



# Santa Monica Scholarship Child Development Program

Connections For Children – An Alternative Payment and Resource & Referral Agency

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# Welcome

## Dear Parents:

Welcome to Connections For Children Santa Monica Family Support and Scholarship Child Development Program. We are pleased to be able to serve your family.

This manual was designed to help you understand and make the most of your child care subsidy. Please keep this manual and use it to find the answers to any questions you have about the program. **Words or phrases shaded in blue are included in the glossary of key terms section, beginning on page 30.**

It is important to remember that any of the information in this manual may change as the program rules and regulations are updated. Any time a program rule or regulation changes, we will send you a letter explaining the change. Please keep all letters you receive from us describing changes in the child care program and/or Policies given to you that pertain to your Eligibility and Need. Read them carefully and add them to this manual. **You are responsible for understanding and following the rules.**

If any part of this manual is unclear to you, call your Specialist at Connections For Children immediately and ask for clarification. The Specialists at Connections For Children are dedicated to making your family's child care experience the best it can be. Please call if you have any child care or parenting questions. We are here to help you get the most from your child care services.

# Connections For Children

## About Us

Connections For Children (CFC) is a non-profit Child Care Resource and Referral agency and Alternative Payment Program, serving child care providers, educators, and parents in the West Los Angeles, Beach Cities, and South Bay communities. We assist parents and child care professionals who seek information, referrals, and education. We are an important voice in support of quality child care and early education. CFC has linked children's advocates, service providers, and parents about issues affecting children and families for over 40 years.

## Our Mission

Our mission is to build a stronger future for children, families, and communities through quality child care resources, education, and guidance.

## Child Care Resource and Referral

In addition to providing subsidized child care to families in the West Los Angeles and Beach Cities communities, Connections For Children provides several Resource and Referral services to parents, providers, and educators.

### Child Care Information Service

Connections For Children (CFC) maintains up-to-date listings of licensed child care available in our region and provides free referrals to parents. Families are referred to programs, which meet their needs in terms of hours, age of child, proximity to home, work, or school, cost and personal preference. We support parental choice by offering parent education on choosing childcare from the following available options: family child care homes, child care centers, camps, co-ops, nanny agencies, and before and after school programs. We also provide referrals to other community agencies that support families. Please contact us for more information on child care referrals and services.

### Newsletter and Resource Library

Connections For Children regularly publishes a newsletter featuring articles on child development, balancing work and family, legislative updates, community resources, and events. In addition, our Resource Library is filled with the latest books, magazines and videos for parents, providers and the community.

### **Support and Training for the Community**

A variety of workshops for parents and child care providers are scheduled throughout the year in the Connections For Children's service area and adjacent communities. Topics range from choosing child care, positive discipline, business issues, child development, the importance of play, and CPR re-certifications. We also offer Brown Bag Lunch Sessions, co hosted by CFC and area Child Care Center Directors; this is an opportunity to network with each other and participate in presentations by child development experts.

### **Technical Assistance**

**Family Child Care Providers:** assistance in becoming licensed, help with daily scheduling, business forms, environmental planning, accreditation, and other areas of implementing a home-based childcare program.

**Child Care Center Directors:** identification of service needs, environment, assistance in becoming licensed or accredited, staff planning, and a Job Bank listing both employers and those seeking work.

**The Community:** identification of child care needs and gaps in service, coordination of existing services, data collection and dissemination of information, and collaboration with other community agencies.

### **Special Projects**

Connections For Children has a number of other projects related to child care including:

**Mobile Toy Van:** our traveling Child Development Specialist visits Family Child Care programs in a van packed with toys, books, and equipment to lend.

**Family Time at the Park :** This project offers hands on training and activities to parents, licensed exempt, and informal care providers at selected parks in our service area.

# Getting Started

## General Policies

### Non-Discrimination

CFC operates all programs and services on a non-discriminatory basis, providing equal access to services without regard to race, color, sex, age, religion, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, marital status, pregnancy, physical or mental disability, medical condition, genetic characteristics, sexual orientation, gender, ethnic group identification, or any other characteristics protected by state and/or federal law.

### Sexual Harassment Policy

Connections for Children is committed to providing an environment free of unlawful harassment including sexual harassment. CFC's policy against harassment applies to all persons involved in the operation including employees, participating parents, children, and child care providers. The policy is designed to protect all from sexual overtures or conduct, verbal, visual, or physical, which are offensive, intimidating, hostile, or unwelcomed. All such harassment is unlawful.

Prohibited unlawful sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the following behavior:

- Verbal conduct such as epithets, derogatory jokes or comments, slurs or unwanted sexual advances, invitations or comments;
- Visual displays of sexually suggestive objects such as derogatory and/or sexually oriented posters, photography, cartoons, drawings or gestures;
- Physical conduct including assault, unwanted touching, grabbing, or brushing of the body;
- Purposely blocking or interfering with normal movements;
- Unwelcomed sexual flirtations, propositions, or leering;
- Threats and demands to submit to sexual requests as a condition of continued benefits and/or services, or to avoid some other loss and/or offers of benefits and/or services in return for sexual favors;
- Retaliation for reporting or threatening to report harassment; and
- Communication via electronic media of any type that includes any conduct that is prohibited by state and/or federal law, or by company policy

Connections for Children will immediately undertake an effective, thorough and objective investigation of harassment allegations. CFC encourages all individuals to report any incidents of harassment forbidden by this policy immediately so that complaints can be quickly and fairly resolved with the respect of the privacy of all parties concerned to the extent possible.

If you believe that you have been unlawfully harassed, please notify CFC in writing at our main address listed on **page 29** as soon as possible after the incident.

### **Mutual Respect**

CFC staff will always treat you with dignity and respect, and CFC expects the same type of treatment from parents, providers and vendors. CFC may terminate services for a parent, provider or vendor who verbally and/or physically abuses, makes threats, and uses profanity or inappropriate language towards any staff member, or around other clients, including children.

### **Grievance Procedure**

Parents and providers are encouraged to make a complaint, either in writing or via telephone within 24 hours after an incident has occurred. This does not mean the agency will not respond to any complaints made 24 hours after an incident has occurred. Rather, this process supports parents and providers in their efforts to resolve their issues in a timely manner. If a parent or provider has a grievance against the agency, policies, or personnel that cannot be satisfactorily resolved with the case worker or specialist, he/she can contact the Program Manager. If a resolution cannot be reached within (5) five **business days**, the supervisor will send a letter updating the parent and/or provider on the status of their complaint and will continue to do so until a resolution can be reached. A detailed written explanation of this procedure is available through your case specialist.

### **Fair Hearings**

Parents enrolled in Connections For Children's Santa Monica Child Development Scholarship Program have the right to a fair hearing if they disagree with any action taken regarding their child care services. Parents may file a request for a hearing if they disagree with any action taken regarding their child care services. A parent may file a request for a hearing with Connections for Children within fourteen (14) **calendar days** of the date of the receipt of the Notice of Action. Upon the filing of a request for a hearing, the intended action as identified on the Notice of Action shall be suspended until the review process has been completed. Additional information about the process for requesting a fair hearing is outlined on the back of the Notice of Action.

### **Verbal Agreements**

All agreements between the parent, the provider, and/or a CFC staff member must: be in writing; be approved by the Manager; and be signed by all parties. CFC will not accept nor enforce any verbal agreements made between the parent, the provider, or any CFC staff member.

### **Gifts and Gratuities**

CFC employees, at any level in the organization, are not allowed to give nor accept any gifts or gratuities from parents, providers, or vendors. If you want to show your appreciation for a job well done by one of our employees, please just send us a letter or a “thank you” card.

### **Confidentiality**

All family information is kept confidential and not shared with other agencies without parents’ approval. Information provided is used to verify eligibility and need for the Santa Monica Scholarship Program, and when necessary, to report to the City of Santa Monica, and through audits, which parent’s approval is not required. Upon request and at reasonable times and places, parents or their **authorized representatives** may review the basic data file.

### **Fraud Policy**

The City of Santa Monica requires CFC to inform all families that if child care **subsidies** are obtained by providing fraudulent or incomplete information, CFC shall actively pursue recovering funds paid out for the child care services. Please refer to our Fraud Policy Statement that is given to you at the time of enrollment for more information.

## **About the Child Care Subsidy Program**

Connections for Children is a non-profit agency funded partially by the City of Santa Monica, to provide subsidies to low-income families for child care and development services. Connections For Children operates in accordance with all State of California laws governing non-profit agencies, and as such is governed by a Board of Directors.

The Santa Monica Child Development Scholarship Program design was based on the belief that child care providers themselves can identify families in their programs in need of service. An exception to this is children referred directly to Connections for Children for protective and emergency services. This program is to support the partial cost of child care for eligible Santa Monica parents.

Connections For Children’s Santa Monica Child Development Scholarship Program serves eligible families by providing services and subsidies for children from birth to kindergarten age entry. Children who turn age five in the middle of the school year, will continue to be eligible until they enter kindergarten .



## Service Area

Santa Monica Scholarship subsidies may be used to pay for care provided only in licensed facilities (e.g. child care centers or family day care homes). Selected providers must operate within the City of Santa Monica.

## Children with Special or Exceptional Needs

Children with special and/or exceptional needs are defined as children with an active **Individualized Educational Plan** (IEP) or **Individualized Family Service Plan** (IFSP). IEP's or IFSP's should clearly indicate a need for adult supervision in a child care setting. In the event that you are requesting child care services to accommodate your child's special need and the submitted IEP or IFSP does not clearly indicate this, you will be asked to provide a letter from a **legally qualified professional** who is licensed by the State.

## Parental Choice

CFC's Subsidized Child Development Programs are based upon parents' choice. It is a parent's responsibility to select the child care provider that best meets the needs of his/her child and family. CFC does not inspect nor warrant the condition of the child care facility nor the degree or type of supervision provided. We assume no responsibility for injury or damages arising from the performance of our agreement for child care services. The selected provider and the parent both agree to hold harmless CFC, its officers, employees or representatives from costs, suit or liabilities allegedly arising from the provision of child care services.

With prior notice and approval, parents may change their child care setting to meet their needs. Parents must notify CFC staff at least five (5) **calendar days** prior to making any changes.

## Choosing a Provider

CFC's Santa Monica Scholarship Program provides child care **subsidies** to eligible families with children birth through entry to kindergarten. Based upon a parent's documented need, child care services are available as follows: all day, part time, and evenings/nights.

### **Types of facilities include:**

- **Child Care Centers** – Facilities that are licensed to care for more than 18 children and are staffed by adults who have training in early childhood care and education.
- **Licensed family child care homes**– A provider who cares for small groups of children in his/her home. One adult can care for up to 8 children (this is known as a small child care home), and two adults can care for up to

14 children (this is known as a large child care home). Family child care providers are required to complete first aid and CPR training. Many have also taken classes in early childhood education and child development. They are licensed through [Community Care Licensing](#).

## How To Qualify For Services

In order to qualify for a child care subsidy program, a family must meet all eligibility requirements and demonstrate a need for child care services.

### Eligibility Requirements

[Parents](#), including custodial adults and guardians, and all adults counted in the [family](#) must meet the following criteria:

#### 1. Residency Requirements

- a. Parents or Guardians as well as children, must live and receive child care in the City of Santa Monica. Proof of residency will be required in the form of a utility bill or notarized letter

#### 2. Documentation of Family Size -This will include providing to CFC some or all of the following:

- a. Birth Certificates, adoption documents, court documents, Records of Foster Care, for all children in your family, indicating relationship of child to parent or guardian.
- b. Social security cards for all members of the family

#### 3. Documentation that Family's Gross Income is at or below the State's median income level -This may include one (1) or more of the following:

- a. 1 months worth of consecutive payroll stubs
- b. An independent letter from your employer, or other record of wages issued by your employer.
- c. Copies of your most recently signed and completed tax returns with a statement of current estimated income for tax purposes.
- d. Other business records such as ledgers, receipts, or business logs totaling 1 month or more of [gross income](#) received.
- e. Any other documentation, which verifies all sources of income.

#### 4. Documentation of Child's Exceptional Needs

- a. Provide CFC with an active Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).

#### 5. Documentation of Homelessness / Seeking Housing

This may include one (1) or more of the following:

- a. Provide CFC with a written referral from an emergency shelter or other legal, medical, or social service agency; or

- b. A written parental declaration stating that your family is homeless and a statement describing your family's current living situation.

## 6. Documentation of Child Protective Services (CPS) / At Risk

This will include one (1) of the following:

- a. Provide CFC with a written referral from a county welfare department, child welfare services worker, certifying that the child is receiving protective services and the family requires child care and development services as part of the case plan.
- b. Provide CFC with a written referral from a **legally qualified professional** from a legal, medical, or social services agency, or emergency shelter for children at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

## Admission/Enrollment Process

During Connections For Children's (CFC) enrollment process, the parent is contacted over the telephone to verify their eligibility information. If your family meets the standard eligibility criteria, a certification appointment is made with the parent. The parent must come into the CFC office to be certified. At the time of the appointment the parent must provide all documentation verifying the family's eligibility and need, as well as sign a release form that allows CFC to verify all documents submitted. In addition, the parent must submit the following applicable documents to prove a need for child care services.

### Required Documentation For Child Care Need

#### 1. Documentation of Employment

- **Basic Employment**-Parents must complete an Employment Information Release Form, which allows CFC to obtain information regarding your work schedule and pay rate. CFC will attempt to contact your employer via mail, telephone, email or fax. CFC can only authorize child care for verifiable employment.
- **Self Employment**-In the event that a parent is self-employed, such as a hairdresser, barber, gardener, etc; parents will be asked to submit a copy of their business license, workspace lease, or workspace rental agreement to verify the business. In addition, parents must demonstrate the days and hours worked by providing documentation of their customary business hours. This is done by providing CFC with appointment logs, job logs, a list of client contact information, or any other verifiable documentation which demonstrates the days and hours worked. Parents who are self employed and work from home must have a business that prevents them from safely caring for their

children. These parents must complete a Statement of Job Duties to explain why child care is needed.

- **Employment with Variable Work Schedules**–Any parent who does not have a fixed work schedule will have services approved on a **variable work schedule**. Parents with a variable work schedule must complete a monthly **Variable Calendar** form. The monthly Variable Calendar form must be completed by the parent, listing the exact days and hours worked for the specified month. In addition, the employer must verify the days and hours worked by signing the Variable Calendar form.

## 2. Documentation of Employment Search

Families may use up to ninety (90) **business days** during the **fiscal year** to seek employment. Child care services may not exceed 30 hours per week. Families must also provide CFC with the following information:

- A written declaration stating that the parent is seeking employment and a plan to secure, change or increase employment.
- A Parent seeking employment must also submit a monthly Job Search Activity Log describing the activities he or she has undertaken during the month to find employment. In addition, this document is used to verify the job search using the hours provided on the logs. Parents may be required to submit additional documentation to verify need.

## 3. Documentation of Education or Training

Parents may apply for child care services while enrolled in vocational/educational training. Parents must submit the following documentation for every semester, quarter, or training period enrolled.

Parents must submit a Training Verification form that includes the school's signature stamp of the training institution's registrar. The training verification must display all classes currently enrolled in, along with the current semester/quarter end date and anticipated date of completion; or

- A current class schedule that is an electronic print-out from the training institution.

## 4. Documentation of Seeking Permanent Housing

Families may use up to sixty (60) working days during the **fiscal year** to seek housing. Child care services may not exceed 30 hours per week. Families seeking housing must also provide CFC with the following information:

- A written search plan for securing a fixed, regular, and adequate residence.

- A signed statement from the shelter, transitional housing agency, or homeless support program regarding the parent's search progress to date
- A monthly housing log describing the activities he or she has undertaken during the month to seek permanent housing. In addition, this document is used to verify the seeking housing activity using the hours provided on the logs. Parents may be required to submit additional documentation to verify need.

## **6. Documentation of Incapacitation**

This includes medical or psychiatric need, to the extent that the parent's ability to provide normal care for the child is limited. Child care and development services shall not exceed 50 hours a week.

- The Incapacitation Form is to be completed by a **legally qualified professional**.

## **Family Child Care Certificate**

Upon completion of enrollment/certification paperwork, an enrollment certificate is issued to the provider. The certificate informs the child care provider that CFC will pay for child care services as approved in the parent's certification.

The participating parent is responsible for informing the Family Specialist at CFC of any changes in need for child care location, hours, or days.

## **Notice of Action**

A Notice of Action (NOA) is an official document mailed to the family from CFC notifying the family of the status of their child care services. A NOA may be for any one of the following:

- **Initial Certification**
- **Increase/Decrease in Services**
- **Increase/Decrease in Family Fees**
- **Delinquent Family Fees**
- **Denial/Termination**

The NOA states the approved child(ren) and hours of care. Family fees will be stated if applicable.

## **Reporting Changes**

It is the responsibility of the participating parent to notify CFC of any change in eligibility status, income, use of child care services, or change of address or telephone numbers, as this information may change eligibility for child care subsidy. Failure to report any of these changes within **five (5) calendar days** of the change is cause for termination from the program. CFC assumes no

responsibility if mail is lost, returned, or not received when the notice was sent to the existing address on file.

### **Provider Notices**

If the parent makes any changes in their child care need (e.g., changes in location, hours, days of care), CFC will inform the Provider by mailing a Provider's Notice. A Provider Notice describes the changes or actions taken in approved child care and the effective date. The selected provider is responsible for informing CFC of any changes to their days of operation and/or rates.

## **Continuing Your Child Care Services**

### **Recertification of Eligibility**

Based on the parent's defined need, the case must be reviewed periodically to determine continuing eligibility. This is called the Recertification of Eligibility. Recertification deadlines are determined by a family's needs. Failure to recertify within the specified timeframe will result in termination.

- **Students** must update need (recertify) two weeks before the end of each term **or** when there are changes in their class schedule. Recertification must coincide with the new proposed term. Parents who are students must provide the following to meet the City's criteria for need for continuation of services:
  - ❖ A training verification form must be turned in for each new semester, quarter, or term.
  - ❖ Report cards, transcripts or other records to document that the parent is making progress towards the attainment of the vocational goal.
- **Working parents** must recertify once a year **or** when a change occurs in employment status such as income, termination or loss of employment.
- Families involved with **Child Protective Services** must recertify no less than every 6 months.
  - ❖ Families with an **at-risk referral** must recertify no less than every 3 months.
- Parents who are **incapacitated** must recertify every 6 months **or** depending on their probable return date from incapacitation. A legally qualified professional must complete documentation.

**Important!**

**All families must recertify following major changes such as medical or maternity leaves of absence. Please refer page 17 for medical/ maternity leave criteria.**

# Attendance Sheets

## Completing the Attendance Sheets

Properly completing Attendance Sheets on a daily basis and submitting them according to agency deadlines is extremely important for proper and timely reimbursement to child care providers.

Attendance sheets are used as our method of billing for payment and are an essential requirement of provider participation in the Subsidized Child Development Program. Attendance sheets are the only form of documentation we will accept for reimbursing provider claims. If an attendance sheet is more than **60 days late**, CFC reserves the right to refuse payment.

- ❖ A pre-printed Attendance Sheet will be mailed to your selected child care provider each month for each child who is approved for child care.
  - One Attendance Sheet a month must be completed for each child.
- ❖ The Attendance Sheet must be filled out daily. Parents must **sign their full name** each day and record the **exact** "in and out" time for each child. (see **example below**). Do not sign your child into care if he/she is not using the care.

PARENT SIGN IN THIS COLUMN ONLY			PROVIDER MUST SIGN IF CHILD HAS A SPLIT SCHEDULE				PARENT SIGN IN THIS COLUMN ONLY		OFFICE USE
DATE	TIME IN	PARENT'S SIGNATURE	TIME OUT	PROVIDER SIGNATURE	TIME IN	PROVIDER SIGNATURE	TIME OUT	PARENT'S SIGNATURE	TOTAL HOURS
10/01/07	6:53	Jane Doe					5:02	Jane Doe	
10/02/07	7:03	Jane Doe					4:59	Jane Doe	
10/03/07	6:52	Jane Doe					5:07	Jane Doe	

- **Do not write the same time every day.**
  - **Do not round off times.**
  - Signatures must be in ink only; **pencil or whiteout is not accepted.**
- ❖ During your Certification of Eligibility, you will be asked to complete a Signature Authorization form. This form lists all adults allowed to drop off and pick up your child(ren).
    - Only you and those listed on the Signature Authorization form will be approved to complete Attendance Sheets.
    - It is your responsibility to inform your child care provider of all adults listed on the Signature Authorization form.
    - Attendance Sheets that display unauthorized signatures may result in your provider's payment being reduced or delayed.
  - ❖ If your child is absent or uses fewer hours of care than scheduled, you must fill out the **absence report** section on the back of the Attendance Sheet. The **specific** nature of the absence (doctor's appointment, fever, flu, etc.) must be documented with the full signature of the parent i.e. "**John had the flu**" (see **example below**).

(Example)

### FORM FOR VERIFICATION OF ABSENCES

DATE	REASON (if sick, name illness)	SIGNATURE
10/4/10	Doctor's appointment. John had the flu.	Jane Doe
10/7/10	Water Heater Flooded House	Jane Doe

## Submitting Attendance Sheets

At the end of each month, both parent and provider must sign the bottom of the Attendance Sheet verifying the accuracy of the information on the form. The completed form must be returned to CFC no later than the **due date stated on top of the monthly Attendance Sheet**.

- Attendance Sheets must be filled out completely and signed by both parent and provider before payment can be made to the provider.
- CFC does not accept faxes, photocopies, carbon copies, or provider generated Attendance sheets. Only original Attendance Sheets can be processed by CFC's Payments Department.
- Please ensure that all documentation needed to process your provider's payment is attached to the Attendance Sheet **prior** to submission, such as parent's **Variable Calendar**, Job Search Logs, and doctor's notes.
- Attendance Sheets may be mailed to CFC or placed in our secure lock box located in CFC's lobby by 5:00 pm.
- A secured lock box is located at the front of CFC's building, for after hours Attendance Sheet submittal.
- The Attendance Sheet is a legal document. It is the responsibility of both parent and provider to ensure the accuracy and truthfulness of all information submitted on the Attendance Sheets.

**Important!**

Failure to complete Attendance Sheets on a daily basis and submit them according to agency deadlines will result in termination from the program. Please note that it is the responsibility of both parent and provider to submit completed Attendance Sheets in a timely manner.

## **Child Care Attendance**

The need for child care services is assessed during the certification and/or recertification interview and reassessed when a parent reports a change in status. It is extremely important that parents use the child care services that have been approved. Connections for Children understands that there will be times when your child will be unable to attend childcare for reasons beyond your control. Therefore, CFC has created an Absence Policy to assist you in documenting such absences.

### Types of Absences

- **Excused Absences**  
Excused absences for a full day due to an unavoidable event or family emergency must be verified with written documentation or notification. Examples include but are not limited to: child or parent illness; quarantine of the child/parent; medical/dental



appointments for the child; family emergency; court ordered visitation or other court ordered activity.

- **Unexcused Absences**

Absences that do not fall within the definition of Excused Absences will be considered unexcused. Examples include but are not limited to: any unexplained or undocumented absence for which CFC is unable to determine a reason. A Program Supervisor will review unexcused absences in excess of five (5) days per month and child care need will be reassessed or terminated if it is determined there is no need for care.

### **Reporting Absences**

When a child is absent for more than five (5) consecutive days due to illness, a doctor/medical note must be attached to the child's Attendance Sheet prior to submission to CFC for review. This documentation will not waive the parent/provider's responsibility to report the absence in a timely manner.

These absence policies do not apply to days your provider may be closed. In that event, your provider will be reimbursed based on their normal payment policies and not the absence policy listed above.

### **Maternity Leave**

If an increase in family size occurs through birth and the parent is unable to attend work or school, all eligible children **will** continue to receive child care services paid by the City of Santa Monica Scholarship Program for the following timeframe without additional documentation:

Natural Birth -- 6 weeks maximum

C-Section Birth -- 8 weeks maximum

### **Leave of Absence (LOA)**

With prior approval, you may be granted a short-term leave of absence from child care services for any or all of your children. Children on leave **will not** receive any child care services paid by the City of Santa Monica Scholarship Program. When a child returns from an approved leave, services will resume.

Please remember that CFC cannot guarantee that your provider will readmit your child(ren), and that it is your responsibility to notify your provider of your leave period. Except in emergencies, parents must notify CFC staff and complete the application for Short Term Leave of Absence at least three (3) days prior to the scheduled leave of absence.

### **A short-term leave of absence may be granted for the following reasons:**

1. Parents in school who have no need for services because they are out for the summer, other school breaks between quarters/semesters, not working or attending school.

2. Children away from home for an extended period visiting with other parents or relatives (e.g., grandparents, joint custody arrangements, etc.)
3. Family emergencies that require parents to leave town for an extended amount of time.

Leave may be granted for a minimum of **two (2)** to a maximum of **twelve (12)** consecutive weeks per program year with the exception of a parent on maternity or medically related leave of absence from their employment or training. Maternity or medically related leaves of absence shall not exceed **sixteen (16)** consecutive weeks per program year. You must discuss your needs with a CFC Program Specialist in order to determine the start to your program year, as well as a start and end date for the leave period.

Fourteen (14) days before the approved return date, CFC will send a letter to inform you of the date your approved leave period will expire. The letter will state that services will be terminated if your child does not return from leave or if you do not request an extension. If the full 12 or 16 weeks allowed per year have not already been used, you may request an extension up to that maximum. The extension must be requested and approved before the original leave period expires. Families must recertify for child care services before the end of their approved Leave of Absence.

### **Child Care in Elementary Education**

Connections For Children does not pay for your child's attendance in an elementary education program. The Santa Monica Child Development Scholarship Program only serves children from birth through kindergarten entry. Once the child is eligible for kindergarten instruction, we can no longer provide child care and development services.

## **Family Fees & Co-Payments**

### **What is a Family Fee?**

Families whose income falls within a certain range, as specified by the City of Santa Monica, are required to pay a fee for child care services. Connections For Children (CFC) charges and collects fees in accordance with the State of California's regulations on assessing and collecting fees. The **Family fee** is based on:

- i. The number of people in the family unit
- ii. The adjusted **gross monthly income**
- iii. The child receiving the largest amount of subsidized care

Family fees are due on the first **business day** of each month. Fees are always paid in advance for services and are considered delinquent if not received by

the 5<sup>th</sup> (fifth) day of each month. Parents will be billed by the third week of each month. Family fees will not be adjusted or waived for un-excused absences.

- If a child will not be attending care due to lack of need for care, parents must notify their Program Specialist by reporting a Leave of Absence (LOA). While on approved LOA, parents are not responsible for a family fee.
- Any changes in Family Fees are calculated from income documentation submitted by parent(s) and are effective based upon the Notice of Action given to the parent. Verbal notification of changes in income will not be accepted.
- Family fees should be mailed to: **Connections For Children, 2701 Ocean Park Blvd., Suite 253 Santa Monica, CA 90405, Attention: Family Fees**

**Important!**

Please write your family number on the check (this number is located on the Family Fee Statement). Only cashier's checks, money orders, or personal checks are accepted for payment.

### **Family Fees and Variable Schedules**

Family fees for parents on **variable work schedules** are subject to monthly billing adjustments. The monthly fee will reflect the days worked each month and the amount may be increased or decreased based on the days worked each month. After CFC receives the parent's **variable calendar** and attendance sheets for child care, the account will be reviewed to see if the original bill was correct. If a parent worked more or less and was therefore eligible for more or less care, he/she will be billed or credited accordingly for family fees.

### **Delinquent Family Fees**

A written Notice of Action will be mailed to the parent when fees are delinquent. The Notice of Action will indicate the amount of unpaid fees, the daily fee and the period of delinquency. Full payment of family fees must be made within two weeks of the date of the Notice of Action, or services will be terminated. During this time CFC may attempt to work with the parent to create a payment plan, if needed. Consistent delinquent payments (3 Notices of Action within one **fiscal year**) will result in termination. When services are terminated for non-payment of delinquent fees, the parent will not be eligible for placement on the **Eligibility List**.

**In the event of a returned check, CFC will implement the following procedures:**

1. Immediately notify the parent/payer and inform him/her that he/she is responsible for check replacement and any bank charges incurred by the agency.

2. Require that replacement funds and bank charges be made payable in the form of a money order or cashier's check within **3 business days** or a Termination Notice of Action will be sent.
3. Require that future family fees be paid only in the form of a money order or cashier's check.

### Co-Payments

The maximum amount CFC will reimburse a child care provider is determined by the local **regional market rate** for child care. If a parent chooses a provider whose rate is above the regional market rate the parent is responsible for paying the difference directly to the provider.

#### *Example*

If the **regional market rate** is **\$600** a month, and the provider's rate is **\$700**, the difference of \$100 per month is the amount above the regional market rate. Therefore, **\$600** would be the maximum payment CFC would make for child care services and the parent would be responsible for a co-payment of **\$100** given directly to the provider.

## Family Termination

When Connections For Children (CFC) terminates a family from the Subsidized Child Development Programs, a **fourteen (14)-calendar day** Notice of Action will be given to the parent. In addition, a Provider Notice will be given to the child care provider stating the last day of care approved for reimbursement.

**CFC may terminate a family from the program for any of the following reasons:**

1. Failure to provide current and correct information at the time of Enrollment, Certification, or Recertification.
2. Failure to complete and/or sign all documents required for enrollment, certification, or recertification.
3. Failure to use the hours of care based on the evidence of lack of need for care.
4. Delinquency in the payment of family fees.
5. Failure to notify CFC within five (5) **calendar days** of changes in family or child care status, such as changes in the hours of care, **gross monthly income**, place of residence, employment, family size, or marital status.
6. Failure to complete Attendance Sheets on a daily basis and submit them according to agency deadlines.

7. Falsification of or refusal to sign attendance sheets.
8. Family income exceeding the State median income.
9. Family provides fraudulent, false, or misleading information to CFC program staff.

Important!

If a provider has a policy of payment for termination of service, **the parent must pay the fee to the provider**. CFC is not responsible for paying any fees resulting from the parent's decision to change providers or termination of child care services.

### Appeals Procedures

If you decide to appeal an action proposed on an adverse Notice of Action, you must file a written request for an appeal hearing within **fourteen (14) calendar days** of your receipt of the Notice of Action. The appeal should be filed with CFC. An appeal hearing will be with an agency staff member who is at least one level above the person who made the contested decision.

During the hearing, you may speak for yourself, or a friend, attorney, or other spokesperson of your choice may represent you. If needed, an interpreter will be made available to you. A representative of CFC will be present to explain the agency's reason(s) for the action indicated on the Notice of Action. Following the hearing, within two weeks, you will receive a written decision from CFC with an explanation of the next level of appeal.

## Provider Program Requirements

In order to participate in the Subsidized Child Development programs, child care providers must comply with the following requirements.

- Operate within the City of Santa Monica.
- Remain in compliance with applicable regulations (i.e., **Licensing**)
- Operate on a non-discriminatory basis giving equal treatment and access to services without regard to race, sex, ethnicity, creed, religion, physical or mental disability, national origin or ancestry.
- Refrain from engaging in religious instruction or worship while providing child care and development services.
- Submit a declaration stating that parents have unlimited access to their children and to the providers caring for their children during normal hours of operation and whenever the children are in the care of the providers.

The child care certificate issued by CFC is non-transferable. We reserve the right to make payment only to those providers who remain in compliance with the program's requirements.

**In addition to the general requirements listed above, there are specific requirements for specific types of care.**

**1. Child Care Centers must:**

- a. Provide CFC with a copy of their current license and **Federal Identification Number**.
- b. Maintain current, active, and continuous licensure to receive payment for services.
- c. Provide CFC with a copy of the license indicating the name of the new owner before payment for child care services will be made, if there is a change of ownership.
- d. Receive an updated Child Care Certificate any time a change in **licensing** status is made. A current Child Care Certificate must be on file at CFC for reimbursement to child care centers.

**2. Licensed family child care providers must:**

- a. Provide CFC with a copy of their current license and **Federal Identification Number** or Social Security Number.
- b. Provide CFC with current Photo Identification
- c. Obtain a new license reflecting any change of address before becoming eligible for payment. A new Child Care Certificate must be completed reflecting any changes in address or fees. A current Child Care Certificate must be on file at CFC for reimbursement to family child care providers.

You are *not* eligible to be a provider if:

- You are a parent (by blood, marriage, or adoption) in the program.
- You are a parent (by blood, marriage, or adoption) of the child receiving services.
- You are a live-in "significant other" (ex. Boyfriend, girlfriend, or companion) of a parent in the program.
- You live in the same home as the parent receiving services in the program.
- You live in the same home as a provider receiving payment for services in the program.

## Provider Reimbursements

### Tiered Reimbursement Rates

Santa Monica subsidy assistance rates are set to recognize quality child care centers and family child care providers. CFC relies upon four quality assessment systems; rating is conducted by trained *external* evaluators. These tools examine multiple quality indicators and are recognized as industry standards for rating quality child care:

- STEP <http://cao.lacounty.gov/ccp/step.htm>
- LAUP [www.laup.net](http://www.laup.net)
- NAEYC Accreditation [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)
- NAFCC Accreditation [www.nafcc.org](http://www.nafcc.org)

For a more detailed description of the quality ratings, please visit the websites listed above.

**All participating Santa Monica child care programs will be reimbursed at new rates reflecting the quality levels in the matrix shown below.**

Reimbursement Tier	Quality Level Reflected
SM Base Rate	No participation in quality rating programs
SM First Step	Participation in STEPS and receiving rating of 1
SM STEP-ping Up	Participation in STEPS with rating of 2-3; or LAUP with 3-STAR rating
SM Top STEP	Participation in STEPS with rating of 4-5; or LAUP with 4-5 STAR rating, or active NAEYC or NAFCC Accreditation

### Provider Child Care Certificate

Upon completion of enrollment/certification paperwork, an enrollment certificate is issued to the provider. The certificate informs the child care provider that CFC will pay for child care services as approved in the parent's certification.

The participating parent is responsible for informing the Family Specialist at CFC of any changes in: need for child care location, hours, or days.

Connections For Children (CFC) will pay licensed facilities for the child care services rendered, at the rate reflected on the Child Care Certificate. Payments are always made after the care has been received and only for the care which has been approved.

CFC does not pay for child care expenses incurred before a family has been enrolled in the program.

### Payment Schedule

1. CFC's payment period for the Subsidized Child Development Programs is **monthly**. When complete and accurate attendance sheets are received by CFC by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the calendar month after the service month, provider payments will be mailed no later than the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month. To ensure timely payments, providers and parents should refer to the **CFC Payment Calendar** for specific monthly reimbursement and attendance sheet due dates.
2. For attendance sheets received after the 5<sup>th</sup>, but no later than the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month, provider payments will be mailed no later than the last day of the month. Attendance sheets received after the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month will be paid using the next month's payment schedule.
3. All licensed provider or license-exempt providers must comply with CFC's Non-Compliance Child Care Attendance Sheet Policy. Upon enrollment, both provider and parent are given a detailed description of this policy which must be signed. This policy consists of a warning system to all providers and parents to discourage submittal of incomplete and inaccurate attendance sheets. Consistent submittal of incomplete and/or inaccurate attendance sheets may result in parent and/or provider termination from the program.

### Usual and Customary Rates (Rate Sheet)

CFC, in compliance with Federal / State regulations, requires providers to submit a rate sheet that specifies their usual and customary rates for the public (non-subsidized families). This information should include any additional fees that are charged to the public, the days and hours of operation and any policies regarding attendance and absences. Rate sheets should be submitted with any published brochures, flyers, parent handbooks or website printouts that substantiate your policies and rates.

### Paid Days of Non-Operation

Providers who can prove to CFC (**via written policies for the public**) that they charge non-subsidized families for days of non-operation can be paid for 10 days of non-operation. CFC will only reimburse proven days of non-operation if the child(ren) has been approved for care on that day.



If a provider is eligible to be paid for days of non-operation and wishes to select a different day of non-operation than those observed by the State, a written notice of this request must be made to CFC.

Important!

Providers should notify parents about their vacation policies (i.e., how much notice is required from a parent when he/she goes on vacation for an extended period of time).

### Prorating

Weekly and monthly rates will be **prorated** when the authorization does not cover the rate applied to the schedule or when a provider is not authorized to be paid by contract and there is a day of non-operation.

### Evening/Weekend Care Rates

1. CFC does not pay “split rates” for evening/weekend care. An evening/weekend care adjustment factor may be applied to licensed providers who can prove customary rates for the public (non-subsidized families).
2. If at least 50% of the total certified hours fall during the evening and/or weekend, multiply the **Regional Market Rate** by 1.25 to get a new ceiling.
3. If at least 10%, but less than 50% of the total certified hours fall during the evening and/or weekend, multiply the Regional Market Rate by 1.125 to get a new ceiling.

Important!

CFC will never pay more than the **Regional Market Rate** regardless of the percentage of evening/weekend care provided.

#### *For Example*

If the **Regional Market Rate** for one month of care is \$900 and 50% of the certified hours for care that month occurred during the evening or weekend, CFC would make an adjustment of  $\$900 \times 1.25$  for an adjusted monthly rate of \$1,125. If the provider's rate is \$1,250 the parent would be responsible for a co-payment of \$125.

### Rate Changes

Providers must report a change of rates in writing to CFC and have their new rates approved by the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month to have those rates effective for that month of care. If reported or approved after the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month, the rates will

become effective the following month. Rate changes are permitted one time per **fiscal year**.

### **Registration Fees**

Registration fees may be paid with documentation (**via written policies for the public**) stating that all families enrolled in the provider's care are required to pay a registration fee. If applying a registration fee creates a payment that exceeds the **Regional Market Rate** category, CFC will be unable to pay the portion of the registration fee that exceeds the RMR ceiling.

### **IRS and Tax Information**

All providers receiving subsidy child care payments from CFC are independent contractors, not employees.

CFC issues subsidy payments to providers on behalf of enrolled families in the agency's child care subsidy programs. CFC does not withhold or pay income or payroll taxes from provider payments. CFC will mail all providers a copy of their IRS 1099 form by **January 31, excluding corporations**. Providers are responsible for paying all federal, State, and local income taxes, as well as other taxes.

## **Parent/Provider Relationship**

When a provider agrees to provide care, information regarding the specific needs of the child, emergency numbers and the name of adults authorized to pick-up a child at the end of the day should be obtained from the parent.

Per Department of Social Services Community Care **Licensing**, licensed providers should be sure that they have the following information.

### **Specific Needs of the Child**

- a. For children using medication: documentation of the type, dosage, schedule and reason for administering.
- b. Documentation of children's allergies.
- c. Documentation of specific health, cognitive, or developmental needs about which the provider should know.

### **Emergency Information**

- a. Documentation on authorized adults to contact in case of emergency.
- b. Documentation on family's Medi-Cal or private insurance.
- c. Documentation on whether the provider should take a child the child to private physician, or if the parent to do so themselves.

## Authorization

- a. Documentation regarding authorized adults allowed to pick-up the child.

## Hours of Care

- a. Providers should clearly specify their hours of operation. Providers should ensure that parents clearly understand their expectations regarding pick-up times.
- b. Providers should inform parents of the days their child care program will be closed. Providers must also notify CFC of their scheduled vacations.
- c. CFC does not pay for child care services when the provider is on vacation. CFC does pay for child care services for major holidays listed on the **Days of Non-Operation**.

## Snacks and Meals

Providers should notify parents about the type of food provided and the meal schedule. Parents may have special requests regarding food restrictions, etc.

## Provider Termination

### Termination of an Enrolled Family

If a provider terminates a family's child care services, Connections For Children (CFC) will only reimburse up to the last day of care used by the child. Whenever possible, CFC will give providers a ten-day notice when terminating a family from the Santa Monica Scholarship Subsidized Child Development Program.

### Termination of a Provider

Providers will not be allowed to participate in CFC's Subsidized Child Development Programs should any of the following conditions occur:

- The provider refuses to sign CFC's Child Care Certificate.
- The provider fails to provide current and correct information regarding child care attendance, rates, or billings.
- If the State of California Department of Social Services, Community Care **Licensing** has revoked or suspended the facility's child care license.

CFC will issue a written notice to any provider terminated from participation in the program. The severity of the infraction will determine the timeliness of the notice. For example, care and payment will cease immediately if a provider is found to be abusive to the children participating in the program.

If the provider has any questions regarding the notice, he/she will be able to request a meeting with the Department Manager, and/or Executive Director. A

Important!

written notice of the discussion and outcome will be mailed to the provider in a timely manner.

Providers should inform parents of their policies about suspending or terminating services. CFC will not pay for two weeks notice to providers. If a provider has a policy of payment for termination of service, the parent will have to pay the difference to the provider.

## Useful Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding this manual, please contact CFC at (310) 452-3325

Important!

**1. Do you have questions about your eligibility or recertification?**

Ask for a Family Specialist

**2. Do you have questions about the provider certificates or your provider?**

Ask for a Provider Specialist

**3. Do you have questions about how provider payments are processed?**

Ask for a Payments Specialist

**4. Do you have questions about your parent fees?**

Ask for a Parent Fee Specialist

If you have problems reaching anyone listed or feel your problem/concern has not been addressed thoroughly, please contact a supervisor or manager of the Subsidized or Payments Department.

**Martha Gonzalez**  
Subsidized Programs Manager  
Extension 206

**Ulises Salinas**  
Payments Coordinator  
Extension 241

**Connections for Children mailing address:**

2701 Ocean Park Blvd Suite 253  
Santa Monica, Ca 90405  
**(310) 452-3984 Fax**

### Important Telephone Numbers

**Community Care Licensing** .....Culver City: (310) 337-4333  
Los Angeles East: (323) 981-3350

**DCFS**.....West LA: (323) 900-2222  
Los Angeles: (323) 290-8437

**Los Angeles County Child Support Hot Line**.....(866) 901-3212

**Social Security Administration**.....(800) 772-1213

**California Employment Development Division**.....(888) 745-3886

**Referrals for Health and Human Services in Los Angeles County**.....Dial 211

# Glossary of Key Terms

1. **Authorized Representative** – A trusted adult the parent/guardian has authorized in writing to act on their behalf.
2. **Business Days** – The days considered to be the standard working days. Monday through Friday, not including federal holidays and weekends.
3. **Calendar Days** - The seven days of the week, Sunday through Saturday.
4. **CalWORKs** – California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids is a State-administered program that provides temporary financial assistance and employment focused services to families with minor children who have income and property below the State maximum limits for their family size.
5. **CFC Payment Calendar** – A calendar prepared for providers and parents on a yearly basis to inform them about the due dates for attendance sheets and payments to the provider
6. **Child Protective Services (CPS)** – A program run by the County Welfare Department tasked with ensuring child safety and protection by investigating and intervening in cases of possible abuse or neglect of children.
7. **Community Care Licensing** – The state agency that licenses and oversees both day care and residential facilities for children and adults in California.
8. **Eligibility List** – A list of families who are seeking subsidized child care services for the CAPP programs. Families must meet income and need guidelines. A parent can fill out an application to be added onto Eligibility List.
9. **Family** – A family includes the parent(s), all adults, and all children for whom the parents are responsible, who comprise the household in which the child receiving services is living. For purposes of income eligibility and family fee determination, when a child and his or her siblings are living in a family that does not include the biological or adoptive parent, the “family” shall be considered as the child and related siblings.
10. **Federal Identification Number** - A unique nine-digit number assigned by the Internal Revenue Services (IRS) to business entities operating in the United States for the purposes of identification.
11. **Fiscal Year** - A 12 month period used for calculating annual (“yearly”) financial statements in businesses and other organizations. CFC’s Fiscal Year runs from July 1st to June 30th.
12. **Gross Income** – Total countable income from all sources, earned before taxes.

13. **Individual Education Plan** - An educational plan that is designed to meet the unique educational needs of one child. The IEP must be tailored to the individual student's needs as identified by the evaluation process and must help teachers and related service providers understand the student's disability and how the disability affects the learning process.
14. **Individualized Family Services Plan** – a plan set up to identify individualized supports and services that will enhance a child's development. The plan must include an assessment of the child's present level of development, a statement of goals, support services that will be put in place to achieve those goals, date services will begin, and name and identification of the service coordinator.
15. **Legally Qualified Professional** – A person who is licensed by the State to perform medical, health, legal, or social services.
16. **Licensing (Community Care)** – the agency that licenses and oversees both day care and residential facilities for children and adults in the State of California.
17. **Parent** – Biological parent, adoptive parent, step parent, foster parent, caretaker relative, legal guardian, domestic partner of the parent, or any other adult living with a child who has responsibility for the care and welfare of the child.
18. **Prorated** – allocated or distributed proportionally.
19. **Recertification Packet** – Agency forms that must be completed by all parents receiving child care services.
20. **Regional Market Rate (RMR)** – A survey, released by the California Department of Education, which establishes the ceiling guidelines for provider reimbursement rates.
21. **Subsidies** – Payments made to providers on behalf of low-income and working parents to help cover the costs of child care.
22. **TANF** – Temporary Assistance to Needy Families is the federal assistance program commonly known as welfare. Since 1996, each state has designed and implemented its own assistance program with TANF funds. In California, that program is CalWORKS.
23. **Variable Calendar** – The form required for all parents who qualify under a self-employed or variable schedule need. This form must be completed on a monthly basis and submitted to CFC in order to pay the provider.
24. **Variable Work Schedule** – A schedule with significant fluctuations in days and hours worked.

*Please submit after receipt and review of*

*Connections For Children's*

*Santa Monica Child Development Scholarship Program*

*Parent/Provider Manual*

This is to certify that I have received my copy of Connections For Children's Santa Monica Scholarship Child Development Program Parent/Provider Manual and Grievance Procedure and recognize that it is my responsibility to thoroughly review the document.

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Signature of Parent or Provider

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Date

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Print Name