



Investing in our community, one family at a time

Parent Guide

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ABOUT SNCS

What is SNCS?

Sierra Nevada Children's Services (SNCS) is a private, community-based nonprofit child care resource and referral agency that has served families, early care and education professionals and the community since 1978. We have 3 offices in Nevada and Sierra Counties – Grass Valley, Truckee, and Loyalton.

SNCS Mission Statement

Sierra Nevada Children's Services enriches the community by supporting quality child care and empowering families to aspire to life-long success.

SNCS Vision Statement

We provide the bridge between state dependence and self sufficiency, resulting in families contributing to the community through economic success and growth. This is done by ensuring child care, which reduces barriers to employment and enables more people to work, creating economic expansion.

Non-Discrimination Clause

SNCS operates on a non-discriminatory basis, giving equal treatment and access to services without regard to race, color, creed, religion, disability, sexual orientation, national origin or ethnicity.

Confidentiality

SNCS policy regarding confidentiality states that the use or disclosure of information pertaining to the child or the child's family is restricted to purposes directly related to the administration of the program. The use or disclosure of information will be limited to SNCS staff and authorized representatives of the funding sources or, in the event of a licensing investigation, Community Care Licensing. Information may also be

shared with the Department of Social Services regarding CalWORKs families, or the District Attorney's office for fraud cases.

Except in the aforementioned instances, information shall not be released without prior written acknowledgment of the enrolled parent or child care provider, unless a court order is issued to SNCS.

SNCS permits the review of information regarding the child by the custodial parent(s) or those with the legal right to know, upon request and at reasonable times and places.

SNCS PROGRAMS

Supportive Child Care

SNCS administers various programs that are funded by federal, state and local governments to help income eligible families pay for part, or all of their child care costs. Families may also pay a share of cost on a sliding scale that is based on income and family size.

Child Care Referrals

SNCS is funded by the California Department of Education (CDE) to provide Resource & Referral services to Nevada and Sierra counties. SNCS provides free child care referrals to anyone in the community, regardless of income. SNCS maintains current information on all licensed family child care providers and licensed child care centers in Nevada and Sierra counties.

When a parent calls looking for child care, SNCS gathers some basic information from the parent to best match the family's needs to a list of child care providers. SNCS staff is available to answer questions about how to find quality child care. SNCS believes the parent is the best person to choose the care for the child. It is SNCS goal to help parents make informed choices from a broad range of child care options that meet the family's needs.

Additionally, when providing child care referrals SNCS staff informs parents that they have the right to view information about a licensed child care provider (Family Child Care Home or Child Care Center) either at the child care provider's location or by contacting Community Care Licensing (CCL) (Oliver's Law, January 2000). The purpose of this law is to empower and inform parents and guardians who need child care services; to encourage parents to review the safety of the child care program or facility; and to encourage parents to evaluate the program's ability to meet the needs of their child. To obtain information regarding a child care provider, you can call CCL at (916) 263-5744 (Nevada County) or (530) 895-5033 (Sierra County) or online at <https://secure.dss.ca.gov/CareFacilitySearch/>.

SNCS does not inspect or guarantee the conditions of a child care provider's facility or the quality of care children received. SNCS does not assume any responsibility for injury or damages arising from the performance of our agreement of services. Providers and parents agree to indemnify and hold harmless SNCS, its officers and its employees from costs, suit or liability allegedly arising from the provision of child care services.

Resources

SNCS provides a family-friendly environment where parents can utilize a variety of resources while their children play nearby.

In addition, SNCS is connected to other agencies in the community that provide family services. SNCS staff can provide a current list of these agencies.

Child Development Lending Library

SNCS has child development resources available for both parents and child care providers. All 3 of our offices have a Child Development Lending Library that includes developmentally appropriate toys, books, and games for children of different ages. The Lending Library also contains educational books and videos to assist both parents and child care providers in caring for and raising children. The resources range

from parenting guidance to information on how to successfully operate a family child care home or child care center.

Workshops & Trainings

SNCS offers training workshops throughout the year for child care providers, as well as other various learning opportunities for child care providers and parents. The monthly schedule is posted in the main lobby as well as on the SNCS website.

CHILD CARE OPTIONS

Licensed Child Care

All licensed child care providers are regulated by Community Care Licensing (CCL), a division of California Department of Social Services. Legislation requires at least one unannounced site visit every 3 years; however, annual comprehensive visits are made to those sites with previous violations or serious complaints. Licensed child care providers, upon request, must provide a copy of a valid license issued by CCL. Copies of all visits by CCL are required to be available for review at the site by potential or currently enrolled families. Licensed child care providers are fingerprinted, and have passed a criminal background check and cleared the California Child Abuse Index. Licensed child care providers are required to charge rates for subsidized children that are less than or equal to the rates charged for nonsubsidized children.

- **Child Care Center**

A licensed facility that provides child care services for a number of children. Each center's license indicates the number and age groups of children the center may serve. Centers are licensed to serve infants, toddlers, preschoolers or school-aged children or some combination of these age groups. A child care program that is staffed by school district employees for school age children on school site is considered a child care center for purposes of subsidized reimbursement. These programs, however, are exempt from licensing.

- **Family Child Care Home**

A family child care home is a private home which has been licensed for the occupant to provide child care services. There are two types of homes: those licensed for six or eight children and those licensed for twelve or fourteen children. In both cases, the license states the number and ages of children that may be served. Anyone who lives in the home and is over 18 years of age must pass a criminal background check and clear the California Child Abuse Index.

License-Exempt Child Care

License-exempt care occurs when an individual cares for the children of one family other than his/her own. License-exempt providers must be at least 18 years of age and will be required to complete an EMSA approved Pediatric CPR/First Aid class within 90 days of the license-exempt provider's service start date. Parents, legal guardians, or members of the child's assistance unit are not eligible for reimbursement, nor are individuals currently on probationary status with CCL. Additionally, license-exempt providers must meet with SNCS staff prior to authorization of services. There are 2 types of license-exempt child care providers.

- **Relative Care**

An individual that qualifies as a relative care provider is an aunt, uncle, grandmother, or grandfather of the child, by blood, marriage, or court decree.

- **TrustLine Care**

An individual who does not qualify for Relative Care must be TrustLine registered to receive reimbursement. TrustLine is the California registry of child care providers who have passed a background screening. A TrustLine provider is cleared through a fingerprint check of records at the California Department of Justice. SNCS will not enroll or pay any provider until they have been registered on TrustLine. Parents who have an immediate need for child care (those who are working, participating in a CalWORKs work activity, training, or are incapacitated) and are unable to find a licensed or relative provider who can accommodate their child care need have the option to select a

provisional child care provider. The provisional child care provider must first complete a TrustLine application, submit fingerprints, and then be TrustLine registered within 30 days to be eligible for reimbursement. A provisional provider who is not TrustLine registered within 30 days will not be reimbursed until they have been registered on TrustLine.

In-Home Child Care

Child care that takes place in the child’s home with a license-exempt provider is referred to as in-home child care. If child care occurs in the child’s home the parent is the provider’s employer and is responsible for complying with state and federal laws. More information on in-home care is available from SNCS staff.

Choosing Quality Child Care

Prior to selecting a child care provider it is recommended that the parent and child visit various child care provider sites to gain more information about the child care provider and the environment. It is important to ask questions about the child care provider, the program and activities, the indoor and outdoor environments, and parent/child expectations. Please visit SNCS website at www.sncs.org for more tools to help you find quality child care that meets the needs of your family.

FUNDING OPTIONS

There are two ways a family may be enrolled for supportive child care services – from the Childcare Eligibility list or through a CalWORKs referral.

Childcare Eligibility List (CEL)

The Nevada and Sierra County CEL gives families access to two funding sources: the Alternative Payment Program and the Family Child Care

Homes Education Network program. An application may be obtained by contacting any of the SNCS offices.

SNCS child care payment assistance programs provide full or partial payment for child care services for enrolled families. These programs are designed to assist income eligible families in paying for child care. Funding is provided by the California Department of Education (CDE), Child Development Division (CDD).

Families who need subsidized child care services must complete and submit an application. Applications are entered into the CEL database. Each family is assigned an eligibility rank between 1 and 61, with a lower number indicating a higher likelihood of admission.

Priority for enrollment is based on factors determined by CDE guidelines. A family's rank is determined by the size of the family and the family's gross monthly income. Children who are receiving child protective services or children who are at risk of being neglected, abused, or exploited shall be given precedence in the admission process. Families at the lowest rank are the next to be enrolled. It is important to note that the CEL is not administered on a first-come, first-served basis; the amount of time a family has waited does not have any impact on a family's rank.

When funds become available to enroll new families, SNCS prints a current CEL listing ordered by rank and contacts families by mail for possible enrollment. Enrollment is prioritized by rank with the lowest ranked families enrolled first. The family's current eligibility is determined to see if they are still the most eligible for enrollment at that time. There are 2 sources of funding for which families may be eligible:

- **Alternative Payment Program**

The Alternative Payment Program (CAPP) helps pay child care costs for income-eligible families. Families are enrolled in CAPP funding from the CEL, in order of priority, when funding is available. Families may select the child care provider of their choice.

- **Family Child Care Homes Education Network**

Families are enrolled in the Family Child Care Homes Education Network (CFCC) program from the CEL, in order of priority when funding is available. Families enrolled in the Network program must select a child care provider that is on the Network list.

Children enrolled under Network funding are assessed through the Desired Results for Children and Families system. This assessment system is designed to encourage progress toward the achievement of desired outcomes by providing information and technical assistance to improve program quality.

One major goal of the Network is to train and support family child care providers in providing professional care in a quality environment. Another important goal is to ensure that parents are provided information on the development of their child or children and are afforded an effective method of communication between themselves, providers, and SNCS staff. Parents complete an annual survey, and have a conference with SNCS staff at least twice a year. Developmental profiles are completed on each child twice a year to assure that they are meeting developmental milestones. A progress report is then generated from the information gathered and shared with parents and providers to ensure that developmental needs are being met.

Network child care providers receive training on working with infants, toddlers, and young children. They also provide ongoing support to parents who have concerns re: feeding, sleeping, and issues surrounding general development. The quality of child care is maintained by the child care providers through annual program assessments that focus on the environment, child care routines, nutrition, and activities to support child development and the quality of the relationship with the families that are served. This assessment is completed by the child care provider and SNCS staff.

Note: Children enrolled in the Family Child Care Homes Education Network (CFCC) are only eligible to receive services when they are enrolled with a Family Child Care provider that is on the Network list. If a provider is removed from the Network list, the families who use that provider will be given referrals to other providers who are still on the Network list. To remain eligible for CFCC Network funding, these families must enroll with one of the referred providers within 30 days of receiving the referrals.

CalWORKs

California's version of welfare reform is the CalWORKs (California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids) program. CalWORKs has many family support services including child care. Child care through CalWORKs is a 3-stage program that pays child care expenses for eligible CalWORKs participants. Families eligible for CalWORKs funding must be referred to SNCS by the CalWORKs office.

- **Stage 1**
Eligibility for Stage 1 child care is determined by staff at CalWORKs. A referral is faxed to SNCS authorizing child care services. When it is determined by the CalWORKs office that the family's situation is stable, a referral is made to SNCS to transfer child care funding from Stage 1 to Stage 2.
- **Stage 2 (C2AP)**
CalWORKs Stage 2 is available for 24 months after the family becomes ineligible for cash aid; however, eligibility requirements must be met. Eligibility is determined by SNCS staff.
- **Stage 3 (C3AP)**
After the 24 months on Stage 2 has passed a family's child care funding is transitioned to Stage 3, which may continue as long as the family maintains eligibility for services.

RECEIVING CHILD CARE SERVICES

SNCS administers services that are funded by federal, state, and local governments. Different funding sources may have different rules and regulations. Therefore, it is possible for two families that are receiving services to have different rules applied to their cases.

Enrollment

A family is enrolled for services based on eligibility status and need for services. In order to successfully complete enrollment a family must do the following:

- Provide all documentation required to establish eligibility and need for services.
- Meet with a Family Support Specialist for an eligibility assessment and to review program requirements.
- Select a child care provider that is enrolled for participation.

If all of the requirements are met within 30 days from the date the parent signed the application for services, the family will receive a Notice of Action (NOA) approving services. If requirements are not met within 30 days the parent will receive a NOA denying services. If the parent disagrees with the agency's decision to deny services the parent may appeal by completing the reverse side of the NOA. All appeals must be submitted to SNCS no later than the appeal date shown on the NOA.

Eligibility Status

Families must meet one of the following requirements in order to be eligible for child care services:

- Child Protective Services or At Risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation
- Current Aid Recipient
- Income Eligible
- Homeless

Need for Services

In order to be eligible for services the parent must have a need for child care services. The need criteria are: employment, seeking employment, vocational training, parental incapacity, seeking permanent housing, CPS, or at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

- **Employment**

If the basis of need for services is employment the parent must submit documentation of the days and hours of employment. If the parent has an employer the parent must request that the employer complete verification of employment. The information that is submitted to SNCS will be independently verified by a Family Support Specialist.

If the parent is self-employed, the parent must provide the following documentation to demonstrate a need for services:

- A declaration of need under penalty of perjury that includes a description of the employment and an estimate of the days and hours worked per week.
- To demonstrate the days and hours of work the parent must provide a copy of one or more of the following: appointment logs, client receipts, job logs, mileage logs, a list of clients with contact information, or similar records.
- If applicable, a copy of a business license, workspace lease, or workspace rental agreement.

SNCS may request additional information if the documentation submitted by the parent is not sufficient to verify employment.

- **Seeking Employment**

If a parent's need for services is to look for employment an agreement to seek employment must be signed prior to using child care. This agreement must include the following:

- The plan to secure employment.
- The days and hours child care is needed.

The period of eligibility for seeking employment is 60 consecutive working days (excluding weekends and federal

holidays) during the fiscal year, for no more than 5 days per week and fewer than 30 hours per week.

If the parent has concurrently received services based on employment or vocational training for at least 20 working days while receiving services for seeking employment, eligibility for seeking employment may be extended an additional 20 working days.

- Services for seeking employment will be authorized on a case-by-case basis for parents of school-age children or two-parent families in which both parents are seeking employment. Since this is a part-time benefit, if both parents are requesting services for seeking employment, care can only be authorized to the extent that the parents cannot take turns caring for the child(ren) while the other person seeks employment. Parent(s) of school-age children must demonstrate a need to seek employment that cannot be met during the hours the child is enrolled in school.
- **Vocational Training**
If the parent's need for services is vocational training leading directly to a recognized trade or profession, services may be authorized for class time (including online courses) and study time.

Eligibility for child care while attending school or a training program is for a period of 6 years from the first date of services as a student (even if services are not used continuously). If the parent has or receives a Bachelor's Degree child care is limited to the first 24 semester units taken after receiving the Bachelor's Degree, not to exceed the 6 year limit.

Continuation of services based on training is contingent upon making adequate progress, which is defined as earning a grade point average of 2.0 or higher. Students dropping below these minimum standards will be allowed one training period to improve. If adequate progress is not met during the second period, services for the purpose of training will be terminated

and may be available to the parent 6 months after the date of termination.

- **Parental Incapacity**

A parent may receive child care services if the parent is incapable of providing care and supervision for a child for part of the day due to a physical or mental health condition. The parent will be required to provide a signed statement from a legally qualified health professional to verify that the parent is incapacitated and requires child care services. Child care shall not exceed 50 hours per week.

- **Seeking Permanent Housing**

If a parent's need for child care services is to seek permanent housing for family stability, the parent's period of eligibility for services is limited to 60 working days during the contract period. Services shall occur no more than five days per week and for less than 30 hours per week. The period of eligibility shall start on the day authorized by the Family Support Specialist and extend for consecutive working days. During the period of authorization parents will be requested to provide documentation describing the search plan to secure a fixed, regular, and adequate residence and shall identify a general description of when services will be necessary. Parents requesting services to seek permanent housing must meet the federal definition of homeless.

- **Child Protective Services (CPS)/At Risk**

First priority for enrollment from the CEL shall be given to neglected or abused children who are recipients of child protective services, or children who are at risk of being neglected or abused, upon written referral from a legal, medical, or social services agency.

- **CPS**

A family may receive child care services for up to 12 months on the basis of a certification by CPS. The time limit may be extended if the family's child care referral is recertified by CPS. These families may be exempt for up to 12 months from assessment of family fees, upon the recommendation of the county social worker s.

- **At Risk**

A family may receive child care services for up to 3 months based on certification that the children are at risk of being neglected or abused. A written referral from a legal, medical or social services agency is required. These families may be exempt for up to 3 months from assessment of family fees, upon the recommendation of the referring source.

When the CPS or At Risk referral has expired, if funds are available, and the parent is otherwise eligible for services, SNCS may enroll the family based on one of the other eligibility criteria. Because funding is limited, not all eligible families are served. However, if interested, eligible families may submit an application and be placed on the Child Care Eligibility List (CEL).

Income

The family's adjusted gross monthly income must be at or below 70% of the state median income. For all countable sources of income please refer to Appendix I.

Income is calculated using gross monthly income that may be "fixed" or "fluctuating." Income is fixed if it stays the same from month to month. Income is fluctuating if it varies because of overtime, variable hours, seasonal employment, commissions, tips, self-employment, etc. Verification of a family's income shall be required annually (at recertification), every four months (for families with fluctuating income), and when a change in income occurs.

Family Size

Families must provide documentation to support the number of children and parents in the household. When only one parent has signed the application for services and the information provided indicates the child in the family has another parent whose name does not appear on the application, then the presence or absence of that parent must be documented. If family size fluctuates due to shared custody the child will only be included in the family size when the child is in the custody of the enrolled parent. Children under the age of 18 who are part of the

household and are not receiving services will still be included in the family size. High School students who have turned 18, but have been continuously enrolled in school, may be included in the family size until they have completed high school. The parent will be required to submit documentation of continuous enrollment for the child to be included in the family size.

Notification of Changes

It is the responsibility of the parent to notify SNCS of any changes affecting family income, family size, or need for services within 5 calendar days of the change. Failure to do so will result in issuance of a Notice of Action to terminate services. The parent must also report changes in contact information or child care provider changes as soon as possible.

Recertification

Once a family is enrolled recertification of need and eligibility for services must be completed at least once per year. The Family Support Specialist will notify the family by mail that the recertification is due, and what requirements must be met. The parent is required to attend group orientation as part of the recertification process.

Limited Term Service Leave (LTSL)

Parents who temporarily have no need for child care but do not wish to be dropped from the program can request a Limited Term Service Leave (LTSL). The parent must request LTSL on a form provided by SNCS. Such leaves may be approved for the following reasons:

- Parent break from school/training.
- Medical, family or maternity leave.
- Child’s visit with non-custodial parent.

LTSL shall be no more than 12 consecutive weeks during the fiscal year, except in the case of maternity and family leave, a verifiable medical condition, or student parents. LTSL for maternity and family leave, a verifiable medical condition, or a break in training cannot exceed 16 weeks. LTSL will only be granted once per fiscal year, regardless of the

duration, except when a parent is taking leave due to a break in school/training. Student parents may be eligible for more than one LTSL, not to exceed 16 weeks total, as long as the parent has a documented educational need following the leave. SNCS is not responsible for child care reimbursement during the period of LTSL. Also, due to funding, SNCS cannot guarantee services once LTSL ends.

Notice of Action

A Notice of Action (NOA) will be issued any time a change or termination of services occurs. If the family’s services are being terminated, the parent may appeal the action by following the appeal instructions on the reverse side of the notice. If the family receives 3 termination notices for non-compliance within the certification period the termination cannot be rescinded without an appeal. During the appeal process it will be determined whether the termination will be upheld or rescinded.

PARENT’S SHARE OF CHILD CARE COSTS

Family Fees

Parents may be required to pay a portion of their child care costs. This portion is called a family fee. Family fees are assessed on a sliding scale based on the certified need for child care services. Family fee amounts are established by the State of California and determined by the family's adjusted gross monthly income, family size, and whether the child is enrolled for full time (130 hours or more per month) or part time (fewer than 130 hours per month) care as defined by the CDE. Family fees are billed according to the child who is authorized for the most care, regardless of the number of children enrolled in the program. Family fees are not adjusted for absences or actual use of child care. It is important for parents to report schedule changes within 5 days so that family fees are billed accurately as adjustments will not be made under any circumstances.

Family fees are billed and collected by SNCS in advance. Payments are due to the Grass Valley SNCS office by the first day of the service month. Payment must be made in the form of check, money order or PayPal only. **SNCS cannot accept cash, or post-dated checks.**

If SNCS is unable to meet all of a family's need for child care for which need and eligibility have been established, SNCS shall grant a fee credit equal to the amount paid to the other service provider of these child care and development services. The fee credit shall apply to the family's subsequent billing period, but shall not be allow to carry over beyond that billing period. In order to receive a fee credit the parent shall submit a receipt or cancelled check for the other child care and development services prior to the first of the following month.

Delinquent Family Fees

Family fees are considered delinquent after 7 calendar days from the date the fees were due. Upon determination that fees are delinquent, a Notice of Action to terminate services shall be mailed. If the fees are paid by the effective date of the termination notice, child care payment assistance services may continue. Fees must be kept current; that is, the current family fee must always be paid; however, SNCS will accept a reasonable payment plan for payment of past due fees. If the payment plan is followed, termination of services for delinquent family fees can be avoided. Repeated late Family Fees are grounds for automatic termination. If a family is terminated all fees must be paid prior to re-enrollment for child care services.

Non-Sufficient Funds

If a family fee is paid by a check that "bounces", a non-sufficient funds fee (currently \$40, effective January 1, 2012) will be added to the family fee bill. If two checks bounce within a fiscal year (07/01-06/30), all future payments must be made in the form of money order only.

Co-Payments

A benefit amount, which is the maximum amount reimbursed for child care services, is determined for each child receiving services. The benefit amount is determined in accordance with state regulation. Parents who choose child care providers whose usual and customary fee exceeds their benefit amount are responsible to pay the difference between the maximum reimbursement and the child care provider's fee. This co-payment is paid directly to the child care provider by the parent and shall not be accounted for by SNCS.

Non-Reimbursable Costs

SNCS does not cover the cost of fees that are not included in the child care provider's basic cost for child care services. These fees may include diaper fees, transportation fees, late fees, etc. Additionally, SNCS does not cover time when a child is suspended from the child care program.

SNCS will reimburse registration fees as long as the fees (or a prorated portion thereof) plus the rate established for the provider does not exceed the maximum allowable benefit amount. Any non-reimbursable portion of registration fees are the parent's responsibility

APPROVED CHILD CARE SCHEDULES

The financial stability of SNCS child care payment assistance programs is maintained by careful and constant monitoring of child care attendance. Projections of cost are determined for each newly enrolled family and adequate program funding set aside.

An approved child care schedule includes the days and hours of the parent's documented need for child care, as well as travel time. Additionally, if the parent meets certain criteria child care may be approved for study time and/or sleep time.

Child care is authorized according to the parent's certified need for services, as determined by SNCS. Reimbursement to the child care provider is based on the parent's certified need for care, unless care is authorized on a variable schedule or part-time with a license-exempt provider. Services authorized on a variable schedule or part-time with a license-exempt provider will be reimbursed based upon the actual use of child care. The provider is only eligible for reimbursement on days the child attends care.

If child care utilization is broadly inconsistent with the parent's certified need the parent will be contacted by a Family Support Specialist to determine if the parent's need has changed. Child care is determined to be broadly consistent with the certified need if the child care that is used results in the same reimbursement category as the certified need for care. For more information regarding how SNCS determines the reimbursement amount see Reimbursement Amount Determination.

Certificate of Enrollment

The Certificate of Enrollment (COE) is used to authorize the child care schedule; copies are provided to both the parent and child care provider. The COE contains the approved child care schedule, and the anticipated rate of reimbursement. COEs are issued upon initial enrollment and when changes occur, such as schedule or rate changes.

Notification of Schedule Changes

All changes affecting child care schedules must be reported to SNCS within 5 calendar days of the change. The parent will be required to submit documentation of the change. A new COE will be issued to the parent and child care provider once the change is approved.

Changing Child Care Providers

Families enrolled in child care services have the right to change child care providers at any time. It is critical that the following procedures be followed to prevent a child care provider or parent from absorbing costs for child care that are not reimbursed by SNCS.

- The parent must give the current child care provider notice when choosing to terminate child care services with a child care provider. The parent should check with the child care provider or refer to the provider’s contract for the provider’s termination policy.
- The parent has 30 days from the date services are terminated with the current provider to select a new provider and begin using care. If care does not resume with a new provider within 30 days of the date care is discontinued with the previous provider a Notice of Action to terminate services will be issued.
- The parent must notify SNCS before services are authorized with a new child care provider.
- The new child care provider must meet requirements for child care provider participation before services can start.
- Parents enrolled in the Family Child Care Homes Network must choose a child care provider from the Network list. The parent should request the most current list from SNCS.

If sufficient notice is not given to a child care provider, and the child does not attend care, the parent will be responsible for any payment for notice time when the child was not in care.

Multiple Child Care Providers

Reimbursement is limited to one child care provider per child. The following are exceptions.

- Child care may be authorized when the child’s first child care provider is not a licensed center and the parent chooses a licensed center for large group school readiness experiences.
- Child care may be authorized with an eligible alternate provider when one of the following occurs:
 - When the hours of operation of the first provider do not meet the parent’s need for child care services.
 - When the child is ill and the parent has to obtain an alternate provider.
 - When the child’s regular provider is closed

CHILD CARE PROVIDER REIMBURSEMENT

Requirements for Participation

- All child care providers that receive reimbursement from SNCS must be enrolled with SNCS before services are approved with the provider.
- All child care providers are independent contractors and are not employees of SNCS. SNCS does not withhold taxes from child care provider reimbursement; child care providers are responsible for keeping records of reimbursement for their own tax purposes.
- In-home child care providers are employees of the parent.
- All child care providers are required to submit the SNCS attendance sheets for reimbursement.
- License-exempt child care providers are required to complete an EMSA approved CPR/First Aid course within 90 days of the start of child care services.

Attendance Records

Attendance Records (ARs) are mailed to child care providers for each child enrolled for services. It is important for parents and child care providers to follow these guidelines in order to receive reimbursement for child care services. Failure to adhere to these guidelines may result in termination of services.

- The parent, or other authorized individual, must note the time of arrival and departure. Parents whose children are enrolled in CFCC funding must sign the child in and out of care on a daily basis.
- The parent must use full signatures; initials and partial signatures will not be accepted (CFCC only).
- Child care providers must sign children in and out of care for split schedules (for example: school age children who go to and from the facility for school).

- Parents and child care providers must indicate exact times of arrival and departure from the facility. “Block times” (for example: 8:00am-5:00pm every day) will not be accepted.
- All entries must be made in ink; pencil will not be accepted.
- White out will not be accepted on the AR. If a mistake is made please cross out the mistake and write the correction in any empty space near the entry.
- Parents must indicate exact reason for absence (for example: “fever,” “vacation,” or “with grandma”). If a parent indicates “absent” only or leaves the line blank the absences will be counted as unexcused.
- Anyone other than the parent who is authorized to drop off or pick up the child should have their signature on file with SNCS.
- Parents and child care providers must sign the bottom of the AR. ARs that do not have both the parent’s and provider’s signature will not be reimbursed.

If there is a reason that indicates a parent is not adhering to the above requirements, the parent and/or provider will be notified of the non-compliance and technical assistance will be provided. Repeated non-compliance may result in termination of services.

Absences

Child care providers are reimbursed for absences as long as it is the provider’s usual and customary policy to charge for absences. The child care provider must submit documentation to SNCS that this is their policy for unsubsidized families. The parent must indicate the exact reason for absence on the attendance record. Licensed child care providers may also be reimbursed for 10 days of non-operation per fiscal year (7/1 – 6/30) if it is documented in their policies and submitted to SNCS. License-exempt child care providers are reimbursed for actual attendance only; therefore, they are not eligible to receive reimbursement for absences.

Excused Absences

Reimbursement for the following absence reasons is not limited. Please note that if a child is absent from care for more than 5 consecutive days

due to illness, a note from a physician is required. The note may be attached to the attendance record.

- Illness or quarantine of the child, sibling, or parent.
- Medical appointments for the child, sibling, or parent.
- Court ordered visitation with the other parent (documentation of the court orders must be on file with SNCS).

Reimbursement for the following excused absence reasons is limited.

- **Family Emergency**

These are limited to 10 per child, per fiscal year (7/1 – 6/30), and include:

- Immediate need for treatment of anyone (other than the child in care) in the family by a physician or a dentist.
- Death of a family member; funeral or memorial service.
- Any catastrophic event such as theft, fire, flood, weather, car trouble, or impassable roads.
- IEP (Individualized Education Plan), if the child is required to be present.

- **Best Interest**

These are limited to 10 per child, per fiscal year (7/1 – 6/30), and include:

- Parent or child vacation time.
- Time spent with visiting relatives.
- Non-court ordered time spent with non-custodial parent.
- After school or extracurricular activities.

Unexcused Absences

This includes any absence that is not considered an excused absence or any absence that does not include an absence reason. Unexcused absences will be treated as days of non-attendance when determining if child care used is broadly consistent with the certified need for care. Repeated unexcused absences may be grounds for termination of services.

It is the responsibility of the child care provider to notify SNCS if a child is absent from care for an unexcused reason for 3 consecutive scheduled days or with no notice from the parent.

Reimbursement Procedure

Attendance Records (ARs) are mailed directly to child care providers. It is the responsibility of the child care provider to submit attendance records in a timely manner in order to receive reimbursement for child care services.

- Child care provider reimbursements are processed twice per month, after services are rendered.
- Completed ARs are due to SNCS no later than 5:00pm on the 5th day of the month following care. If the 5th falls on a weekend or national holiday, ARs are due by 5:00pm on the next business day.
- ARs received by the 5th will be reimbursed no later than the 20th of the month.
- ARs received after the 5th, but prior to the 18th will be reimbursed by the end of the month.
- Completed ARs received after the 18th will be processed for reimbursement in the following month.
- ARs that are received after the last day of the month following the month of care will not be reimbursed.
- ARs received after the 5th for the last month of the fiscal year (June) will not be reimbursed if received after the 5th.
- Incomplete or inaccurate daily entries cannot be corrected after being received by SNCS. If the bottom of the AR is missing a signature, the child care provider and/or parent will be contacted as soon as the missing signature is identified. If the missing signature is corrected no later than the last day of the month following the service month the attendance sheet will be reimbursed the following month.
- Reimbursement will be made for approved days and hours of child care; use of child care that does not correspond with the child care schedule, or has not been pre-approved by SNCS, will not be reimbursed.

- Reimbursements to child care providers are issued by paper check or direct deposit.

Because SNCS is funded by the California Department of Education, timing of reimbursement to providers can be affected by a delay in the adoption of a State budget or other legislative delays.

Reimbursement Amount Determination

CA Code of Regulations, Title V, Section 18076 requires that contractors use a single rate category to reimburse providers. Sierra Nevada Children’s Services determines the appropriate rate category by dividing the total hours of care authorized in a given month by 4.33ⁱ (the average number of weeks in a month) to determine a weekly average. Once a weekly average has been determined SNCS uses that number to determine the appropriate reimbursement category.

- If the weekly care average is less than 18 hours per week SNCS will reimburse at either a Daily or Hourly rate.
 - The Daily rate will only be applied if all days for which care was authorized in the month are 6 hours or more.
- If the average weekly care is 18 or more hours per week but less than 30 hours per week SNCS will reimburse at a Daily, Part Time Weekly, or Part Time Monthly Rate.
 - The Daily rate will only be used if care is authorized for 3 days or less per week and all days are 6 hours or more.
 - The weekly rate will only be applied if care is not authorized every week of the month.
- If the average weekly care is 30 or more hours per week SNCS will reimburse at a Full Time Weekly or Full Time Monthly rate.
 - The weekly rate will only be applied if care is not authorized every week of the month.

The Regional Market Rate (RMR)ⁱⁱ for the appropriate reimbursement category is then compared to the provider’s rate. The lesser of the two is the reimbursement amount. In simple terms, SNCS is allowed to reimburse up to the appropriate RMR amount unless the RMR exceeds the provider’s rate.

Child care that is authorized on a variable schedule or with a license-exempt provider is reimbursed based upon actual use and is not eligible for reimbursement for absences or closures. All other schedules are reimbursed based upon the parent’s certified need for care.

When Does SNCS Prorate the Reimbursement Amount?

- If care is being reimbursed on a weekly or monthly basis, and the authorized child care schedule begins or ends in the middle of the week or month.
- If the child exceeds his or her allowable number of reimbursable absences.
- If the facility is closed during a child’s regularly scheduled day of care and is not otherwise covered as a paid closure.
- If a child turns 2 or 6 in the middle of the month, resulting in a change in the applicable RMR ceiling.

¹ If care is not authorized every week of the month the weekly average will be determined by dividing the total hours of care in the month by the number of weeks the authorization covers

ⁱⁱ To look up the RMR in your county visit <http://www3.cde.ca.gov/rcsc/>

TERMINATION OF SERVICES

Reasons for Termination

The parent and child care provider will be issued a Notice of Action (NOA) to inform them of a decision to terminate child care services. The following reasons are grounds for termination of services from SNCS supportive child care program. This should be considered a partial list.

- Failure to comply with the program rules.
- Failure to report a change within 5 calendar days.

- Use of child care that does not correspond with certified need.
- Failure to respond to a request for documentation.
- Failure to pay your family fees on time.
- Non-use of child care services.
- The family no longer meets eligibility requirements.
- The parent falsifies information or required documents.
- Lack of cooperation with SNCS staff.
- Threats affecting the well-being of SNCS employees
- The parent requests to end services.

If a family's services have been terminated by SNCS for any reason, the parent and child care provider will be notified by mail of the last effective day of services.

A third and final termination notice for non-compliance received within the certification/contract period is grounds for automatic termination of services. The family has the right to appeal any termination. The family must request the appeal in writing and schedule a date for a hearing during the two weeks prior to the effective date on the Notice of Action.

Appeal Procedures

Parents have the right to appeal any decision made by SNCS regarding eligibility, receipt of child care, termination, or payment for services. Details of the appeal procedure are found on the reverse side of the NOA.

If an appeal is not submitted to SNCS by the date the appeal is due, the parents' right to an appeal shall be deemed abandoned and SNCS shall implement the intended action.

Fraud Policy

Any fraudulent, false or misleading information provided to SNCS regarding eligibility, need for services, family size, marital status, resident address, or usage of care will result in termination of child care services. Child care used under fraudulent terms may result in a referral

to the District Attorney. Parents will be responsible for repayment of funds dispersed under fraudulent circumstances.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Complaints Regarding Child Care Providers

As a Child Care Resource and Referral agency, SNCS does not license child care facilities nor does SNCS investigate alleged violations. The role of SNCS is to:

- Receive complaints.
- Act as a resource to parents, providers and the community in assisting them in contacting the appropriate authorities.
- Provide technical assistance to providers for compliance with licensing regulations.

Confidentiality will be strictly enforced regarding all complaints. However, if SNCS receives a request from an investigative agency to assist in the investigations, SNCS may provide information from the provider file to the investigative agency.

In no instance shall SNCS make an assumption of guilt or innocence based on the documented complaint.

The following complaint procedures apply when a complaint is received by SNCS regarding any child care provider within its referral database:

- Ask the complainant if they have spoken with their provider. The provider may be unaware that the complainant is unhappy and may be able to resolve the issue immediately.
- Inform the complainant that SNCS does not investigate complaints.
- Direct the complainant to file a formal complaint with Community Care Licensing (CCL). Parents may telephone (916) 263-5744 and request the consultant for Eastern or Western Nevada County, or call (530) 895-5033 and request the consultant for Sierra County.

All of the following are to be considered serious complaints and shall be grounds for immediately placing a facility on temporary hold from referrals:

- Violation of children's rights.
- Child abuse (physical or sexual).
- Use of corporal punishment.
- Unacceptable disciplinary techniques, such as shaming, humiliation, withholding food or toileting privileges, locking child in closet/bathroom, etc.
- Gross unsanitary practices/conditions, such as presences of feces/urine, improper food handling, lack of hand washing before and after food handling/diapering, etc.
- Broken/shattered glass or other sharp objects.
- Poisonous plants/household chemicals (unless properly secured pursuant to CCL regulations).
- Complaints alleging that children have been left alone or in the care of person(s) not cleared through CCL.
- Presence of unsecured firearms.
- Over licensed capacity.
- Insufficient CCL mandated child/staff ratios.
- Presence of unsecured and/or non-childproofed medications and vitamins.
- Presence of seriously damaged/broken toys or equipment.
- Presence of illegal drugs/provider intoxication.
- Any action (written or verbal) alleging discrimination of child and/or family based on sex, race, religion, color, national origin or ancestry, age, disability, sexual orientation or socio-economic status.
- Any attempt to falsify records to receive payment from any SNCS program.

All licensed child care providers are required to maintain, at their site, copies of CCL visit reports. Parents may access these records or may contact CCL for information about complaints regarding child care providers. A child care provider may be permanently removed from the SNCS referral database upon a decision made by CCL.

SNCS shall maintain a record of any written parent complaints regarding any TrustLine registered or relative child care provider. Parents that choose a TrustLine registered or relative child care provider may review the record of complaints maintained by SNCS on that child care provider. All written complaints must include the nature of the complaint, the date and approximate time of occurrence and the name and address of the child care provider.

Complaints Regarding SNCS

SNCS recognizes that it must comply with state and federal laws and regulations governing programs. A complaint alleges that there has been a failure to comply with state and federal laws and regulations governing programs. A complaint may allege unlawful discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, age, gender, color, physical or mental disability. A complaint may also allege a disregard of state or federal law in any of the SNCS programs. Complaints of possible discrimination must be filed within six months of the time of the alleged event or when knowledge was first obtained.

Any individual, public agency or organization may file a written complaint of alleged noncompliance. Confidentiality and protection against retaliation are assured.

The complaint should describe the non-compliance problem and include all the information needed to support the allegation or complaint. Complaint forms and assistance are available at the SNCS Grass Valley Office. The office shall investigate and seek to resolve complaints at the local level. If all parties agree, a neutral mediator may be assigned. All parties shall be notified when a complaint is filed, when meetings are scheduled, and when a decision or ruling is made.

Within three working days of receiving the complaint, the compliance officer shall informally discuss the possibility of using mediation. If mediation is unsuccessful, an investigative meeting will be held within five working days of receiving the complaint to give all parties an opportunity to present information and question witnesses. Within 60 days of receiving the complaint, the compliance officer shall prepare and send to the complainant a written report of the investigation and

decision, including any corrective actions. Civil law remedies may be pursued through local, state or federal aid agencies, offices, or private/public interest attorneys.

If you disagree with the decision made by SNCS you may appeal in writing within 15 days to:

California Department of Education
P.O. Box 944272
Sacramento, CA 94244-2720

You must specify reason(s) for appealing the decision and include a copy of the locally filed complaint and the decision.

Appendix I
Countable Sources of Income

1. Wages, salary, advances, commissions, overtime, bonuses, tips
2. Gross income from self-employment less business expenses with the exception of wage draws
3. Gambling or lottery winnings
4. Wages for migrant, agricultural, or seasonal work
5. Public cash assistance
6. Child support and spousal support
7. Unemployment compensation, Disability compensation, or Worker's compensation
8. Survivor benefits or Retirement benefits
9. Rent for room within the family's residence
10. Foster care grants, payments or clothing allowance for children placed through child welfare services
11. Financial assistance received for the care of a child living with an adult who is not the child's biological or adoptive parent
12. Veteran's pension
13. Pension or annuities
14. Allowances for housing or automobiles provided as part of compensation
15. Portion of student grants or scholarships not identified for educational purposes such as tuition, books, or supplies
16. Insurance or court settlements for lost wages or punitive damages
17. Net proceeds from the sale of real property, stocks, or inherited property
18. Other enterprise for gain

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