

# Sierra Nevada Children's Services

## PARENT GUIDE

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# SIERRA NEVADA CHILDREN'S SERVICES PARENT GUIDE

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# OUR PROGRAMS

## ❖ CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Sierra Nevada Children's Services (SNCS) administers various programs that are funded by Federal, State & local governments to help income eligible families pay for part, or all of their child care costs. Based on the family's income, families may also pay a share of cost on a sliding scale based on income and family size. Parents may choose from child care options such as Family Child Care Homes, Child Care Centers, TrustLine child care providers or relative care child care providers. A child is eligible for this program until his/her 13th birthday. Please see the next section for various child care assistance programs.

## ❖ CHILD CARE REFERRALS

*SNCS is funded by the California Department of Education (CDE) to provide Resource and Referral Services to both Nevada and Sierra Counties.*

SNCS provides free child care referrals to anyone in the community, regardless of income. SNCS maintains current and updated 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, we gather some basic information about the family, including name, address, phone number, first names and ages of the children, the child's schedule for care, and the region of the county in which care is needed. We then best match the child's needs to the child care providers available in the area requested.

SNCS staff is also available to answer questions about how to find quality child care, or to help parents feel more comfortable asking the appropriate questions when they interview child care providers. We believe the parent is the best person to choose the care for the child. Our goal is to help parents make informed choices from a broad range of child care options that meet the family's needs as well as those of the children.

### Oliver's Law

Sierra Nevada Children's Services informs parents that they have the right to view information about a Licensed Child Care Provider (Family Child Care or Center) either at the child care provider's location or at Community Care Licensing (CCL). 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. (Oliver's Law passed January 2000).

To obtain information regarding a child care provider, you can call CCL at (916) 229-4530. Their website is: [www.cclcd.ca.gov](http://www.cclcd.ca.gov), or you can reach them by mailing to: 744 P St., M.S. 19-48, Sacramento, CA 95814.

## ❖ RESOURCES

SNCS has child development resources available for both parents and child care providers. We have a well-stocked Child Development Lending Library that includes hundreds of developmentally appropriate toys, books, and games for children of different ages. We also have many 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 new Family Child Care Home or Child Care Center. For more information refer to our website at [www.sncs.org](http://www.sncs.org).

In addition, SNCS is connected to other agencies in the community that provide family services. SNCS provides a current and updated list of these agencies and their available resources for you to reference.

## ❖ FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

We are a community based organization which acts as a central hub that, through a relationship based approach, connects families to resources to improve the lives of families. The FRC is designed to assist families to become self-sufficient by providing innovative programs that address prevention, intervention, and supportive services such as parenting education, child development, health and wellness, budgeting, advocacy and parent leadership. The FRC has a family friendly environment where parents can utilize our computers for job search, resume building, and internet access while their children play in our child development room. Currently we have grants that provide scholarships for swim lessons and support for parents through Family Nights and in-home parenting programs.

“The Promotora Program is a home-based culturally and linguistically appropriate program designed to incorporate strategies to bridge language barriers and promote child health and development through a holistic family strengthening and self-sufficiency approach.”

## ❖ COMMUNITY EVENTS AND TRAINING

SNCS offers many training workshops throughout the year such as parenting classes, new child care provider workshops, and other various learning opportunities for teachers, child care providers and parents. Our monthly schedule is posted in our main lobby as well as on our website at [www.sncs.org](http://www.sncs.org).

## ❖ HEALTHY FAMILIES APPLICATION ASSISTANCE

SNCS assists families in applying for Healthy Families medical insurance. Healthy Families provides low-cost health, dental, and vision coverage for children ages birth through 18, for families that qualify based on income. Families that have income too high for Medi-Cal eligibility, based on Federal Income Guidelines, may be eligible for Healthy Families.

Families pay a monthly premium of \$4 to \$15 per child. Families requesting coverage for more than 3 children will pay a monthly premium for 3 children only. Information about the Healthy Families program can be found at [www.healthyfamilies.ca.gov](http://www.healthyfamilies.ca.gov).

SNCS has Certified Application Assistants on staff that can determine your eligibility for Healthy Families and help you complete the application. They will also assist families in re-certifying for these services during the annual eligibility renewal when needed. Please contact our office to take advantage of this service.

**\*\*THIS WAS A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMS WE HAVE AVAILABLE. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR WOULD LIKE ANY FUTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT US IN PERSON, BY PHONE, OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE (WWW.SNCS.ORG). WE ARE HERE TO PROVIDE SUPPORT & ASSISTANCE TO FAMILIES\*\***

# CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

## ❖ CENTRALIZED ELIGIBILITY LIST (CEL)

The Nevada and Sierra County CEL gives families access to many subsidized child care, after-school and school readiness programs through a single application. All agencies with State subsidies in the county have access to all the families on the CEL, and contact families from the CEL when they have openings. A family only needs to complete one CEL application.

Families who are in need of subsidized child care services must complete and submit an application. Applications are entered into the CEL database. Each family is assigned an eligibility rank. A family's rank is based on factors determined by CDE guidelines including family size, family income and other factors. The CEL is not administered on a first-come, first-served basis and the amount of time a family has been waiting does not determine who will be served first.

When SNCS has funds to enroll new families, a current CEL listing is printed by rank and families are contacted for possible enrollment. The family's current eligibility is determined to see if they are still the most eligible for enrollment at that time.

## ❖ ALTERNATIVE PAYMENT PROGRAM

The Alternative Payment Program (CAPP) helps pay the child care costs for income eligible families. Families may pay a share of cost on a sliding scale based on their gross monthly income and family size. Parents may choose from child care options such as Family Child Care Homes and Child Care Centers, TrustLine\* child care providers or relative care child care providers. A child is eligible for this program until his/her 13<sup>th</sup> birthday.

\*TrustLine is California's registered listing of in-home child care providers who have passed a background clearance check. However, anyone can apply to register on the TrustLine Registry by coming into SNCS and filling out the initial paperwork. For more information about why a child care provider would want to be TrustLined or why a family would want a TrustLined child care provider, please see page 9.

## ❖ 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. The purpose of Welfare to Work is to help parents prepare for work and find a job. Child care through CalWORKs is a 3-stage program that pays for child care expenses for eligible CalWORKs participants. SNCS is unable to place any family on the CalWORKs program – a referral must be faxed over by CalWORKs Office to enroll a family.

**Stage 1-** Once a Stage 1 referral is received, SNCS will assign a Family Support Specialist to the family. The Specialist will then contact the family and schedule a time to meet and fill out a minimal amount of paperwork. Child care services begin based on the date given on the referral. When it is determined by the CalWORKs office that the family's situation is stable, a referral is made to SNCS to transfer their childcare funding from Stage 1 to Stage 2.

**Stage 2-** Is available for 24 months after the family becomes ineligible for cash aid, however, the family income may not exceed 75% of the State Median Income Level. If sufficient funding is available, parents are contacted by SNCS in order to begin the

enrollment process. A family may be referred back to Stage 1 at the county if the parent cannot comply with the regulations for Stage 2 funding. After the 24 months has expired a family's child care funding is transitioned to Stage 3.

**Stage 3-** Continues until the family exceeds 75% of the State Median Income Level, and as long as funding is available.

All CalWORKs recipients must assign **child and spousal support** rights to the county. Parents who refuse to assign these rights will be sanctioned and the family's grant will be decreased until they cooperate. Their children will still receive aid if eligible.

## ❖ FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES EDUCATION NETWORK (CFCC)

The Family Child Care Homes Education Network is a multi-site child development program where children receive care in Family Child Care settings. The 'Network' is funded through the California Department of Education and was established to provide support to families for child care by providing subsidized child care in quality Family Child Care programs. The Network Director is on the staff of SNCS.

Children enrolled under the 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 Parent Survey and 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 is shared with parents and providers to ensure that developmental needs are being met.

The purpose of the Network is threefold: 1) to provide parents with choices in quality child care, 2) to provide ongoing support to parents and families, and 3) to provide parents with the opportunity to participate in parent meetings and play groups as well as the opportunity to act as part of an advisory council.

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 the issues surrounding general development. The quality of child care is maintained by the child care providers through annual program assessments which 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. The Network program also strives to establish and maintain supportive relationships with families through regular communication with both the child care provider and parent. Staff is available to assist both parents and child care providers with any concerns about child care service, child development or other family needs. The Network also supports families in other areas of family functioning by providing linkages to support resources within the community. **Parents have the opportunity to engage in building supportive relationships with other families through parent meetings and playgroups. Parents are also encouraged to become active participants in the Parent Advisory Council, (we are currently striving to**

**gain a chapter of Parent Voices in our community) which provides SNCS with a yearly evaluation on the effectiveness of agency services.**

Families are enrolled in the Network when funding is available. A letter is sent to families based on their eligibility ranking and need (information is obtained from the CEL). Each family who contacts SNCS regarding the letter is given an explanation of the Network program. All requirements for enrollment in the *general* Alternative Payment programs are the same for the Network.

# YOUR CHILD CARE OPTIONS

Families enrolled for services through SNCS' child care payment assistance programs are assisted in choosing a child care provider from the full range of licensed Family Child Care Homes and licensed Child Care Centers, license exempt centers, TrustLine registered child care providers, and relative care options.

Counseling and assistance in choosing quality child care are available, but recommendations to specific child care programs are not. Basic child care consumer information is provided, along with referrals to care givers contained in SNCS' child care referral files, upon request.

## ❖ WHAT IS LICENSED CHILD CARE?

- **Child Care Center:** A licensed facility which 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.
- **Family Child Care Homes:** 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 who may be served.

All licensed child care providers are fingerprinted, have a criminal background check and California Child Abuse Index clearance. In Family Child Care Homes, anyone who lives in the home and is over 18 years of age goes through the same clearance process. There are specific educational requirements for center child care providers, in addition to the same background clearance as in Family Child Care Home. The site is inspected for safety issues by CCL, a division of State Public Social Services in Sacramento. 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 required to charge the same rates both for subsidized children and non-subsidized children. A copy of the current and customary rate schedule is required.

## ❖ WHAT IS LICENSE EXEMPT CHILD CARE?

In California a license to provide child care is not required for:

- 1) School districts with child care programs staffed by school district employees for school age children on school sites.
- 2) Cooperative Care occurs when the parents rotate care, and is limited to 12 children, and no money is exchanged.
- 3) Child care for a parent that is on site attending a class, church, or an activity.
- 4) A child care provider who cares for the children of one family besides their own. The child care provider may be a relative (grandparent, aunt or uncle of the child in care) or may be TrustLine registered. There are two types of care in this category:
  - a. In-Home care takes place in the child's home
  - b. Out-of-Home care takes place in the child care provider's home

Any child care provider in this category who works with a family receiving services through SNCS must:

- 1) Be 18 years of age or older and provide **one** of the following identification cards: a valid California Driver's License, a valid California State ID card, or a valid Alien Registration card.
- 2) Meet the training requirements for CPR, Pediatric First Aid, Health and Safety. The CPR/First Aid and Health and Safety portion must be received within three months of contracting with a parent receiving services through SNCS.
- 3) Not have a TrustLine status as 'closed', 'denied', or 'revoked'.
- 4) Not be on probationary status with Community Care Licensing.

## ❖ WHAT IS TRUSTLINE CHILD CARE?

TrustLine is a registry of individuals who have passed the California Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation fingerprint record checks. Receiving this clearance means that a person has no disqualifying criminal convictions or substantiated child abuse reports in California.

The purpose of becoming a TrustLine child care provider is twofold. First, it gives the family a sense of security that the caregiver is not only serious about meeting the family's needs, but that the care giver may be entrusted with the care of children. Second, in order to provide child care for a family that is subsidized, the State of California mandates that the child care provider (excluding the grandparent, aunt or uncle of the child) be registered on the TrustLine registry.

**NOTE:** SNCS will not enroll or pay any provider whose TrustLine status has been closed, denied or revoked.

## ❖ WHAT IS IN-HOME CHILD CARE?

Child care that takes place in the child's home is referred to as In-Home Child Care. The parent becomes the employer and is responsible to pay employee taxes. Information on In-Home care is available from SNCS.

If an In-Home child care provider works with a family receiving services through SNCS, minimum wage requirements must be met. The parent will be expected to prove to SNCS that minimum wage requirements are being met.

## ❖ WHAT IS OUT-OF-HOME LICENSE EXEMPT CHILD CARE?

Child care that takes place in the home of a non-licensed child care provider is referred to as out-of-home child care. The child care provider in this situation is called an out-of-home license exempt provider.

## ❖ WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE SELECTING A PROVIDER

It is recommended that parents visit the site and discuss with the provider all relevant information related to their child's care, which can include:

1. Days and times the facility is open and which holidays it is closed
2. Provider vacation policies

3. Meals provided (breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks)
4. Other services provided, such as transportation and field trips
5. Any additional costs
6. Daily routine
7. Requirements when changing providers or terminating services
8. Provider and parent expectations of the child and her/his behavior (e.g. how a behavioral problem would be handled)
9. Specific needs of child (e.g. does your child take medication, have food allergies or a specific health or cognitive need)
10. Who is authorized to pick up child from child care
11. Provider expectation and/or acceptance of parent involvement

**\*\*For more information on choosing child care please ask for our brochure  
"Quality Child Care; Making an Informed Decision" \*\***

**LIABILITY CLAUSE: 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.**

# RECEIVING HELP WITH CHILD CARE

**IMPORTANT: SNCS ADMINISTERS SERVICES THAT ARE FUNDED BY FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS. EACH FUNDING SOURCE HAS ITS OWN RULES AND REGULATIONS REGARDING ELIGIBILITY AND APPROVED NEED OF CHILD CARE. THEREFORE, IT IS POSSIBLE FOR TWO FAMILIES WHO ARE RECEIVING SERVICES THROUGH SNCS AND USING THE SAME CHILD CARE PROVIDER TO HAVE DIFFERENT RULES APPLIED TO THEIR CASES.**

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 for a variety of reasons. See **Eligibility Requirements** for more details. Funding is through the California Department of Education's (CDE) Child Development Division (CDD).

SNCS supports families in making quality choices in child care for their children. A variety of options will be discussed with you during enrollment. Parents may choose from child care options such as Child Care Centers, Family Child Care Homes, TrustLine child care providers or Relative Care child care providers. Valuable information is provided to help families select child care that best meets the needs of the child; however, the choice of the child care provider is your responsibility. The age and the needs of the child are important considerations in making a quality choice. It is, therefore, important to discuss the changing needs of the family with SNCS. Parents are informed that they have the right to view information about the child care provider either at the child care provider's location or at Community Care Licensing (CCL). (Oliver's Law, see page 4).

SNCS will continue to assist families in arriving at self-sufficiency while the family is eligible and has a need for child care. Due to state regulations and limited funding, SNCS will monitor eligibility and need through close contact with the family throughout the time of enrollment.

Because funding is limited, not every family is served. Funding availability varies with current program enrollment. The Centralized Eligibility List (CEL) is maintained for individuals who may be eligible for child care assistance but due to insufficient funding are not currently being served.

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.

This handbook serves as a guide to assist families with successful participation in SNCS payment assistance programs. Please contact us in person or by phone for questions or concerns. SNCS will work together with families as they achieve self-sufficiency.

## ❖ ENROLLMENT FOR SERVICES

Vacancies in SNCS child care payment assistance programs are filled in accordance with the California Department of Education (CDE) funding terms and conditions. CDE requires that families referred for respite child care are granted first priority. A family that has a child currently enrolled for child care payment assistance services through SNCS is granted priority for enrollment of an additional child. After ensuring that the needs of currently funded families have been met, SNCS enrolls families from the Centralized Eligibility List (CEL), based on ranking.

Families currently served by a CDE funded child care payment assistance program in another county may transfer to a SNCS program, if funds are available and the family meets eligibility requirements.

SNCS also enrolls families receiving TANF or those that have received TANF in the past 24 months through a direct referral from CalWORKs.

Families enrolling from the CEL, those transferring from CalWORKs Stage 1 to Stage 2, or those referred for Stage 2 that are not already enrolled, will be required to attend a group format orientation prior to authorization of services. These families will also be required to meet separately with their Family Support Specialist to verify their need and eligibility for services.

## ❖ **RECERTIFICATION PROCESS**

Recertification of need and eligibility for child care services will be established within 12 months from the date of enrollment. Families must recertify for services at least once per year while receiving services. Recertification will occur one-on-one with a Family Support Specialist.

## ❖ **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

Eligibility requirements for SNCS child care payment assistance programs are set by CDE through Funding Terms and Conditions and program requirements for child development programs. Families that may qualify for SNCS child care assistance programs include:

- A family enrolled in CalWORKs
- A family that is eligible based on income
- A family that has been referred by CPS or a legally qualified professional because the child(ren) is at risk of neglect and abuse

In addition to the above **eligibility** requirements, the family must have a **need** for child care. The following section addresses the needs a family may have.

## ❖ **SUMMARY OF NEEDS FOR CHILD CARE**

### ◆ **WORKING PARENTS**

Families whose need for child care services is based on employment will remain eligible until their income exceeds 75% of the State Median Income (SMI).

Verification from the employer, which includes rate of pay and work schedule, is required at enrollment, recertification and when changes in employment occur.

Depending on income, a Parent Fee may be assessed. See **Parents Share of Child Care Costs**.

Quarterly income reporting is required for families with variable income. Any changes to a parent's employment status must be reported to SNCS within 5 calendar days of that change.

### ◆ **JOB SEARCH**

Parents enrolled in SNCS child care payment assistance programs may be placed on job search status. The period of eligibility for seeking employment is 60 consecutive working days during the fiscal year, which allows a parent to seek employment **1 3**

on any day between the start date and the end date, but for no more than 5 days during a week and less than 30 hours a week. If your need for child care services is to find employment, you must first sign an agreement with your Family Support Specialist before your job search can begin. Any job loss must be reported to SNCS staff **within 5 calendar days** in order to be eligible for job search time. Failure to report job loss and the subsequent use of child care may result in termination from the program.

Documentation of seeking employment shall include a written parental declaration signed under penalty of perjury stating that the parent is seeking employment. The declaration shall include the parent's plan to secure, change, or increase employment and shall identify a general description of when services will be necessary.

Parents of school age children who need time for job search will be requested to seek employment during the child's school hours. Parents who are performing job search activities while their children are in school may request a Limited Term Service Leave in order to maintain their eligibility.

#### ◆ **STUDENT PARENTS**

Parents may qualify for SNCS child care payment assistance programs because they are participating in an academic or vocational training program leading directly to employment. The child care schedule will be based upon the parent's class schedule, providing time for required classes, lab and study hours only.

Students must declare a goal that will lead to gainful employment with a projected time limit for completion: Six years from the initiation of services pursuant to this section, or 24 semester units, or its equivalent, after the attainment of a Bachelor's Degree. Coursework must be related to the achievement of that goal. Time for classes must be verified and approved as related to the vocational goal. If additional services are requested for study time or travel time to support the vocational training, the Family Support Specialist shall determine, as appropriate, the amount of services needed for:

- Travel to and from the location where services are provided and the training location, not to exceed half of the weekly hours authorized for training to a maximum of four hours per day; or
- Study time, including on-line and televised instructional classes, according to the following: two hours per week per academic unit in which the parent is enrolled.

Documentation of progress towards meeting the specific vocational goal must be submitted to SNCS program staff each quarter/semester including a report of the prior semester's grades. Failure to submit this will result in termination of payment assistance services.

Adequate progress will be defined as a grade point average of 2.0 or higher for classes taken during the current quarter/semester. Students dropping below these minimum standards will be allowed one quarter/semester to improve before being terminated from the payment assistance program.

Student parents are required to update their applications prior to each new quarter/semester. Each update or certification requires a new training verification and documentation to verify progress.

Students not attending class, working or actively seeking employment during school breaks, will be granted a Limited Term Service Leave (see **Limited Term Service Leave** for specific provisions). Students who wish to "take a break," skipping a

semester or quarter, and exhibit no other eligible need for child care will be terminated from SNCS payment assistance programs.

#### ◆ **INCAPACITY**

If a parent's ability to provide normal care for their child is significantly limited, due to medical or psychiatric special needs, child care services may be authorized. SNCS shall determine the days and hours of service based on the recommendation of the health professional. Child care and development services shall not exceed 50 hours per week.

#### ◆ **SEEKING PERMANENT HOUSING**

If a parent's need for child care services is due to seeking 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 on 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.

#### ◆ **CPS/AT-RISK CHILD CARE**

Families that are referred to SNCS by Child Protective Services (CPS) or a licensed, legally qualified professional because their children have been abused or are at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation, may be eligible for respite child care.

A referral may be made for a maximum term of 12 months for CPS referrals and 3 months for At-Risk referrals. Although it may be renewed, respite child care should be considered **short term** relief for families and every effort should be made by both parent and referring organization to reduce and/or eliminate the stresses causing the "at risk" status of the family.

The need for child care for families referred by CPS must be a component of the CPS plan. All non-CPS referrals for respite child care must identify the need for child care as a part of an intervention plan to reduce or eliminate the risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

**Respite child care cannot represent the entire plan to eliminate or reduce the risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation.**

Respite child care should be considered a component of the plan that will allow the parent to attend parenting classes, counseling sessions, support groups, etc. An approved child care schedule will be developed to accommodate those components of the plan that are included in the referral letter. The referring organization is responsible to notify SNCS that the parent is not participating in the plan. When SNCS is notified that a parent ceases to participate in the specified plan a notice of termination will be mailed to the parent.

**If funds are available, and the parent has a need and is eligible, SNCS may enroll the family in another program when the term of the respite child care is over. Because funding is limited, not all eligible families are served. However, if interested, eligible families may submit an application and be placed on the Centralized Eligibility List.**

## ❖ VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY

Families enrolled for child care payment assistance services will meet with their Family Support Specialist. Policies and procedures are explained and the following information must be provided:

- ◆ **For Working Parents**  
Employment Verification, Work Schedule, and Pay Stubs that cover a minimum of 5 consecutive weeks and indicate gross income (a letter from the employer may be a temporary substitute).
- ◆ **For Self-Employed Parents**  
Tax returns or quarterly tax filings, copies of appointment logs, receipts and expenses, including verification of leased/rented space (when applicable), independent verification from employers (clients) regarding rate of pay, and work schedule.
- ◆ **For Parents Seeking Employment**  
A *Job Search Agreement*, unemployment benefits or other income received during the job search period.
- ◆ **For Students**  
Income that is applicable, training/education form, statement of vocational goals which includes anticipated completion date, class schedule, grades, signature and stamp of school, etc.
- ◆ **For Families that are Homeless**  
A written referral from a homeless shelter or a legal, medical, or social service agency stating the family is homeless.
- ◆ **For Parental Incapacity**  
All applicable income, and a *Statement of Incapacity* form completed and signed by a licensed health professional.

**NOTE:** Verification of need and eligibility does not apply to CalWORKs Stage 1. Need and eligibility for families receiving Stage 1 funding is determined by the county.

Income is calculated using the gross monthly income that may be “fixed” or “variable.” Income is fixed if it stays the same from month to month. Income is variable if it fluctuates because of overtime, variable hours, seasonal employment, commissions, tips, self-employment, etc. Verification of a family’s income may be required on a monthly basis. **All changes in income (raises, schedule, and bonuses) or family size must be reported to SNCS within 5 calendar days.**

SNCS will encourage the family to pursue child support through the Child Support Services office if the absent parent is not currently supporting the child(ren)

## ❖ VERIFICATION OF FAMILY SIZE

Numerous household compositions and configurations could meet the definition of family. Examples of household compositions that would constitute a family for purposes of determining family size as specified in CCR5, section 18100 can be reviewed with your family support specialist. Supporting documentation regarding the number of children and parents in the family will be collected prior to enrollment and with any changes that occur in the family size.

## ❖ 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). Such leaves may be approved for the following reasons:

- school breaks
- 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, which cannot exceed 16 consecutive weeks. SNCS will not be responsible for child care reimbursement during the period of LTSL.

Parents of school-age children who have lost their job, and are looking for work, may be placed on LTSL. This may be a more viable option if the parent may be able to look for work while the child is in school.

## ❖ PARENTAL REVIEW OF CHILD INFORMATION IN FAMILY FILES

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

# RULES & POLICIES FOR CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

## ❖ CHANGING CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

Families enrolled in child care payment assistance services have the right to change child care providers at any time. SNCS policies do not allow for payment of two child care providers for the same child during the same time period. However, because continuity of care is so important to a child's development, it is SNCS policy to limit the number of child care provider changes to a maximum of three in a 12 month period.

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.

### **Please note the following guidelines:**

1. A parent who chooses to change their child care provider must give adequate notice to the current child care provider in accordance with the child care provider's termination policy. The parent must also notify SNCS staff of their need to make the change. Before payment to the new child care provider can be made, the parent must identify the new child care provider to SNCS and child care must be authorized. The new child care provider will be required to conform to SNCS policies for child care provider participation.
2. SNCS will notify the current child care provider of the last effective date of payment for services and the new child care provider of the first effective date of payment for services.

## ❖ 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.

When families are enrolled for payment assistance program services, parents and SNCS staff work together to outline child care schedules that meet the needs of each family (optimum schedules may or may not be accommodated depending upon current program funding). Projections of cost are determined for each newly enrolled family and adequate program funding set aside.

Child Care Certificates are used to authorize the child care schedule. The Child Care Certificate contains the names of the parent and child, the approved child care schedule, and the projected payment amount. These are mailed to child care providers serving SNCS funded families upon initial enrollment and when changes occur, such as schedule or rate changes.

**An approved schedule may not exceed 12 consecutive hours/day, six consecutive days, and/or 60 hours per week.**

## ❖ NOTIFICATION OF SCHEDULE CHANGES

All changes affecting child care schedules must be reported to SNCS staff within 5 calendar days of the change. Approval of changes to the child care schedule is dependent upon current program funding levels; however, families are accommodated as quickly as possible. Child care providers will be informed of the newly approved child care schedule by a phone call and/or by mailing a new Child Care Certificate. **SNCS will make every effort to give advance notice to child care providers regarding schedule reductions.**

## ❖ ATTENDANCE SHEETS

Enrolled parents and child care providers are responsible for indicating **actual** attendance on the Attendance Sheet **on a daily basis**. Child care providers and parents confirm attendance by signing their full signatures at the bottom of each Attendance Sheet. Parents may choose to designate another eligible adult to sign the child in or out of child care.

Every day of the approved child care schedule must be accounted for on the Attendance Sheet. Payment will be made for approved days and hours of child care and excused absences, if it is the usual and customary policy of the licensed child care provider to charge for such absences. Excused absences include:

- The first ten (10) **closure days** per fiscal year (7/1 – 6/30) chosen by the provider.
- The first ten (10) **excused absences** per fiscal year which are medically-unrelated absence days when no care is used (e.g. visitation either by court order, mediation agreement or the like, or any informal arrangement that the parent deems is in the best interest of the child, for example child/parent vacation, visiting relative).
- The first ten (10) **illness** or “sick” days per fiscal year (e.g. child or family member sick, at Drs appointment, hospitalization, attending a funeral, or absent for other medically related reasons)
- Payment for days used beyond the 10 in each category becomes the parent’s responsibility.

All other absences (e.g. transportation problems, poor weather conditions, etc) will be considered unexcused absences and cannot be reimbursed.

**Attendance sheets that are received with incomplete entries (e.g. missing time or signature) on a daily basis cannot be fixed later and will not be reimbursed.** It is extremely important that you take the time to complete every aspect of the daily entries on the attendance sheet with attention to detail. A complete entry means the following:

- Full signatures in ink by parents on each day of service for in and out
- Child care providers initials for split schedules only
- Actual times on each day of service in and out (no block times)
- No white out on the attendance sheet
- Parents must indicate the reason for each absence

Trustline and relative child care providers will be paid for **actual attendance** up to the maximum number of hours on the schedule. License exempt providers are not reimbursed for absences.

# PARENTS SHARE OF CHILD CARE COSTS

## ❖ CO-PAYMENTS

Parents who choose child care providers whose usual and customary fee exceeds the Regional Market Rate (RMR) ceiling are responsible to pay the difference between the rate cap and the child care provider's fee. The *co-payment* will be paid directly to the child care provider by the parent and shall not be accounted for by SNCS.

## ❖ REGISTRATION FEES

When child care providers charge registration fees, SNCS may be able to pay those fees. This is dependent on state limits. A maximum of two registration fees to two separate child care providers is allowed in a 12 month period.

## ❖ FAMILY FEES

Some families may be required to pay a Family Fee. Family fees are determined by the California Department of Education Family Fee Schedule and are based on family size, the monthly gross income and hours per day of child care. Fees are charged for only one child in the family - the child receiving the most hours of care.

Family fees are billed by SNCS 19 days before the last day of the month for the next month's services. Payments must be submitted to SNCS by the first (1<sup>st</sup>) day of the service month. SNCS cannot accept post-dated checks. **SNCS cannot accept cash as payment.** Only checks or money orders will be accepted **and all family fees are submitted to the Grass Valley Office.** Family fees are considered delinquent after seven (7) calendar days from the date the fees were due. Upon determination that fees are delinquent, a notice 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; 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. Also, if your Family Fee is paid by a check that bounces, a \$15 non-sufficient funds fee will be added to your bill. If you bounce two checks within a fiscal year, all future payments will be received in the form of money order only.

If you are terminated for outstanding family fee bills, all fees must be paid prior to being re-enrolled into the subsidy program.

# TERMINATION OF PAYMENT ASSISTANCE SERVICES

The following are grounds for termination of services from SNCS child care payment assistance programs. This should be considered a partial list.

- **Falsification** of any eligibility information, attendance documentation, or other documents required by SNCS policy
- Lack of cooperation with SNCS staff
- Threats affecting the well-being of SNCS employees
- Persistent failure to follow one or more of the policies and/or procedures contained herein
- Non-use of child care services
- Non-payment or frequent late payment of parent fees
- Receipt of three Notices of Action to terminate services for non-compliance within a family's certification/contract period

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.

## ❖ NON-USE OF CHILD CARE

If a family terminates a child care agreement with a licensed child care provider, and fails to give notice to that child care provider or to SNCS, the parent shall be responsible for payment on any contractual agreement with their provider. Trustline and relative child care providers are paid for actual attendance only. Child care providers are requested to notify SNCS when a child has been absent for three consecutively scheduled days.

If you do not use child care services for thirty (30) days and have not signed up for Limited Term Service Leave, you will be issued a notice of action to terminate services.

## ❖ FRAUD POLICY

California Department of Education (CDE) requires SNCS to inform all families receiving subsidized child care services that if child care funds are obtained by providing fraudulent or incomplete information, or by willingly omitting information, that SNCS shall actively pursue recovery of the funds paid out for the child care services.

Any fraudulent, false or misleading information provided to SNCS regarding resident address, usage of care, employment or student status, income, household composition, or eligibility relating to medical incapacitation will be grounds for termination and will be cause for SNCS to recover funds. This recovery may include a repayment plan, submission of the debt to collections agency, filing a claim through small claims court, or legal action by the District Attorney's office. As a state and county funded program, SNCS retains the right to share information or to verify documentation supplied by the parent or provider with any applicable State or County agency including, but not limited to, Department of Human

Assistance, Community Care Licensing, Child Protective Services, Child Support Services, or the District Attorney's office.

## ❖ APPEAL PROCEDURES FOR PARENTS

Each parent participating in SNCS child care payment assistance programs has 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 Notice of Action (NOA).

If a family wishes to appeal the proposed action, a written request for a local hearing must be submitted within 14 calendar days of receipt of the NOA. *Failure to appeal to SNCS within the allotted 14 calendar days will be deemed as abandonment and there will be no further appeal rights.* Within 10 calendar days following the receipt of the request for a hearing, SNCS must notify the parent of the time and place of the hearing.

An appeal hearing will be conducted by an administrative staff person who is at least one level higher in authority than the person who issued the NOA. During the hearing the parent may speak, or may authorize a representative to speak. If requested, an interpreter will be made available by SNCS. A representative of SNCS will be present to explain the agency's reason(s) for the action. *Failure to appear at the hearing will be deemed as abandonment and there will be no further appeal rights.*

Following the hearing, within 14 days, the family will receive a written decision from the hearing officer. If the termination is being upheld another NOA will accompany the letter from SNCS. Child care services are paid during the appeal process. If you are dissatisfied with the decision reached by SNCS, you may file a written appeal to the California Department of Education's Child Development Division (CDD), in conjunction with the 2<sup>nd</sup> NOA. This appeal must be made within 14 calendar days of your receipt of the decision reached by SNCS. Include with your written appeal to the state a copy of the NOA (both sides), a copy of SNCS decision, and a statement of the reason(s) for appealing. Please provide SNCS with a copy of the appeal to the state. This ensures suspension of the termination, and continuation of child care services until notification from the state appeal is received.

**Mail the appeal and supporting documents to:**  
**State Department of Education**  
**Child Development Division**  
**560 J Street, Suite 200**  
**Sacramento, CA 95814**  
**Attn: Appeals Coordinator**

Upon receipt of the appeal, the Child Development Division will review the information submitted and render a final decision within 30 calendar days. This decision will be mailed directly to the family, and a copy will be sent to SNCS. During the course of the appeal process, child care costs will continue to be paid by SNCS. **However, should the appeal ruling not find in favor of the parent, all child care costs and/or Family Fees incurred during the appeal process will be due and payable to SNCS.**

# COMMUNITY COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

## ❖ COMMUNITY COMPLAINTS REGARDING CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

### COMPLAINT POLICY

- A. 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:
  - 1. Receive complaints.
  - 2. Act as a resource to parents, providers and the community in assisting them in contacting the appropriate authorities.
  - 3. Provide technical assistance to providers for compliance with licensing regulations.
- B. Child care complaints handled by SNCS are subject to the Complaint Policy, which has been adopted by the SNCS Board of Directors and is subject to periodic review by the SNCS Program Committee.
- C. 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 investigating agency.
- D. In no instance shall SNCS make an assumption of guilt or innocence based on the documented complaint.

### SNCS PROCEDURE

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

- A. 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.
- B. Inform the complainant that SNCS does not investigate complaints.
- C. Direct the complainant to file a formal complaint with Community Care Licensing (CCL). Parents may telephone (916) 229-4530 (Sacramento) and request the consultant for Eastern or Western Nevada County, or call (530) 895-5033 (Chico) and request the consultant for Sierra County.

### ***What does Community Care Licensing(CCL) consider serious?***

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

- A. **Violation of Children's Rights**
  - 1. Child abuse (physical or sexual).
  - 2. Use of corporal punishment.
  - 3. Unacceptable disciplinary techniques, such as shaming, humiliation, withholding food or toileting privileges, locking child in closet/bathroom, etc.

**B. Health and Safety Violations**

1. Gross unsanitary practices/conditions, such as presences of feces/urine, improper food handling, lack of hand washing before and after food handling/diapering, etc.
2. Broken/shattered glass or other sharp objects.
3. Poisonous plants/household chemicals (unless properly secured pursuant to CCL regulations).
4. Complaints alleging that children have been left alone or in the care of person(s) not cleared through CCL.
5. Presence of unsecured firearms.
6. Over licensed capacity.
7. Over CCL mandated child/staff ratios.
8. Presence of unsecured and/or non-childproofed medications and vitamins.
9. Presence of seriously damaged/broken toys or equipment.
10. Presence of illegal drugs/provider intoxication.

**C. Discrimination**

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.

**D. Allegations of Fraud**

Any attempt to falsify records to receive payment from any SNCS program.

***What should you know, as a parent?***

A provider may be permanently removed from the SNCS referral database upon a decision made by CCL.

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.

SNCS shall maintain a record of any written parent complaints regarding any TrustLine registered or relative child care provider.

Families who 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.

## ❖ **UNIFORM COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

If you believe SNCS has violated any State or Federal regulation, law or statute, you have the right to contact, in writing, the California Department of Education, Child Development Division at the following address:

**California Department of Education  
Child Development Division  
1430 N Street, Suite 3410  
Sacramento, CA 95814**

## NON-DISCRIMINATION CLAUSE: CONFIDENTIALITY OF SERVICES

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.

The use or disclosure of information maintained in the client's or child care provider's file 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 Nevada County Adult and Family Services regarding CalWORKs families.

Child care providers should also be aware that SNCS staff, during the course of administering the Child Care Payment Assistance Programs, and the Child Care Resource and Referral Program regularly exchanges information. In the case of conflicting information, the child care provider or the parent will be contacted as a first step toward correcting any inconsistency.

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.

# ABOUT SNCS

Sierra Nevada Children's Services (SNCS) is a private non-profit organization, established in 1978 to provide services to Nevada County and in 1985 to Sierra County. Over the years, the agency has become an important child care resource and referral agency of child development programs funded by the California Department of Education, Child Development Division. SNCS assists hundreds of families per year. SNCS philosophy is to improve the quality of life for children and families in these two rural counties. Current brain research supports our long held belief, that the care given to young children significantly affects their ability to be successful in life. SNCS believes that children deserve quality child care services and that these services play a significant part in enhancing the lives of families and, ultimately, the larger community.

SNCS supports families and children with a variety of programs in Nevada and Sierra Counties. Its' primary services include Child Care Resource and Referral and child care payment assistance (Alternative Payment Program, CalWORKs Stages 1, 2 and 3, and the Family Child Care Homes Education Network). Other services include application assistance for Healthy Families insurance and processing TrustLine registry applications.

SNCS supports the Local Child Care Planning Councils in both counties and collaborates with local school districts in the development of opportunities for children and families. Program services are available through our Family Resource Center in Grass Valley and 2 regional resource centers in Loyalton and Truckee. Some areas benefiting from services include North San Juan, Penn Valley, Lake of the Pines, Lake Wildwood, Washington, Allegheny, Goodyear's Bar, Sierra City and Sierraville.

SNCS can access a wide variety of community resources that offer assistance to families in need of social services. SNCS supplies the training and guidance for child care providers in caring for children. In addition to its trained staff, the agency works closely with outside organizations such as Public Health, Social Services, and Child Protective Services, and The Children & Families First Commission through its broader information and referral services. SNCS partners with statewide organizations to bring resources to the local communities.

# Statement of Philosophy

We, the Board of Directors and staff of Sierra Nevada Children's Services (SNCS), believe that families are the heart of our community. We know that the way we raise our children today will determine their future and ours. Therefore, we bring together diverse families and professionals in a community of people committed to the well being of young children and their families. We integrate diverse services and activities to provide support, encouragement, and respect to local families. Our Family Resource Centers offer safe and stimulating learning environments for children, parents and early childhood professionals to assist them in achieving their personal and professional goals.

For many years SNCS has demonstrated a strong commitment to the belief that all children and families deserve high-quality, affordable and available early care and development programs. We actively promote quality child development programs to support children's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development to enhance the effectiveness of the family and, ultimately, to benefit the larger community.

SNCS values the diverse families in our communities. Each family is unique and contributes a valuable perspective to the dialogue about children, families, and society. We promote the principle of "mutual obligation and respect" which builds on the strengths and competence of parents. Parents are their children's first teachers; they know their children best and are capable of supporting their children's growth and development. Therefore, parents are best able to choose and evaluate early care and development services for their children. The best indicator of quality in an early care program is the training and skill of its caregivers and teachers. SNCS offers free and flexible child development training and technical assistance to all kinds of caregivers, including parents, to develop highly skilled early care and education in our communities. Our goal is ambitious: To collaborate with parents, professionals, and other community organizations to offer our young children the very best education and the most caring relationships we possibly can.

# Sierra Nevada Children's Services

## Provider Guide

Parent Guide



**SIERRA NEVADA CHILDREN’S SERVICES  
PROVIDER GUIDE**

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## Overview:

Sierra Nevada Children's Services (SNCS) has been a premier provider of child development and family support services in Nevada and Sierra counties since 1978. SNCS offers voucher-based programs (which allow parents to choose among all childcare providers in their communities).

# PROVIDER POLICIES

## ◆ REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDER PARTICIPATION

**All child care providers** are required to meet with SNCS staff in person to review and sign documents necessary to become contracted with SNCS for subsidized child care payments. All child care providers must sign an agreement with SNCS, and submit a completed W-9. Additional paperwork is required depending on the type of child care provided (licensed and license-exempt). Agreements between SNCS and providers will be renewed prior to the beginning of each new fiscal year.

**All licensed child care providers** must provide documentation of rates, contractual agreements, days of non-operation, and hours of operation. If unable to provide such documentation the provider must complete a signed statement declaring that they do not provide these to unsubsidized families.

**All child care providers** will welcome the enrollment of children with disabilities, making reasonable accommodations for them and implementing those accommodations. Providers must agree to operate on a non-discriminatory basis without regard to economic status, race, color, creed, religion, ethnicity, or national origin.

**All child care providers** must allow parents unlimited access to their child when the child is in care.

**All child care providers** must provide a signed statement (in the Provider Agreement) as to whether or not the child care and development services being provided include religious instruction or worship.

**All child care providers** are independent contractors and are not employees of SNCS. Child care providers are responsible for keeping records of reimbursement for their own tax purposes. SNCS does not withhold taxes from child care provider reimbursement. All in-home child care providers are employees of the parent.

**All child care providers** must submit accurate, complete and legible Attendance Sheets for children whose care is reimbursed through SNCS.

**All license-exempt child care providers** must complete a TrustLine application, and Live Scan application and fingerprinting. The TrustLine application and fingerprints are cleared through the California Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Reimbursement to the child care provider will begin on completion of the application, in addition to other documents required by SNCS, and will continue unless SNCS is notified that TrustLine is denied or revoked.

For parents funded through CalWORKs Stage 1, license-exempt child care providers will not receive reimbursement until they are cleared by TrustLine. Once cleared, providers may be eligible for retroactive payment up to 120 days between the date the provider is registered with SNCS through the date that the provider is TrustLine approved. TrustLine is not a requirement for qualifying school districts and qualified relative child care providers.

**All relative child care providers** must complete the *Declaration of Exemption from TrustLine Registration & Health and Safety Self-Certification* form. **All TrustLine providers** must complete the *Health and Safety Self-Certification* form.

**All license-exempt child care providers** must complete EMSA approved Pediatric CPR, First Aid, and Health & Safety practices courses within 90 days of the first payment to the provider. The training shall include pediatric cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), pediatric first aid, prevention of infectious disease and prevention policies, preventative health practices and injury prevention (Health and Safety Code Section 1596.866 and 1797.113)

### **Liability Insurance**

As an independent contractor, I understand that California law gives family child care providers several ways to protect from liability claims for accidents or injuries and that I must comply with one of the following:

- Carry liability insurance covering bodily injury to children and guests caused by negligence of the provider or an assistant (\$100,00 per occurrence, \$300,000 annual total for all occurrences), or such other limits as may be fixed by law; or
- Purchase a bond in the amount of \$300,000 to cover liability for child injuries; or
- Require a signed affidavit in proper legal form from parents of enrolled children stating that they are aware that the provider carries no liability insurance or bond, and, if the provider is not the owner of the family child care home, containing a statement saying that the property owner is not liable. The form for these affidavits can be obtained from the local licensing agency.

SNCS shall have no liability or responsibility to verify, advise or assist provider in compliance with such requirements.

### **Auto Insurance**

In the event I provide transport for any children by automobile, such as field trips, I agree that as to any vehicle used I will ensure that liability insurance is carried with adequate liability insurance coverage. If the frequency and/or regularity of automobile use dictates I will carry a commercial use policy with adequate limits.

### **Co-Payments**

A co-payment may be charged by the child care provider only if the family chooses a child care provider who charges a higher amount than the maximum reimbursement rate. A co-payment is the amount the client is responsible to pay. Per Title V, section 18076(3) the childcare provider must

charge the same rate for subsidized and private pay clientele.

### **SNCS Responsibility: Family Fees**

Depending on a family's income and the number of children in the family, a family fee is a payment by a family pursuant to a graduated fee schedule established by the California Department of Education. This fee schedule determines whether a fee must be paid at all and, if so, the amount of the fee. Families begin to incur fees when their incomes exceed 40 percent of the state median income and the amount increases as income grows.

California law does not state definitively who must collect the family fee. SNCS collects the family fee and receipts are provided to the family.

### **◆ CHILD CARE CERTIFICATES**

Child Care Certificates are used to authorize the child care schedule based on the authorized need for childcare. The Child Care Certificate contains the names of the parent and child, the approved child care schedule, and the projected payment amount. These are mailed to child care providers serving SNCS funded families upon initial enrollment and when changes occur, such as approved schedule or rate changes.

### **◆ ATTENDANCE SHEETS**

Every day of an approved child care schedule must be accounted for on the Attendance Sheet. Parents and providers must sign in and out on a daily basis. Attendance sheets that are received with missing signatures and/or in and out times will not be reimbursed for those days. Parents and providers must sign the bottom of the attendance sheet to receive reimbursement for the month of service. Payment will be made for approved days and hours of child care and excused absences, if it is the usual and customary policy of the licensed child care provider to charge for such absences. Excused absences include:

- \* The first ten (10) illness or "sick" days per fiscal year (e.g. child or family member sick, at Drs appointment, hospitalization, attending a funeral, or absent for other medically related reasons).
- \* The first ten (10) excused absences per fiscal year which are medically-unrelated absence days when no care is used (e.g. visitation either by court order, mediation agreement or the like, or any informal arrangement that the parent deems is in the best interest of the child, for example child/parent vacation, visiting relative).
- \* The first ten (10) closure days per fiscal year (7/1 – 6/30) chosen by the provider. Providers are required to submit their chosen ten (10) holidays before the start of each new fiscal year. Additionally, changes to those holidays can be made once per fiscal year.

Days used beyond the 10 in each category become the parent's responsibility.

**Attendance sheets that are received with incomplete entries (e.g. missing time or signature) on a daily basis cannot be fixed later and will not be reimbursed.** It is extremely important that you take the time to complete every aspect of the daily entries on the attendance sheet with

attention to detail. A complete entry means the following:

- Full signatures by parents on each day of service for in and out
- Child care providers initials for split schedules only
- Actual times on each day of service in and out (no block times)
- No white out on the attendance sheet
- Parents must indicate the reason for each absence

Trustline and relative child care providers will be paid for **actual attendance** up to the maximum number of hours on the schedule. Excused absences, provider holidays and sick days are not available for families using license exempt providers.

## PROCEDURE

1. The child care provider should receive an attendance sheet for each child prior to the first of the month. The provider should receive an attendance sheet when a parent is approved for services. Please call SNCS if the provider does not receive attendance sheets before the first of the month. If you don't receive an attendance sheet *and* you need one immediately for an **approved** schedule to sign in and out on a daily basis, you can get a generic attendance sheet from our web site at [www.sncs.org/providers/programs](http://www.sncs.org/providers/programs). The generic sheet can be used for **approved** schedules until the sheet from SNCS with specific child information is received.
2. All parents are required to document attendance on monthly Attendance Sheets by signing in and out on a daily basis. Days that are missing signatures or in and out times will not be reimbursed and cannot be fixed at a later date.
3. If a child has a split schedule then the child care provider must sign each child in or out of care using exact times, on a daily basis. A split schedule is defined as follows:
  - Any school-age child who attends a child care program before and after school.
  - Any child who attends a state preschool then returns to a general child care program.
4. All parent signatures must be full signatures, consistent with documentation contained within their SNCS family file and must do so on a daily basis.
5. SNCS will not accept partial signatures, parents' initials, blank lines on days of scheduled child care, signatures in pencil, signatures inconsistent with documentation on file, white out, or "block times" (e.g. 7:30am-5:30pm each day of care).
6. Additionally, the child care provider and the parent are required to sign the bottom of the Attendance Sheet, certifying accuracy of the attendance record. Missing signatures on the bottom of the attendance sheet cannot be reimbursed for the whole month.

## PAYMENT PROCEDURE

**Completed Attendance Sheets must be submitted by the child care provider to SNCS no later than 5:00pm on the 5th of the month following care.** If the 5th falls on a weekend or national holiday, Attendance Sheets are due by 5:00pm on the following workday. Late attendance sheets for the last month of the fiscal year cannot be accepted if late and can be processed only if received by the 5<sup>th</sup> of July every fiscal year.

1. Attendance Sheets will be date stamped, processed by SNCS, and approved for payment upon receipt.
2. **Daily entries that are incomplete and/or inaccurate will be not be paid and cannot be corrected after the fact. It is essential that parents sign in and out with actual times and full signatures on a daily basis. If the attendance sheet is not signed at the bottom by the parent and/or the provider the whole month of services cannot be reimbursed *and* if corrected may not be reimbursed on time.**
3. It is important to SNCS, as an agency, to ensure that providers are reimbursed for the services that have been provided. Please work with SNCS to ensure payment in a timely fashion.

**Falsification of attendance documentation is grounds for** immediate termination of services for parents and child care providers, and reimbursement of child care costs may be required.

## Hours of Care

- The maximum reimbursement rate depends in part of the hours of care provided. Care may be provided by the hour, day, partial week, full week, partial month, or full month (Title V, California Code of Regulations 18075).
- The full-time monthly rate is used when the child receives 30 or more hours of care per week for a month, and care occurs every week in the month.
- The part-time monthly rate is used when the child receives less than 30 hours of care per week (or an average per week), and care occurs every week in the month.
- The full-time weekly rate is used when the child receives 30 or more hours of care per week, on at least 3 days per week, but not necessarily for a whole month.
- The part-time weekly rate is used when the child receives less than 30 hours of care per week, on at least 3 days per week.

- The daily rate is used when a child receives six or more hours of care on three or fewer days per week, or, under some circumstances, when a parent has an unscheduled need for child care for more than six hours per day per occurrence.
- The hourly rate is used when a child receives no more than six hours of care on any day and no more than 15 hours in the week, or, under some circumstances, when a parent has an unscheduled need for childcare for six hours or less per occurrence.
- The hourly rate is also available to pay for the portion of childcare services that exceed 52.5 hours per week and is not included in the provider's full-time weekly or full-time monthly rate; this rate applies only if the family uses a single childcare provider to meet the entire childcare need.

Ordinarily, providers are compensated on the basis of a single rate category.

Child care provider payments are processed once per month. Child care providers whose completed Attendance Sheets are received on time (by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month) will be issued a check by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month, or have their payments electronically deposited by the 20<sup>th</sup> if they have signed up for Direct Deposit. Completed Attendance Sheets received after the 5<sup>th</sup> will be processed for payment in the subsequent month. **Please note that Attendance Sheets received after the last day of the month following the month of care will not be paid.**

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Because SNCS is funded by the California State 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.

# COMMUNITY COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

## ◆ COMMUNITY COMPLAINTS REGARDING CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

### COMPLAINT POLICY

- A. 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.
- B. Child care complaints handled by SNCS are subject to the Complaint Policy, which has been adopted by the SNCS Board of Directors and is subject to periodic review by the SNCS Program Committee.
- C. 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 investigating agency.
- D. In no instance shall SNCS make an assumption of guilt or innocence based on the documented complaint.

### SNCS PROCEDURE

The following Complaint Procedures apply when a complaint is received by SNCS regarding any Child Care Provider within its referral database:

- A. **Ask** 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.
- B. **Inform** Complainant that SNCS does not investigate complaints.
- C. **Direct** Complainant to file a formal complaint with CCL. Parents may telephone 1-916-229-4530 (Sacramento) and request the consultant for Eastern or Western Nevada County or call 530-895-5033 (Chico) and request the consultant for Sierra County.

### *What does Community Care Licensing consider serious?*

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

#### **A. Violation of Children's Rights**

1. Child abuse (physical or sexual).
2. Use of corporal punishment.
3. Unacceptable disciplinary techniques, such as shaming, humiliation,

withholding food or toileting privileges, locking child in closet/bathroom, etc.

**B. Health and Safety Violations**

1. Gross unsanitary practices/conditions, such as presences of feces/urine, improper food handling, lack of hand washing before and after food handling/diapering, etc.
2. Broken/shattered glass or other sharp objects.
3. Poisonous plants/household chemicals (unless properly secured pursuant to CCL regulations).
4. Complaints alleging that children have been left alone or in the care of person(s) not cleared through CCL.
5. Presence of unsecured firearms.
6. Over licensed capacity.
7. Over CCL mandated child/staff ratios.
8. Presence of unsecured and/or non-childproofed medications and vitamins.
9. Presence of seriously damaged/broken toys or equipment.
10. Presence of illegal drugs/provider intoxication.

**C. Discrimination**

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.

**D. Allegations of Fraud**

Any attempt to falsify records to receive payment from any SNCS program.

**◆ UNIFORM COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

If you believe SNCS has violated any State or Federal regulation, law or statute, you have the right to contact, in writing, the California Department of Education, Child Development Division at the following address:

**California Department of Education  
Child Development Division  
1430 N Street, Suite 3410  
Sacramento, CA 95814**

## ABOUT SNCS

Sierra Nevada Children's Services (SNCS) is a private non-profit organization, established in 1978 to provide services to Nevada County and in 1985 to Sierra County. Over the years, the agency has become an important child care resource and referral agency of child development programs funded by the California Department of Education, Child Development Division. SNCS assists hundreds of families per year. SNCS philosophy is to improve the quality of life for children and families in these two rural counties. Current brain research supports our long held belief, that the care given to young children significantly affects their ability to be successful in life. SNCS believes that children deserve quality child care services and that these services play a significant part in enhancing the lives of families and, ultimately, the larger community.

SNCS supports families and children with a variety of programs in Nevada and Sierra Counties. Its' primary services include Child Care Resource and Referral and child care payment assistance (Alternative Payment Program, CalWORKs Stages 1, 2 and 3, and the Family Child Care Homes Education Network). Other services include application assistance for Healthy Families insurance and processing TrustLine registry applications.

SNCS supports the Local Child Care Planning Councils in both counties and collaborates with local school districts in the development of opportunities for children and families. Program services are available through our Family Resource Center in Grass Valley and 2 regional resource centers in Loyalton and Truckee. Some areas benefiting from services include North San Juan, Penn Valley, Lake of the Pines, Lake Wildwood, Washington, Allegheny, Goodyear's Bar, Sierra City and Sierraville.

SNCS can access a wide variety of community resources that offer assistance to families in need of social services. SNCS supplies the training and guidance for child care providers in caring for children. In addition to its trained staff, the agency works closely with outside organizations such as Public Health, Social Services, and Child Protective Services, and The Children & Families First Commission through its broader information and referral services. SNCS partners with statewide organizations to bring resources to the local communities.

# Statement of Philosophy

We, the Board of Directors and staff of Sierra Nevada Children's Services (SNCS), believe that families are the heart of our community. We know that the way we raise our children today will determine their future and ours. Therefore, we bring together diverse families and professionals in a community of people committed to the well being of young children and their families. We integrate diverse services and activities to provide support, encouragement, and respect to local families. Our Family Resource Centers offer safe and stimulating learning environments for children, parents and early childhood professionals to assist them in achieving their personal and professional goals.

For many years SNCS has demonstrated a strong commitment to the belief that all children and families deserve high-quality, affordable and available early care and development programs. We actively promote quality child development programs to support children's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development to enhance the effectiveness of the family and, ultimately, to benefit the larger community.

SNCS values the diverse families in our communities. Each family is unique and contributes a valuable perspective to the dialogue about children, families, and society. We promote the principle of "mutual obligation and respect" which builds on the strengths and competence of parents. Parents are their children's first teachers; they know their children best and are capable of supporting their children's growth and development. Therefore, parents are best able to choose and evaluate early care and development services for their children.

**The best indicator of quality in an early care program is the training and skill of its caregivers and teachers. SNCS offers free and flexible child development training and technical assistance to all kinds of caregivers, including parents, to develop highly skilled early care and education in our communities. Our goal is ambitious: To collaborate with parents, professionals, and other community organizations to offer our young children the very best education and the most caring relationships we possibly can.**