

October 9, 2017

MEMORANDUM

TO: Executive Directors, VPK Contacts

FROM: Rodney J. MacKinnon, Executive Director 

SUBJECT: **VPK for Children from Puerto Rico Impacted by Hurricane Maria**

While Florida is still recovering from the devastating effects of Hurricane Irma, both Irma and Maria hit our friends in Puerto Rico. Last week, Governor Rick Scott signed an [executive order](#) declaring a state of emergency in all 67 Florida counties in response to Maria's catastrophic impact. The declaration will provide resources and help for families impacted by Hurricane Maria when they come to Florida. Many displaced families are already here. Others are arriving.

Education is a critical need for displaced families with children. While Puerto Rico does not have state-funded prekindergarten, some families may have young children who are eligible for VPK. You may have begun hearing from some of them. What can we do as an early learning community? Here are some steps we are taking.

VPK Class Size and Teacher Ratio

- Our office is temporarily waiving the VPK classroom size and teacher ratio requirements found in [s. 1002.55\(3\)\(f\), F.S.](#) for private providers and [s. 1002.63\(7\), F.S.](#) for public schools for the 2017-18 VPK school year program, allowing a maximum class size of 22 students. For each private VPK provider's class of 4 to 12 students, appropriate adult supervision of students must be provided by a prekindergarten instructor meeting the requirements of s. 1002.55(3)(c), F.S. If the class has between 13 to 22 students, an additional prekindergarten instructor (often called an assistant or paraprofessional) meeting the requirements of s. 1002.55(3)(d), F.S. (private) or s. 1002.55(5), F.S. (public) is also required. Note: Since DCF governs classroom capacity, please address any questions regarding the number of children allowed in a classroom space with DCF.
- Additionally, we encourage private providers and public schools that have multiple children interested in enrolling in VPK to open additional VPK classes, as space allows, so children can take advantage of a full 540 hours of VPK rather than join a VPK class in progress. VPK providers should contact their early learning coalition to amend their contract for this purpose.

Child Eligibility for Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program. For families arriving from Puerto Rico due to Maria, the following information is effective for the 2017-18 VPK school year:

RODNEY J. MACKINNON

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- Documentation of Florida residency found in [s. 1002.53\(2\), F.S.](#) and [rule 6M-6.201\(b\)](#) is temporarily waived for children applying to the VPK program, since Florida’s geography primarily ensures children are residing in Florida.
- Documentation of a child’s age eligibility for VPK is temporarily waived, varying [s. 1002.53\(4\)\(b\), F.S.](#) and [rule 6M-8.201\(3\)\(a\), F.A.C.](#), allowing the application for VPK to be approved in the meantime.

You may have questions about we will implement these processes and we will be providing further detail. Please let us know if you have recommendations or questions that may arise from specific circumstances.

RJM/jf