Statutes, *Gold Seal Quality Care program*

Section 402.316, Florida Statutes, *Exemptions*

Section 1002.55, Florida Statutes, *School-year prekindergarten program delivered by private prekindergarten providers*

**Purpose**

A designation by the Department of Children and Families conferred upon a child care program that meets the accreditation standards of one of the approved accrediting agencies.

Participation is voluntary for those programs that choose to meet standards higher than the minimum licensing standards required by law or administrative rule.

Child care programs must submit a copy of their accreditation to the Department and complete a Gold Seal Tax Exempt Application to receive tax credits.

A Gold Seal designation may entitle the program to a higher reimbursement rate for school readiness children of up to 20% of the market rate, as determined by the local early learning coalition. If a program meets additional statutory requirements, this designation also allows for ad valorem tax exemption and sales tax exemption for the purchase of educational materials.

Holding the designation of Gold Seal Quality Care program also meets eligibility criteria for the child care program to participate in the Voluntary Prekindergarten program.

Child Care Programs that meet the following criteria may request an exemption from licensure as part of a religious entity, if:

1. they are an integral part of a church or parochial school, AND
2. they are member of or accredited by one of the Accrediting Agencies recognized by the Department of Children and Families AND
3. they meet all level two background screening and local health requirements.

Child care programs seeking religious exemption must contact the Department of Children and Families' child care licensing office and provide annually their current certificate of religious exemption, membership, or accreditation and the Religious Exemption from Licensure Annual Statement attesting to continuation of all screening, health standards, and eligibility. This required form is located on the Department of Children and Families website at [www.myflorida.com/childcare](http://www.myflorida.com/childcare)—select "*Religious Exempt Information.*"

Failure to continue to meet these requirements will result in the child care program's loss of exemption from licensure.

To participate in the Voluntary Pre-kindergarten program, administered by the Agency for Workforce Innovation through local early learning coalitions, child care programs must be accredited in one of two ways:

- Through the Gold Seal Quality Care Program, or
- By an association that is a member of one of the three umbrella associations listed in statute (National Council for Private School Accreditation — NCPSA, Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation — CITA, or Florida Association of Academic Nonpublic Schools — FAANS), whose written standards meet or exceed those of the state.

## Accreditation: What does it mean for Florida Child Care Programs?

Accreditation is “the granting of approval to an institution of learning by an official review board after the program has met specific requirements.”

In Florida, accreditation is used for three purposes for child care – Gold Seal Quality Care program (s. 402.281, F.S.); Religious Exemption (s. 402.316, F.S.) and Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) (s. 1002.55, F.S.). For the purpose of child care, the Gold Seal Quality Care Program promotes quality above the state’s minimum licensing standards, Religious Exemption from licensure serves the role of health and safety oversight in the absence of licensure, and VPK accreditation serves as one of the requirements to become an eligible VPK provider.

Accreditation may seem confusing, but each accreditation has a distinct purpose and valuable role in providing child care for children in Florida. Please read this brochure to understand the role accreditation plays as it relates to you or your child care program.

## Accrediting Agencies and Contact Information

### Gold Seal Quality Care Program

[www.myflorida.com/childcare](http://www.myflorida.com/childcare)  
Select “Gold Seal Quality Care”  
1-866-320-9710

### Religious Exemption from Licensure

[www.myflorida.com/childcare](http://www.myflorida.com/childcare)  
Select “Religious Exempt Information”  
1-850-488-4900

### Voluntary Pre-kindergarten (VPK)

[www.flready.com/](http://www.flready.com/)  
Select “For Coalitions” and then “Accrediting Agencies for VPK”  
1-850-921-3180

## How to Become an Approved Accrediting Association

### Gold Seal Quality Care Program

The Department of Children and Families, through a contract with the Florida Children’s Forum, accepts and reviews accrediting body standards for possible approval as a Gold Seal accrediting body. Accrediting bodies interested in becoming approved as Gold Seal Accrediting Agencies must meet the requirements outlined on the application found on the Department of Children and Families website at [www.myflorida.com/childcare](http://www.myflorida.com/childcare)—select “Forms and Applications.”

### Religious Exemption from Licensure

Any accrediting agency wishing to be recognized for the purpose of Religious Exemption must submit its published standards for health, safety, and sanitation to the Department of Children and Families for recognition. Once recognized, the name and contact information of the accrediting agency will be posted on the Department of Children and Families website at [www.myflorida.com/childcare](http://www.myflorida.com/childcare)—select “Religious Exemption Information.” It is the responsibility of the Religious Exemption Accrediting Agency to keep the Department informed of any changes to its standards and contact information. To assist with recognition of each religious exempt child care program, the accrediting agency is asked to issue a certificate of religious exemption, membership, or accreditation, which includes an expiration date, for the purpose of religious exemption to each of its members.

### Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Accreditation

Any accrediting agency wishing to be recognized for the purpose of Voluntary Pre-kindergarten Accreditation must contact one of the following agencies for details:

- National Council for Private School Accreditation: [www.ncpsa.org](http://www.ncpsa.org)
- Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation: [www.citaschools.org](http://www.citaschools.org)
- Florida Association of Academic Nonpublic Schools: [www.faans.org](http://www.faans.org)



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