



**HEAD START PROGRAM PERFORMANCE STANDARDS
CHILD CARE DEVELOPMENT FUND
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

**LICENSING AND
REGULATIONS
ALIGNMENT**

SEPTEMBER 2026

Kimberly Singer, M. Ed.
Director
Florida Head Start Collaboration office
with support from Cody Burckhardt
Associate
Florida Head Start Collaboration Office



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Sources	5
Subpart A	9
Subpart B	32
Subpart C	49
Subpart D	64
Subpart E	86
Subpart F	89
Subpart G	94
Subpart H	98
Subpart I	99
Subpart J	113
Findings	120
Conclusion	123
References	124

Executive Summary

Florida School Readiness (SR): Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) and Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) Alignment Analysis

This analysis examines the degree of alignment between the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) and Florida's School Readiness (SR) program, which is administered through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) by the Florida Division of Early Learning (DEL). The purpose of this work is to identify areas of alignment, partial alignment, and gaps between the two systems, with particular attention to how Florida's regulatory framework supports—or does not fully support—the comprehensive, outcome-driven requirements of Head Start.

The review is grounded in a systematic comparison of federal Head Start standards (45 CFR Chapter XIII, Part 1302) with all applicable Florida statutes, administrative rules, and operational guidance governing early learning and child care programs. The analysis focuses on both structural requirements (e.g., ratios, group size, licensing) and programmatic expectations (e.g., individualized instruction, attendance, service delivery models, and continuous improvement) to determine where the HSPPS align and to what degree and analyzes where Head Start standards exceed those of the SR program.

Florida's SR Program is a statewide, subsidized child care and early learning program designed to support low-income working families while promoting children's readiness for school. Administered by DEL in partnership with 30 local Early Learning Coalitions (ELC) and Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA), the program uses a combination of federal CCDF and state funds to provide financial assistance for early education and care from birth through school age. State funds are used only for School Readiness Plus, allowing for continued enrollment when the family income is between 85 percent and 100 percent, inclusive, of the state median income. The primary purpose of the program is twofold: to help parents achieve and maintain employment, education, or training, and to ensure that children gain early learning experiences that support their development and preparation for kindergarten. Services are delivered through a mixed delivery system of providers—including private centers, public schools, and family child care homes and include developmental screening, curriculum-based learning, and extended-day or school-age care. Florida's SR Program functions primarily as an access and workforce support system, providing families with child care assistance while offering foundational early learning experiences that contribute to school readiness. The state funds Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK), offering 540 instructional hours during the school year and 300 hours in the summer, for all children aged four before September 1 of the enrolling year. There are no income requirements or fees for families accessing only VPK services across the

state. For the purposes of this analysis, only SR is being examined, as the other subsidized child care program operating in the state with federal and state funds.

Head Start is a federally funded, comprehensive early childhood program designed to promote school readiness for children from low-income families by supporting their cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. Established under the Head Start Act, the program serves children from birth to age five (including Early Head Start for infants and pregnant women) through a wide range of integrated services, including education, health, nutrition, mental health, and family support.

A defining feature of Head Start is its whole-child, whole-family approach, which requires programs to not only provide high-quality early learning experiences but to also engage families as partners in their child's development and support family stability and self-sufficiency. Programs must implement data-driven systems, including ongoing child assessment, continuous program improvement, and accountability measures, to ensure services are effective and responsive to community needs. Head Start is a true Two-Generational (2Gen) model, supporting both the child and their caregivers simultaneously.

Head Start operates as an integrated system, where programs are responsible for coordinating services, individualizing instruction, engaging families, and continuously improving to best meet the needs of children and families.

Florida's child care system is primarily designed to ensure that providers operate safely, legally, and consistently with state licensing and program requirements. The model is centered on child safety, licensing compliance, minimum staffing standards, health and sanitation, background screening, provider accountability, and kindergarten readiness through SR and VPK.

Head Start is broader. HSPPS expects an integrated child and family development model that includes education, family engagement, health and wellness, mental health, disabilities services, parent leadership, school readiness, continuous improvement, and community partnerships. The major difference is that Florida licensing asks whether a program is safe and compliant, while Head Start asks whether children and families are progressing across developmental, health, and family well-being domains.

SR and Head Start are tasked with promoting kindergarten readiness, however how they achieve this looks different. Looking at the strengths of each program, this analysis strives to break down each HSPPS in Subparts A, B, C, D, E, F, G, I, and J and examines where alignment exists between state statutes, rules and regulations.

Sources

Florida's early learning system is governed by a layered framework of federal law, state statutes, administrative rules, handbooks, contracts, and monitoring requirements. Together, these authorities regulate child care licensing, SR, VPK and provider operations throughout the state.

Four counties in Florida administer their own child care licensing programs. These are Broward, Palm Beach, Pinellas, and Sarasota counties. **These counties must still meet the state's minimum standards**, but there may be additional rules they require specific to them. For the purposes of this document, the state minimums will be referenced.

Chapter 1002 in the Florida Statutes frames the legal authority in the state, with Chapter 402 as the primary legal governing statutes around child care licensing, with Chapter 435 addressing background screening. The Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) provides the operational rules that implement the Florida statutes and Chapter 6M through the Department of Education- DEL rules govern Florida's early learning programs.

Oversight is provided by the DEL, DCF and the ELCs across the state.

This document relies on Florida Statutes (F.S.), Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), the Department of Children and Families Rules (65C), the DCF Licensing Handbooks, the Division of Early Learning (DEL) program guidance and the Head Start Program Performance Standards 45 CFR Chapter XIII.

Further, the use of Program Instructions (PI) and Information Memoranda (IM) are key federal guidance the Office of Head Start (OHS) uses to clarify, reinforce, and operationalize the HSPPS. HSPPS define formal regulatory requirements, while PIs and IMs provide the practical direction and expectations that programs must follow towards implementation. Program Instructions are typically more directive and may include requirements related to compliance, reporting, or program operations, while IM provides interpretation, priorities, and guidance on how programs should approach specific issues or emerging policy areas. In this way, PIs and IMs function as a critical bridge between regulation and practice, ensuring that Head Start operates as a responsive, data-driven, and continuously improving system, rather than a static compliance model.

Florida Statutes:

These statutes establish the legal framework and authority of the state's early learning system. Sections 1002.81-1002.995 encompass School Readiness.

Chapter 1002, F.S. – School Readiness Program

- 1002.81 Definitions

- 1002.82 Department of Education; powers and duties
- 1002.83 Early learning coalitions
- 1002.84 Early learning coalitions; school readiness powers and duties
- 1002.85 Early learning coalition plans
- 1002.86 School readiness program; education component
- 1002.87 School readiness program; eligibility and enrollment
- 1002.88 School readiness program provider standards; eligibility to deliver the school readiness program
- 1002.89 School readiness program; funding
- 1002.821 Florida Child Care Fund
- 1002.895 Market rate schedule
- 1002.91 Investigations of fraud or overpayment; penalties
- 1002.92 Child care and early childhood resource and referral
- 1002.93 School readiness program transportation services
- 1002.935 School Readiness Plus Program
- 1002.945 Gold Seal Quality Care Program
- 1002.95 T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship Program
- 1002.96 Early Head Start collaboration grants
- 1002.97 Records of children in the school readiness program
- 1002.995 Early learning professional learning standards and career pathway

Chapter 402, Florida Statutes (F.S.) is the primary statutory authority for child care licensing and regulation by the Department of Children and Families (DCF), and it works alongside administrative rules and other statutes.

Chapter 402 F. S. Key Child Care Licensing Statutes

The most important sections include:

- s. 402.302 Definitions
- s. 402.305 Licensing standards for child care facilities
- s. 402.30501 Child care personnel requirements
- s. 402.3055 Child care personnel screening
- s. 402.306 Design and construction standards
- s. 402.308 Issuance of licenses
- s. 402.309 Provisional licenses
- s. 402.310 Disciplinary actions and fines
- s. 402.311 Inspections and investigations
- s. 402.3125 Health and safety standards handbook authority

- s. 402.313 Family child care homes
- s. 402.3131 Large family child care homes
- s. 402.316 Religious-exempt child care providers

Chapter 435, Florida Statutes - Employment Screening

- 435.01 Applicability of this chapter; statutory references; rulemaking
- 435.02 Definitions
- 435.03 Level 1 screening standards
- 435.04 Level 2 screening standards
- 435.05 Requirements for covered employees and employers
- 435.06 Exclusion from employment
- 435.07 Exemptions from disqualification
- 435.08 Payment for processing of fingerprints and state criminal records checks
- 435.09 Confidentiality of personnel background check information
- 435.10 Sharing of personnel information among employers
- 435.11 Penalties
- 435.12 Care Provider Background Screening Clearinghouse

Florida Administrative Code (FAC): Division of Early Learning (6M-4, F.A.C.)

The 6M Rules are the Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) rules adopted by the Florida Department of Education's Division of Early Learning (DEL). They provide the detailed requirements for administering Florida's early learning programs, including School Readiness, CCDF, VPK, and Early Learning Coalitions.

Chapter 6M-4: School Readiness Program Rules

Eligibility

- 6M-4.200 School Readiness Eligibility Provisions
- 6M-4.208 Documenting Eligibility for the School Readiness Program
- 6M-4.300 School Readiness Application and Waiting List Procedures
- 6M-4.400 Required Parent Copayment

Attendance and Reimbursement

- 6M-4.500 Child Attendance and Provider Reimbursements
- 6M-4.501 Reimbursement During Emergency Closures

Provider Requirements

- 6M-4.610 Statewide Provider Contract for the School Readiness Program
- 6M-4.620 Health and Safety for School Readiness Providers
- 6M-4.630 Statewide Provider Contract Monitoring Tool for the School Readiness Program

Child Outcomes and Quality

- 6M-4.700 Child Performance Standards for the School Readiness Program
- 6M-4.710 School Readiness Program Curricula
- 6M-4.720 Screening of Children in the School Readiness Program
- 6M-4.735 Early Learning Professional Development Standards and Career Pathways
- 6M-4.740 Program Assessment Requirements for the School Readiness Program
- 6M-4.741 (Program assessment-related rule)

Other 6M Rules That Impact CCDF Administration

- Chapter 6M-9: Early Learning Coalitions
- 6M-9.110 Coalition Composition
- 6M-9.115 Approval of School Readiness Plans
- 6M-9.120 Coalition Performance Standards and Evaluations
- 6M-9.200 School Readiness Plus Program
- 6M-9.300 Child Care Resource and Referral and Consumer Education
- 6M-9.400 Coalition Anti-Fraud Plans

Department of Children and Families (DCF) Rules (65C):

DCF licensing requirements are largely implemented through:

- Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) Chapter 65C-22 (Child Care Facilities)
- 65C-20 (Family Child Care Homes)
- 65C-25 (Large Family Child Care Homes)

These rules help define ratios and supervision, health and safety standards, staff training requirements, background checks, inspections, and recordkeeping requirements.

DCF Licensing Handbooks:

- Child Care Facility Handbook
- Family Child Care Home Handbook

These operationalize licensing rules and provide detailed requirements for discipline practices, attendance documentation, supervision and safety, and staff responsibilities.

Division of Early Learning Program Guidance & Systems:

- Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards (Birth–Kindergarten)
- Approved Curriculum List (DEL)
- Developmental Screening (ASQ-3) requirements
- CLASS-based Program Assessment System

Head Start Program Performance Standards 45 CFR Chapter XIII

- August 2024 Updated

Subpart A: Executive Summary

Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (1302.11-1302.18)

Subpart A establishes the full enrollment life cycle framework for Head Start programs, defining how programs identify community needs, recruit families, select participants, maintain enrollment, and ensure children actively participate in services. At its core, this subpart ensures that Head Start programs are intentional, equitable, and accountable in serving the children and families who need services most.

The standards require programs to begin with a data-driven understanding of their community (§1302.11) and use that information to guide every major decision. From there, programs must implement structured systems to verify eligibility (§1302.12), actively recruit eligible families (§1302.13), and use fair, documented processes to select children based on need (§1302.14). Once children are enrolled, programs must actively manage enrollment to maintain full capacity (§1302.15) and ensure children are consistently attending and benefiting from services through ongoing attendance monitoring and family engagement (§1302.16).

A critical component of Subpart A is its strong focus on access. This is reinforced through requirements to prohibit expulsion and limit suspension (§1302.17), ensuring children remain engaged in services, and to guarantee that all services are completely free to families (§1302.18) so that financial barriers never prevent participation.

Across all sections, Subpart A shifts programs from passive service delivery to active management systems, requiring ongoing monitoring, documentation, and continuous improvement. Programs must not only enroll children but also demonstrate how and why decisions are made, track outcomes, and intervene when participation or access is at risk.

HSPPS §1302.11 and Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS §1302.11 requires programs to conduct a comprehensive, data-driven community assessment that serves as the foundation for all program decisions, including service design, recruitment, and selection. This assessment must analyze demographics, high-need populations, and available community resources, be formally documented, updated regularly (at least every five years with annual updates), and used to justify how the program is structured and delivered. It also requires governance oversight, ensuring that leadership and the Policy Council use the data to guide decisions, with a strong focus on identifying and prioritizing underserved populations to ensure equitable access to services.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.11(a)(1) Program must define and maintain an approved service area.	F.S. §1002.83 Early Learning Coalitions; F.S. §1002.84 Coalition Responsibilities	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida establishes geographic service delivery areas through Early Learning Coalitions, but individual School Readiness providers are not required to establish or obtain approval for a service area.
1302.11(a)(2) Program must obtain approval before changing its service area.	No direct equivalent.	❌ No Alignment. School Readiness providers do not have federally approved service areas that require modification approval.
1302.11(b)(1) Conduct a comprehensive community assessment at least once during the five-year period and update annually.	F.S. §1002.85 Early Learning Coalition Plans; Rule 6M-9.115 Procedures and Criteria for Approval of School Readiness Plans	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida requires coalitions to engage in planning and needs-based assessments through School Readiness planning processes but does not require each provider to conduct a Head Start-style comprehensive community assessment.
1302.11(b)(1)(i) Identify populations most in need of services.	F.S. §1002.87 School Readiness Eligibility and Enrollment	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida identifies priority populations including economically disadvantaged children, at-risk children, public assistance

		recipients, children with special needs, and other vulnerable populations.
1302.11(b)(1)(ii) Use assessment results to inform program design and equitable access.	F.S. §1002.85 Coalition Plans; Rule 6M-9.115 School Readiness Plans	⚠ Partial Alignment. Coalition planning processes are intended to address local needs and improve service delivery, though not to the extent required under HSPPS.
1302.11(b)(1)(iii) Use assessment data to inform recruitment, enrollment, and selection.	F.S. §1002.87 Eligibility and Enrollment; Rule 6M-4.300 Application and Waiting List Procedures	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida uses statutory eligibility priorities and waiting-list procedures rather than locally developed recruitment and selection strategies based on community assessment findings.
1302.11(b)(1)(iv) Identify community strengths, resources, and partnerships.	F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and Referral; Rule 6M-9.300 Child Care Resource and Referral and Consumer Education	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida's CCR&R system is specifically designed to identify and connect families with available community resources and services.
1302.11(b)(1)(v) Identify communication methods that best engage families.	F.S. §1002.92; 6M-9.300	⚠ Partial Alignment. Consumer education and referral services support family engagement and communication, but do not require communication analyses equivalent to HSPPS.
1302.11(b)(2)(i) Collect demographic data including poverty, homelessness, foster care, disability, language, and geography.	F.S. §1002.85 Coalition Plans; F.S. §1002.87 Eligibility Categories	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida planning and eligibility systems collect information on vulnerable populations and community needs, but not with the same prescriptive requirements as Head Start community assessments.
1302.11(b)(2)(ii) Assess education, health, nutrition, and social service needs.	F.S. §1002.85 Coalition Plans; F.S. §1002.92 CCR&R Services	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida planning processes consider community needs and available services but do not require a provider-level multidisciplinary community assessment.

HSPPS §1302.12 vs Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS §1302.12 requires programs to implement a structured and accountable system for determining, verifying, and documenting eligibility, ensuring that only children who meet federal criteria (age, income, or categorical eligibility such as homelessness or foster care) are enrolled. Programs must collect and verify reliable documentation, accurately calculate eligibility (including income), and maintain complete, auditable records that clearly show how each determination was made and approved. This process must include consistent procedures, staff accountability, and ongoing monitoring to ensure accuracy and compliance, with documentation that can withstand federal review and demonstrate that eligibility decisions are transparent, consistent, and based on verified information. Florida uses the Florida Early Learning Family Portal, which houses information on Resource and Referral, School Readiness and VPK programs, allowing families to learn more and directly apply for services. All

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.12(a)(1) Conduct an in-person interview with each family unless another approved method is used.	Rule 6M-4.208 Documenting Eligibility for the School Readiness Program	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida requires eligibility documentation and verification but does not require an in-person interview for every family as a condition of eligibility determination.
1302.12(a)(1)(ii) Verify information used to determine eligibility.	F.S. 1002.87; Rule 6M-4.200; Rule 6M-4.208	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires verification and documentation of eligibility information before School Readiness authorization is granted.
1302.12(a)(1)(iii) Create and maintain an eligibility determination record.	Rule 6M-4.208	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires eligibility documentation and records supporting eligibility determinations.

1302.12(a)(2) Telephone interviews may be used when appropriate.	Coalition eligibility procedures under Rule 6M-4.208	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida permits remote eligibility processes but does not contain the same prescriptive interview requirements as Head Start.
1302.12(b) Establish age eligibility requirements.	F.S. 1002.87 School Readiness Eligibility and Enrollment	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida establishes eligibility based on statutory age requirements and program categories.
1302.12(c)(1) Determine eligibility based on income, public assistance, homelessness, or foster care status.	F.S. 1002.87; Rule 6M-4.200	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida eligibility categories include economically disadvantaged families, public assistance recipients, at-risk children, and other priority populations.
1302.12(c)(2) Allow limited enrollment of children who do not meet traditional eligibility criteria.	F.S. 1002.87 eligibility priorities	❌ No Alignment. Florida has statutory eligibility categories but does not provide Head Start's specific over-income enrollment allowances. Parent must meet eligibility requirements to receive SR services.
1302.12(d) Additional income-based enrollment allowances (up to 130% of poverty).	No direct School Readiness equivalent.	❌ No Alignment. Florida does not use the Head Start over-income enrollment structure. Eligibility is determined through School Readiness statutes.
1302.12(e) Tribal-specific eligibility flexibility.	No School Readiness equivalent.	❌ No Alignment. Florida School Readiness contains no tribal enrollment provisions comparable to Head Start.
1302.12(f) Migrant and Seasonal Head Start eligibility requirements.	No direct School Readiness equivalent.	❌ No Alignment. Florida School Readiness does not include a separate Migrant and Seasonal Head Start eligibility structure.
1302.12(g) Special eligibility provisions for	No equivalent provision.	❌ No Alignment. Florida eligibility requirements are statewide and do not provide this flexibility.

communities with fewer than 1,000 residents.		
1302.12(h) Program must verify age.	Rule 6M-4.208 Eligibility Documentation	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires documentation supporting eligibility, including age verification.
1302.12(i)(1) Verify income using documentation.	Rule 6M-4.208; Rule 6M-4.200	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires documentation of family income and other eligibility factors during eligibility determination.
1302.12(i)(2) Verify public assistance eligibility.	F.S. 1002.87; Rule 6M-4.208	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires verification of public assistance-related eligibility categories when applicable.
1302.12(i)(3) Verify homelessness.	F.S. 1002.87 at-risk categories; Rule 6M-4.208	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida may document homeless status relevant to eligibility but does not contain documentation standards as detailed as Head Start. There is an at-risk referral and the family's authorization period (six-month increments) and billing group are listed in the Electronic Filing System Model (EFS-Mod). Once the referral ends, parents must have a purpose of care to continue receiving services.
1302.12(i)(4) Verify foster care status.	F.S. 1002.87 at-risk eligibility provisions; Rule 6M-4.208	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida recognizes foster-care and at-risk populations but does not prescribe the same verification standards found in HSPPS. Verification is completed by the referring entity instead.
1302.12(j) Establish eligibility duration requirements.	School Readiness redetermination and continued eligibility processes under F.S.	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida establishes ongoing eligibility and redetermination requirements but not the Head Start eligibility-duration framework.

	1002.87 and Rule 6M-4.200	
1302.12(k) Maintain eligibility records and supporting documentation.	Rule 6M-4.208; Rule 6M-4.610 Statewide Provider Contract	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires eligibility records, supporting documentation, and retention of records for monitoring and audit purposes.
1302.12(l) Establish policies for staff who violate eligibility determination requirements.	6M-9.400 Early Learning Coalition Anti-Fraud Plans; F.S. 1002.91 Investigations of Fraud or Overpayment	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida addresses fraud, overpayments, and improper eligibility practices, but does not require provider-level disciplinary procedures matching HSPPS requirements.
1302.12(m) Train staff responsible for eligibility determinations.	Coalition administrative requirements under F.S. 1002.82, 1002.84, and eligibility procedures in Rule 6M-4.208	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida requires administration of eligibility systems but does not prescribe comprehensive eligibility training requirements equivalent to Head Start's mandatory training framework. SR does require ELCs to train their staff to ensure continuity of eligibility determinations.

HSPPS §1302.13 vs Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS §1302.13 requires programs to implement an intentional, ongoing recruitment system that actively seeks out and engages eligible children and families throughout the year, with a particular emphasis on reaching those who are most underserved, such as families experiencing homelessness, foster care involvement, or economic hardship. Programs must use data from the community assessment to guide targeted outreach strategies, ensure recruitment efforts are accessible and inclusive, and maintain documentation of all recruitment activities. Overall, the requirement ensures that programs are not passive in enrollment but instead use strategic, continuous, and child centered efforts to identify and connect with families most in need of Head Start services.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
-------------------	--	-----------------------

Program must develop and implement a recruitment process designed to actively inform all families with eligible children of available services.	F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R); Rule 6M-9.300 Child Care Resource and Referral and Consumer Education	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida assigns outreach, consumer education, and referral responsibilities to Early Learning Coalitions through the CCR&R system. However, individual School Readiness providers are not required to maintain a formal recruitment system comparable to Head Start.
Program must use recruitment practices that reach families most in need of services.	F.S. §1002.87 School Readiness Eligibility and Enrollment; F.S. §1002.92 CCR&R Services	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida targets priority populations through statutory eligibility categories and outreach systems designed to connect eligible families with services.
Program must actively inform families about program availability.	F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and Referral; Rule 6M-9.300 Consumer Education	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida's CCR&R system is specifically responsible for helping families understand and access available early learning services and providers.
Program must use modern technologies to encourage and assist families in the application process.	State School Readiness application and eligibility systems administered through Early Learning Coalitions; Rule 6M-4.300 Application and Waiting List Procedures	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida provides electronic application and eligibility processes, but there is no specific requirement that providers use modern technology for recruitment and enrollment.
Program must reduce family administrative and paperwork burden during enrollment.	Rule 6M-4.208 Documenting Eligibility; Coalition eligibility determination procedures	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida has centralized eligibility and documentation processes intended to streamline enrollment, but there is no explicit requirement mirroring the Head Start standard.
Program must make specific efforts to locate and recruit children with disabilities.	F.S. §1002.87 Eligibility and Enrollment; Rule 6M-4.720 Screening of Children in the School Readiness Program	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida prioritizes children with special needs and requires developmental screening, but does not require provider

		recruitment plans specifically targeting children with disabilities.
Program must make specific efforts to locate and recruit children experiencing homelessness.	F.S. §1002.87 Eligibility and Enrollment; F.S. §1002.92 CCR&R Services	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida provides priority access and referral supports for vulnerable populations but does not require targeted recruitment efforts comparable to Head Start.
Program must make specific efforts to locate and recruit children in foster care.	F.S. §1002.87 Eligibility and Enrollment; F.S. §1002.92 CCR&R Services	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida's eligibility framework supports access for at-risk populations, including children involved with child welfare systems, but does not require formal recruitment activities directed at foster children.

HSPPS §1302.14 and Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS §1302.14 requires Head Start programs to establish annual selection criteria based on their community assessment to prioritize enrollment for children and families with the greatest need. Factors considered include family income, homelessness, foster care status, age, eligibility for special education or early intervention services, and other risk factors. Programs must not deny enrollment because of a disability or chronic health condition, maintain a ranked waiting list, and ensure that at least 10% of actual enrollment consists of children eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), unless a waiver is granted.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.14(a)(1) Program must annually establish selection criteria.	F.S. §1002.87 School Readiness Eligibility and Enrollment	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida establishes statewide eligibility and priority categories through statute rather than requiring providers to develop annual selection criteria.
1302.14(a)(1) Selection criteria must be based on community needs	F.S. §1002.85 Early Learning Coalition Plans; 6M-9.115 School Readiness Plans	⚠ Partial Alignment. Early Learning Coalitions assess local needs during planning processes, but providers are

identified through the community assessment.		not required to develop selection criteria from a formal community assessment.
1302.14(a)(1) Selection criteria must consider family income.	F.S. §1002.87(1)(c)	✅ Strong Alignment. Economically disadvantaged families are a primary School Readiness eligibility category.
1302.14(a)(1) Selection criteria must consider homelessness.	F.S. §1002.87; at-risk eligibility categories	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida may serve homeless children through at-risk categories, but homelessness is not a standalone statewide selection criterion.
1302.14(a)(1) Selection criteria must consider foster care status.	F.S. §1002.87 at-risk eligibility provisions	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Foster children may qualify through at-risk eligibility pathways, but Florida does not maintain a separate foster-care priority structure equivalent to Head Start.
1302.14(a)(1) Selection criteria must consider child age.	F.S. §1002.87	✅ Strong Alignment. School Readiness eligibility categories are age-based and establish priorities according to age groups.
1302.14(a)(1) Selection criteria must consider IDEA eligibility and disability status.	F.S. §1002.87(1)(c)6.; F.S. §1002.88	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida specifically includes children with special needs as an eligibility category.
1302.14(a)(1) Selection criteria must consider other family or child risk factors.	F.S. §1002.87	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida prioritizes multiple risk factors including public assistance participation, at-risk status, and economic disadvantage.
1302.14(a)(2) Tribal programs may prioritize tribal affiliation.	No Florida School Readiness equivalent.	❌ No Alignment.
1302.14(a)(3) Migrant and Seasonal programs must prioritize children of migratory agricultural workers.	Limited migrant eligibility provisions may exist administratively, but no equivalent annual selection requirement.	❌ No Alignment. While Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA) functions as a Head Start grantee, including offering Migrant/Seasonal programs, it is also an

		ELC. For the purposes here, RCMA as an ELC operating SR
1302.14(a)(4) Programs must prioritize younger children where publicly funded prekindergarten is available.	No equivalent Florida requirement.	✗ No Alignment.
1302.14(a)(5) Programs must not deny enrollment because of a disability or chronic health condition.	F.S. §1002.87(1)(c)6.; F.S. §1002.88	✓ Strong Alignment. Children with special needs are eligible for participation, and providers must comply with disability protections.
1302.14(a)(6) Programs may consider children of staff members in selection criteria.	No equivalent Florida provision.	✗ No Alignment.
1302.14(b)(1) At least 10% of enrollment must consist of children eligible under IDEA unless waived.	No equivalent Florida requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not require a minimum percentage of enrollment for children with disabilities.
1302.14(b)(2) IDEA-eligible children should be prioritized for available slots.	F.S. §1002.87(1)(c)6.	⚠ Partial Alignment. Children with special needs are an eligibility category, but Florida does not establish an IDEA enrollment mandate.
1302.14(c) Program must develop a waiting list at the beginning of each enrollment year.	Rule 6M-4.300 FAC School Readiness Application and Waiting List Procedures	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida requires waiting-list procedures, but lists are generally maintained by coalitions rather than providers.
1302.14(c) Waiting list must rank children according to selection criteria.	F.S. §1002.87; 6M-4.300	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida prioritizes children according to statutory eligibility categories rather than provider-developed ranking criteria.
1302.14(d) Program must identify barriers to enrollment using	F.S. §1002.85 Coalition Plans; F.S. §1002.92 CCR&R	⚠ Partial Alignment. Coalitions identify service needs and access barriers, but providers are not required

community assessment data.		to conduct community-assessment-based barrier analyses.
1302.14(d) Program must identify barriers to attendance, including transportation.	F.S. §1002.92 CCR&R; F.S. §1002.93 Transportation Services	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida recognizes transportation and access needs but does not require this analysis as part of provider selection processes.
1302.14(d) Program must use enrollment-barrier data to improve access for the highest-need children.	F.S. §1002.85; 6M-9.120 Coalition Performance Standards	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida uses planning and coalition oversight systems to improve accessibility but does not require provider-level continuous improvement tied specifically to enrollment selection.
1302.14(d) Program must identify barriers to enrollment using community assessment data.	F.S. §1002.85 Coalition Plans; F.S. §1002.92 CCR&R	⚠ Partial Alignment. Coalitions identify service needs and access barriers, but providers are not required to conduct community-assessment-based barrier analyses.

HSPPS §1302.15 and Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS §1302.15 requires programs to actively manage enrollment to ensure that all funded slots are continuously filled and accessible to eligible children. Programs must maintain 100% funded enrollment, promptly fill vacancies—within 30 days—and maintain an active, organized waitlist to support rapid replacement of children who leave or stop attending. This requires ongoing monitoring of enrollment data, coordination with recruitment and selection systems, and documentation of enrollment actions to demonstrate accountability. Overall, the requirement ensures that programs do not operate below capacity and are consistently maximizing access to services for eligible children and families.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.15(a) Program must maintain funded enrollment levels.	No equivalent provision in F.S. Ch. 1002, F.S. Ch. 402, Ch. 435, 6M-4, 6M-9, or DCF licensing rules.	✗ No Alignment. Florida School Readiness does not require providers to maintain a funded enrollment percentage or operate at full capacity. School Readiness funding is tied to child

		eligibility and authorization rather than federally assigned funded enrollment slots.
1302.15(a) Program must fill any vacancy as soon as possible and within 30 days.	No equivalent provision in Florida statutes, administrative rules, handbooks, or the Statewide School Readiness Provider Contract.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not impose a statewide requirement to fill open School Readiness slots within a specified timeframe. Enrollment occurs through coalition-managed eligibility and authorization processes.
1302.15(b)(1) Program must make efforts to maintain enrollment of eligible children for the following year.	F.S. §1002.87; Rule 6M-4.200; Rule 6M-4.208.	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida allows continued participation for children who remain eligible and complete redetermination requirements; however, programs are not specifically required to maintain year-to-year enrollment as Head Start requires.
1302.15(b)(2) Program may maintain enrollment beyond the standard program year under specified circumstances.	No direct School Readiness equivalent.	✗ No Alignment. School Readiness services continue or end based on eligibility and authorization status, not Head Start enrollment duration rules
1302.15(b)(3) Program must maintain enrollment or support transition for homeless children and children in foster care who move.	F.S. §1002.87 (priority for at-risk children); F.S. §1002.92 (CCR&R services).	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida provides enrollment priority and referral support for vulnerable populations but does not require providers to maintain enrollment across service-area moves or arrange transitions in the manner required by Head Start.
1302.15(c) Program may reserve enrollment slots for homeless children, children in foster care, or pregnant women.	No equivalent Florida statute, rule, or handbook requirement.	⚠ Partial Alignment. Providers have the option to participate in contracted slots that require coalition's immediate action to fill the vacancy for children birth to 5

1302.15(c) Reserved slot must be filled within 30 days or released.	No equivalent Florida requirement.	 No Alignment. Because Florida does not use reserved enrollment slots, there is no corresponding requirement or timeline.
1302.15(d) Children funded through other sources are not part of funded enrollment.	F.S. §1002.87; F.S. §1002.89.	 Partial Alignment. Florida distinguishes School Readiness-funded children from private-pay children for reimbursement and reporting purposes, but it does not use the Head Start funded-enrollment framework.
1302.15(e) Program must comply with state immunization enrollment and attendance requirements.	F.S. §402.305; F.S. §1002.88; DCF Child Care Facility Handbook.	 Strong Alignment. Florida requires immunization documentation and health records for enrolled children as part of licensing and School Readiness provider requirements.
1302.15(f) Parent participation in program activities must be voluntary and not a condition of enrollment.	No direct School Readiness equivalent; eligibility requirements found in F.S. §1002.87.	 Partial Alignment. Florida does not require parent participation as a condition of School Readiness eligibility, but there is no statutory language mirroring the Head Start provision.
1302.15(g) Program must regularly review and improve enrollment processes to ensure they are user-friendly and accessible.	Rule 6M-4.300; F.S. §1002.92; Rule 6M-9.300.	 Partial Alignment. Florida requires application, referral, and consumer education systems designed to improve family access to services but does not require provider self-assessment and continuous improvement of enrollment processes in the same manner as Head Start.

HSPPS §1302.16 and Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS §1302.16 requires programs to actively monitor and promote consistent child attendance through a comprehensive, data-driven process that goes beyond simple recordkeeping. Programs must track daily attendance, quickly follow up on unexplained absences to ensure child safety, and identify patterns of chronic absenteeism (typically children

missing around 10% of program days). They are required to work collaboratively with families to address barriers to attendance—such as transportation or health issues—through ongoing engagement, including direct contact and support strategies. Additionally, programs must monitor overall attendance rates and implement program-wide improvements if attendance falls below established thresholds (such as 85%), ensuring continuous participation and maximizing the benefits of Head Start services for enrolled children.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.16(a) Program must track attendance for each child.	Rule 6M-4.500 Child Attendance and Provider Reimbursements; Rule 6M-4.610 Statewide School Readiness Provider Contract	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires providers to maintain daily attendance records and document attendance for reimbursement and monitoring purposes.
1302.16(a)(1) Program must ensure children are safe when they do not arrive as expected.	Rule 6M-4.500 Attendance Requirements	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Providers are required to report excessive absences to the coalition. One unexcused absence for at-risk children requires notification to DCF or the community-based lead agency.
1302.16(a)(2) Program must implement strategies to promote attendance.	Rule 6M-4.500 Attendance Requirements	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida requires attendance tracking but does not require providers to implement formal attendance improvement strategies.
1302.16(a)(2)(i) Provide information about the benefits of regular attendance.	Rule 6M-4.500 Attendance Requirements	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida does not require attendance education or awareness activities, but there are attendance procedures provided by the provider to the parent to inform them.

1302.16(a)(2)(ii) Support families to promote the child's regular attendance.	General family service supports Early Learning Coalitions and CCR&R systems.	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida supports family access to services, but there is no specific requirement to provide attendance-focused family supports.
1302.16(a)(2)(iii) Conduct home visits or direct contact after multiple unexplained absences.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	❌ No Alignment. Florida does not require home visits or direct outreach after unexplained absences.
1302.16(a)(2)(iv) Identify children at risk of missing 10% of program days and implement interventions.	Rule 6M-4.500 Attendance Requirements.	⚠️ Partial Alignment. If a child misses 5 consecutive scheduled days or has 10 unexplained absences in a month without any contact from the parent, the provider must notify the coalition (or its designee) in writing. The coalition will then review whether the child should continue receiving School Readiness (SR) services and must document all efforts made by the coalition, provider, and any referring agency to reach the parent.
1302.16(a)(2)(v) Identify attendance barriers, including transportation, and provide assistance when possible.	F.S. §1002.93 School Readiness Transportation Services; F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and Referral	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida recognizes transportation and access supports but does not require providers to conduct attendance-barrier analyses or attendance intervention plans.
1302.16(a)(3) If a child ceases to attend, the	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	❌ No Alignment. Florida does not require providers to conduct

program must reengage the family.		family reengagement activities when attendance stops.
1302.16(a)(3) If attendance does not resume, the slot becomes vacant.	Attendance tracked under Rule 6M-4.500; enrollment managed through eligibility and authorization processes.	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida recognizes withdrawal, loss of eligibility, transfer, or termination of services, but does not define vacancy based on attendance cessation alone.
1302.16(b) If attendance falls below 85%, the program must analyze absenteeism and implement corrective action.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not establish a statewide attendance-performance threshold or corrective action requirement tied to attendance rates.
1302.16(c)(1) Homeless children may attend for up to 90 days without immunization and other records.	F.S. §402.305; F.S. §1002.88; DCF Child Care Facility Handbook	✗ No Alignment. Florida requires compliance with immunization and health record requirements and does not contain a specific 90-day homeless child exemption equivalent to Head Start.
1302.16(c)(2) Program must use community resources to provide transportation for homeless children when needed.	F.S. §1002.93 School Readiness Transportation Services; F.S. §1002.92 CCR&R	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida authorizes transportation-related services and referrals but does not specifically require transportation assistance for homeless children to support attendance.

HSPPS §1302.17 and Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS §1302.17 requires programs to use developmentally appropriate, inclusive discipline practices that prioritize keeping children engaged in the program and prohibit expulsion under any circumstance. Suspension may only be used as a last resort, after the program has implemented and documented comprehensive supports such as behavior

intervention strategies, mental health consultation, and meaningful family engagement. Programs must take active steps to understand and address the root causes of challenging behavior, ensure decisions are equitable and non-discriminatory, and maintain clear documentation of all actions taken. The standard ensures that programs respond to behavioral challenges through support and intervention—not removal—while maintaining accountability and protections for every child’s continued participation.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.17(a)(1) Programs must prohibit or severely limit suspension due to a child's behavior.	F.S. §1002.88 School Readiness Provider Standards; 6M-4.620 Health and Safety for School Readiness Providers; School Readiness Health and Safety Requirements Handbook Rule 6M-4.500	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida promotes developmentally appropriate practices and safe learning environments but does not contain an explicit statewide prohibition or severe limitation on suspension comparable to HSPPS. There is a differential SR providers can receive for supporting children with behavioral and developmental conditions. Providers should have a suspension and expulsion policy that is shared with families and the ELC.
1302.17(a)(2) Temporary suspension may only be used as a last resort when a serious safety threat exists and interventions have been attempted.	No direct equivalent in School Readiness statutes, rules, or handbooks.	❌ No Alignment. Florida does not establish a statewide requirement that suspension be used only as a last resort after documented interventions and mental health consultation.
1302.17(a)(3) Program must consult a mental health consultant, collaborate with parents, and use community resources before suspension.	6M-4.720 Screening of Children in the School Readiness Program; F.S. §1002.86 School Readiness Education Component	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida promotes screening, developmental support, and family engagement, but there is no requirement for mental health consultation before suspension decisions.

1302.17(a)(4) Program must support reentry following a temporary suspension and document all efforts.	No direct equivalent.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not require formal reentry planning, documentation of reentry efforts, or continuation of services during suspension.
1302.17(a)(4)(i) Continue collaboration with parents, mental health consultants, and community resources.	F.S. §1002.86; 6M-4.720	⚠ Partial Alignment. Family engagement and developmental screening are supported, but Florida does not mandate this level of multidisciplinary intervention related to suspension.
1302.17(a)(4)(ii) Provide additional supports and services, including home visits.	No School Readiness equivalent.	✗ No Alignment. Home visits and enhanced intervention requirements are not required under Florida School Readiness regulations.
1302.17(a)(4)(iii) Determine whether IDEA referral is appropriate and coordinate with IFSP/IEP agencies.	6M-4.720 Screening of Children in the School Readiness Program; F.S. §1002.87(1)(c)6. Children with special needs.	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida requires developmental screening and recognizes children with special needs but does not specifically require IDEA referral consideration before suspension.
1302.17(b)(1) Programs may not expel or unenroll a child because of behavior.	No equivalent prohibition in F.S. Ch. 1002, Chapter 402, 6M Rules, or DCF licensing regulations.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not contain a statewide prohibition on expulsion or disenrollment based on behavior for School Readiness providers.
1302.17(b)(2) Programs must explore and document all possible interventions before considering removal.	F.S. §1002.86 Education Component; 6M-4.710 School Readiness Program Curricula; 6M-4.720 Screening of Children.	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida promotes child development support and screening but does not require documented intervention efforts before exclusion.

1302.17(b)(2) Programs must engage a mental health consultant.	No School Readiness equivalent.	✗ No Alignment. Mental health consultation is a Head Start requirement and is not required under Florida CCDF regulations.
1302.17(b)(2) Programs must consider Section 504 accommodations before exclusion.	Federal disability requirements apply independently; no specific Florida School Readiness rule parallels this provision.	⚠ Partial Alignment. Providers remain subject to federal disability law, but Florida School Readiness does not contain a parallel requirement.
1302.17(b)(2)(i) If the child has an IFSP or IEP, consult with the responsible agency.	6M-4.720 Developmental Screening requirements.	⚠ Partial Alignment. Screening requirements support referral and identification but do not mandate coordination before exclusion.

HSPPS §1302.18 and Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS §1302.18 requires programs to ensure that all Head Start services are provided completely free of charge to enrolled families, with no fees, co-payments, or financial barriers to access. Programs must not require or solicit payments, donations, or contributions as a condition of enrollment or participation, and must ensure that every child has equal access to services regardless of a family's ability to pay. This applies to all program components, including education, meals, transportation, and family services. The standard ensures equity and accessibility by guaranteeing that financial constraints never limit a child's participation or access to comprehensive Head Start services.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.18(a) Programs may not charge eligible families a fee to participate in Head Start.	F.S. §1002.87 School Readiness Eligibility and Enrollment; Rule 6M-4.400 Required Parent Copayment	⚠ Partial Alignment. Unlike Head Start, Florida School Readiness permits parent copayments for many eligible families. Participation is not universally free.
1302.18(a) Programs may not charge fees for	No direct School Readiness equivalent.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not prohibit providers from charging for optional

program activities, including special events or field trips.		activities or field trips, provided such charges comply with program requirements and are not prohibited by contract.
1302.18(a) Enrollment or participation may not be conditioned on payment of a fee.	Rule 6M-4.400 Required Parent Copayment; School Readiness Provider Contract	⚠ Partial Alignment. School Readiness requires compliance with copayment requirements, but enrollment is generally based on eligibility and authorization rather than a family's ability to purchase services. The structure differs significantly from Head Start's no-fee model.
1302.18(b)(1) Programs may only charge for services beyond those funded by Head Start.	School Readiness Provider Contract; Provider private-pay policies	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida providers may offer additional services outside School Readiness-funded care and may charge for those services, but the state does not use the same "funded hours versus additional hours" framework as Head Start.
1302.18(b)(1) Programs may not condition enrollment on a family's ability to pay for additional hours.	No direct School Readiness equivalent.	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida does not contain a specific prohibition mirroring Head Start, although School Readiness eligibility itself is not based on a family's ability to purchase additional services.
1302.18(b)(2) Programs may charge private-pay families and non-Head Start families.	F.S. §1002.89 School Readiness Funding; Provider private-pay policies	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida providers commonly serve a mix of School Readiness-funded, private-pay, and other subsidized children and may charge tuition to non-subsidized families.
1302.18(b)(2) Programs may use multiple funding sources while maintaining separate enrollment categories.	F.S. §1002.89 School Readiness Funding; Statewide School Readiness Provider Contract	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida's mixed-delivery system allows providers to blend and braid funding sources while serving School Readiness children alongside privately funded children.

Subpart A

Alignment and Gap Summary

Florida has established a comprehensive framework through Chapter 1002, SR administrative rules, ELC planning processes, and CCR&R systems that support identifying eligible children, documenting eligibility, maintaining enrollment records, and connecting families with available services. The state's statutory priority structure also aligns closely with Head Start's focus on serving children who are economically disadvantaged, at risk, or have special needs.

The greatest alignment occurs within §1302.12 (Determining, Verifying, and Documenting Eligibility) and portions of §1302.14 (Selection). Florida requires verification of eligibility, age, income, public assistance status, and maintenance of eligibility records. Similarly, Florida's School Readiness eligibility structure prioritizes many of the same populations emphasized by Head Start, including low-income families, children with disabilities or special needs, and other vulnerable populations. Both systems seek to provide direct services to children with the greatest need, although Florida accomplishes this through state-established eligibility priorities rather than provider-developed selection criteria.

Moderate alignment exists within §1302.11 (Community Assessment), §1302.13 (Recruitment), §1302.14 (Selection), and portions of §1302.16 (Attendance). Florida's Early Learning Coalitions conduct local planning, assess service needs, administer waiting lists, provide consumer education, and operate Child Care Resource and Referral systems that help identify service gaps and connect families to care. However, unlike Head Start, Florida generally places these responsibilities at the coalition level rather than requiring each provider to conduct comprehensive community assessments, develop recruitment plans, analyze enrollment barriers, or maintain provider-level strategic planning processes. As a result, Florida addresses many of the same objectives but through a more centralized administrative structure.

The largest gaps appear in Florida's lack of direct equivalents to Head Start's funded enrollment and enrollment management requirements under §1302.15 (Enrollment). Head Start requires programs to maintain funded enrollment, fill vacancies within 30 days, maintain ranked waiting lists, reserve slots for homeless and foster children, and actively manage continuous enrollment. Florida School Readiness services are driven by child eligibility determinations, coalition authorization processes, and available funding, and some providers do have contracted slots. Consequently, many of Head Start's enrollment management requirements have no direct Florida counterpart.

Significant gaps also exist between 1302.16 (Attendance) and §1302.17 (Suspension and Expulsion.) Florida requires daily attendance documentation for reimbursement and monitoring purposes and does require contact with parents to address excessive absenteeism, but it does not require the extensive attendance improvement strategies mandated by Head Start. Similarly, Florida does not contain statewide prohibitions on expulsion or severe limitations on suspension comparable to Head Start. Requirements for mental health consultation, documented behavioral interventions, reentry planning, IDEA coordination before exclusion, and transition planning to alternative placements are largely unique to the Head Start framework.

Finally, §1302.18 (Fees) represents another substantial area of divergence. Head Start is designed as a federally funded program that prohibits fees for participation by eligible families. In contrast, Florida's School Readiness Program allows family copayments for many participants and permits providers to operate within a mixed-delivery system that includes private-pay and subsidized children. While both systems allow providers to blend multiple funding sources, Florida's fee structure is fundamentally different from Head Start's no-cost participation model.

In summary, Florida's CCDF-funded School Readiness system aligns well with Head Start's goals of identifying eligible children, documenting eligibility, prioritizing vulnerable populations, and connecting families to services. However, substantial differences remain in the areas of funded enrollment management, vacancy filling, attendance intervention, suspension and expulsion protections, reserved slots, and participant fee requirements. These differences reflect the distinct design of the two systems: Head Start operates as a comprehensive child and family development program with extensive federal performance requirements, while Florida School Readiness functions primarily as a child care subsidy and early learning access program administered through a statewide coalition structure.

While there is partial alignment at the basic levels of eligibility determination and verification, there are more significant gaps around how enrollment is managed and prioritized. Further reinforcement of this can be found in Head Start Act and Program Instructions (PI) such as ACF-PI-HS-18-04 (Full Enrollment Initiative), requires programs to actively maintain 100 percent enrollment, manage waitlists, and fill vacancies quickly, with federal oversight and consequences for noncompliance. Additional Information Memoranda (IM), such as ACF-OHS-IM-25-06, further emphasize that attendance and enrollment are directly tied to program performance, requiring programs to monitor and address absenteeism to prevent loss of services. Together, these federal requirements establish enrollment as a continuous, data-driven process that prioritizes the highest-need children, including those experiencing homelessness, foster care, or other vulnerabilities, as required under the Head Start Act.

Subpart B: Executive Summary

Program Structure (1302.20-1302.24)

Subpart B establishes the structural backbone of how Head Start services are delivered, requiring programs to intentionally design service models that meet the developmental needs of children and the realities of their communities. It requires programs to select appropriate program options (center-based, home-based, family child care, or combinations) and ensure these models are implemented with sufficient intensity, quality, and consistency to achieve meaningful child and family outcomes.

The standards emphasize that program design must be data-driven and responsive, beginning with community needs and continuously reviewed to ensure effectiveness. Each program option comes with specific federal expectations—such as required hours of service in center-based programs and structured weekly engagement in home-based models—that go beyond basic licensing requirements. Programs are expected not only to deliver services, but to ensure those services are delivered at a level of intensity (“dosage”) sufficient to produce results, and to adjust program models when they are not achieving intended outcomes.

From an alignment perspective, Florida provides a strong foundation in licensing, safety, and basic service delivery infrastructure, particularly center-based and family child care settings. However, significant gaps exist in areas where Head Start requires intentional program design, defined service duration, structured home-based services, and continuous evaluation and redesign of program options. Florida does not require programs to justify their service model choices, monitor effectiveness in the same structured way, or redesign services based on performance data.

Subpart B: HSPPS

§1302.20 and Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS §1302.20 requires programs to intentionally select and implement the appropriate program option—such as center-based, home-based, family child care, or a combination—based on the needs identified in their community assessment. Programs must ensure that the chosen model is capable of effectively meeting the developmental, educational, and family engagement needs of enrolled children and families, and that it complies with the specific requirements associated with that option. The regulation emphasizes that program design is not arbitrary; it must be data-driven, justified, and aligned with community conditions, while also ensuring sufficient quality, intensity, and accessibility of services.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation (ELC-Specific)
1302.20(a)(1) Program must choose one or more program options (center-based, home-based, family child care, or locally designed option).	F.S. §1002.88 School Readiness Provider Standards	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida permits delivery of School Readiness services through a variety of provider types, including child care centers, family child care homes, large family child care homes, faith-based providers, public schools, and other eligible providers. However, Florida does not require programs to formally select a Head Start-style program option.
1302.20(a)(1) Program option must be based on community needs identified through a community assessment.	F.S. §1002.85 Early Learning Coalition Plans	⚠ Partial Alignment. Coalition planning considers local community needs, but individual providers are not required to select operating models based on a formal community assessment.
1302.20(a)(2) Program must review community needs annually when determining program structure and calendar.	F.S. §1002.85; 6M-9.115 School Readiness Plans	⚠ Partial Alignment. Early Learning Coalitions conduct planning activities and assess service needs, but providers are not required to annually evaluate program structure based on community assessment data.
1302.20(a)(2) Program must consider full-day, full-working-day, and extended-year services.	F.S. §1002.89 School Readiness Funding; Local coalition reimbursement policies	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida supports varying care schedules, including full-day services, but does not require

		providers to formally evaluate service duration options as part of program design.
1302.20(a)(2) Program must promote continuity of care and services.	F.S. §1002.82 Department Responsibilities; F.S. §1002.83 Early Learning Coalitions	 Partial Alignment. Florida supports continuity of services through coordinated early learning systems but lacks a direct requirement comparable to Head Start's continuity-of-care planning process.
1302.20(a)(2) Program must seek alternative funding sources to support full-working-day services.	No direct School Readiness equivalent.	 No Alignment. Florida does not require providers to pursue additional funding sources to expand service duration.
1302.20(b) All program options must provide the full range of comprehensive services.	School Readiness focuses on education, care, and developmental supports under F.S. Ch. 1002; CCR&R services under F.S. §1002.92	 No Alignment. Florida School Readiness is not a comprehensive service model equivalent to Head Start and does not require providers to deliver the full range of health, nutrition, family services, and program governance requirements.
1302.20(c)(1) Programs may request conversion of Head Start Preschool slots to Early Head Start slots.	No School Readiness equivalent.	 No Alignment. Florida does not operate through Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start slot conversion processes.
1302.20(c)(2) Conversion requires governing body and policy council approval.	No School Readiness equivalent.	 No Alignment. Florida School Readiness has no policy council or governing

		body approval structure comparable to Head Start.
1302.20(c)(3) Conversion requests must be supported by community assessment data and operational planning.	No School Readiness equivalent.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not require formal conversion applications or supporting documentation of this nature.
1302.20(c)(4) Tribal programs may reallocate funds between Head Start and Early Head Start.	No School Readiness equivalent.	✗ No Alignment. Florida School Readiness does not have a comparable tribal fund reallocation provision.
1302.20(d) Hours funded by multiple sources may count toward service duration requirements if HSPPS are met.	F.S. §1002.89 School Readiness Funding; mixed-delivery funding model	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida providers frequently blend multiple funding streams and serve children supported by different funding sources, but Florida does not establish Head Start-style service duration requirements.

§1302.21 and Florida Requirements

Summary: §1302.21 establishes that center-based Head Start services must be intentionally designed—not just licensed—to ensure that classroom environments, staffing structures, and service duration collectively produce meaningful developmental and school readiness outcomes for children. While it includes baseline requirements around health, safety, staffing, and ratios, its deeper purpose is to ensure that classroom structure actively supports high-quality interactions, individualized instruction, and consistent engagement over time. It is not just about meeting ratios and safety standards; it is about structuring classrooms, staffing, and time in a way that guarantees children receive consistent, high-quality learning experiences that lead to measurable developmental outcomes.

At its core, §1302.21 integrates three interdependent components: Structural Quality (ratio, group size, staffing), Instructional Capacity (environment and interactions) and Dosage and Intensity. This is a nuanced standard, connecting to §1302.11 and §1302.16 in Subpart A as well

as §1302.32, around curriculum and instruction. This standard will be broken down into subsections as it is so detailed.

a) Setting

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
Center-based options must deliver a full range of services (education, family engagement, health, etc.)	F.S. Ch. 402; F.S. §1002.88 (provider standards)	✗ No alignment. Florida requires care and basic developmental activities but does not require full comprehensive services
Services delivered primarily in classroom settings	65C-22 FAC (Child Care Facility Standards)	✓ Strong alignment. Florida requires licensed, center-based settings for care.

(b) Ratios & Group Size

(b)(1) General Ratio Requirements

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference	Alignment Explanation
Ratios determined by age of majority of children	65C-22 FAC ratio tables by age group	✓ Strong alignment. Florida ratios are age-based.
Must meet stricter standard if state ratio is more stringent	65C-22 FAC licensing requirements	✓ Strong alignment. Licensing must be followed
Ratios always maintained (with limited exception)	65C-22 supervision requirements	⚠ Partial alignment. Florida requires ratios at all time per the SR contract

(b)(2) Infants/Toddlers (Continuity of Care + Group Size)

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
Max 8–9 children with 2–3 teachers (under 36 months)	65C-22 FAC ratios: 1:4 infants, 1:6 (1-year-olds), 1:11 (2-year-olds)	⚠ Partial alignment. Florida ratios align for infants, are higher for toddlers, and significantly higher for 2-

		year-olds; no fixed group size cap.
Two or three teachers required depending on group size	Not required in Florida rules	✗ No alignment. Florida does not require multiple staff structure.
Each teacher assigned primary responsibility for ≤4 children (continuity of care)	No requirement	✗ No alignment
Must minimize teacher changes (continuity of care)	No requirement	✗ No alignment

(b)(3) 3-Year-Old Classrooms

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference	Alignment Explanation
Max 17 children (or 15 double session)	65C-22 ratio = 1:15 (age 3)	✗ No alignment. Florida allows larger group sizes (30 with 2 staff)
Requires teacher + assistant (2 staff)	Not required	✗ No alignment

(b)(4) 4–5-Year-Old Classrooms

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference	Alignment Explanation
Max 20 children (17 double session)	65C-22 ratio = 1:20 (age 4)	✗ No alignment. Florida allows up to 40 children with 2 staff
Requires teacher + assistant (2 staff)	Not required	✗ No alignment

(c) Service Duration (Dosage)

Early Head Start (c)(1)

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference	Alignment Explanation
1,380 annual hours required	No requirement in Florida SR rules	✗ No alignment

Head Start Preschool (c)(2)

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference	Alignment Explanation
1,020 annual hours for at least 45% enrollment	No required hours in Florida SR	✗ No alignment
Minimum number of days per year (160+/128 days)	No requirement	✗ No alignment
Minimum 3.5 hours per day	No requirement	✗ No alignment
Double session requirements (time, staffing, planning)	No requirement	✗ No alignment

Calendar Planning (c)(4)

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference	Alignment Explanation
Programs must plan for closures and make up time	No requirement	✗ No alignment

(d) Licensing & Space Requirements**(d)(1) Licensing**

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference	Alignment Explanation
Must meet state licensing requirements	F.S. Ch. 402; 65C-22 FAC	✓ Strong alignment. Florida licensing is required

(d)(2) Square Footage

Requirement Area	HSPPS Requirement (§1302.21)	Florida Requirement (DCF / 65C-22)	Alignment
Indoor Space per Child	Minimum 35 sq ft of usable indoor space per child	Minimum 35 sq ft of usable indoor space per child (excludes bathrooms, hallways, kitchens, offices)	✓ Strong alignment
Outdoor Space per Child	Minimum 75 sq ft of outdoor play space	Minimum 45 sq ft of usable outdoor play	✗ No alignment

	per child for center-based programs	space for children one year of age and older	
Licensing Requirement for Space	Must meet all applicable state/local licensing requirements	Required under F.S. §402.305 and 65C-22 FAC for adequate physical environment	✓ Strong alignment
Use of Space for Learning Environment	Space must support learning environments, group separation, and instructional effectiveness	Florida requires adequate physical space for safety and capacity, but does not explicitly require design for instruction	⚠ Partial alignment
Defined Classroom Separation / Noise Control	Requires clearly defined space for groups and control of learning environment	No explicit requirement for instructional separation or noise control in licensing rules	✗ No alignment
Connection to Child Development & Outcomes	Space must facilitate implementation of educational services (Subpart C)	Space requirements tied to health, safety, and capacity, not outcomes	✗ No alignment

(d)(3) Group Separation & Learning Environment Design

HSPPS Requirement	Exact Florida Reference	Alignment Explanation
Must have defined classroom divisions to support learning	65C-22 FAC physical environment requirements	⚠ Partial alignment. Florida requires safe space, but not instructionally designed separation
Must minimize noise and support learning environment	Not required in Florida rules	✗ No alignment

This sub-section will offer more specific insights, outlining the ratio and group size alone, along with the nuances around screening, assessment and the use of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) for the purpose of improving quality instruction, not as a compliance piece.

HSPPS and Florida Ratios & Group Size (Birth–5)

Age Group	HSPPS Ratio	Florida Ratio	Alignment
Birth – 12 months	1:4	1:4	✓ High (ratio aligned; structure differs)
12 – 24 months	1:4	1:6	✗ Low
2 years	1:6	1:11	✗ Low
3 years	1:10	1:15	✗ Low
4–5 years	1:10	1:20	✗ Very Low

Child Screening and Assessment Notes

School Readiness requires a developmental screening, and the Ages & Stages Questionnaires®, Third Edition (ASQ®-3) is the developmental screening tool used in the School Readiness Program. Parents, child care providers, and ELCs can complete the screening tool. Screening results are shared with parents (Florida Department of Education, n.d.).

While the statewide School Readiness child assessment process is voluntary, it helps improve school readiness and School Readiness child care providers who meet eligibility requirements may receive a differential for conducting child assessments during the three child assessment periods (Florida Department of Education, n.d.).

Child Screening and Assessment

Area	Florida (School Readiness)	Head Start (HSPPS)
Developmental screening	✓ Required	✓ Required
Ongoing assessment	✗ Voluntary	✓ Required
Assessment tool	✓ State-approved list	✓ Required (comprehensive system)

Use of data to guide instruction	✓ Encouraged	✓ Required
Individualization	✗ Not required	✓ Required
Documentation of progress	✗ Not required	✓ Required

The Use of CLASS

Area	Florida	Head Start
Instructional quality monitoring	✓ YES (CLASS)	✓ YES (CLASS + broader system)
Required	✓ Required in SR contracts	✓ Required
Focus	Classroom interactions	Classroom + individual child outcomes + systems
Link to compliance	✓ Contract performance thresholds	✓ Federal monitoring & outcomes

OVERALL ALIGNMENT SUMMARY – §1302.21

Category	Alignment Level
Setting	✓ Moderate-High
Ratios (basic structure)	⚠ Partial
Group size & staffing structure	✗ Low
Service duration (dosage)	✗ Low
Licensing	✓ High
Space/environment design	⚠ Partial

HSPPS §1302.22 vs Florida Requirements (Home-Based Option)

Summary: Florida School Readiness is not a home visiting program and does not include a home-based service delivery option; instead, it is structured as a flexible child care subsidy system delivered in licensed settings, with no requirements for in-home instruction, family visits, or defined service intensity.

HSPPS §1302.23 and Florida Requirements (Family Child Care Option)

Summary: HSPPS §1302.23 allows programs to deliver services through family child care homes (FCCH) homes, provided those settings meet Head Start's full performance standards and are intentionally designed to support child development and learning. Programs must ensure FCCH environments maintain appropriate ratios and small group sizes, support mixed-age group care safely and developmentally, and provide consistent, relationship-based care through stable caregivers. In addition to meeting health and safety requirements, FCCH providers must deliver developmentally appropriate, individualized instruction, integrate family engagement, and participate in ongoing monitoring by the grantee to ensure quality and compliance. experiences comparable to other Head Start program models.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.23(a) Family child care option must deliver the full range of program services.	F.S. §1002.88 School Readiness Provider Standards; F.S. Ch. 402; 65C-20 Family ChildCare Home Rules	 No Alignment. Florida family child care homes may participate in School Readiness but are not required to provide the comprehensive health, family services, mental health, nutrition, and governance services required by Head Start.
1302.23(a)(1) Program must have a legally binding agreement with family child care providers defining responsibilities.	Rule 6M-4.610 Statewide School Readiness Provider Contract	 Partial Alignment. Florida requires School Readiness providers, including family child care homes, to operate under a provider agreement; however, the contract does not establish the comprehensive Head Start partnership structure required by this standard.

1302.23(a)(2) Program must ensure family child care homes can accommodate children and families with disabilities.	F.S. §1002.87(1)(c)6.; F.S. §1002.88; ADA and Section 504 requirements	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida recognizes children with special needs and providers must comply with applicable disability laws, but there is no specific family child care accommodation requirement equivalent to Head Start.
1302.23(b)(1) Group size must not exceed federally established limits.	F.S. §402.313 Family Child Care Homes; F.S. §402.3131 Large Family Child Care Homes; 65C-20; 65C-25	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida establishes maximum capacity and ratio requirements for family child care settings, but the limits differ from Head Start family child care requirements.
1302.23(b)(2) Mixed-age groups with preschool children must meet specific Head Start group size requirements.	F.S. §402.313; 65C-20; F.S. §402.3131; 65C-25	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida regulates group composition and ratios but does not use Head Start's mixed-age group size structure.
1302.23(b)(3) Infant and toddler-only groups must meet specific Head Start group size requirements.	F.S. §402.313; F.S. §402.3131; 65C-20; 65C-25	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida regulates infant and toddler capacity but does not mirror Head Start's specific enrollment limits.
1302.23(b)(4) Program must maintain ratios during all hours of operation.	F.S. §402.305; F.S. §402.313; F.S. §402.3131; 65C-20; 65C-22; 65C-25	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida licensing rules establish staff-to-child supervision and ratio requirements that must be maintained throughout operating hours.
1302.23(b)(4) Providers must have systems ensuring child safety when children are not in direct view.	65C-20 Family Child Care Home Rules; 65C-22 Child Care Facility Rules; DCF Health and Safety Requirements	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires active supervision and child safety procedures designed to protect children at all times.
1302.23(b)(4) Programs must provide qualified substitutes to	65C-20 Family Child Care Homes; 65C-25	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida contains substitute and supervision requirements but does not require a

prevent interruption of services.	Large Family Child Care Homes	Head Start-style substitute staffing system to ensure comprehensive services.
1302.23(c) Family child care providers must operate sufficient hours to meet family needs and no less than 1,380 hours annually.	F.S. §1002.89 School Readiness Funding; Provider operating schedules	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not establish a minimum annual service duration requirement comparable to the Head Start family child care option.
1302.23(d) Family child care providers must be licensed.	F.S. §402.313; F.S. §402.3131; 65C-20; 65C-25	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires family child care homes and large family child care homes to meet state licensing requirements.
1302.23(d) Most stringent requirement applies when state and Head Start standards differ.	No equivalent Florida requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida requires compliance with state standards but does not incorporate the Head Start "most stringent standard prevails" requirement.
1302.23(e) Program must provide a child development specialist to support family child care providers.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not require family child care homes participating in School Readiness to receive support from a designated child development specialist.
1302.23(e)(1) Child development specialist must visit each home at least every two weeks, including unannounced visits.	No equivalent Florida requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida licensing inspections and monitoring occur, but not under a biweekly child development specialist model.
1302.23(e)(2) Specialist must verify compliance with contracts or agency policies.	Rule 6M-4.630 Statewide Provider Contract Monitoring Tool; licensing inspections	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida conducts monitoring and inspections but does not require a dedicated child development specialist to perform these functions.
1302.23(e)(3) Specialist must facilitate communication	F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida provides coordination and support

among the program, provider, and families.	Referral; Coalition support systems	functions through coalitions and CCR&R systems, but not through a required child development specialist.
--	-------------------------------------	--

HSPPS §1302.24 and Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS §1302.24 requires programs to continuously evaluate and justify their chosen program options (center-based, home-based, or family child care) to ensure they remain effective and responsive to community needs over time. Programs must use data—such as community assessment findings, child outcomes, and participation patterns—to determine whether their current service delivery model is meeting the needs of enrolled children and families. If not, they must make informed adjustments or redesign their program options with oversight from the governing body and Policy Council.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.24(a) Programs may request approval to operate a locally designed program option to meet unique community needs.	F.S. §1002.85 Early Learning Coalition Plans; 6M-9.115 Procedures and Criteria for Approval of School Readiness Plans	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida allows local flexibility through coalition planning and service delivery models, but individual School Readiness providers do not request federal-style waivers to create locally designed program options.
1302.24(a) Locally designed options may combine multiple program options.	F.S. §1002.88 School Readiness Provider Standards	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida providers may offer multiple service models (center-based, family child care, school-age, blended funding arrangements), but there is no formal locally designed option approval process.
1302.24(a) Programs must continue delivering the full range of comprehensive services.	F.S. Ch. 1002; F.S. Ch. 402	❌ No Alignment. Florida School Readiness does not require providers to deliver the comprehensive health, nutrition, family services, mental

		health, and governance components required under Head Start.
1302.24(a) Programs must demonstrate alignment with program goals and outcomes.	6M-4.700 Child Performance Standards; 6M-4.740 Program Assessment Requirements; F.S. §1002.995 Professional Learning Standards	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida requires child outcomes, curriculum implementation, and quality improvement activities, but does not require justification of locally designed program models against federally approved program goals.
1302.24(b) Program must receive approval from the responsible federal official to operate the variation.	No equivalent Florida requirement.	❌ No Alignment. Florida has no comparable waiver approval process for locally designed School Readiness program structures.
1302.24(b) Approval may be revoked based on monitoring and performance.	Rule 6M-4.630 Statewide Provider Contract Monitoring Tool; F.S. §1002.88 Provider Standards	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida providers are monitored and may face corrective action, sanctions, or termination from School Readiness participation, but not through a locally designed option approval process.
1302.24(c)(1) Federal officials may waive specific operational requirements.	No equivalent Florida waiver authority.	❌ No Alignment. Florida statutes and rules do not establish a provider waiver process similar to HSPPS locally designed program options.
1302.24(c)(1) Minimum standards for infant and toddler ratios may not be waived.	F.S. §402.305; F.S. §402.313; F.S. §402.3131; 65C Licensing Rules	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida establishes mandatory ratio and supervision requirements that providers must follow.
1302.24(c)(2) Any approved waiver must maintain specified group size limitations.	F.S. §402.305; F.S. §402.313; F.S. §402.3131; 65C Licensing Rules	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida establishes group size and capacity requirements but does not have a waiver framework that modifies them.

1302.24(c)(3) Programs approved for service-duration waivers must continue meeting certain operational requirements.	F.S. §1002.89 School Readiness Funding; Provider operating schedules	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not use Head Start service duration minimums or service-duration waiver processes.
1302.24(c)(4) Programs must provide evidence that the variation supports positive child outcomes.	6M-4.740 Program Assessment Requirements; 6M-4.700 Child Performance Standards	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida requires quality and child outcome measures, but not as part of a waiver application process.
1302.24(c)(5) Programs seeking service-duration waivers must demonstrate the model better serves families and children.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not require evidence-based justification for alternative service-duration models.
1302.24(c)(5) Programs must evaluate the effectiveness of the approved variation.	6M-9.120 Early Learning Coalition Performance Standards and Evaluations; 6M-4.740 Program Assessment Requirements	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida requires performance evaluation and quality assessment activities, but not evaluation of a formally approved locally designed program option.

Subpart B

Alignment and Gap Summary

Florida's SR systems demonstrate moderate alignment in areas related to provider types, licensing, health and safety requirements, monitoring, and local flexibility. However, there are significant gaps because Florida's system is designed as a child care and early learning subsidy program rather than a comprehensive service model like Head Start.

One of the strongest areas of alignment is Florida's mixed-delivery approach, which allows services to be provided through multiple provider types, including child care centers, family child care homes, large family child care homes, faith-based providers, schools, and other eligible settings. Similar to Head Start's center-based, family child care, and other program options, Florida recognizes multiple delivery models to meet community needs. Florida also

aligns strongly with Head Start requirements related to licensing, supervision, staff-child ratios, group size regulation, and child safety requirements, particularly within family child care settings.

Florida also demonstrates moderate alignment in the areas of local planning and community responsiveness. Early Learning Coalitions assess local needs, develop School Readiness plans, administer services based on community demand, and coordinate community resources. These activities support many of the same goals found in Head Start's requirements for community-informed program design. Florida's performance monitoring systems, provider assessments, curriculum requirements, and quality improvement initiatives also support accountability and continuous improvement efforts.

The most significant gaps occur because Florida does not require a comprehensive services model comparable to Head Start. While School Readiness providers must meet education, developmental, health, safety, and screening requirements, they are not required to provide the full range of Head Start services such as family services, mental health consultation, nutrition services, health services, governance structures, policy councils, and integrated comprehensive service delivery. This difference affects alignment across much of Subpart B.

Another major difference is the absence of a formal program-option approval and waiver structure. Head Start programs may request locally designed program options, seek waivers of certain operational requirements, convert Head Start slots to Early Head Start slots, and justify alternative program structures using child outcome data and community-assessment findings. Florida has no comparable statewide process. Providers must comply with established licensing, School Readiness, and contract requirements rather than seeking approval for customized program designs.

Florida also does not align with requirements related to minimum service duration standards, such as Head Start's annual hour requirements, full-school-year expectations, or family child care requirements for operating at least 1,380 hours per year. School Readiness services are driven by child care needs, eligibility authorizations, provider operating schedules, and reimbursement structures rather than federally defined service-duration standards.

Within the family child care option, Florida aligns strongly on licensing, supervision, safety, and operational requirements but has limited alignment with Head Start's requirement for a dedicated child development specialist, regular support visits, intensive technical assistance, and ongoing oversight specific to family child care providers. Florida offers professional development and quality support through coalitions and state initiatives, but these systems are not as individualized or prescriptive as those required by Head Start.

In summary, Subpart B reveals that Florida's School Readiness systems align well with the operational foundations of early learning programs, particularly provider regulation, safety, and local service delivery flexibility. However, Florida has substantially less alignment with the Head Start requirements related to comprehensive services, governance, service-duration standards, program-option waivers, child development specialist supports, and federally structured program design processes. The overall pattern suggests that Florida and Head Start share many operational objectives but use fundamentally different program models to achieve them.

Subpart C: Executive Summary

Education and Child Development Program Services (1302.30-1302.36)

Subpart C (HSPPS §§1302.30–1302.35) establishes a comprehensive, integrated approach to early childhood education that requires programs to intentionally design and deliver high-quality learning experiences that promote school readiness across all developmental domains. It requires programs to implement research-based curricula aligned to developmental standards, create structured and engaging learning environments, and ensure teaching practices are responsive, language-rich, and developmentally appropriate. A central requirement is that programs operate a continuous instructional cycle, where curriculum, teaching, and assessment are connected and used together to promote children's growth.

In addition, Subpart C emphasizes that programs must go beyond screening to conduct ongoing child assessments, using data—along with observations and family input—to individualize instruction and improve teaching practices for each child. It also requires strong inclusion practices for children with disabilities and dual language learners, as well as active family engagement in children's education. Overall, Subpart C ensures that early learning is not incidental but intentionally planned, continuously monitored, and individualized, resulting in meaningful and measurable developmental outcomes for every child.

HSPPS §1302.30 and Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS §1302.30 establishes the foundation for all educational services in Head Start, requiring programs to create intentional teaching and learning environments that promote children's development and school readiness across all domains. It emphasizes that education must be developmentally appropriate, research-based, and responsive to each child's needs, ensuring that learning experiences are meaningful, engaging, and grounded in how young children grow and learn. Rather than focusing only on curriculum or activities, the standard defines the broader expectation that programs must build a cohesive, high-quality educational approach where environments, teaching practices, and interactions work together to support cognitive, social-emotional, language, and physical development.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
Programs must provide developmentally appropriate, research-based early childhood education	F.S. §1002.88; DEL Early Learning & Developmental Standards	✅ Strong alignment. Florida requires curriculum aligned to developmental standards.
Programs must support school readiness across domains	Florida Early Learning & Developmental Standards	✅ Strong alignment. Florida defines domains of development.
Programs must ensure intentional teaching practices	No explicit requirement in statute/rule	⚠️ Partial alignment. Standards exist but intentional implementation not required.

HSPPS §1302.31 and Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS §1302.31 requires programs to create teaching and learning environments that are intentionally structured to promote active engagement, exploration, and development across all domains for every child. Classrooms must be well-organized, developmentally appropriate, and responsive to individual children’s strengths, needs, and interests, with teaching practices that encourage curiosity, problem-solving, and social-emotional growth. The standard emphasizes the importance of strong teacher-child interactions, consistent routines, and environments that support both whole-group and individualized learning experiences. This is a detailed standard with specific subsections identified.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.31(a) Program must provide responsive care, effective teaching, and organized learning environments that support	F.S. §1002.88 School Readiness Provider Standards; 6M-4.700 Child Performance Standards; 6M-4.710	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires School Readiness providers to support age-appropriate development, implement approved curricula, and provide learning

child development and learning.	School Readiness Program Curricula	environments that promote child growth and development.
1302.31(a) Program must support implementation through supervision and individualized ongoing professional development.	F.S. §1002.995 Early Learning Professional Learning Standards and Career Pathways; 6M-4.735 Professional Development Standards	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida requires professional development systems and workforce standards but does not require the same individualized coaching and supervisory framework described in Head Start.
1302.31(b)(1)(i) Teaching practices must emphasize nurturing relationships, emotional security, language-rich interactions, critical thinking, problem solving, and supportive feedback.	6M-4.700 Child Performance Standards; 6M-4.710 School Readiness Program Curricula	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida's child development standards emphasize social-emotional development, language development, communication, and age-appropriate learning experiences.
1302.31(b)(1)(ii) Teaching must align with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework and individualized development.	6M-4.700 Child Performance Standards; 6M-4.710 School Readiness Program Curricula	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida requires alignment with Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards rather than the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework.
1302.31(b)(1)(iii) Teaching must integrate child assessment data into planning.	6M-4.720 Screening of Children; 6M-4.740 Program Assessment Requirements	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida requires developmental screening and assessment activities but does not explicitly require ongoing individual instructional planning using assessment data to the same extent as Head Start.
1302.31(b)(1)(iv) Learning experiences must include language, literacy, social-emotional development, math, science, social studies, creative	6M-4.700 Child Performance Standards; 6M-4.710 School Readiness Program Curricula	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida standards address multiple developmental domains and support comprehensive early learning experiences.

arts, and physical development.		
1302.31(b)(2) Programs must support dual language learners and recognize bilingualism and biliteracy as strengths.	F.S. §1002.82 Department Powers and Duties; Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida supports culturally responsive practices and diverse learners but does not contain the extensive dual-language learner requirements found in HSPPS.
1302.31(b)(2)(i) Infants and toddlers should receive support for home language development and English exposure.	No direct School Readiness equivalent.	❌ No Alignment. Florida does not specifically require home-language development programming for infants and toddlers.
1302.31(b)(2)(ii) Preschool dual language learners should receive support for both English acquisition and home language development.	General curriculum and developmental standards.	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida encourages language development but does not require bilingual instructional strategies.
1302.31(b)(2)(iii) Programs should support home-language development when staff do not speak the child's language.	No direct School Readiness requirement.	❌ No Alignment. Florida does not impose this specific requirement.
1302.31(c) Programs must implement organized learning environments with developmentally appropriate schedules, lesson plans, play, exploration, and learning opportunities.	6M-4.710 School Readiness Program Curricula; 6M-4.700 Child Performance Standards	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires developmentally appropriate practices and curriculum implementation that support learning through exploration and play.
1302.31(c)(1) Infant and toddler programs must support relational learning through individualized and small-group experiences.	6M-4.700 Child Performance Standards	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida standards support individualized infant and toddler development, though not as specifically as Head Start.

1302.31(c)(2) Preschool programs must include teacher-directed, child-initiated, small-group, large-group, active, and quiet learning opportunities.	6M-4.710 School Readiness Program Curricula	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida-approved curricula generally incorporate these instructional approaches.
1302.31(d) Programs must provide age-appropriate materials, equipment, supplies, and space.	F.S. §1002.88; F.S. Chapter 402; 65C Licensing Rules	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida licensing and School Readiness requirements establish standards for materials, equipment, environment, and learning spaces.
1302.31(d) Materials and environments must be accessible to children with disabilities.	F.S. §1002.88; ADA and Section 504 requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida providers must accommodate children with disabilities and comply with accessibility requirements.
1302.31(d) Programs must intentionally change materials to support development and interests.	Curriculum implementation expectations under 6M-4.710	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida encourages developmentally appropriate curriculum implementation but does not specifically require periodic rotation of materials.
1302.31(e)(1) Programs must implement appropriate rest and nap practices and provide alternatives for children who do not nap.	Chapter 402 Licensing Standards; DCF Child Care Facility Handbook; Family Child Care Home Handbook	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida licensing standards address rest periods, supervision, and age-appropriate nap practices.
1302.31(e)(2) Meals and snacks must support development and learning.	F.S. §1002.88 Provider Standards; DCF Health and Safety Requirements; CACFP practices where applicable	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida supports healthy meals and feeding practices but does not require meal times to be used as structured learning opportunities to the extent required by Head Start.

1302.31(e)(2) Food may not be used as punishment or reward.	DCF Child Care Facility Handbook; Health and Safety Requirements	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida health and safety standards prohibit inappropriate discipline practices involving food.
1302.31(e)(3) Routines and transitions must be used as learning opportunities.	6M-4.710 School Readiness Program Curricula	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Developmentally appropriate practices support learning throughout the day, but Florida does not explicitly require educational planning around routines and transitions.

HSPPS §1302.32 and Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS §1302.32 requires programs to implement developmentally appropriate, research-based curricula that are intentionally aligned with children’s developmental progressions and designed to promote measurable school readiness outcomes. Programs must use curricula that are grounded in scientifically valid research, aligned to the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, and organized with a clear scope and sequence that reflects how children learn over time. In addition to selecting appropriate curricula, programs are required to actively monitor how well it is implemented, ensuring fidelity through ongoing supervision, feedback, and professional development for staff.

The standard also emphasizes that curriculum is not static and programs must continuously evaluate and strengthen its implementation, and when making significant adaptations, they must use qualified experts and assess whether those changes effectively support children’s progress.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.32(a)(1) Programs must implement developmentally appropriate, research-based early childhood curricula.	F.S. §1002.86 School Readiness Program Education Component; 6M-4.710 School Readiness Program Curricula	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires School Readiness providers to implement developmentally appropriate curricula designed to support child development and learning.

1302.32(a)(1)(i) Curricula must be based on scientifically valid research and include standardized training procedures and materials.	6M-4.710 School Readiness Program Curricula; 6M-4.735 Early Learning Professional Development Standards and Career Pathways	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida requires approved curricula and professional development; however, it does not uniformly require the level of research validation and standardized implementation framework specified in Head Start.
1302.32(a)(1)(ii) Curricula must align with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework and state standards.	6M-4.700 Child Performance Standards; 6M-4.710 School Readiness Program Curricula	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida requires alignment with Florida's Early Learning and Developmental Standards rather than the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework.
1302.32(a)(1)(ii) Curricula must be sufficiently content-rich to promote measurable child progress.	6M-4.700 Child Performance Standards; 6M-4.740 Program Assessment Requirements	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida establishes child performance expectations and assessment requirements intended to support measurable developmental progress.
1302.32(a)(1)(iii) Curricula must include a developmental scope and sequence.	6M-4.710 School Readiness Program Curricula	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida-approved curricula are expected to support developmental progressions and age-appropriate learning sequences.
1302.32(a)(1)(iii) Curricula must provide plans and learning experiences based on how children develop and learn.	6M-4.710 School Readiness Program Curricula; F.S. §1002.86	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida's curriculum requirements emphasize developmentally appropriate learning experiences and child-centered instruction.
1302.32(a)(2) Programs must support staff in effective curriculum implementation.	6M-4.735 Early Learning Professional Development Standards and Career Pathways; F.S. §1002.995 Professional Learning	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires workforce development systems and ongoing professional learning to support implementation of educational practices.

	Standards and Career Pathways	
1302.32(a)(2) Programs must monitor curriculum implementation and fidelity.	6M-4.740 Program Assessment Requirements; 6M-4.741; School Readiness monitoring requirements	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida monitors program quality and implementation but does not universally require curriculum fidelity monitoring to the extent required by Head Start.
1302.32(a)(2) Programs must provide support, feedback, supervision, and continuous improvement regarding curriculum implementation.	F.S. §1002.995; 6M-4.735; Coalition quality initiatives	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida supports professional development and continuous improvement but does not require the structured coaching and supervision model described in Head Start.
1302.32(b) Programs making significant curriculum adaptations must use an external early childhood curriculum or content expert.	No equivalent Florida requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not require providers to engage external curriculum experts when modifying or adapting curricula.
1302.32(b) Programs must assess whether curriculum adaptations support school readiness goals.	6M-4.740 Program Assessment Requirements; 6M-4.700 Child Performance Standards	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida requires assessment of program quality and child outcomes, but not specifically evaluation of curriculum adaptations.
1302.32(b) Programs are encouraged to use outside evaluators when assessing curriculum adaptations.	No equivalent Florida requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not require or encourage external evaluation of curriculum modifications in the manner specified by Head Start.

HSPPS §1302.33 and Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS §1302.33 requires programs to implement a comprehensive, integrated system of child screening and ongoing assessment that goes beyond identifying developmental concerns to actively informing individualized teaching and continuous improvement. Programs

must complete timely developmental screenings using standardized, research-based tools in collaboration with families and ensure that children with identified needs are promptly referred for evaluation and supported through IDEA processes. Beyond screening, the standard requires regular, ongoing assessments that track each child’s developmental progress across domains and generate meaningful data for teachers, families, and staff. This data must be consistently used—alongside observations and family input—to individualize instruction, adjust teaching strategies, and improve program practices. The standard also emphasizes that assessments must be valid, culturally and linguistically appropriate, and inclusive of dual language learners and children with disabilities. Finally, it establishes clear safeguards by prohibiting the use of assessment data for exclusion, ranking, or punitive purposes, ensuring that all assessment practices are focused on supporting each child’s development and access to services.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.33(a)(1) Program must complete or obtain a developmental screening within 45 days of enrollment.	Rule 6M-4.720 Screening of Children in the School Readiness Program	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires developmental screening of School Readiness children within established timelines and procedures to identify potential developmental concerns.
1302.33(a)(2) Program must use research-based standardized screening tools and include input from families and staff.	Rule 6M-4.720 Screening of Children in the School Readiness Program	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires use of approved developmental screening processes and encourages family participation in identifying developmental concerns and strengths.
1302.33(a)(3) Program must refer children with identified concerns for further evaluation with parental consent.	Rule 6M-4.720 Screening of Children in the School Readiness Program; F.S. §1002.86 School Readiness Education Component	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires follow-up and referral procedures when developmental concerns are identified through screening activities.

1302.33(a)(3)(i) Program must refer children to the local IDEA agency for evaluation.	Rule 6M-4.720; Florida Exceptional Student Education (ESE) referral processes	✔ Strong Alignment. Florida requires referral procedures for children suspected of having developmental delays or disabilities.
1302.33(a)(3)(ii) Program must partner with families during the evaluation process.	Rule 6M-4.720; F.S. §1002.86	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida requires family notification and engagement in the screening process but is less prescriptive than Head Start regarding ongoing family support during evaluation.
1302.33(a)(4) Program must coordinate services when a child qualifies under IDEA.	F.S. §1002.87(1)(c)6.; F.S. §1002.88 Provider Standards	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida supports inclusion of children with special needs and coordination with service providers but does not require the comprehensive IDEA partnership framework found in Head Start.
1302.33(a)(5) Program must seek additional professional guidance when a child is not found IDEA-eligible but still has significant delays.	Rule 6M-4.720 Screening of Children	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida supports referrals and developmental follow-up but does not require the detailed post-evaluation decision-making process required under Head Start.
1302.33(a)(5)(ii) Program must help families access services for children with significant developmental delays.	F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and Referral Services; Rule 6M-4.720	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida provides referral and resource systems that can connect families to services, although the requirement is less comprehensive than Head Start.
1302.33(b)(1) Program must conduct ongoing standardized assessments to evaluate developmental progress.	Rule 6M-4.740 Program Assessment Requirements; 6M-4.700 Child Performance Standards	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida requires assessment and program quality measures but does not require ongoing child-level assessment systems identical to Head Start.

1302.32(b) Programs must assess whether curriculum adaptations support school readiness goals.	6M-4.740 Program Assessment Requirements; 6M-4.700 Child Performance Standards	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida requires assessment of program quality and child outcomes, but not specifically evaluation of curriculum adaptations.
1302.32(b) Programs are encouraged to use outside evaluators when assessing curriculum adaptations.	No equivalent Florida requirement.	❌ No Alignment. Florida does not require or encourage external evaluation of curriculum modifications in the manner specified by Head Start.
1302.33(b)(2) Assessment information must be used to individualize instruction and learning strategies.	6M-4.710 School Readiness Program Curricula; 6M-4.740 Program Assessment Requirements	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida encourages individualized learning and curriculum implementation but does not require the same level of ongoing assessment-driven individualization.
1302.33(b)(3) Program must refer a child for IDEA evaluation when assessment results indicate concerns.	Rule 6M-4.720 Screening of Children	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires referral processes when developmental concerns are identified.
1302.33(c)(1) Screenings and assessments must be valid, reliable, culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate.	Rule 6M-4.720; Florida-approved screening requirements	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires approved screening procedures designed to be appropriate for participating children.
1302.33(c)(2) Programs serving dual language learners must assess both English and the child's home language.	No direct Florida requirement.	❌ No Alignment. Florida does not require bilingual developmental screening and assessment procedures equivalent to Head Start.
1302.33(c)(2)(ii) Assessments should occur in the language that best captures the child's development.	No direct Florida requirement.	❌ No Alignment. Florida does not contain equivalent language-specific assessment requirements.

1302.33(c)(2)(iii) Assessors must understand the child's language and culture.	General culturally responsive teaching expectations.	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida supports culturally responsive practices but does not require bilingual assessment personnel.
1302.33(c)(3) Programs must use interpreters when qualified bilingual staff are unavailable.	No direct School Readiness requirement.	❌ No Alignment. Florida does not impose this specific requirement.
1302.33(c)(4) Programs may assess in English if no bilingual support is available but must use additional information sources.	No direct equivalent.	❌ No Alignment. Florida does not establish these procedures.
1302.33(d) Screening and assessment data may not be used to rank, compare, reward, sanction, or exclude children.	F.S. §1002.88 Provider Standards; anti-discrimination requirements	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida does not contain the detailed Head Start prohibitions on assessment use but generally does not authorize exclusion based solely on screening results.
1302.33(d) Programs may not use screening or assessment results to exclude children from enrollment or participation.	F.S. §1002.87 Eligibility and Enrollment; F.S. §1002.88 Provider Standards	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida supports participation by children with special needs but does not include the same explicit prohibition found in Head Start.

HSPPS §1302.34 and Florida Requirements

Summary: 1302.34 requires Head Start programs to actively engage parents and families in their children's education and development by recognizing them as their child's first and lifelong teachers. Programs must maintain open communication, conduct at least two parent-teacher conferences and two home visits each year, share screening and assessment results, provide opportunities for family participation and volunteering, gather feedback on curriculum, and ensure communication is accessible to all families. The goal is to build strong partnerships that support children's learning both at home and in the program.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.34(a) Programs must recognize parents as children's lifelong educators and encourage engagement in education.	F.S. §1002.86 School Readiness Program Education Component; 6M-4.700 Child Performance Standards	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida supports family engagement and parent participation in children's development but does not explicitly establish parents as partners in education through a structured family engagement framework comparable to Head Start.
1302.34(b) Programs must offer opportunities for parent and family involvement in education services.	F.S. §1002.91; F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and Referral; School Readiness Provider Standards	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida encourages family involvement and communication but does not require a formal parent engagement system within education services.
1302.34(b)(1) Program settings must be open to parents during program hours.	DCF Child Care Facility Handbook; Family Child Care Home Handbook	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida generally permits parental access to children during operating hours
1302.34(b)(2) Teachers must regularly communicate with parents about routines, activities, and behavior.	65C Child Care Licensing Rules; School Readiness Health and Safety Requirements	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires ongoing communication regarding children's care, supervision, health, and well-being.
1302.34(b)(3) Teachers must hold at least two parent conferences per year.	No equivalent Florida requirement.	❌ No Alignment. Florida does not require parent-teacher conferences or establish a minimum number of conferences annually.
1302.34(b)(4) Parents must have opportunities to learn about and provide feedback on curricula and instructional materials.	6M-4.710 School Readiness Program Curricula	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida requires curriculum implementation but does not require a formal parent feedback process regarding curriculum selection or instructional materials.

1302.34(b)(5) Parents and family members must have opportunities to volunteer in classrooms and activities.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not require providers to offer classroom volunteer opportunities.
1302.34(b)(6) Teachers must share screening and assessment results and discuss child progress with parents.	6M-4.720 Screening of Children in the School Readiness Program	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires family notification and communication regarding developmental screening activities and results.
1302.34(b)(7) Teachers must conduct at least two home visits per year, including one before the program year when feasible.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not require home visits for center-based or family child care School Readiness programs.
1302.34(b)(8) Programs serving migrant and seasonal families must make efforts to conduct home visits.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not establish migrant-specific home visit requirements.
1302.34(b)(9) Programs must use accessible communication methods that meet community needs.	F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and Referral; Consumer Education Requirements	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida promotes family access to information and consumer education but does not require a comprehensive communication strategy similar to Head Start.

HSPPS 1302.35-1302.36

§1302.35 Education in home-based programs: there are no CCDF home based programs.

§1302.36 Tribal language preservation and revitalization: there are no specific tribal programs in the state.

Subpart C

Alignment and Gap Summary

Florida's School Readiness framework demonstrates strong alignment with Head Start requirements related to classroom instruction, curriculum implementation, developmental screening, child development standards, learning environments, health and safety practices, and support for children with disabilities. The strongest alignment occurs in §1302.31 Teaching and the Learning Environment, §1302.32 Curricula, and significant portions of §1302.33 Child Screenings and Assessments, where Florida has established statewide child performance standards, curriculum requirements, developmental screening expectations, professional development systems, and classroom quality requirements.

Florida's curriculum and instructional framework closely mirror the intent of Head Start by requiring developmentally appropriate practices, implementation of approved curricula, promotion of social-emotional, cognitive, language, literacy, and physical development, and support for school readiness outcomes. Florida also requires learning environments that are safe, developmentally appropriate, and accessible to children with disabilities. As a result, the core educational expectations of Head Start are largely reflected within Florida's School Readiness standards.

One of the strongest areas of alignment is developmental screening and identification of children with developmental concerns. Florida requires developmental screening, family notification, referral procedures, and coordination with early intervention and special education systems when concerns are identified. Both systems emphasize early identification and intervention for developmental delays and disabilities and support inclusion of children with special needs within early learning settings.

Moderate alignment exists in areas involving ongoing assessment, individualized instruction, and professional development. Florida requires assessment activities, child performance standards, professional learning requirements, and quality improvement initiatives. However, Head Start is considerably more prescriptive regarding the use of child assessment data to individualize instruction, monitor progress throughout the year, and connect assessment results to curriculum implementation and school readiness goals. Similarly, Florida supports professional development but does not require the intensive coaching, supervision, and continuous performance feedback systems that Head Start expects.

The largest gaps appear in requirements related to dual language learners. Head Start requires bilingual assessment procedures, support for home language development, use of qualified

bilingual staff or interpreters, and intentional strategies to promote bilingualism and biliteracy. Florida supports culturally responsive practices and language development generally but does not impose the same extensive requirements regarding home language preservation, bilingual assessment, or language-specific instructional practices.

Another significant gap exists within §1302.34 Parent and Family Engagement in Education and Child Development Services. Although Florida encourages communication with families and requires notification regarding developmental screening results, it does not require many of the formal family engagement practices that are central to Head Start. Head Start mandates parent conferences, home visits, volunteer opportunities, parent input into curriculum decisions, and a structured approach to recognizing parents as primary educators. Florida's approach is considerably less prescriptive and places greater emphasis on communication and family access rather than formal engagement activities.

This portion of the HSPPS reflects one of the strongest areas of overall alignment between Head Start and Florida School Readiness. Both systems emphasize high-quality teaching, developmentally appropriate curriculum, child development, developmental screening, inclusion, and school readiness. The primary differences are that Head Start incorporates a far more comprehensive framework for family engagement, individualized assessment, coaching, continuous improvement, and support for dual language learners. Florida addresses many of the same objectives, but generally through broader standards and less prescriptive requirements than those found in the Head Start Performance Standards.

Subpart D: Executive Summary

Health and Mental Health Program Services (1302.40-1302.47)

Subpart D establishes a comprehensive, preventive, and coordinated health services system to ensure that all children enrolled in Head Start have access to the medical, dental, mental health, and nutritional supports necessary for healthy development and school readiness. Rather than relying on external systems alone, programs are required to take an active role in identifying health needs, facilitating access to services, and monitoring follow-through, ensuring that each child receives timely and appropriate care. The standards emphasize early identification, continuity of care, and partnership with families and community providers, creating a system where health services are integrated into the overall program rather than treated as separate components.

At its core, Subpart D requires programs to implement a coordinated health approach that includes developmental and health screenings, ongoing monitoring of child health status, and

support for addressing identified needs, including referrals and follow-up care. It places strong emphasis on mental health, nutrition, oral health, and safety, and requires programs to collaborate with families to ensure care is accessible and culturally responsive. Additionally, programs must have systems in place for health recordkeeping, emergency preparedness, and safe environments, ensuring both prevention and response to health and safety issues. Overall, Subpart D ensures that programs actively support the whole child, recognizing that health and well-being are fundamental to children’s ability to learn, participate, and succeed.

HSPPS §1302.40 and Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS §1302.40 establishes the overall purpose of health program services in Head Start, requiring programs to ensure that children’s health, nutrition, and well-being is supported in a comprehensive and integrated way so they can fully participate in learning and development. It defines health broadly—including medical, oral, mental health, and nutrition—and emphasizes that services must not be isolated or reactive, but part of a coordinated system that supports the whole child.

The standard also underscores that health services must be delivered in a way that is developmentally appropriate and responsive to the cultural and linguistic needs of children and families, ensuring equitable access and relevance.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
(a) Programs must ensure a system of health program services that supports children’s overall health and well-being, including medical, oral, mental health, and nutrition	F.S. §402.305 and 65C-22 FAC require health, sanitation, immunizations, nutrition, and safe environments; basic meal and supervision requirements	⚠ Partial alignment. Florida addresses multiple health areas (immunizations, nutrition, safety), but does not define or require a coordinated health services system.
Health services must support children’s ability to participate fully in the program and benefit from services	Florida licensing ensures children are healthy enough to attend (immunization/health forms required)	⚠ Partial alignment. Florida focuses on eligibility/safety for participation but does not connect health services to ongoing developmental outcomes.

(b) Programs must provide health services in a way that is developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and responsive to each child and family	General expectations for care under licensing; no specific requirement in 6M-4 or 65C-22 for culturally or linguistically responsive health services	✗ No alignment. Florida does not require culturally or linguistically responsive health service delivery.
--	--	---

HSPPS §1302.41 and Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS §1302.41 requires programs to actively collaborate with families to ensure children have access to and receive ongoing health care services. Programs must go beyond simply maintaining records by working closely with parents to help identify appropriate medical, dental, and mental health providers, assist with scheduling and keeping appointments, and support families in establishing continuous sources of care for their children. The focus is on building a partnership where programs help families navigate health systems and reduce barriers to care.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.41(a) Programs must collaborate with parents as partners in the health, mental health, and well-being of their children.	F.S. §1002.86 School Readiness Education Component; 6M-4.720 Screening of Children in the School Readiness Program; School Readiness Health and Safety Requirements Handbook	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida requires family communication regarding children's development, screening results, and health and safety matters, but does not establish the comprehensive parent partnership framework required by Head Start.
1302.41(a) Programs must communicate with parents regarding health, mental health, and developmental concerns in a timely and effective manner.	6M-4.720 Screening of Children; School Readiness Health and Safety Requirements Handbook; DCF Licensing Requirements	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires providers to communicate with families regarding developmental concerns, incidents affecting children, health matters, and screening results.

1302.41(a) Communication must be linguistically and culturally appropriate.	General nondiscrimination requirements; consumer education requirements; provider family communication practices	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida supports accessible communication and services for diverse families but does not establish detailed linguistic and cultural responsiveness requirements comparable to Head Start.
1302.41(b)(1) Programs must obtain advance parental authorization for health, mental health, and developmental procedures.	DCF Child Care Facility Handbook; School Readiness Health and Safety Requirements Handbook; 6M-4.720 Screening of Children	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires parental consent or authorization for developmental screenings, medical treatment, emergency care permissions, and other child-related services.
1302.41(b)(1) Programs must maintain written documentation when parents refuse authorization.	Child records requirements under DCF licensing standards; School Readiness documentation requirements	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires documentation and maintenance of child records and must document a parent's choice regarding receipt of additional help.
1302.41(b)(2) Programs must share policies regarding health and mental health emergencies requiring rapid response or immediate medical attention.	DCF Child Care Facility Handbook; School Readiness Health and Safety Requirements Handbook; Emergency Preparedness and Response Requirements	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires providers to maintain and communicate emergency procedures, injury and illness policies, and emergency response protocols to families.
1302.41(a) Programs must collaborate with parents as partners in the health, mental health, and well-being of their children.	F.S. §1002.86 School Readiness Education Component; 6M-4.720 Screening of Children in the School Readiness Program; School Readiness Health and Safety Requirements Handbook	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida requires family communication regarding children's development, screening results, and health and safety matters, but does not establish the comprehensive parent partnership framework required by Head Start.

1302.41(a) Programs must communicate with parents regarding health, mental health, and developmental concerns in a timely and effective manner.	6M-4.720 Screening of Children; School Readiness Health and Safety Requirements Handbook; DCF Licensing Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires providers to communicate with families regarding developmental concerns, incidents affecting children, health matters, and screening results.
1302.41(a) Communication must be linguistically and culturally appropriate.	General nondiscrimination requirements; consumer education requirements; provider family communication practices	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida supports accessible communication and services for diverse families but does not establish detailed linguistic and cultural responsiveness requirements comparable to Head Start.
1302.41(b)(1) Programs must obtain advance parental authorization for health, mental health, and developmental procedures.	DCF Child Care Facility Handbook; School Readiness Health and Safety Requirements Handbook; 6M-4.720 Screening of Children	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires parental consent or authorization for developmental screenings, medical treatment, emergency care permissions, and other child-related services.
1302.41(b)(1) Programs must maintain written documentation when parents refuse authorization.	Child records requirements under DCF licensing standards; School Readiness documentation requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires documentation and maintenance of child records and documentation of parent authorization.
1302.41(b)(2) Programs must share policies regarding health and mental health emergencies requiring rapid response or immediate medical attention.	DCF Child Care Facility Handbook; School Readiness Health and Safety Requirements Handbook; Emergency Preparedness and Response Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires providers to maintain and communicate emergency procedures, injury and illness policies, and emergency response protocols to families.

HSPPS §1302.42 and Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS §1302.42 makes Head Start responsible not just for identifying health needs, but for actively helping families access, coordinate, track, and follow through on medical, dental, developmental, nutritional, and mental health services. It is one of the key standards that distinguishes Head Start from a traditional child care program because it creates a comprehensive health-services and care-coordination system around the child and family.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.42(a)(1) Program must determine whether each child has an ongoing source of health care and health insurance within 30 days.	School Readiness Health and Safety Requirements Handbook; DCF Child Care Facility Handbook	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida requires health information and emergency contact information for enrolled children but does not require providers to verify the existence of a medical home or health insurance coverage for every child.
1302.42(a)(2) Program must assist families in obtaining ongoing health care and health insurance if none exists.	F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and Referral Services	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida's referral system can connect families with community resources, but providers are not required to actively secure medical homes or health insurance coverage for families.
1302.42(b)(1) Program must verify children are up to date on preventive medical, oral health, mental health, and immunization requirements within 90 days.	F.S. §402.305; DCF Child Care Facility Handbook; School Readiness Health and Safety Requirements Handbook	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida requires immunization and health documentation for enrollment but does not require verification of comprehensive preventive medical, mental health, and oral health schedules.
1302.42(b)(1)(ii) Program must assist families in bringing children up to date on health requirements.	School Readiness Health and Safety Requirements	⚠ Partial Alignment. Providers may notify and refer families regarding health concerns, but there is no requirement for comprehensive

	Handbook; CCR&R Services	follow-up and coordination of services.
1302.42(b)(2) Program must obtain or perform vision and hearing screenings within 45 days.	Rule 6M-4.720 Screening of Children in the School Readiness Program	 Partial Alignment. Florida requires developmental screening and referral processes but does not universally require Head Start-style vision and hearing screening timelines for all enrolled children.
1302.42(b)(3) Programs operating 90 days or less must complete required screenings within 30 days.	No direct equivalent.	 No Alignment. Florida does not establish shortened screening timelines based on program duration.
1302.42(b)(4) Program must identify each child's nutritional health needs, including allergies, special diets, and nutritional concerns.	DCF Child Care Facility Handbook; School Readiness Health and Safety Requirements Handbook	 Strong Alignment. Florida requires documentation and accommodation of food allergies, dietary restrictions, and health conditions affecting nutrition and feeding.
1302.42(c)(1) Program must help families maintain recommended well-child and oral health schedules.	F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and Referral Services	 Partial Alignment. Florida may provide referrals and resource information but does not require providers to actively monitor preventive care schedules.
1302.42(c)(2) Program must conduct ongoing observation for developmental, medical, oral health, and mental health concerns.	Rule 6M-4.720 Screening of Children; 6M-4.700 Child Performance Standards	 Partial Alignment. Florida promotes observation and developmental monitoring but does not require an ongoing comprehensive health surveillance system.
1302.42(c)(3) Program must facilitate oral health prevention, treatment, fluoride treatments, and follow-up care.	No direct School Readiness equivalent.	 No Alignment. Florida does not require providers to coordinate oral health treatment or preventive dental services.

1302.42(d)(1) Program must facilitate diagnostic evaluation, treatment, and follow-up for health or developmental concerns.	Rule 6M-4.720 Screening of Children; F.S. §1002.92 CCR&R	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida requires referrals for identified concerns but does not require ongoing case management and treatment monitoring.
1302.42(d)(2) Program must maintain a system to track referrals, services, and follow-up plans.	No direct School Readiness equivalent.	❌ No Alignment. Florida does not require a formal referral-tracking and case-management system comparable to Head Start.
1302.42(d)(3) Program must assist families in obtaining prescribed medications, aids, or equipment.	General referral supports through CCR&R and community services.	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida may provide referrals and support but does not require providers to actively obtain medical equipment, medications, or treatment services.
1302.42(e)(1) Program must use program funds to provide diapers and formula during the program day.	No equivalent Florida School Readiness requirement.	❌ No Alignment. Florida does not require School Readiness providers to supply diapers or formula using program funds.
1302.42(e)(2) Program may use program funds for medical and oral health services when no other funding source is available.	No equivalent Florida School Readiness requirement.	❌ No Alignment. Florida School Readiness funds are not designed to finance direct medical or dental services in the manner allowed under Head Start.

§1302.43 Oral health practices: there are no required oral health practices in School Readiness.

HSPPS §1302.44 and Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS §1302.44 requires programs to ensure that children receive nutritious meals, snacks, and safe feeding practices that support healthy growth, development, and participation in learning. Programs must provide food that meets children’s dietary needs, ensure access to safe drinking water, and implement proper food safety and sanitation practices. Special attention is given to infants and young children, requiring developmentally appropriate feeding practices such as holding infants during bottle feeding and preventing unsafe practices like bottle propping

or putting infants to sleep with bottles. Meal service must also be structured around the length of the program day to ensure children are adequately nourished.

In addition to meeting basic nutritional needs, the standard emphasizes that nutrition should support broader developmental goals. This includes accommodating special dietary needs and recognizing meals and snacks as opportunities to foster healthy habits, social interaction, and learning.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.44(a)(1) Nutrition services must be culturally and developmentally appropriate and meet each child's nutritional and dietary needs.	F.S. §1002.88 School Readiness Provider Standards; DCF Child Care Facility Handbook; School Readiness Health and Safety Requirements Handbook	 Partial Alignment. Florida requires accommodation of food allergies, special dietary needs, and health-related feeding requirements, but does not require a comprehensive nutrition services system equivalent to Head Start.
1302.44(a)(2)(i) Programs operating less than six hours must provide meals and snacks meeting one-third to one-half of daily nutritional needs.	No direct School Readiness equivalent.	 No Alignment. Florida does not establish nutritional intake requirements based on program duration.
1302.44(a)(2)(ii) Programs operating six or more hours must provide meals and snacks meeting one-half to two-thirds of daily nutritional needs.	No direct School Readiness equivalent.	 No Alignment. Florida does not require providers to meet specified portions of a child's daily nutritional needs.
1302.44(a)(2)(iii) Meals and snacks must meet USDA nutrition requirements and be low in fat, sugar, and salt.	DCF Child Care Facility Handbook; CACFP participation requirements where applicable	 Partial Alignment. Florida encourages healthy meals and many providers participate in CACFP, but School Readiness does not independently require USDA meal standards for all providers.

1302.44(a)(2)(iv) Infants and toddlers must be fed according to developmental readiness and individual feeding needs.	DCF Child Care Facility Handbook; Family Child Care Home Handbook	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires age-appropriate feeding practices and individualized feeding plans for infants and toddlers.
1302.44(a)(2)(v) Bottle-fed infants must never be laid down to sleep with a bottle.	DCF Child Care Facility Handbook; Family Child Care Home Handbook	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida health and safety requirements prohibit bottle propping and unsafe feeding practices.
1302.44(a)(2)(vi) Programs must provide breakfast to children who arrive without having eaten.	No equivalent Florida requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not require providers to provide breakfast based on a child's arrival status.
1302.44(a)(2)(vii) Home-based programs must provide healthy snacks and meals during socializations.	No direct School Readiness equivalent.	✗ No Alignment. Florida School Readiness does not contain home-based nutrition requirements.
1302.44(a)(2)(viii) Programs must support breastfeeding, breast milk storage, and nursing mothers.	DCF Child Care Facility Handbook; School Readiness Health and Safety Requirements Handbook	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires providers to safely store and handle breast milk and accommodate breastfeeding mothers.
1302.44(a)(2)(ix) Safe drinking water must be available throughout the day.	DCF Child Care Facility Handbook; School Readiness Health and Safety Requirements Handbook	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires children to have access to safe drinking water throughout program operations.
1302.44(b) Programs must use USDA Child Nutrition Program funding as the primary source for meal services.	CACFP requirements; no School Readiness equivalent requirement	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not require School Readiness providers to participate in CACFP or use USDA nutrition funding as their primary funding source.

HSPPS §1302.45 and Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS §1302.45 requires Head Start programs to promote a program-wide culture that supports the mental health, social-emotional well-being, and overall wellness of children, families, and staff. Programs must use a multidisciplinary approach that includes positive learning environments, supportive teaching practices, mental health consultation, and coordinated services for children who may have social, emotional, behavioral, or mental health concerns. The regulation requires programs to secure ongoing mental health consultation services, ensure children receive appropriate screenings and follow-up when concerns are identified, and connect families to needed resources and services. Programs must also collaborate across education, health, disability, and family engagement services and build community partnerships to strengthen access to mental health supports.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.45(a) Program must establish a program-wide culture that promotes mental health, social-emotional well-being, and safety.	F.S. §1002.86 School Readiness Education Component; 6M-4.700 Child Performance Standards	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida promotes healthy social-emotional development and positive learning environments but does not require a comprehensive program-wide mental health framework.
1302.45(a)(1) Program must coordinate supports for adult mental health, family relationships, home visiting, and staff wellness.	No direct School Readiness equivalent.	❌ No Alignment. Florida does not require coordinated adult mental health, staff wellness, or family wellness systems.
1302.45(a)(2) Program must coordinate supports for positive learning environments and children with behavioral or mental health concerns.	6M-4.700 Child Performance Standards; 6M-4.710 School Readiness Program Curricula	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida promotes positive learning environments and developmental supports but does not require an integrated mental health support system.
1302.45(a)(3) Program must secure ongoing mental health consultation services and assess those services annually.	No equivalent Florida requirement.	❌ No Alignment. School Readiness does not require ongoing mental health consultants.

1302.45(a)(4) Mental health consultation services must be available at least monthly.	No equivalent Florida requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not establish minimum mental health consultation frequencies.
1302.45(a)(4)(i) Alternative behavioral health specialists may be used when consultants are unavailable.	No equivalent Florida requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not require substitute mental health consultation arrangements.
1302.45(a)(4)(ii) Programs must coordinate alternative providers with mental health consultants.	No equivalent Florida requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not have a comparable coordination requirement.
1302.45(a)(5) Programs must ensure screening and referral for social-emotional and mental health concerns.	6M-4.720 Screening of Children in the School Readiness Program	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida requires developmental screening and referrals but does not establish a dedicated mental health screening and follow-up system.
1302.45(a)(6) Programs must coordinate mental health services with education, disabilities, family engagement, and health services.	F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and Referral Services	⚠ Partial Alignment. Referral networks encourage coordination among services, but Florida does not require multidisciplinary mental health coordination.
1302.45(a)(7) Programs must build community partnerships to increase access to mental health resources.	F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and Referral Services	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida supports community resource referrals but does not specifically require formal mental health partnerships.
1302.45(b)(1) Mental health consultants must help create a program-wide culture that promotes mental health and identifies concerns.	No equivalent Florida requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not require mental health consultants.
1302.45(b)(2) Consultants must help staff build nurturing	No equivalent Florida requirement.	✗ No Alignment. No School Readiness requirement exists for

relationships and positive learning environments.		consultant-driven coaching on mental health practices.
1302.45(b)(3) Consultants must help staff identify and appropriately respond to mental health concerns, trauma, and behavioral challenges.	General developmental support requirements under 6M-4.700	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida encourages support of social-emotional development but does not require mental health consultation or trauma-informed coaching.
1302.45(b)(4) Consultants must help families and staff access mental health support and services.	F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and Referral Services	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida referral systems can connect families to services but do not require mental health consultant involvement.
1302.45(b)(5) Consultants must support implementation of policies limiting suspension and prohibiting expulsion.	No equivalent Florida requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not require consultant involvement in suspension or expulsion prevention.
1302.45(b)(6) Consultants must support children and families following significant health, mental health, or safety incidents.	No equivalent Florida requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not require post-incident mental health consultation or support services.

HSPPS §1302.46 and Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS §1302.46 requires programs to actively partner with families by providing education, information, and ongoing support to help promote children’s health, nutrition, and mental well-being. Programs must offer opportunities for parents to learn about topics such as preventive health care, nutrition, safety, and child development, as well as engage in discussions with staff about their child’s health and behavior. This includes ensuring information is accessible and understandable, even for families with low health literacy.

Beyond education, the standard requires programs to provide ongoing support to help families navigate health and mental health systems, including understanding health insurance, interpreting medical information, accessing services, and connecting to resources when concerns arise.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.46(a) Programs must collaborate with parents to promote children's health, nutrition, oral health, and mental health.	F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and Referral Services; 6M-4.720 Screening of Children in the School Readiness Program	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida supports family communication, referrals, and sharing information about children's development and well-being, but does not require a comprehensive family health support system comparable to Head Start.
1302.46(a) Information must be understandable and accessible, including for families with limited health literacy.	Consumer Education Requirements; F.S. §1002.92 CCR&R Services	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida promotes parent access to information and services but does not specifically require health-literacy-focused family education.
1302.46(b)(1)(i) Parents must have opportunities to learn about preventive health care, oral health, first aid, environmental hazards, tobacco exposure, lead exposure, and safe sleep.	DCF Health and Safety Requirements; Safe Sleep Training Requirements; Child Care Facility Handbook	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida requires health and safety practices and staff training on topics such as safe sleep, but does not require providers to offer comprehensive parent education on all listed topics.
1302.46(b)(1)(ii) Parents must have opportunities to discuss nutrition, physical activity, healthy eating, and food budgeting.	School Readiness Health and Safety Requirements Handbook; CACFP nutrition education activities where applicable	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida supports healthy nutrition practices but does not require ongoing parent nutrition education and coaching.
1302.46(b)(1)(iii) Parents must have opportunities to learn about healthy pregnancy, postpartum care, breastfeeding, and parental mental health.	Breastfeeding accommodation requirements; CCR&R referral services	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida supports breastfeeding accommodations and referrals but does not require education regarding

		pregnancy, postpartum health, or parental mental health.
1302.46(b)(1)(iv) Parents must have opportunities to discuss child mental health, behavior, and social-emotional development.	6M-4.720 Screening of Children; Developmental Screening Requirements	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida requires communication regarding developmental concerns but does not require structured parent education related to child mental health and social-emotional development.
1302.46(b)(1)(v) Parents must learn about vehicle and pedestrian safety.	Health and Safety Training Requirements	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida addresses child safety topics but does not require parent-focused education on vehicle and pedestrian safety.
1302.46(b)(2) Programs must provide ongoing support to help parents navigate health and mental health systems.	F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and Referral Services	⚠ Partial Alignment. CCR&R services help connect families to community resources, but providers are not required to provide ongoing case management or health-system navigation.
1302.46(b)(2)(i) Programs must help families understand and access health insurance.	CCR&R referral systems and community resource information	✖ No Alignment. Florida does not require School Readiness providers to assist families with obtaining or understanding health insurance coverage.
1302.46(b)(2)(ii) Programs must help families understand diagnostic results, treatments, and ongoing care plans.	6M-4.720 Screening of Children	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida requires communication regarding screening concerns and referrals, but not ongoing interpretation of medical evaluations and treatment plans.
1302.46(b)(2)(iii) Programs must help families enroll in and	F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and Referral Services	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida provides referrals and information about available services but does

use ongoing health care systems.		not require active health care coordination.
1302.46(b)(2)(iv) Programs must provide information and referrals for children's and families' mental health services.	F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and Referral Services; 6M-4.720 Screening of Children	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida supports referrals when concerns are identified but does not require comprehensive mental health navigation services.

HSPPS §1302.47 and Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS 1302.47 requires Head Start programs to establish, implement, and enforce a comprehensive system of health and safety practices that ensures children are kept safe at all times. Programs must provide ongoing staff training, supervision, and monitoring to maintain safe environments and continuously improve safety procedures. The regulation requires facilities to be clean, well-maintained, free of hazards, and compliant with licensing requirements. It also states that equipment and materials meet recognized safety standards, staff complete required background checks and safety training, and programs implement effective health, hygiene, emergency preparedness, and active supervision practices.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.47(a) Program must establish, train staff on, implement, and enforce a system of health and safety practices to keep children safe.	F.S. §1002.88 School Readiness Provider Standards; Rule 6M-4.620 Health and Safety Standards; DCF Licensing Handbooks	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires comprehensive health and safety policies, staff training, monitoring, and compliance systems to protect children.
1302.47(b) Program must maintain a management system with training, oversight, correction, and continuous improvement related to health and safety.	Rule 6M-4.620; Rule 6M-4.630 Statewide Provider Contract Monitoring Tool; DCF Licensing Monitoring	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires ongoing monitoring, corrective action, and compliance oversight for health and safety standards.

1302.47(b)(1)(i) Facilities must meet licensing requirements.	F.S. Ch. 402; 65C-22; 65C-20; 65C-25	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires licensed facilities and family child care homes to meet state health and safety requirements.
1302.47(b)(1)(ii) Facilities must be clean and free from pests.	DCF Child Care Facility Handbook; Family Child Care Home Handbook	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida licensing standards require sanitation and pest-control measures.
1302.47(b)(1)(iii) Facilities must be free from pollutants, toxins, and hazards.	DCF Licensing Standards; Health and Safety Requirements Handbook	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires providers to maintain safe environments free of hazards.
1302.47(b)(1)(iv) Facilities must prevent injuries and safety hazards.	F.S. §402.305; DCF Licensing Handbooks	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires ongoing hazard identification and injury-prevention practices.
1302.47(b)(1)(v) Facilities must be adequately lit, including emergency lighting.	DCF Licensing Standards; Local Fire and Building Codes	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires safe facility conditions, including lighting and emergency preparedness.
1302.47(b)(1)(vi) Facilities must maintain first aid kits and fire safety supplies.	DCF Child Care Facility Handbook; Health and Safety Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires first aid supplies and fire-safety equipment.
1302.47(b)(1)(vii) Firearms and weapons must not be accessible to children.	DCF Licensing Standards	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires dangerous weapons and hazardous items to be inaccessible to children.
1302.47(b)(1)(viii) Toileting and diapering areas must be separated from food preparation and activity areas.	DCF Child Care Facility Handbook; Family Child Care Home Handbook	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida establishes sanitation and separation requirements for diapering and food preparation areas.

1302.47(b)(1)(ix) Facilities must be maintained through preventive maintenance systems.	DCF Licensing Standards	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida requires facilities to be maintained in safe condition but does not require a formal preventive maintenance system.
1302.47(b)(2)(i) Equipment and materials must be clean, safe, and disinfected.	DCF Licensing Handbooks; Health and Safety Requirements	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires routine cleaning, sanitization, and maintenance of equipment and materials.
1302.47(b)(2)(ii) Equipment must be age appropriate.	DCF Licensing Standards	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires equipment and materials to be developmentally appropriate and safe.
1302.47(b)(2)(iii) Equipment must support supervision of children.	Active Supervision Requirements; DCF Licensing Standards	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires environments that support active supervision of children.
1302.47(b)(2)(iv) Programs must separate infants/toddlers from preschoolers during play.	DCF Licensing Requirements for Age Grouping and Supervision	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida addresses supervision and safety of mixed-age groups but does not mirror the Head Start requirement exactly.
1302.47(b)(2)(v) Equipment must be maintained through preventive maintenance.	DCF Licensing Standards	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Equipment must be maintained safely, but formal preventive maintenance systems are not specifically required.
1302.47(b)(3) All staff must complete background checks.	F.S. Ch. 435; F.S. §402.305; F.S. §1002.88	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires comprehensive background screening for child care personnel.

1302.47(b)(4)(i)(A) Staff must be trained in prevention and control of infectious diseases.	Health and Safety Training Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires training covering disease prevention and infection control.
1302.47(b)(4)(i)(B) Staff must be trained in safe sleep and SIDS prevention.	Safe Sleep Training Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires safe sleep training for applicable staff.
1302.47(b)(4)(i)(C) Staff must be trained in medication administration.	DCF Licensing Standards; Medication Administration Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida establishes medication administration requirements and training expectations.
1302.47(b)(4)(i)(D) Staff must be trained in food allergy prevention and emergency response.	Health and Safety Requirements Handbook	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires food allergy awareness and emergency response procedures.
1302.47(b)(4)(i)(E) Staff must be trained on facility and environmental safety.	Health and Safety Training Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires health and safety training related to environmental hazards.
1302.47(b)(4)(i)(F) Staff must be trained in the prevention of abusive head trauma and child maltreatment.	Child Abuse and Neglect Training Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires training related to child abuse prevention and recognition.
1302.47(b)(4)(i)(G) Staff must be trained in emergency preparedness.	Emergency Preparedness Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires emergency preparedness and disaster planning training.
1302.47(b)(4)(i)(H) Staff must be trained on hazardous materials and biohazards.	Health and Safety Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida addresses hazardous material handling and sanitation practices.

1302.47(b)(4)(i)(I) Staff must be trained in transportation safety when applicable.	Transportation Safety Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida establishes transportation safety requirements for programs transporting children.
1302.47(b)(4)(i)(J) Staff must be trained in First Aid and CPR.	Pediatric CPR and First Aid Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires CPR and First Aid certification for designated staff.
1302.47(b)(4)(i)(K) Staff must be trained on reporting abuse and neglect.	Mandatory Reporter Requirements; DCF Training Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires child abuse reporting training and compliance with mandatory reporting laws.
1302.47(b)(4)(ii) Staff without child contact must receive health and safety and emergency training.	Orientation and Emergency Preparedness Requirements	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida requires orientation and safety training but not as comprehensively as Head Start.
1302.47(b)(5)(i) Staff must report suspected abuse and neglect.	F.S. §39.201 Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires reporting of known or suspected child abuse and neglect.
1302.47(b)(5)(ii) Staff must follow safe sleep practices.	Safe Sleep Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida maintains extensive infant safe sleep requirements.
1302.47(b)(5)(iii) Children must be appropriately always supervised.	Active Supervision Requirements; DCF Licensing Standards	✓ Strong Alignment. Continuous supervision requirements are a core Florida licensing expectation.
1302.47(b)(5)(iv) Children may only be released to authorized adults.	Child Release Procedures in DCF Licensing Standards	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires documented release procedures and authorization controls.
1302.47(b)(5)(v) Staff must follow standards of conduct.	F.S. §402.305; DCF Personnel Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida establishes personnel, conduct

		expectations and child protection requirements.
1302.47(b)(6)(i) Programs must follow proper toileting, handwashing, and diapering procedures.	DCF Licensing Handbooks	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida has detailed sanitation and hygiene requirements.
1302.47(b)(6)(ii) Programs must follow safe food preparation procedures.	Health and Safety Requirements Handbook	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida establishes food handling and sanitation requirements.
1302.47(b)(6)(iii) Programs must safely manage exposure to blood and bodily fluids.	OSHA-Based Health and Safety Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires universal precautions and biohazard procedures.
1302.47(b)(7)(i) Programs must maintain emergency procedures.	Emergency Preparedness and Response Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida mandates emergency plans and drills.
1302.47(b)(7)(ii) Programs must maintain fire prevention and response procedures.	Fire Safety Requirements; DCF Licensing Standards	✓ Strong Alignment. Fire safety planning and drills are required.
1302.47(b)(7)(iii) Programs must maintain communicable disease and illness exclusion procedures.	Health and Safety Requirements Handbook	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida has illness exclusion and communicable disease procedures.
1302.47(b)(7)(iv) Programs must maintain medication administration procedures.	Medication Administration Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires medication documentation and procedures.
1302.47(b)(7)(v) Programs must ensure children are released only to authorized adults.	Child Release Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida mirrors this requirement closely.
1302.47(b)(7)(vi) Programs must maintain emergency plans for health conditions and food allergies.	Allergy and Medical Action Plan Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires documentation and emergency response procedures for allergies and medical conditions.

1302.47(b)(8) Programs must maintain an all-hazards disaster preparedness and response plan.	Emergency Preparedness Requirements; DCF Licensing Standards	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires comprehensive emergency and disaster planning.
1302.47(b)(9) Programs must implement lead exposure prevention, testing, inspection, and remediation practices.	Health and Safety Requirements; Lead Exposure Requirements	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida addresses environmental health hazards but does not universally require the Head Start-specific testing and inspection cycle.

Subpart D

Gaps and Alignment

Subpart D represents one of the strongest areas of alignment between Florida and the Head Start Program Performance Standards. Florida's School Readiness and child care regulatory framework demonstrates its strongest alignment with Head Start in the area of child health and safety protections, particularly within §1302.47 Safety Practices. Florida licensing regulations, School Readiness health and safety requirements, staff training mandates, background screening requirements, emergency preparedness standards, active supervision expectations, medication procedures, safe sleep practices, child abuse reporting requirements, and food allergy management systems closely mirror the intent and many of the specific requirements found in Head Start. This section represents one of the strongest areas of alignment between Florida's CCDF system and the HSPPS.

Florida also shows moderate alignment with requirements related to parent communication about children's health and development (§1302.41), developmental screening and referrals, and portions of child nutrition (§1302.44). Florida requires family notification regarding developmental concerns, parental consent for many child services, accommodation of dietary restrictions and allergies, safe infant feeding practices, breastfeeding accommodations, and access to safe drinking water. Providers are also required to maintain health records, follow health and safety procedures, and communicate important health information to families.

The largest gaps occur in the areas of comprehensive health services coordination (§1302.42), mental health services (§1302.45), and family support services (§1302.46). Head Start requires programs to actively help families obtain medical homes, health insurance, preventive care, oral health care, mental health services, and follow-up treatment. Programs must also track referrals,

coordinate ongoing care, and assist families in navigating health systems. Florida's framework generally relies on referral systems and community resources rather than requiring providers to manage or coordinate these services directly.

Significant differences also exist in mental health requirements. Head Start requires ongoing mental health consultation, multidisciplinary coordination, staff wellness supports, family mental health education, trauma-informed practices, and formal strategies to prevent suspension and expulsion. Florida supports social-emotional development and referral processes but does not require providers to maintain a formal mental health consultation system or provide comprehensive mental health services to children, families, and staff.

Similarly, Head Start's family support services model goes well beyond Florida requirements. Head Start programs must provide ongoing education and support related to health, nutrition, oral health, mental health, pregnancy, breastfeeding, child development, safety, and health insurance access. Florida encourages family communication and referrals but does not require providers to offer the extensive family education, coaching, and health-system navigation services required by Head Start.

Florida aligns strongly with Head Start in areas involving child safety, regulatory compliance, supervision, health and safety training, developmental screening, and basic family communication. The greatest gaps occur because Head Start operates as a comprehensive health, nutrition, mental health, and family support system, whereas Florida's School Readiness framework primarily functions as a child care, education, and health and safety compliance system supported by referrals to community resources rather than direct service coordination.

Subpart E: Executive Summary

Family and Community Engagement Program Services (1302.50-1302.53)

Subpart E establishes a comprehensive, relationship-based approach to family engagement, requiring programs to go beyond basic communication and actively partner with families to support both child development and broader family well-being. Programs must implement a structured system that positions families as equal partners in their child's learning, including ongoing communication, parent participation in educational activities, and shared responsibility for supporting children's development. A key component is the family partnership process, where programs collaborate with families to identify strengths, set goals, and provide individualized support that addresses family needs such as health, education, and economic stability.

In addition, Subpart E requires programs to connect families to community resources and services, establish partnerships with local agencies, and support families in navigating systems

such as health care, education, and social services. It emphasizes a two-generation approach, recognizing that supporting family outcomes directly impacts child outcomes. Programs must also track family progress and continuously improve engagement efforts. There are limited alignments between HSPPS and Florida regulations here, therefore the HSPPS with minimal to moderate alignment is summarized below. The table below shows where there are partial alignments with the HSPPS in this entire subpart.

Subpart E (HSPPS) and Florida Requirements

Family and Community Engagement Program Services (1302.50-1302.53)

HSPPS §§1302.50-1302.53 require Head Start programs to integrate family engagement into all aspects of program operations by recognizing parents as their children's primary teachers, building respectful and culturally responsive relationships, and partnering with families to identify strengths, needs, goals, and resources that support family well-being and child development. Programs must provide opportunities for parents to strengthen their parenting skills, support their children's learning, promote regular attendance, and participate in research-based parenting education. They must also implement an ongoing family partnership process that includes individualized goal setting, family partnership agreements, regular progress reviews, and connections to needed services. Additionally, programs are required to establish and maintain strong community partnerships with health, education, social service, housing, workforce, and other agencies to ensure families have access to comprehensive supports and coordinated services that promote positive outcomes for children and families.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
Programs must communicate with families and share information about children (§1302.50, §1302.51)	65C-22 FAC requires programs to communicate policies; 6M-4.720 requires sharing developmental screening results with parents	⚠️ Partial alignment. Florida requires communication and sharing key child information, but not ongoing engagement systems.
Programs must provide opportunities for parent involvement in children's learning (basic level) (§1302.51)	General expectations for parent-provider interaction; open communication encouraged through licensing and program practice	⚠️ Partial alignment. Florida supports involvement informally but does not require structured opportunities.

Programs must connect families to community services and resources (§1302.53)	Early Learning Coalitions provide referrals; external systems (Early Steps, Medicaid, community agencies) available	⚠ Partial alignment. Referral pathways exist, but participation and tracking are not required.
Programs must build community partnerships to support families (§1302.53)	Coalitions coordinate services at a system level; providers may connect families to local resources	⚠ Partial alignment. Partnerships exist at system level but are not required at provider level.
Programs must provide information to families about available services and supports (§1302.50)	Providers share program policies, health requirements, and basic information with families	⚠ Partial alignment. Florida provides information but not structured, comprehensive family support systems.

Subpart E

Alignment and Gap Summary

Subpart E demonstrates limited alignment overall, with only moderate alignment in basic communication and access to services, and significant gaps in structured family engagement systems. Florida aligns with Head Start at a foundational level by requiring or supporting general communication with families, sharing key information (such as policies and screening results), and providing access to community resources through Early Learning Coalitions and external service networks. These elements reflect a system that ensures families are informed and can connect to services, creating a baseline level of engagement.

However, the major gaps appear in the areas that define Head Start’s relationship-based, two-generation model. Subpart E requires programs to implement a formal family partnership process, including individualized goal setting, ongoing case management, and shared responsibility for child and family outcomes. Florida does not require these practices. There is also no requirement for parent leadership, governance roles (e.g., Policy Council), or systematic tracking of family outcomes, which are central to Head Start. Additionally, Florida does not require programs to provide structured opportunities such as parent-teacher conferences, home visits, or integrated family engagement in teaching and learning, nor does it require active support for navigating systems like health, education, or employment.

Subpart F

Additional Services for Children with Disabilities (1302.60-1302.63)

Subpart F (§1302.60–1302.63) establishes a comprehensive framework to ensure that children with disabilities, including those eligible under IDEA, fully participate in all Head Start services in the least restrictive environment. Programs are required to actively provide individualized support, accommodations, and modifications so that each child can access and benefit from the full range of program activities. This includes delivering services aligned with each child’s IFSP or IEP, ensuring progress toward developmental goals, and coordinating closely with IDEA agencies, service providers, and families to meet each child’s unique needs.

Beyond direct services to children, Subpart F emphasizes strong collaboration with families and community systems. Programs must support parents in understanding disabilities, navigating the IDEA process, and advocating for their child’s needs, while also helping them access resources such as therapies, adaptive equipment, and support services. Programs are further required to actively coordinate with local IDEA agencies through Child Find, interagency agreements, and participation in IFSP/IEP planning and transitions.

Subpart F and Florida Requirements: §1302.60-1302.63 require Head Start programs to ensure that children with disabilities fully participate in all program services and activities in the least restrictive environment, receive individualized accommodations and supports, and have access to services while eligibility for IDEA is being determined. Programs must also support and inform parents throughout the process and collaborate closely with local agencies responsible for implementing IDEA to coordinate evaluations, services, and transitions, ensuring that children and families receive comprehensive and inclusive support.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.61(a) Programs must ensure individualized needs of children with disabilities are met and children can fully	F.S. §1002.87(1)(c)6.; F.S. §1002.88 School Readiness Provider Standards	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida supports inclusion of children with special needs and access to School Readiness services.

participate in all activities and services.		
1302.61(a) Programs must provide modifications, accommodations, and supports necessary for participation.	F.S. §1002.88; ADA and Section 504 requirements	✅ Strong Alignment. Providers must provide reasonable accommodations and supports to ensure access for children with disabilities.
1302.61(a) Programs must protect children from disability discrimination under ADA and Section 504.	ADA; Section 504; F.S. §1002.88	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida providers are subject to federal disability nondiscrimination requirements.
1302.61(b) Programs must provide individualized supports while IDEA eligibility is being determined.	Rule 6M-4.720 Screening of Children in the School Readiness Program	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida requires referrals and follow-up for developmental concerns but does not specifically require interim individualized supports pending IDEA determination.
1302.61(b) Programs must use parent input, observation, and assessment data to individualize services during evaluation.	6M-4.700 Child Performance Standards; 6M-4.720 Screening of Children	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida encourages individualized support but does not require a formal interim service process.
1302.61(c)(1) Programs must collaborate with IDEA agencies, families, and service partners.	Rule 6M-4.720; F.S. §1002.87(1)(c)6.	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Collaboration occurs through referrals and service coordination, though requirements are less prescriptive than Head Start.
1302.61(c)(1)(i) Services must be delivered consistently with the child's IFSP or IEP.	IDEA requirements; inclusion practices	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida recognizes IFSPs and IEPs, but School Readiness regulations do not assign the same implementation responsibility to providers.
1302.61(c)(1)(ii) Programs must support progress toward IFSP or IEP goals.	F.S. §1002.87(1)(c)6.	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Inclusion is supported, but explicit monitoring of IFSP/IEP goals is not required.

1302.61(c)(1)(iii) Programs must coordinate services that are delivered by outside agencies and specialists.	F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and Referral	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida supports referrals and coordination but not the level of formal interagency collaboration required by Head Start.
1302.61(c)(1)(iv) Programs must ensure IFSPs and IEPs are reviewed and revised as required.	IDEA agencies responsible for review and revision	⚠ Partial Alignment. IEPs are accepted in lieu of developmental screenings if they are reviewed/completed within 12 months
1302.61(c)(1)(v) Services should be delivered in the child's regular classroom to the greatest extent possible.	ADA; Section 504; Florida inclusion practices	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida supports inclusion in regular early learning environments whenever appropriate.
1302.61(c)(2) Programs must plan and implement transition services for children receiving IDEA services.	Kindergarten transition activities; IDEA transition procedures	⚠ Partial Alignment. Transition activities occur but are not as comprehensive as Head Start requirements.
1302.61(c)(2)(i) Programs must support transition from IFSP to Part B IDEA services.	IDEA transition procedures	❌ No Alignment. No comparable School Readiness requirement.
1302.61(c)(2)(ii) Programs must support transition from preschool to kindergarten for children with IEPs.	Florida kindergarten transition activities	⚠ Partial Alignment. Transition practices exist but are not required at the same level as Head Start.
1302.62(a)(1) Programs must help parents understand disabilities and advocate for appropriate services.	F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and Referral Services	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida provides referrals and information but does not require structured parent advocacy support.
1302.62(a)(2) Programs must help families access services, equipment, supports, and assistance programs.	F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and Referral Services	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida connects families with resources but does not require intensive case-management support.

1302.62(b)(1) Programs must help parents understand IDEA timelines.	No direct School Readiness equivalent.	✗ No Alignment.
1302.62(b)(2) Programs must help parents participate in evaluations and IFSP/IEP development.	Developmental screening and referral requirements	⚠ Partial Alignment. Family participation is encouraged but not required to the extent specified by Head Start.
1302.62(b)(3) Programs must help parents understand evaluation results and services.	Rule 6M-4.720 Screening of Children	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida requires communication regarding developmental concerns but not comprehensive explanation of IDEA evaluations and services.
1302.62(b)(4) Programs must help ensure children's needs are accurately reflected in IFSPs and IEPs.	No direct School Readiness equivalent.	✗ No Alignment.
1302.63(a) Programs must coordinate with IDEA agencies and participate in Child Find efforts.	Rule 6M-4.720 Screening of Children; IDEA Child Find activities	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida supports referral and identification efforts but does not expressly require School Readiness provider participation in Child Find.
1302.63(b) Programs should develop interagency agreements with IDEA agencies.	No direct School Readiness equivalent.	✗ No Alignment.
1302.63(c) Programs must participate in IFSP and IEP development when requested by parents.	Collaboration through referrals and local practices	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida supports collaboration but does not require provider participation in IFSP/IEP meetings.
1302.63(c)(1) Programs must provide screening, assessment, and observation data to IDEA teams.	Rule 6M-4.720 Screening of Children	⚠ Partial Alignment. Rule requires screening results to be shared with families within 15 calendar days after the screening due date.
1302.63(c)(2) Programs must participate in meetings to	No direct School Readiness equivalent.	✗ No Alignment.

develop or review IFSPs and IEPs.		
1302.63(d) Programs must retain copies of IFSPs and IEPs for enrolled children.	Child records requirements; documentation standards	 Strong Alignment. Florida requires maintenance of child records.

Subpart F

Alignment and Gap Summary

Florida's School Readiness system demonstrates strong alignment with the foundational principles of inclusion, accessibility, and nondiscrimination for children with disabilities. Florida requires providers to serve children with special needs, comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504, provide reasonable accommodations, and support participation in inclusive early learning environments. Both systems emphasize ensuring that children with disabilities have access to program services and opportunities alongside their peers.

Florida also shows partial alignment in the areas of developmental screening, referral, family communication, collaboration with service providers, and support during transitions. School Readiness requirements include developmental screening and referral processes when developmental concerns are identified, and providers may work with families and community agencies to connect children to needed services. Florida also supports kindergarten transition activities and resource referral systems that help families access available supports.

The greatest gaps occur because Head Start requires a much more active and formal role in the IDEA service delivery process. Under Subpart F, Head Start programs are responsible for coordinating with IDEA agencies, participating in Child Find activities, supporting families through evaluations, collaborating in the development and implementation of IFSPs and IEPs, monitoring progress toward IFSP and IEP goals, coordinating transition services, and ensuring that services outlined in those plans are delivered. Florida generally assigns these responsibilities to local early intervention programs, school districts, and IDEA agencies rather than to School Readiness providers.

Significant gaps also exist in parent advocacy and support requirements. Head Start requires programs to help families understand disabilities, IDEA timelines, evaluation processes, IFSPs and IEPs, available services, and advocacy strategies. Programs are also expected to assist families in obtaining adaptive equipment, specialized services, and additional support programs.

Florida's system primarily provides referrals and information through Child Care Resource and Referral services rather than the intensive family support and case-management approach required by Head Start.

Florida aligns strongly with Head Start's expectations regarding disability inclusion, accommodations, and nondiscrimination, but has more limited alignment with the extensive coordination, case management, family advocacy, IFSP/IEP participation, and interagency collaboration responsibilities that are central to Head Start's disability services model. The primary difference is that Head Start functions as an active partner in IDEA implementation, while Florida School Readiness generally serves a supportive and referral-based role.

HSPPS Subpart G and Florida Requirements

Transition Services (1302.70-1302.72)

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule/ Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.70(a) Early Head Start programs must implement strategies and practices to support successful transitions out of Early Head Start.	F.S. §1002.82; F.S. §1002.85; Kindergarten Readiness and Transition Initiatives	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida supports transitions between early learning settings and into school but does not require a formal Early Head Start transition planning process.
1302.70(b) Transition planning must begin at least six months before a child's third birthday.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	❌ No Alignment. Florida does not require formal age-based transition planning timelines.
1302.70(b)(1) Transition planning must consider developmental progress, disabilities, family needs, and available community services.	Developmental screening and referral requirements; coalition service referral systems	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida considers child needs through screening and referrals but does not require comprehensive transition planning based on these factors.
1302.70(b)(2) Children should transition to Head Start Preschool or another	School Readiness eligibility and enrollment procedures	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida supports movement into age-appropriate programs but does not

appropriate program after age three.		require individualized transition plans.
1302.70(c) Programs must collaborate with parents to support successful transitions.	F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and Referral Services	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida encourages family engagement and information sharing but does not require a structured Early Head Start transition partnership process.
1302.70(d) Early Head Start and Head Start programs must collaborate to maximize enrollment transitions.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida has no comparable requirement linking Early Head Start and Head Start program transitions.
1302.70(e) Programs must provide additional transition services for children with IFSPs.	IDEA transition procedures; special needs referral processes	⚠ Partial Alignment. Transition requirements exist under IDEA, but not specifically within School Readiness standards.
1302.71(a) Programs must implement strategies to support successful transition from preschool to kindergarten.	F.S. §1002.23 Coordinated Screening and Progress Monitoring; Local Kindergarten Transition Initiatives	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida strongly emphasizes kindergarten readiness and transition activities.
1302.71(b)(1) Programs must collaborate with parents to support kindergarten transitions.	Parent engagement practices; kindergarten transition activities	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida encourages family involvement but does not require the level of structured parent transition support required by Head Start.
1302.71(b)(2)(i) Parents must understand their child's progress during the program year.	Rule 6M-4.720 Screening of Children; Child Progress Monitoring Systems	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires communication regarding child development and progress.
1302.71(b)(2)(ii) Programs must help parents support academic and social transitions to kindergarten.	Kindergarten readiness initiatives	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida supports kindergarten readiness, but requirements are less detailed than Head Start.

1302.71(b)(2)(iii) Parents must understand rights, responsibilities, disability services, and educational options.	No direct School Readiness equivalent.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not require comprehensive parent education regarding educational rights and school services.
1302.71(b)(2)(iv) Programs must support ongoing communication between parents and schools.	Family engagement activities	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida encourages parent involvement but does not require formal school-family transition coordination.
1302.71(c)(1) Programs must collaborate with school districts and kindergarten teachers.	School Readiness coalition partnerships; local school district collaboration	⚠ Partial Alignment. Collaboration occurs locally but is not required at the level prescribed in Head Start.
1302.71(c)(2)(i) Programs must transfer relevant records to receiving schools.	Child records transfer procedures; parental consent requirements	⚠ Partial Alignment. Records may be shared when authorized, but Florida does not require transition record transfer procedures comparable to Head Start.
1302.71(c)(2)(ii) Programs must communicate with schools to promote continuity of learning.	Local transition and collaboration efforts	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida encourages coordination but does not require formal continuity planning.
1302.71(c)(2)(iii) Programs should participate in joint professional development with kindergarten staff.	Local professional development initiatives	⚠ Partial Alignment. Joint training may occur but is not required.
1302.71(c)(3) Programs must help families access summer programs before kindergarten when available.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment.
1302.71(d) Programs must implement activities that familiarize children with	Kindergarten readiness and transition activities	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida strongly supports activities

kindergarten and build confidence.		designed to prepare children for school entry.
1302.71(e) Programs must provide additional transition services for children with IEPs.	IDEA transition procedures	⚠️ Partial Alignment. IDEA includes transition requirements, but School Readiness standards do not specifically assign these responsibilities to providers.
1302.72(a) Programs must support transitions when families move, including homeless families and children in foster care.	F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and Referral Services	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida referral systems assist families in locating services but do not require formal transition support between programs.
1302.72(a) Programs should help families identify alternative early childhood programs when necessary.	F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and Referral Services	✅ Strong Alignment. CCR&R systems are specifically designed to connect families with available early learning options.
1302.72(b) Programs must support transitions to other early education programs prior to kindergarten.	School Readiness and VPK transition activities	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida supports transitions but does not require all Head Start transition activities.
1302.72(c) Migrant and Seasonal programs must support transitions to other Head Start programs.	No School Readiness equivalent.	❌ No Alignment

Subpart G

Alignment and Gap Summary

Florida's School Readiness system demonstrates moderate alignment with Head Start's transition requirements. The strongest alignment occurs in activities that support kindergarten readiness, family communication regarding child progress, referrals to community programs, and general efforts to prepare children for school entry. Florida's early learning framework emphasizes school readiness, developmental progress monitoring, kindergarten transition activities, and helping

families access appropriate educational services, reflecting many of the same goals found in Head Start.

Florida also shows partial alignment in areas involving family engagement during transitions, collaboration with community partners, transition support for children with disabilities, and coordination with schools. Local transition initiatives, family communication practices, developmental screening processes, and resource and referral services help support movement between early childhood settings and into kindergarten. Children with disabilities may also benefit from IDEA transition requirements administered through early intervention programs and school districts.

The most significant gaps exist because Head Start requires a highly structured and individualized transition system. Head Start mandates formal transition planning beginning at least six months before an Early Head Start child's third birthday, ongoing collaboration between Early Head Start and Head Start Preschool programs, extensive family education regarding school systems and parental rights, coordinated transfer of records, communication between sending and receiving programs, and specific transition activities for children with IFSPs and IEPs. Florida does not generally assign these responsibilities directly to School Readiness providers.

Additional gaps include requirements related to parent advocacy training, transition-focused collaboration with kindergarten teachers, participation in joint professional development with schools, coordination of summer transition opportunities, and specialized transition requirements for migrant and seasonal families. While some of these activities may occur locally, they are not required statewide within Florida's CCDF or School Readiness framework.

Florida aligns well with the overall goal of helping children move successfully into kindergarten and other early learning settings. However, Head Start's transition requirements are considerably more comprehensive, requiring formal planning processes, documented collaboration, family advocacy support, and extensive coordination among programs, schools, and IDEA agencies. Florida's approach is generally focused on school readiness and referral support, while Head Start establishes a broader, more systematic transition framework for children and families.

Subpart H

Services to Enrolled Pregnant Women (1302.80-1302.82)

Subpart H (Services to Enrolled Pregnant Women) demonstrates no alignment with Florida School Readiness, as Florida does not include or require any prenatal service model within its

system. While pregnant women in Florida may access services such as Medicaid, WIC, and community health supports, these exist entirely outside of the School Readiness framework and are not coordinated or delivered by providers. In contrast, Head Start requires programs to deliver a comprehensive, integrated set of services during pregnancy, including prenatal health education, nutrition, mental health support, and family engagement, along with intentional planning for the transition from pregnancy to infancy.

The most significant gaps are in program responsibility and continuity of services. Florida does not require providers to support pregnant women, offer prenatal education, engage families during pregnancy, or coordinate postpartum transitions into infant services. There are also no requirements for addressing maternal mental health or supporting families in preparing for birth and early development. As a result, any alignment is limited to the existence of external health systems, not program-level expectations, creating a substantial gap between Florida's child care subsidy model and Head Start's prenatal-to-early-childhood, two-generation service approach.

Subpart I

Human Resources Management (1302.90-1302.94)

Subpart I focuses on program management and quality improvement, requiring Head Start programs to operate as fully integrated, data-informed systems that ensure continuous improvement across all service areas. It establishes expectations for strong organizational structure, including effective leadership, clear management systems, and comprehensive planning processes that align staffing, resources, and services to program goals. Programs must develop and regularly update plans based on community needs, track progress across all areas (education, health, family services, disabilities), and ensure accountability through ongoing oversight and monitoring.

Subpart I emphasizes the use of data to drive decision-making and continuous improvement. Programs are required to collect and analyze information on child outcomes, family engagement, and program performance, and use that data to make informed adjustments to services, staffing, and systems. It also includes requirements for self-assessment, ongoing monitoring, risk management, and reporting of significant incidents, ensuring both quality and safety are maintained.

HSPPS §1302.90 and Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS §1302.90 establishes a comprehensive framework for personnel policies that go beyond basic hiring and supervision to include workforce quality, equity, and support systems. Florida aligns strongly with this standard in areas related to background screening, staff conduct, supervision, and child safety, reflecting a robust licensing and compliance system. Programs are required to ensure staff are properly vetted, trained, and held to clear behavioral standards, which closely mirrors Head Start expectations in these foundational areas.

Head Start requires programs to implement structured compensation systems, progress toward salary parity with public school teachers, staff benefits, and supports such as health coverage and professional well-being, none of which are required in Florida's School Readiness system. There are also gaps in governance (Policy Council involvement) and culturally and linguistically responsive staffing, particularly for dual language learners. As a result, Florida demonstrates high alignment in compliance and safety, but low alignment in workforce development, compensation, and support systems, which are central to the intent of §1302.90.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.90(a) Programs must establish written personnel policies and procedures approved by governing bodies and made available to staff.	Rule 6M-4.610 Statewide School Readiness Provider Contract; F.S. §1002.88 School Readiness Provider Standards	 Partial Alignment. Florida requires providers to maintain personnel and operational policies but does not require Head Start-style governing body and policy council approval.
1302.90(b)(1) Programs must conduct interviews, verify references, and complete required background checks before hire.	F.S. Chapter 435; F.S. §402.305; F.S. §1002.88	 Strong Alignment. Florida requires comprehensive personnel screening and background checks for child care personnel.
1302.90(b)(1)(i) State or tribal criminal history records and fingerprint checks.	F.S. Chapter 435; Level 2 Background Screening Requirements	 Strong Alignment. Florida requires fingerprint-based criminal history screening.

1302.90(b)(1)(ii) FBI criminal history records and fingerprint checks.	F.S. Chapter 435 Level 2 Screening	✓ Strong Alignment. FBI fingerprint-based screening is required for child care personnel.
1302.90(b)(2) Programs must complete all required background checks within established timelines.	F.S. Chapter 435; DCF Background Screening Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires completion and maintenance of screening requirements before personnel may work independently with children.
1302.90(b)(3) Programs must use CCDF disqualification factors when making employment decisions.	F.S. Chapter 435 Disqualifying Offenses	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida uses statutory disqualifying offenses and screening criteria for employment eligibility.
1302.90(b)(4) Individuals may not have unsupervised access to children until background checks are complete.	F.S. Chapter 435; DCF Screening Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida restricts unsupervised access until screening requirements are satisfied.
1302.90(b)(5) Programs must repeat comprehensive background checks at least every five years.	F.S. Chapter 435 Rescreening Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires periodic rescreening of child care personnel.
1302.90(b)(6) Programs must consider qualified current and former program parents for employment opportunities.	No direct School Readiness equivalent.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not require providers to give employment consideration to current or former parents.
1302.90(c)(1)(i) Standards of conduct must promote positive behavior support practices.	DCF Child Care Facility Handbook; School Readiness Health and Safety Requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires positive discipline and developmentally appropriate behavior management practices.
1302.90(c)(1)(ii)(A) Programs must prohibit corporal punishment and physical abuse.	F.S. §402.305; DCF Licensing Standards	✓ Strong Alignment. Corporal punishment and abusive practices are prohibited.

1302.90(c)(1)(ii)(B) Programs must prohibit sexually abusive behavior.	Child Protection Laws; DCF Licensing Standards	✔ Strong Alignment. Sexual abuse and exploitation of children are prohibited.
1302.90(c)(1)(ii)(C) Programs must prohibit emotionally harmful or abusive behavior.	DCF Licensing Standards; Personnel Conduct Requirements	✔ Strong Alignment. Florida prohibits abusive, humiliating, threatening, and degrading treatment of children.
1302.90(c)(1)(ii)(D) Programs must prohibit neglectful behavior.	F.S. Chapter 39; DCF Licensing Standards	✔ Strong Alignment. Florida requires supervision and protection from neglect.
1302.90(c)(1)(iii) Personnel must report suspected abuse and neglect.	F.S. §39.201 Mandatory Reporting Requirements	✔ Strong Alignment. Florida requires mandatory reporting of suspected abuse and neglect.
1302.90(c)(1)(iv) Personnel must respect the unique identity of each individual and avoid stereotyping.	Nondiscrimination Requirements; ADA; Civil Rights Requirements	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida prohibits discrimination, but does not include the same detailed Head Start standards regarding identity and inclusion.
1302.90(c)(1)(v) Personnel must comply with confidentiality requirements.	Child Record Confidentiality Requirements; School Readiness Provider Contract	✔ Strong Alignment. Florida requires protection of confidential child and family information.
1302.90(c)(1)(vi) No child may be left alone or unsupervised.	Active Supervision Requirements; DCF Licensing Standards	✔ Strong Alignment. Continuous supervision is a core Florida requirement.
1302.90(c)(2) Personnel policies must include penalties for violations of conduct standards.	DCF Enforcement and Corrective Action Processes	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida establishes enforcement mechanisms but does not specifically require internal disciplinary structures within personnel policies.
1302.90(d)(1) Staff must be able to communicate effectively	General family communication	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida encourages communication with

with dual language learners and families.	requirements; English language learner supports	diverse families but does not require the same level of language access provisions.
1302.90(d)(2) If a majority of children speak the same language, at least one staff member must speak that language.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment.
1302.90(e)(1) Programs must implement salary scales or structured compensation systems by 2031.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment.
1302.90(e)(2) Programs must demonstrate progress toward pay parity with public school teachers.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment.
1302.90(e)(3) Programs must establish salaries sufficient to support basic living needs.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment.
1302.90(e)(4) Wage structures may not differ by age group served for similar positions.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment.
1302.90(e)(5)-(10) Small agency exemptions and wage-parity waiver provisions.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment.
1302.90(f)(1) Programs must provide or facilitate access to health insurance, paid leave, and behavioral health services for full-time staff.	General employment law; provider personnel policies	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not require School Readiness providers to offer these benefits.
1302.90(f)(2) Programs must facilitate access to affordable health coverage for part-time staff.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment.

1302.90(f)(3) Programs must connect staff with child care resources and subsidies when eligible.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment.
1302.90(f)(4) Programs must facilitate access to Public Service Loan Forgiveness and similar programs.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment.
1302.90(f)(5) Programs must periodically assess benefit comparability with local school districts.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment.
1302.90(f)(6)-(7) Small agency benefit exemptions.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment.

HSPPS §1302.91 and Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS §1302.91 requires programs to ensure that staff possess the education, skills, and competencies necessary to deliver high-quality services that support child development and school readiness. It establishes clear expectations for qualifications, particularly requiring teachers to hold at least a bachelor’s degree—and ensures that all staff have appropriate credentials, training, and experience for their roles. Beyond minimum qualifications, the standard emphasizes that staff must demonstrate competencies aligned with child development, effective teaching practices, and the needs of diverse children and families.

The standard also requires programs to support staff through ongoing professional development, supervision, and coaching, ensuring that learning is continuous and directly connected to improving practice and outcomes for children.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.91(a) Programs must ensure staff, consultants, and contractors have appropriate	F.S. §1002.88 School Readiness Provider Standards; F.S. §1002.55 Staff Credentials; 6M-	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida establishes qualification, training, and competency requirements for

knowledge, training, experience, and competencies.	4.735 Professional Development Standards	personnel serving children in School Readiness programs.
1302.91(a) Programs must provide ongoing training and professional development.	F.S. §1002.995 Professional Learning Standards and Career Pathways; 6M-4.735 Professional Development Standards	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires ongoing professional development and training for early childhood personnel.
1302.91(b) Head Start directors must possess at least a bachelor's degree and management experience.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not establish minimum degree requirements for directors specific to School Readiness participation.
1302.91(c) Programs must employ or secure a qualified fiscal officer.	School Readiness Provider Contract; financial accountability requirements	⚠ Partial Alignment. Providers must comply with fiscal requirements, but Florida does not prescribe specific fiscal officer credentials.
1302.91(d)(1) Family services, health services, and disability managers must hold at least a bachelor's degree.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not require specialized management positions for family, health, or disability services.
1302.91(d)(2) Education managers and curriculum specialists must possess appropriate early childhood education degrees and experience.	F.S. §1002.55; 6M-4.735	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida establishes instructional credential requirements but does not specifically require education manager or curriculum specialist qualifications.
1302.91(e)(1) Early Head Start infant and toddler teachers must hold a CDA or comparable credential.	F.S. §1002.55 School Readiness Program Personnel Standards and Credentials	✓ Strong Alignment. Florida requires early childhood credentials and training for personnel working with young children.

1302.91(e)(2) Head Start Preschool teachers must possess an associate or bachelor's degree in early childhood education or related field.	F.S. §1002.55; VPK instructor qualification requirements	 Partial Alignment. Florida requires credentials and training but does not require all School Readiness teachers to hold degrees comparable to Head Start standards.
1302.91(e)(3) Assistant teachers must hold or obtain a CDA or equivalent credential.	F.S. §1002.55 Child Care Personnel Credential Requirements	 Strong Alignment. Florida credentialing requirements closely align with CDA expectations for instructional staff.
1302.91(e)(4)(i) Family child care providers must obtain a Family Child Care CDA, equivalent credential, or degree.	F.S. §402.313; 65C-20 Family Child Care Home Requirements	 Partial Alignment. Florida requires training and competency requirements for family child care providers but does not require CDA attainment comparable to Head Start.
1302.91(e)(4)(ii) Child development specialists must hold a bachelor's degree.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	 No Alignment. Florida does not require child development specialists for family child care providers.
1302.91(e)(5) Teachers and providers must demonstrate competency in curriculum implementation, assessment, and support of children with disabilities and dual language learners.	6M-4.700 Child Performance Standards; 6M-4.710 School Readiness Program Curricula; 6M-4.735 Professional Development Standards	 Partial Alignment. Florida requires competency in curriculum and child development but does not specifically require demonstrated competencies related to dual language learners and all Head Start instructional expectations.
1302.91(e)(6)(i) Home visitors must possess a home-based CDA or comparable credential.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	 No Alignment. Florida School Readiness does not operate a home-based program option.
1302.91(e)(6)(ii) Home visitors must demonstrate competency in	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	 No Alignment. No comparable requirement exists because School

home visiting practices and family relationships.		Readiness does not require home visitors.
1302.91(e)(7) Family services staff must obtain credentials in social work, counseling, family services, or related fields.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida School Readiness does not require family service staff positions.
1302.91(e)(8)(i) Health procedures must be performed by licensed or certified health professionals.	Florida health care licensure requirements; DCF health and safety requirements	✓ Strong Alignment. Health services requiring professional credentials must be performed by appropriately licensed personnel.
1302.91(e)(8)(ii) Mental health consultants must be licensed and experienced with young children and families.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not require mental health consultants.
1302.91(e)(8)(iii) Nutrition staff or consultants must be qualified dietitians or nutritionists.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment. School Readiness does not require nutrition specialists.
1302.91(f) Coaches must possess at least a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related field.	Quality improvement and professional learning initiatives	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida supports coaching and professional development initiatives but does not require coach qualifications statewide under School Readiness standards.

HSPPS §1302.92 and Florida Requirements

Summary: §1302.92 Training and Professional Development requires programs to maintain a systematic professional development system that ensures staff have the knowledge, skills, and ongoing training needed to provide high-quality services. The standard includes staff orientation, annual professional development, training on child abuse reporting and social-emotional development, specialized training based on staff roles, and a research-based coaching system that uses observation, feedback, and continuous improvement to strengthen staff performance and improve child and family outcomes.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.92(a) Programs must provide orientation for new staff, consultants, and volunteers on program goals and philosophy.	DCF Introductory Child Care Training; School Readiness Provider Requirements; Provider Personnel Policies	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida requires orientation and introductory training for child care personnel but does not require training specifically focused on Head Start-style program philosophy and comprehensive services.
1302.92(b) Programs must establish a systematic approach to staff training and professional development.	F.S. §1002.995 Professional Learning Standards and Career Pathways; 6M-4.735 Professional Development Standards	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires ongoing professional development systems and workforce training standards.
1302.92(b)(1) Staff must complete at least 15 hours of professional development annually.	DCF Continuing Education Requirements; Florida Professional Development Registry Requirements	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires annual continuing education and ongoing training for child care personnel.
1302.92(b)(1) Teaching staff must have individualized professional development plans.	Professional development and career pathway systems	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida supports professional growth and career pathways but does not universally require individualized professional development plans for all School Readiness educators.
1302.92(b)(2) Annual training on child abuse and neglect reporting.	F.S. §39.201; Health and Safety Training Requirements	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires training related to child abuse recognition and mandatory reporting responsibilities.

1302.92(b)(3) Annual training on positive social-emotional development and behavior support strategies.	6M-4.700 Child Performance Standards; Professional Development Requirements	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida promotes social-emotional development and positive behavior practices but does not require annual training on these topics for all staff.
1302.92(b)(4) Child and family services staff must receive training on family engagement strategies.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not require specialized family engagement training because it does not maintain a Head Start-style family services workforce.
1302.92(b)(5) Family, health, and disability staff must receive training to improve child and family outcomes.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not require these specialized service positions.
1302.92(b)(6) Education staff professional development must address curriculum implementation, disabilities, dual language learners, family partnerships, transitions, behavior support, and individualized instruction.	F.S. §1002.995; 6M-4.735 Professional Development Standards	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida provides broad professional development requirements but does not require training across all Head Start content areas.

HSPPS §1302.93 and Florida Requirements

Summary: §1302.93 requires programs to actively support the health and well-being of staff as a core component of program quality. It emphasizes creating a program-wide culture that promotes staff wellness, including attention to physical health, mental health, and overall work conditions. Programs are expected to recognize that staff working closely with children and families may experience stress and must provide support that help maintain their well-being and capacity to perform effectively.

The standard also highlights the importance of integrating wellness into broader program systems, such as supervision, training, and workplace practices, so that staff receive ongoing support rather than one-time interventions

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.93(a) Staff must receive initial and periodic health examinations, including screening for communicable diseases as appropriate.	DCF Child Care Facility Handbook; Florida health requirements for child care personnel	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida requires certain health and employment-related documentation and communicable disease protections but does not require periodic health examinations for all School Readiness staff.
1302.93(a) Programs must ensure staff do not pose a health risk due to communicable disease consistent with ADA and Section 504.	ADA; Section 504; DCF Health and Safety Requirements	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida providers must maintain health and safety practices that protect children and staff while complying with federal disability protections.
1302.93(b) Programs must make mental health and wellness information available to staff and provide opportunities to learn about wellness.	F.S. §1002.995 Professional Learning Standards and Career Pathways	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida supports professional development opportunities, but does not specifically require staff wellness or mental health education programs.
1302.93(c)(1) Programs must provide regular breaks of adequate length and frequency, including meal breaks as appropriate.	Federal and state labor requirements; provider personnel policies	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Breaks may be governed by employment policies, but School Readiness standards do not specifically require staff break schedules.
1302.93(c)(2) Programs should comply with more stringent federal, state, or local break requirements.	Applicable labor laws	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Compliance with applicable employment laws is required, but not specifically through School Readiness standards.
1302.93(c)(3) Programs may use qualified substitute staff during breaks while	DCF Licensing Standards; ratio and	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida permits substitute staff and requires supervision

maintaining child safety and quality.	supervision requirements	and ratio compliance, but does not specifically address break coverage in the same manner as Head Start.
1302.93(d) Programs should cultivate a culture of wellness that supports staff and promotes high-quality performance.	Professional development and workforce initiatives under F.S. §1002.995	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida supports workforce development but does not require a formal staff wellness framework or organizational wellness culture.

HSPPS §1302.94 and Florida Requirements

Summary: HSPPS §1302.94 requires programs to intentionally use and support volunteers as part of their overall service delivery system, ensuring they contribute positively to program quality while maintaining child safety. Programs must ensure that volunteers are appropriately screened, supervised, and oriented to their roles, and that they follow the same standards of conduct as staff. Volunteers are expected to complement—not replace—qualified staff and may help support activities related to children’s learning and family engagement.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.94(a) Programs must ensure regular volunteers are screened for communicable diseases in accordance with applicable state, tribal, or local requirements.	DCF Child Care Facility Handbook; Family Child Care Home Handbook; Florida health and safety requirements	⚠ Partial Alignment. Florida requires volunteers who work in child care settings to comply with applicable health and safety requirements, but School Readiness does not specifically require communicable disease screenings for volunteers beyond applicable state or local requirements.
1302.94(a) Programs must consult with a Health and Mental Health Services Advisory Committee when no screening requirements exist.	No equivalent School Readiness requirement.	✗ No Alignment. Florida does not require Health and Mental Health Services Advisory Committees or consultation regarding volunteer health screenings.

1302.94(b) Programs must ensure children are never left alone with volunteers.	DCF Licensing Standards; Active Supervision Requirements; Background Screening Requirements	 Strong Alignment. Florida requires active supervision and does not permit unscreened or unauthorized volunteers to be left alone with children. Children must remain under the supervision of qualified personnel.
--	---	--

Subpart I

Alignment and Gap Summary

Florida's School Readiness and child care regulatory framework demonstrates strong alignment in employee screening, child protection, supervision, staff training, and personnel conduct requirements. Florida's background screening laws, mandatory reporting requirements, active supervision standards, child abuse prevention requirements, confidentiality protections, and health and safety training expectations closely align with the child safety objectives found throughout Subpart I. The strongest alignment is found in §1302.90 Personnel Policies and §1302.94 Volunteers, where Florida's licensing and CCDF requirements mirror many of Head Start's protections designed to ensure children are cared for by qualified and appropriately screened adults.

Florida also shows strong alignment in workforce qualifications and ongoing training requirements. School Readiness providers are required to meet credentialing requirements, participate in continuing education, maintain staff training, and comply with professional development standards. These requirements align well with the intent of §1302.91 Staff Qualifications and Competency Requirements and portions of §1302.92 Training and Professional Development, particularly those focused on workforce competency, annual training, and continuous professional growth.

Moderate alignment exists in the areas of professional development systems, staff competencies, coaching, dual language learner support, and personnel management. Florida supports career pathways, workforce development, quality improvement initiatives, and ongoing professional learning. However, Head Start provides much more prescriptive requirements regarding staff competencies, individualized professional development plans, coaching systems, and specialized training related to family engagement, disabilities, dual language learners, and comprehensive service delivery.

The most significant gaps occur because Head Start requires a broader and more comprehensive workforce structure than Florida's School Readiness system. Head Start establishes minimum qualifications for directors, education managers, family service managers, disability managers, health managers, fiscal officers, mental health consultants, nutrition specialists, coaches, home visitors, and family service staff. Florida generally focuses on qualifications for personnel directly responsible for child care and education and does not require many of these specialized positions.

Substantial gaps also exist in the areas of staff compensation, benefits, and wellness. Head Start requires salary structures, progress toward pay parity with public school educators, living-wage considerations, access to health insurance, paid leave, behavioral health supports, and workforce wellness initiatives. Florida does not impose comparable statewide requirements on School Readiness providers. Similarly, Head Start requires a structured coaching model tied to program goals and staff performance improvement, while Florida primarily relies on professional development and local quality improvement initiatives rather than mandated coaching systems.

Florida aligns strongly with Head Start's expectations regarding child protection, personnel screening, staff qualifications, supervision, and professional training. The greatest gaps are found in Head Start's requirements for specialized staffing structures, workforce compensation and benefits, staff wellness programs, language-access staffing requirements, family service personnel, and research-based coaching systems. While both systems prioritize qualified and safe staff, Head Start's workforce framework is considerably broader and more comprehensive than Florida's School Readiness requirements.

SUBPART J §1302.102

Program Goals, Continuous Improvement, and Reporting- §1302.101-1302.102

HSPPS 1302.101-1302.102 and Florida Requirements

Summary: Subpart J: Program Management and Quality Improvement establishes the overall management, governance, accountability, planning, monitoring, and continuous improvement requirements for Head Start programs. Its purpose is to ensure programs have effective systems in place to oversee operations, use data for decision-making, maintain high-quality services, and continuously improve outcomes for children and families.

The standard further requires programs to implement ongoing monitoring and self-assessment processes, using data from multiple sources (child outcomes, family engagement, staffing, and program operations) to evaluate progress and identify areas for improvement. Programs must not only correct compliance issues but also prevent recurrence and systematically strengthen

performance over time. Finally, §1302.102 emphasizes structured reporting and accountability, requiring programs to share performance information with leadership and report critical incidents and program outcomes as appropriate. Programs must function as continuous improvement systems, where data is actively used to guide decisions, improve quality, and achieve measurable outcomes for children and families.

HSPPS Requirement	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
1302.101(a)(1) Programs must maintain a program, fiscal, and human resource management structure that supports effective oversight and high-quality services.	F.S. §1002.88 School Readiness Provider Standards; Rule 6M-4.610 Statewide School Readiness Provider Contract	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida requires providers to maintain administrative, fiscal, and operational systems to participate in School Readiness, but does not require oversight of the full range of comprehensive services required by Head Start.
1302.101(a)(2) Programs must establish clear staff roles and responsibilities and provide regular supervision and employee engagement.	Personnel requirements under DCF Licensing Standards; School Readiness Provider Contract	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida requires staff supervision and personnel management practices but does not specifically require employee engagement systems comparable to Head Start.
1302.101(a)(3) Programs must maintain staffing patterns and budgets that support continuity of care, professional development, and comprehensive service delivery.	F.S. §1002.88; School Readiness Provider Contract	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida supports staffing and training requirements but does not require budget structures tied to continuity of care or comprehensive services.
1302.101(a)(4) Programs must maintain an automated accounting and recordkeeping system.	Financial accountability provisions in the School Readiness Provider Contract; fiscal monitoring requirements	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires providers to maintain financial records and documentation sufficient for monitoring, reimbursement, and accountability.

1302.101(a)(5) Programs must train staff on required reporting procedures.	Health and Safety Requirements; Mandatory Reporting Requirements; Incident Reporting Requirements	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida requires staff training on reporting child abuse, incidents, and other required notifications.
1302.101(b)(1) Programs must coordinate professional development systems to support high-quality services and continuous improvement.	F.S. §1002.995 Professional Learning Standards and Career Pathways; 6M-4.735 Professional Development Standards	✅ Strong Alignment. Florida maintains statewide professional development systems designed to improve service quality and workforce effectiveness.
1302.101(b)(2) Programs must support meaningful participation of dual language learners and their families.	Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards; family communication requirements	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Florida supports access and communication for diverse families but does not require a comprehensive dual language learner management system.
1302.101(b)(2)(i) Programs must use community assessment data to anticipate language needs.	F.S. §1002.85 Early Learning Coalition Planning	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Community needs assessments occur at the coalition level, but providers are not required to use language data in the manner prescribed by Head Start.
1302.101(b)(2)(ii) Programs must establish partnerships with community organizations that serve dual language learners.	F.S. §1002.92 Child Care Resource and Referral Services	⚠️ Partial Alignment. Community partnerships are encouraged but not specifically required for dual language learner services.

HSPPS 1302.102 and Florida Requirements

(a) Establishing Program Goals

HSPPS Requirement §1302.102(a)	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
-----------------------------------	---	-----------------------

(a)(1) Strategic long-term goals based on community needs assessment	No requirement for provider-level community needs assessment; needs assessments occur at state/ELC level, not program-specific	✗ No alignment. Florida does not require program-level strategic planning tied to community needs.
(a)(2) Goals across service areas (education, health, nutrition, family engagement)	Florida systems define requirements separately (DCF licensing, DEL education standards, external health/IDEA systems)	✗ No alignment. Florida does not require integrated program-wide goals across service domains.
(a)(3) School readiness goals aligned with ELOF, state standards, and K–12 expectations	Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards define domains; no requirement for program-level school readiness goals or alignment to local schools	⚠ Partial alignment. Florida aligns at standards level, but not at program goal setting or alignment to schools.
(a)(4) Goals for effective health and safety practices	Strong requirements in 65C-22 FAC and Chapter 402, F.S. for health and safety standards	✓ Strong alignment. Florida requires health and safety compliance, though not framed as program goals.

b) Monitoring Program Performance

HSPPS Requirement §1302.102(b)	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
(b)(1) Ongoing oversight system ensuring implementation of standards	DCF licensing inspections; DEL/ELC monitoring; CLASS observations	⚠ Partial alignment. Oversight exists, but focuses on compliance rather than full system implementation.
(b)(1)(i) Use data to inform oversight	Data collected (CLASS, screenings, attendance), but not required to drive oversight decisions	✗ Low alignment. No requirement to use data systematically to inform oversight.

(b)(1)(ii) Correct quality and compliance issues promptly	Licensing violations must be corrected; compliance enforcement exists	✅ Partial–High alignment. Florida requires correction of violations, but not system-level quality improvement
(b)(1)(iii) Engage governing body & Policy Council in oversight	No Policy Council; governance handled externally by coalitions or owners	❌ No alignment. No equivalent program-level shared governance system.
(b)(1)(iv) Prevent recurrence of issues (deficiencies, incidents)	Corrective action required after violations; no requirement for systemic prevention planning	⚠️ Partial –Low alignment. Florida addresses compliance issues but not root-cause prevention systems.

(b)(2) Ongoing Assessment of Program Goals

HSPPS Requirement §1302.102(b)(2)	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
Annual self-assessment using program data	Not required	❌ No alignment. Florida lacks program-wide self-assessment requirement.
Use aggregated child, PD, and family data to evaluate effectiveness	Screening and CLASS data collected; not required to be aggregated for program evaluation	❌ Low alignment. No requirement for program-level data evaluation across domains.
Collaboration with staff, parents, governing body	No structured requirement for collaborative evaluation	❌ No alignment. No requirement for shared review of performance.
Submit self-assessment findings	No equivalent reporting requirement	❌ No alignment. Florida does not require formal evaluation reporting.

(c) Using Data for Continuous Improvement

HSPPS Requirement §1302.102(c)	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
---------------------------------------	--	------------------------------

(c)(1) Use data to identify strengths/needs and implement improvements	No structured requirement; quality initiatives optional	✗ Low alignment. No required continuous improvement system.
(c)(2)(i) Aggregate and analyze data across program areas	Data collected but siloed (licensing, CLASS, screening)	✗ Low alignment. No requirement for integrated data systems.
(c)(2)(ii) Child assessment aggregation 3x/year (or 2x for short programs)	Screening only required; no ongoing assessment system	✗ No alignment. Florida does not require ongoing child assessment cycles.
(c)(2)(iv) Use multiple data sources (child, staff, family) for planning	No requirement to integrate multiple data sources	✗ No alignment. Florida data use is limited and not comprehensive.
(c)(2)(v) Use improvement plans to adjust services, PD, program design	No required improvement planning system	✗ No alignment. Florida lacks program improvement planning requirements.

(d) Reporting

HSPPS Requirement §1302.102(d)	Florida Reference (Statute / Rule / Handbook)	Alignment Explanation
(d)(1)(i) Semi-annual reporting to governing body & Policy Council	No Policy Council; limited reporting beyond administrative requirements	✗ No alignment. No requirement for program-level performance reporting to leadership.
(d)(1)(ii) Report significant incidents within 7 days	Florida requires incident reporting for licensing violations and abuse/neglect (DCF reporting rules)	✓ Partial-Strong alignment. Florida has incident reporting requirements, though not identical timelines/scope.
(d)(1)(iii) Report specific incidents (abuse, closures, injuries, etc.)	Florida mandates reporting of abuse, neglect, serious incidents under Chapter 402 and related rules	✓ Strong alignment. Strong alignment in child safety reporting expectations.
(d)(2) Annual public report (community assessment + program information)	No program-level public reporting requirement	✗ No alignment. Florida does not require public program reporting.

(d)(3) Quality improvement plan for deficiencies	Corrective action plans required for licensing violations	⚠ Partial alignment. Florida requires correction, but not full quality improvement planning tied to performance data.
--	---	---

Subpart J

Alignment and Gaps

Florida's School Readiness system demonstrates moderate to strong alignment with Subpart J because both frameworks require programs to maintain sound administrative, fiscal, operational, and accountability systems. Florida providers must comply with licensing requirements, School Readiness contracts, fiscal monitoring, documentation standards, workforce requirements, and quality improvement expectations. Both systems emphasize program oversight, staff training, recordkeeping, data management, and compliance monitoring.

The strongest areas of alignment include management systems, fiscal accountability, recordkeeping, data security, personnel oversight, professional development, and continuous quality improvement activities. Florida requires providers to maintain operational and financial records, participate in monitoring and corrective action processes, protect confidential information, and support ongoing workforce development. These requirements closely align with the core management functions expected under Head Start.

Florida also demonstrates alignment in areas addressing program monitoring, reporting requirements, health and safety oversight, staff supervision, and the use of data to support program operations. Both systems recognize the importance of documenting performance, maintaining internal controls, tracking compliance, and addressing identified deficiencies.

The most significant gaps arise because Head Start's management system is designed to oversee a comprehensive child and family services model, while Florida's School Readiness system focuses primarily on early learning, child care, and regulatory compliance. Head Start requires integrated management of education, family engagement, health, mental health, nutrition, disabilities, and transition services. Florida generally does not require providers to manage or coordinate these broader service systems.

Additional gaps exist in Head Start's requirements for governing body and policy council involvement, community assessment-driven planning, program-wide coordinated approaches for dual language learners, formal school readiness goal setting, comprehensive self-assessment

processes, and data-based strategic planning across all service areas. While Florida addresses many of these concepts through coalition planning and state oversight, the requirements are not as comprehensive or prescriptive as those found in Head Start.

Florida aligns well with the administrative and accountability functions of Subpart J, including financial management, monitoring, recordkeeping, staff development, and operational oversight. The primary gaps relate to Head Start's broader governance structure, comprehensive service integration, community-driven planning requirements, and extensive continuous improvement systems designed to support the full Head Start model.

Findings

Florida Strengths

Florida's early childhood system demonstrates several areas of strong alignment with the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS), particularly in domains where federal authority—including the Head Start Act (§9835), HSPPS Subpart D, and related Program Instructions and Information Memoranda—emphasizes health, safety, and baseline regulatory compliance. Through Florida statutes (Chapter 402, F.S.), Department of Children and Families (DCF) licensing rules (65C-22, FAC), and oversight from the Division of Early Learning (DEL), the state has established a comprehensive regulatory framework that ensures safe learning environments, appropriate supervision, sanitation, emergency preparedness, and monitoring systems. These requirements closely mirror federal expectations for safe program operations and child protection, making health and safety one of the strongest areas of alignment between Florida and Head Start.

In addition, Florida's rigorous background screening system reflects strong alignment with federal personnel safety requirements under HSPPS §1302.90. State Statute 435.04 F.S. details background screening requirements established in statute and implemented through a centralized clearinghouse and Florida ensures that staff working with children undergo fingerprinting, criminal history checks, and ongoing re-screening. This approach aligns with federal expectations designed to protect children and maintain safe staffing environments, demonstrating consistency between state and federal requirements in safeguarding children.

Florida also demonstrates partial alignment with federal expectations for early learning through its established developmental standards and curriculum framework. The Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards, along with DEL-approved curricula requirements, provide a clear structure for supporting child development across domains, consistent with the intent of the Head Start Act which emphasizes school readiness and developmentally appropriate practices.

Additionally, Florida’s use of CLASS observations to assess teacher-child interactions reflects alignment with federal monitoring approaches. However, while these structures exist, Florida does not require the data-driven, individualized instructional systems reinforced through federal Program Instructions and Information Memoranda, limiting its alignment to structural components rather than full instructional systems.

Florida also shows strength in its monitoring and oversight systems, which parallel, at a basic level, the federal accountability framework outlined in §641A of the Head Start Act. Through DCF inspections, Early Learning Coalition (ELC) oversight, and CLASS-based evaluations, Florida ensures providers meet minimum compliance standards. While these systems are not integrated into a continuous improvement framework as required under Head Start—where PIs and IMs emphasize data-driven program improvement—they do provide a consistent statewide baseline for monitoring program quality and compliance.

Another key strength is Florida’s broad access to services and statewide infrastructure, facilitated through the School Readiness program and coordinated by the Division of Early Learning and local Early Learning Coalitions. Unlike Head Start, which targets the highest-need populations through structured prioritization systems, Florida’s model ensures wide availability and affordability of child care services for working families. This reflects a different, but complementary, approach that emphasizes system access and scale rather than targeted service delivery.

Finally, Florida benefits from strong external service systems, including Early Steps (IDEA Part C), local education agencies (Part B IDEA), Medicaid, and WIC. These systems align with federal expectations that children and families have access to health, developmental, and support services. However, under Head Start, federal authority (Act, PI, and IM guidance) requires programs not only to connect families to services but to coordinate, track, and ensure service delivery, whereas Florida relies on these services existing outside the early childhood program structure.

Florida performs strongly in areas aligned with compliance, safety, and access, supported by state statutes, licensing regulations, and DEL oversight systems. These strengths provide a solid foundation that reflects key aspects of federal expectations. However, they do not extend to the integrated, coordinated, and outcome-driven systems required by Head Start, particularly those reinforced through Program Instructions and Information Memoranda, which emphasize program-level responsibility, continuous improvement, and measurable outcomes for children and families.

Head Start Strengths

Head Start's primary strength lies in its comprehensive, integrated program model, which is designed to support the whole child and family through coordinated systems across education, health, family engagement, and program operations. Unlike systems that focus primarily on access or compliance, Head Start requires programs to actively deliver and integrate services, ensuring that children and families receive consistent, intentional, and outcome-driven support.

A defining strength of Head Start is its emphasis on data-driven decision-making and continuous improvement, as outlined in HSPPS §1302.102. Programs are required to establish measurable goals, track progress using multiple data sources, conduct annual self-assessments, and implement structured quality improvement processes. This creates a system where programs are not only monitored for compliance but are continuously evaluated and improved to drive measurable outcomes for children and families.

Head Start also demonstrates strong leadership in education quality and individualized instruction. Through requirements in Subpart C, programs must implement research-based curricula, conduct ongoing child assessments, and use data to guide individualized teaching practices. This ensures that instruction is not static, but responsive to each child's developmental progress, supported by federal guidance that emphasizes intentional teaching and measurable school readiness outcomes.

Another major strength is Head Start's family engagement system, which is both structured and outcome oriented. Through Subpart E, programs must partner with families to set goals, support family well-being, and involve parents in decision-making through governance structures such as Policy Councils. This two-generation approach ensures that programs address not only children's needs, but also family stability and long-term success, recognizing families as essential partners in children's development.

Head Start is also distinguished by its requirements for comprehensive and coordinated services, particularly in health, disabilities, and transitions. Programs are responsible not only for connecting families to services, but for ensuring those services are delivered and integrated into the child's overall program experience. This includes coordination with IDEA services, mental health support, and transition planning, creating a system that is proactive, coordinated, and accountable for service delivery.

Finally, Head Start maintains a strong focus on accountability and governance, supported by federal oversight systems such as the Designation Renewal System (DRS). Programs must demonstrate performance across multiple areas—including education, health, family

engagement, and management or risk losing funding. This creates a level of accountability that ensures programs are held to high, consistent standards tied to outcomes, not just compliance.

Conclusion

HSPPS and Florida School Readiness (CCDF)

Across Subparts A–I, Florida’s School Readiness system demonstrates strong alignment in foundational compliance areas but diverges significantly from Head Start in integrated program design, service delivery, and accountability systems. Florida aligns most consistently in areas related to health and safety, licensing, background screening, and basic operational standards. Requirements governing facilities, staff conduct, ratios (at a minimum level), and sanitation closely mirror Head Start expectations, particularly in Subparts D and §1302.47 (safety). Additionally, Florida establishes a solid baseline in curriculum use and developmental standards, providing a framework for what children should learn.

However, the alignment weakens considerably when examining how systems function together to produce outcomes. Head Start requires programs to operate through a fully integrated, data-driven model, where education, health, family engagement, and disabilities services are coordinated and continuously improved. Florida, by contrast, operates through separate systems (licensing, SR rules, external service providers) with limited requirements for integration. This results in major gaps in areas such as individualized instruction, ongoing assessment, program design decisions, and continuous improvement processes (Subparts B, C, and I).

The most significant differences emerge in family engagement, disabilities services, workforce systems, and comprehensive service delivery. Head Start requires structured family partnership processes, goal-setting, and shared responsibility for outcomes (Subpart E), while Florida primarily requires communication and access. Similarly, while Florida ensures access to IDEA services, it does not require programs to coordinate or implement individualized support (Subpart F). Workforce requirements also diverge, with Head Start mandating degree qualifications, compensation systems, and staff wellness supports, which are absent in Florida (Subparts I & §1302.90–.93).

Florida’s system reflects a model focused on access, compliance, and basic quality monitoring, while Head Start requires programs to function as comprehensive, coordinated systems designed to produce measurable child and family outcomes. This creates moderate alignment in structure but substantial gaps in intentionality, integration, and accountability.

References

Florida Department of Children and Families. (2026). *Child care standards (65C-22)*, Florida Administrative Code. <https://flrules.elaws.us/fac/65c-22>

Florida Department of Children and Families. *Child Care Facility Handbook* (October 2021), incorporated by reference in Rule 65C-22.001, Florida Administrative Code

Florida Department of Education. (n.d.). *School readiness services*.
<https://www.fldoe.org/schools/early-learning/providers/sr-train-screen-serv.stml>

Florida Department of Health. (2025, July). *Eligibility guide*. <https://www.floridahealth.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/eligibility-guide.pdf>

Florida Department of State. (2026). *Division of Early Learning (6M)*, Florida Administrative Code. <https://flrules.elaws.us/fac/6m>

Florida Legislature. (2025). *Section 1006.09, Florida Statutes: Duties of school principal relating to student discipline and school safety*. Retrieved from
https://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=1000-1099/1006/Sections/1006.09.html

Florida Legislature. (2025). *Section 1006.07, district school board duties relating to student discipline and school safety*. Florida Statutes.
https://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=1000-1099/1006/Sections/1006.07.html

Florida Legislature. (2025). *Section 1002.53, Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program; eligibility and enrollment*. Florida Statutes. <https://www.flhouse.gov/Statutes/2025/1002.53/>

Florida Legislature. (2025). *Section 1002.53, Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program; eligibility and enrollment*. Florida Statutes.
https://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=1000-1099/1002/Sections/1002.53.html

Florida Legislature. (2025). *Section 1002.87, school readiness program; eligibility and enrollment*. Florida Statutes

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start. (2025, September 26). *Addressing vacant slots due to chronic absenteeism in Head Start programs (ACF-OHS-IM-25-06)*. <https://headstart.gov/policy/im/acf-ohs-im-25-06>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2010). *Appeal procedures for Head Start grantees and delegate agencies (45 C.F.R. Part 1303)*. Code of Federal Regulations.
<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2010-title45-vol4/pdf/CFR-2010-title45-vol4-part1303.pdf>

Florida Legislature. (2025). *Section 1002.89, School readiness program; funding*. Florida Statutes. <https://www.flsenate.gov/Laws/Statutes/2025/1002.89>