

New law establishes La. early learning enrollment coordination procedures. Requires the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) to approve a process to authorize entities as local early learning enrollment coordinators to begin performing required services in school systems in the 2015-2016 school year. Provides for the responsibilities of such coordinators including conducting a process for informing families about early childhood care and education programs, collecting family preferences, using a common application process, determining demand, and making recommendations to the state Dept. of Education (DOE). Provides for initial authorization of local early learning enrollment coordinators for a period up to five years and provides that BESE may grant renewal for additional periods of not less than three years nor more than five years after thorough review of the local early learning enrollment coordinator activities.

Provides that prior to authorizing local early learning enrollment coordinators, BESE shall:

- (1) Provide certain information to public school governing authorities and other specified child care providers (nonpublic and public) relative to informing families about the availability of publicly-funded and Type III licensed early childhood care and education programs, coordinating enrollment, eligibility criteria, and waiting lists, collecting family preferences for enrollment, and providing related timelines.
- (2) Not certify any entity as a local early learning enrollment coordinator unless it is in compliance with procedures and regulations established by BESE. Requires that the entity be a state agency, a public school system, or a nonprofit or for-profit corporation having an educational or social services mission, including but not limited to a nonprofit corporation of a philanthropic or policy nature, a La. public postsecondary education institution, or a nonprofit corporation established by the governing authority of a parish or municipality.
- (3) Review proposed local early learning enrollment coordinators in a timely manner and determine whether each proposed coordinator complies with the law and rules and whether the proposal is valid, complete, and financially well-structured.
- (4) Approve a process by which the DOE serves as the local early learning enrollment coordinator for those coverage areas without an approved entity.
- (5) Promulgate rules establishing an appeals process and designating DOE to oversee the process for families and early learning centers to appeal decisions made by local early learning enrollment coordinators.

Relative to funding for local early learning enrollment coordinators, provides that the DOE shall allocate not more than 1% of the public funds appropriated for each early childhood care and education program in the coverage area to support the local early learning enrollment coordinator in performing the services required by new law. Specifies that the amount allocated from the funding for each early childhood care and education program shall be proportionate to the number of children in the program enrolled by the local early learning enrollment coordinator for the coverage area and if an allocation cannot be made from a funding stream to support the early learning enrollment coordinator for a coverage area, the amount established for that funding stream to support the early learning enrollment coordinator shall be allocated from the remaining program funding streams in an amount proportionate to the number of children in each program enrolled by the local early learning enrollment coordinator for the coverage area. Prohibits BESE from allocating additional funds to support early learning enrollment coordinators, as provided in new law, from the funding stream for any early childhood care and education program that has a per-child allocation or subsidy below the state average per-child allocation or subsidy for all programs included in the enrollment system. Authorizes the DOE to use such funds to support any local enrollment pilot programs during the 2014-2015 school year in order to inform the establishment of rules adopted by BESE on or before June 30, 2015.

Provides that Head Start programs shall fund their respective recruitment, selection, and enrollment system mandated by applicable federal laws, regulations, standards, and grant requirements and shall collaborate with local schools and early learning centers to conduct combined recruitment enrollment activities as defined in new law.

Authorizes BESE to establish start-up or incubation grants to encourage sufficient supply of high-quality local early learning enrollment coordinators.

Requires local early learning enrollment coordinators to annually submit to DOE an independent financial audit conducted by a certified public accountant who has been approved by the legislative auditor, along with the auditor's statement that the report is free of material misstatements. Limits the audit to those records necessary to ensure that the coordinator has used funds to perform required services and requires that it be submitted to the legislative auditor for review. Requires the local early learning enrollment coordinator to return to the state any funds that the legislative auditor determines were expended in a manner inconsistent with state law or state board regulations. Provides that the cost of the audit shall be paid by the DOE from funds provided pursuant to new law.

Provides that new law shall not prevent any Head Start grantee or Early Head Start grantee from complying with all applicable federal laws, regulations, standards, and grant requirements.

Requires BESE to adopt all rules required pursuant to new law in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act.

Provides for definitions for purposes of new law.

Effective upon signature of governor (June 18, 2014).

(Adds R.S. 17:407.41-407.46)