



sierra nevada children's services

Resource & Referral Parent Handbook



Joining Forces for
Our Children

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ABOUT SNCS

WHAT IS SNCS?

Sierra Nevada Children's Services (SNCS) is a private, community-based nonprofit childcare 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.

CHILD CARE OPTIONS

When parents begin the search for child care, they are often confused and unsure of what options are available to them. Listed below are several different options, including both licensed and license-exempt care. Each of these types of care has distinct features, differences, and licensing requirements, along with conditions on size and adult-to-child ratios. Knowing what these features and differences are can assist you in choosing the option that best fits your needs, as well as your child's.

Licensed child care can occur in either a Family Child Care Home or in a Child Care Center.

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 (small) and those licensed for twelve or fourteen children (large). In both cases, the license states the number and ages of children, who 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.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

All licensed child care providers are required to maintain an Open Door Policy in that parents have the right to visit their child's programs anytime during operating hours and are encouraged to participate in activities whenever possible.

License Exempt Care

License-exempt care occurs when an individual provides care 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 to review participation requirements and complete enrollment paperwork prior to authorization of services. There are 2 types of license-exempt childcare 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 childcare 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. For families enrolled on CalWORKs Stage 1, the provider must first complete and submit all SNCS provider enrollment paperwork, a TrustLine application, and fingerprints. Once cleared, the provider may be eligible for retroactive payment up to 120 days between the date the provider submitted SNCS paperwork through the date the provider was TrustLine registered.

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, which includes meeting minimum wage requirements and providing Worker's Compensation Insurance. More information on in-home care is available from SNCS staff.

CHOOSING QUALITY CHILD CARE

When looking for quality child care, it is important to call and interview the provider over the phone (preferably before or after program hours so you have the provider's full attention). Also, set up a time that you can visit the facility with your child.

HERE ARE SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- **Health and Safety** - Is the environment clean and safe?
- **Professionalism** - Does staff have training in early childhood education or child development?
- **Parent Relationships** - How does the provider communicate with the parents?
- **Child Interaction** - Is the provider kind and nurturing? How do they interact with the children?
- **Environment** - Is the program child-friendly, well equipped and organized? Does it promote emotional, social, mental and physical development?
- **Philosophy** - Does the philosophy of the program meet your needs and the needs of your child?

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS

Quality Counts California (QCC) is the statewide quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) that supports local and regional agencies in raising the quality of early learning and care. QCC supports all licensed family child care homes, child care centers, and alternative sites serving children birth to age five, to enhance the quality of early learning and care programs they provide and to inform parents and families on what different quality levels mean for the child. QCC is designed to support and recognize child care programs for implementing research-based practices to provide high-quality environment and experiences for all children. Not all childcare providers participate in QCC . Providers participating in QCC are dedicated to improving quality program environments, teacher-child interactions, and child learning outcomes. Childcare providers who participate in QCC commit to ongoing professional development, specialized training, program assessments, and accountability, and have the opportunity to receive on-site coaching, professional consultation, quality award stipends, and a state recognized quality rating.



Early Quality Matters in Nevada County

Please visit 4cnevco.org for details on the QCC program or scan the QR code for a direct link.



Prior to selecting a childcare provider, it is recommended that the parent and child visit various childcare provider sites to gain more information about the childcare provider and the environment. It is important to ask questions about the childcare provider, the program and activities, the indoor and outdoor environments, and parent/child expectations.

Please visit SNCS website at www.snccs.org for more tools to help you find quality child care that meets the needs of your family. More information on the statewide QCC program can be found at nevcolpc.org or www.qualitycountsca.net

QCC uses three primary mechanisms to help programs improve and sustain high-quality care:

- 1. Technical Assistance and Specialized Training:** Participating sites are matched with a QCC Coach, peer mentor, and consultants who provide customized technical assistance with the QRIS assessment and rating processes. Sites are also connected with quality improvement activities, such as training and program enhancements.
- 2. Professional Development and Quality Award Stipends:** Professional development stipends encourage education and recognize teachers' achievements. Quality award stipends recognize sites' efforts in striving for and achieving higher levels of quality.
- 3. Quality Care Assessment and Tools:** To encourage self-reflection and to inform quality improvement efforts, participating sites receive a free quality care assessment of every eligible classroom, completed by a certified independent observer, including Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) and Classroom Learning Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS).

*Adapted from Child Care Coordinating Council,
<http://www.4cnevco.org/>

CALIFORNIA CHILD CARE INITIATIVE PROJECT (CCIP)

CCIP has supported local resource and referral agencies across the state to work with governments, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and community leaders to recruit, train, and retain licensed family child care providers.

As a CCIP contractor SNCS assists new family child care providers through the licensure process and provides support for existing family child care providers.

FAMILY CHILD CARE ENVIRONMENTAL RATING SCALE (FCCERS)

In order to provide care and education that will permit children to experience a high quality of life while helping them develop their abilities, a quality program must provide for the three basic needs all children have.

- Protection of their health and safety
- Building positive relations
- Opportunities for stimulation and learning from experience

HEALTH AND SAFETY PLAN

Oliver's Law

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/>.

TRUSTLINE

TrustLine helps ensure the safety of your child. A TrustLine clearance is the minimal qualification your caregiver should provide, in addition to experience with children, a warm and caring manner, and a commitment to ensuring your child's safety and well-being. Trustline uses the most up-to-date and detailed databases at the California Department of Justice and the FBI to protect children.

Child care providers can register with TrustLine and parents can check if a provider is registered by calling 1-800-822-8490.

DISCLAIMER

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.

CHILD CARE REFERRALS

SNCS is funded by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) 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 and updates on all licensed family child care providers and licensed child care centers in Nevada and Sierra counties.

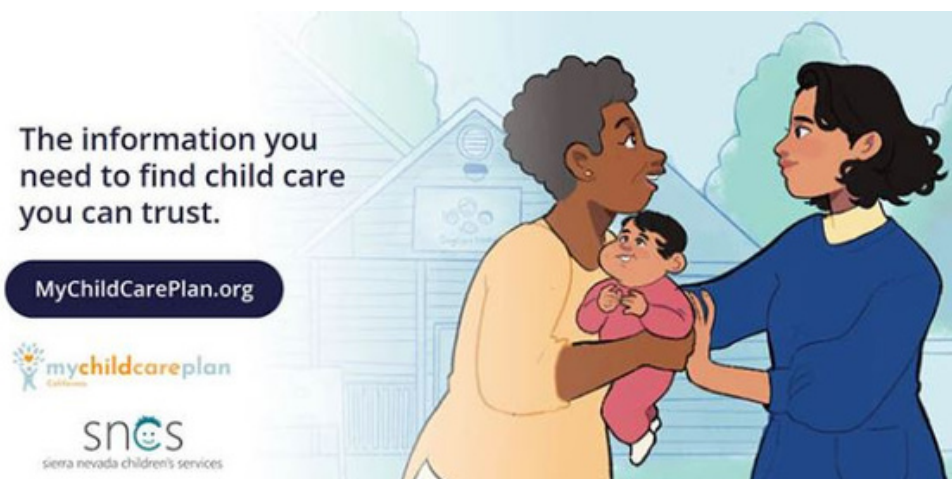
SNCS believes the parent is the best person to choose the care for the child. Referrals are intended to provide parents with a variety of choices, and should not be considered as recommendations to a particular program or facility. It is SNCS' goal to help parents make informed choices from a broad range of childcare options that meet the family's needs.

When a parent contacts SNCS for Child Care Referrals information is requested in order to make appropriate referrals. This information is considered confidential and is only available to SNCS staff and will not be released without prior written consent. Families can use mychildcareplan.org to search for childcare at any time or may call toll-free 888-306-7627(SNCS).

The information requested includes, but may not be limited to:

- a) Caller's name and phone number
- b) Home address and e-mail address
- c) Name of closest elementary school
- d) Days and hours child care is needed
- e) Number of children needing care, their gender and date of birth
- f) Type of care parent is considering (e.g. child care center, family child care home, preschool, before/after school care, etc.)
- g) Types of services parent is considering (such as hot meals, toilet training, transportation need, etc.)
- h) An assessment of child(ren)'s special needs or preferences
- i) Interest in the educational background of providers

After discussing their options, parents are given a list of all programs that meet their requested criteria, with a minimum of 4 facilities to be included in the referral. This list will include the names, phone numbers and relevant program information for the child care providers who appear to best meet the family's needs. For reasons of confidentiality, family child care providers' addresses are not released. Parents are encouraged to view the providers' profiles on MyChildCarePlan.org to learn more about the programs.



Visit MyChildCarePlan.org or scan the QR code for direct access:



SNCS encourages childcare providers to report changes that affect the information provided to families requesting childcare referrals. Accurate information, such as accepted age range and days and hours of operation, is vital for providing accurate referrals to families. SNCS requests quarterly information updates from providers and monthly vacancy updates are requested monthly through the referral database in order to keep the data as up to date as possible. Updates are sent directly from the referral database, providers can opt in to receive text, or email alerts. Full provider updates are requested every quarter. Providers that are no longer licensed are removed from the referral database by changing the status to inactive and turning referrals “OFF”. Parents are encouraged to ask the provider directly about availability, as this information changes rapidly.

CHILD CARE FUNDING

SNCS CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

SNCS is proud to offer financial assistance programs to Sierra and Nevada County residents. These programs are designed to help income-eligible families cover the expenses associated with childcare services. Funding is provided through a combination of federal, state and local agencies.

CAREWAIT CHILDCARE ELIGIBILITY LIST (CEL)

The CEL gives families access to two funding sources: the California Alternative Payment Program (CAPP) and the California Family Child Care (CFCC)/Family Child Care Homes Education Network (FCCHEN) program. Families may submit an online CareWait application directly from our website, www.sncs.org or by contacting their local SNCS office. Families may be required to create a CareConnect Family account.

Scan the QR Code to access the online CareWait application:



SNCS child care payment assistance programs provide full or partial payment for childcare services for enrolled families. Programs are designed to assist eligible families in paying for child care, otherwise known as subsidized child care services. Funding is provided by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS).

Families who need subsidized childcare services must complete and submit an application in CareWait. Each family is assigned an eligibility rank between 1 and 85, with a lower number indicating a higher likelihood of enrollment.

Enrollment is based on a priority ranking system determined by CDSS guidelines. 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.

- The Childcare Eligibility List determines which families should be served first
- The family is ranked by gross family income, family size and other needs. Income is verified prior to enrollment
- Children receiving CPS, or children at risk of being neglected or abused are given priority
- If a child lives with a guardian/foster parent only the child's income is used to determine the family's rank

When funds become available to enroll new families, SNCS contacts families by mail, email, and/or phone for possible enrollment, and the family will receive an electronic invitation to join the CareConnect Family portal in order to receive and submit their enrollment documents. Parents who choose not to use the portal will be issued enrollment documents via USPS mail or will-call at their local office. The family's current eligibility is determined to see if they are still the most eligible for enrollment at that time.

CalWORKs

The CalWORKs (California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids) program has many family support services, including child care. Child care through CalWORKs is a 3-stage program that pays full or partial child care expenses for eligible CalWORKs participants.

- **Stage 1**

Families currently receiving cash aid may be eligible for CalWORKs Stage 1 child care services and must be referred to SNCS by the CalWORKs office.

- **Stage 2**

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.

- **Stage 3**

If a family is currently enrolled on Stage 2 their child care will be transitioned to Stage 3 24 months after the family becomes ineligible for cash aid. Eligibility is determined by SNCS.

EMERGENCY CHILD CARE BRIDGE PROGRAM FOR FOSTER CHILDREN (BRIDGE PROGRAM)

Bridge Program services are available for eligible children experiencing a foster placement or for a child(ren) whose parent is in foster care. The program aims to increase the number of children placed in foster family homes, increase the capacity of child care programs to meet the needs of foster children in their care, and maximize funding to support the child care needs of eligible families. Eligibility is determined by the county, and eligible families will be referred to SNCS.

Other Funding Options

HEAD START

Head Start is a US Department of Health and Human Services program designed to support income eligible families through child care centers and schools in their local community, by providing services for the comprehensive development and promotion of school readiness to young children ages 3 to 5 years old. Head Start services include early learning, health, nutrition, and family well-being.

EARLY HEAD START

Early Head Start programs support low income families with pregnant women, infants, and children up to age 3 years old, by providing comprehensive services and high-quality early learning environments in child care centers and schools.

STATE PRESCHOOLS

State preschool programs are **part-day** comprehensive developmental programs for 3 to 5 year old children from low-income families. The programs emphasize parent education and encourage parent involvement. Families who select a preschool program usually do not need a full day, full year setting but are looking for a program that focuses on kindergarten readiness. **Full time** services are available for parents needing to maintain employment, meet work participation requirements, or participate in education or job training.

RESOURCES

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

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

In addition, SNCS coordinates community resources for the benefit of parents and local child care providers. SNCS staff can provide referrals to these agencies.

THE LEARNING CENTER (TLC)

SNCS has child development resources available for both parents and child care providers. The Learning Center in Grass Valley includes a Resource Library and Play Space that is open to the public when not in use, be sure to check the calendar or call for availability.

THE LENDING LIBRARY

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.

Becoming a member of our Lending Library is easy. Just stop by and fill out a simple information card (name, address, phone number). You may then check out items for two weeks at a time, with the possibility of extending that time if the item(s) is/are not requested and reserved by others.

PLAYGROUPS

Groups are designed for children and parents/caregivers – a trained facilitator guides parents on the value of interactive play with their infants and toddlers. The activities include social development and skills, language, fine motor, gross motor, creative expression, nutrition, and developing and encouraging curiosity and wonder. Find out more information at your local SNCS office or online at sncs.org.

FAMILY EVENTS

SNCS offers family community social events with fun themes and seasonal arts and crafts, all free to participating families. Make sure you are on our mailing list to hear about these great events. We started the Parent Advisory Committee because we value parent involvement.

GRIEVANCE & COMPLAINTS

WHAT IS A GRIEVANCE?

Parents and providers are encouraged to share their suggestions and concerns, as this offers a way for our program to better serve their needs. Should a grievance concerning agency policy or practice be brought to SNCS attention, the matter will be forwarded to the Program Director in an effort to resolve the issue. If the matter is not resolved at this level, the complaint will be forwarded to the Executive Director.

Additionally, if satisfaction is not reached through the grievance process, a formal complaint may be filed with the California Department of Social Services . Uniform Complaint Policy information may be found in the lobby of Sierra Nevada Children’s Services, as well as in both the Parent and Provider Guides.

WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

Sierra Nevada Children’s Services (SNCS) must comply with State and Federal laws and regulations when administering its programs. A complaint is an accusation that in some fashion SNCS has not acted in compliance with State and/or Federal laws and regulations, including allegations of unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, bullying and non-compliance.

In order to file a complaint, a “Sierra Nevada Children’s Services Uniform Complaint Procedure Form” must be completed and submitted to SNCS. These forms are available at the SNCS office, free of charge, and may be requested at anytime. A complaint should be submitted as soon as possible.

Complaints of possible discrimination must be filed within six months of the incident, or when first discovered. The Executive Director may extend this deadline for up to 90 calendar days for good cause.

WHO MAY FILE A COMPLAINT?

Any individual, duly authorized representative or interested third party, public agency or organization may file a written complaint of alleged noncompliance. Confidentiality and protection against retaliation are assured.

WHAT INFORMATION MUST BE IN THE COMPLAINT?

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 Executive Director shall assure that there is an investigation of the complaint 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.

WHERE DO I SEND COMPLAINTS?

You may send a written complaint to: Executive Director, 420 Sierra College Drive, Ste. 100, Grass Valley, CA 95945, (530) 272-8866 or fax (530) 272-1354.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO SOLVE A COMPLAINT?

An investigative meeting will be held within five business days of receiving the complaint to give all parties an opportunity to present information and question witnesses. Within 60 days of receiving the complaint (unless the complainant agrees to an extension of time), the Executive Director shall prepare and send to the complainant a written report of the investigation including findings, conclusion of law, disposition of the complaint, rationale, and any corrective actions. Civil law remedies may be pursued through local, state or federal aid agencies, offices, or private/public interest attorneys.

WHAT IF I DISAGREE WITH THE DECISION?

You may appeal in writing within 15 days to:

California Department of Social Services

Child Care and Development Division

ccddstakeholders@dss.ca.gov

You must specify reason(s) for appealing the decision, stating how the facts of the agency's decision are incorrect and/or the law was misapplied, and include a copy of the locally filed complaint and the decision.

SERVING YOU AT THREE LOCATIONS:



sierra nevada children's services

GRASS VALLEY OFFICE:

420 Sierra College Drive, Suite 100
Grass Valley, CA 95945
530.272.8866
Fax 530.272.1354

TRUCKEE OFFICE:

10075 Levon Street, Suite 201A
PO Box 3239
Truckee, CA 96160
530.587.5960
Fax 530.587.0899

LOYALTON OFFICE:

701 Main Street, Suite 1
PO Box 1139
Loyalton, CA 96118
530.993.1288
Fax 530.993.1512

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Sierra Nevada Children's Services Toll Free Number:
888-306-7627(SNCS)

Stay Connected:
info@snos.org
www.snos.org



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