

# Parent Handbook



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# Welcome

Welcome to the Child Care Payment Program administered by Valley Oak Children's Services, Inc. (VOCS).

VOCS is a non-profit agency funded by the California Department of Social Services, Child Care and Development Division and the California Department of Employment & Social Services, to provide child care subsidies and other supportive services to eligible families in Butte County. We offer various services to parents, children, and child care providers. Services include Child Care Resource and Referral, Child Care Food Program, Child Care Payment Program, and a Toy Lending Library. VOCS assists parents in understanding their own specific needs, offers information on choosing safe, quality child care and informs them of additional resources available to them.

Please read this handbook, which contains Regulations and Program policies. Participation in all child care reimbursement programs is voluntary!

The information contained in this handbook will be strictly enforced; including the strict enforcement regarding the correct use of the child care certificates (attendance records); timely reporting of changes in your income if exceeding 85% of the State Median Income (SMI) and providing documentation within the stated time frames.

Contained in this handbook is the information you need to protect yourself and your children in order to avoid incurring unwanted financial obligations. You are financially responsible to the provider you select at all times and VOCS will only reimburse costs on your behalf as long as you remain eligible. To remain eligible you must comply with all reporting responsibilities and complete your child care certificates correctly. Please call us if you have any questions.

*Approved by VOCS Board of Directors 2/9/2012, 10/15/2015, 2/23/2017, 3/15/2018, 1/17/2019, 10/2019, 1/27/2022, 4/28/2022, 10/5/2023 Revised 10/2014, 11/2014, 10/2017, 2/2017, 3/2018, 9/2018, 1/2019, 10/2019, 11/2021, 1/2022, 4/2022,10/2023*

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## I. Our Mission

The mission of Valley Oak Children's Services is to support, empower, and advocate for children, families, and child care providers through education, information and quality child care.

## II. Our Programs

### a. Programs Administered by VOCS

Alternative Payment Program (CAPP) - Federal and State funded programs available to any family that meets income and need eligibility guidelines as long as there is funding.

CalWORKS Stage I, II & III Child Care – Federal and State funded programs for current and past CalWORKS recipients:

*Stage I (C1AP)*, CA Department of Social Services, Child Care and Development Division: parents' must be referred by the CalWORKs Program and be participating in an approved Welfare-to-Work activity.

*Stage II (C2AP)*, CA Department of Social Services, Child Care and Development Division: Parents must be a former or current CalWORKs recipient, participating in an approved activity or employed.

*Stage III (C3AP)*, CA Department of Social Services, Child Care and Development Division: Parents currently enrolled and eligible are transferred to Stage III the first month following the expiration of their 24-month Stage II eligibility period, as long as funding is available.

Center Based FACES FCCH (CCTR) - Federal and State funded program available to families that meet income and need eligibility. Child care provider must be a licensed family child care home. Program serves children up to their 6<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Early Head Start Child Care Partnership - *EHS* Federally funded program that offers quality child care and comprehensive services to low-income children age 0-4 and their families. *EHS*

will partner with FACES FCCH CCTR child care providers who meet all the criteria for participating.

Emergency Foster Care Bridge Program (ECCB) – State funded program available to families that meet eligibility requirements: must be receiving services from Butte County Children’s Services Division, and must be a Resource Family or an Emergency Placement or Compelling Reason Placement. Program benefits are contingent on available funding.

**b. Range of Services**

VOCS is an Alternative Payment Program (APP) that operates with State and Federal funds. Our goals are to promote “parental choice”, accommodate the individual needs of the family and ensure that families receive information to help them make informed choices for the care of their children.

A child care certificate is issued for each child and must be used as a deposit for child care services or used to obtain child care services for their children. The value or amount on the certificate is the maximum allowed for the type of care, the age of the child and the parents’ certified need for services. Parents who choose a provider with a higher rate will be responsible for any amount above the amount on the certificate.

Parents can choose from a broad range of services, including center-based care, family child care, non-license exempt care, care provided by relative and sectarian child care services (depending on the funding source). Parents may also choose State Preschools, Head Start or other subsidized programs.

We make reimbursements directly to the child care provider selected by the family, and will not authorize services to begin until all required documentation has been completed and submitted.

**c. Locations**

Office Hours:

Monday through Thursday 8:30am-12pm, 12:30pm-4pm

Friday 8:30am-12pm, 12:30pm-3pm

Main Office: 3120 Cohasset Rd., Suite 6, Chico, CA 95973  
(530) 895-3572 phone, (530) 895-8524 fax

Butte County Employment and Social Services (DESS) - Chico:  
765 East Ave., Suite 200, Chico, CA 95926  
(530) 879-3479

Butte County Employment and Social Services (DESS) - Oroville:  
78 Table Mountain Blvd., Oroville, CA 95965  
(530) 538-7711

**d. Religious Instruction (as permitted)**

The State funded portion of the Alternative Payment Program prohibits religious instruction or worship in the child care setting. Child Care providers must supply information to the agency if religious instruction is included during the time children are in care.

**e. Equal Access**

VOCS operates on a non-discriminatory basis, giving equal access to services without regard to sex, sexual orientation, gender, ethnic group identification, race, ancestry, national origin, religion, color or mental or physical disability.

**III. Program Philosophy, Goals & Objectives**

**a. Staff Development Program** - VOCS is committed to providing effective, efficient and stellar service to families and the community. We hire knowledgeable and friendly staff.

- New staff are provided an orientation to guide them in understanding how the agency policies relate to their prospective job descriptions.
- We support continuous staff growth by assessing the needs of staff and providing professional development activities to enhance their growth.
- Staff members are evaluated annually.
- We have sound internal communication systems, which include email, phone, and newsletters to provide staff with information necessary to carry out their job duties.

**b. Community Involvement**

VOCS solicits support from our community. This includes solicitation of donated goods and services. We provide information to our community regarding the services available. Media and other forms of communication are used to reach out to our community.

- c. Program Self Evaluation** - VOCS performs a self-evaluation process annually. Staff and Board Members are involved in the assessment of our programs. Procedures are developed to ensure the ongoing monitoring of our programs and to ensure that standards are met. Any areas requiring modifications are addressed in a timely and efficient manner. Modifications are made to programs in order to address any identified areas that need improvement.

**IV. How to Qualify for our programs**

Upon establishing initial or ongoing need & eligibility requirements (Enrollment or Recertification), a family is considered to meet all requirements for those services for not less than 12 months (C1AP, C2AP, C3AP) or 24 months (CAPP, CCTR).

**a. Need & Eligibility**

Children may be served:

- If they are eligible.
- In some instances, until the day before their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday with an IEP (Individualized Education Program) and a statement from a Qualified Professional.
- Parent must provide documentation of children and adults in the home and included in the family size. Adults living in the home other than biological or adoptive parent may be counted in the family size.

The programs serve parents who are:

- Working or seeking employment
- In an approved training or education program

- At Risk and referred by Children’s Services Division (CSD) or a Qualified Licensed Professional (must use licensed child care - some exceptions may apply).
- Homeless or Seeking Permanent Housing
- Incapacitated (Verified by a Qualified Licensed Professional)
- Income Eligible

Income eligibility is based on documentation and verification of the family’s total countable income. It is the parent’s responsibility to provide VOCS with current, accurate income documentation. Total countable income includes but is not limited to:

- Gross wages or salaries, commissions, tips, overtime, bonuses
- Public cash assistance
- Disability, Unemployment, or Worker’s Compensation
- Child support or Alimony payments received

Families on the program may choose from a variety of care settings, which include:

- Licensed child care centers & preschools
- Licensed family child care homes
- TrustLine registered and relative non-license exempt care

**b. Need Statuses**

Student Training Documentation (Vocational or Educational Program)

- Parents may qualify for child care subsidies because they are participating in an academic, vocational or ESL/GED program.
- They must be working toward a recognized trade or profession.
- Services shall be limited to six years from the initiation of services, or 24 semester units, or its equivalent after attainment of a Bachelor’s Degree (end of certification cycle in which limitation is reached).



- Families receiving child care in Stage 1 must have their educational plan approved by CalWORKS.
- Enrollment in a training program or college must be verified with:
  - An Educational Plan or equivalent verification from the training institute indicating the name and address of the institution, beginning and ending date of the vocational goal and classes.
  - A current schedule that is either an electronic print-out or similar documentation of the days and time of classes.
- Changes in class schedule, dropping or adding classes, or changes in the educational program may be voluntarily reported in order to increase or decrease child care.
- Report cards, transcripts, grades, or other records are required to be submitted to VOCS at Recertification. Participants must be making adequate progress which is defined as a grade point average of 2.0 or higher or in a non-graded program, meet the programs standard requirements for making adequate progress.
- Child Care for study time is based upon the number of academic units in which the parent is enrolled.

### Employment

- 2 months of pay stubs from either month of the two-month window immediately preceding the certification or recertification and an agency “Employment Verification” form (completed and signed by the parent and employer) is required.
- Self-Employment: Parent must complete an agency form describing the type of self-employment and the name and contact information of current customers/clients or other verifiable information regarding their business and hours of operation. VOCS will verify all self-employment activities.
- Previous month of profit and loss statement showing income and expenses is also required.
- Self-Employment income may be verified using filed quarterly or yearly tax returns.
- Parents employed as an Assistant in a Large Family Child Care Home will be required to provide a copy of the

provider's license, proof that the parent's fingerprints are associated with the facility, and pay stubs that prove the provider withholds payroll deductions.

### Seeking Employment

- Job Seek activities are limited to no more than 5 days per week and less than 30 hours per week.
- Parents must complete a declaration signed under penalty of perjury stating they are seeking work and a brief description of their plan to secure employment.
- Child care for school aged children may not be allowed if a parent can seek work during the time the child attends school.

### Seeking Permanent Housing/Homelessness

- If the basis of need is Homelessness, documentation shall include a written referral from an emergency shelter or other legal, medical, or social service agency or a written parental declaration describing the family's current living situation.
- If the basis of need is Seeking Permanent Housing, the parent's period of eligibility for child care services is limited to no more than 5 days per week and less than 30 hours per week.
- Documentation of Seeking Permanent Housing shall include a written parental declaration signed under penalty of perjury stating the search plan, as well as other activities necessary to comply with a shelter plan.

### Parental Incapacity

- Child care based on incapacity of a parent must be documented by a licensed professional using an agency form and must indicate that the parent is incapable of caring for their child(ren) at least part of the day.
- The statement/form must indicate the hours and days needed for child care services. The maximum number of hours allowed for child care is 50 hours per week.

**c. Family Size and Residency Documentation:**

Family Size:

The number of children, parents, and other adults included by the parent in the family size, living in the family home shall be documented by at least one of the following, as applicable:

- Birth Certificates
- Court orders regarding child custody
- Adoption documents
- Records of Foster Care Placements
- School or Medical records
- County Welfare Department records
- Records of marriage, divorce, domestic partnerships or legal separation

When only one parent has signed the application and the information provided to document family size indicates the child(ren) in the family have another parent whose name does not appear on the application the parent must indicate and initial on the Application for Services under penalty of perjury that s/he is a single parent.

“Parent” as defined under Title 5 or the Education Law, means a biological parent, adoptive parent, step-parent, foster parent, caretaker relative, legal guardian, domestic partner of the parent (as defined in Family Code section 297), or any other adult living with a child who has responsibility for the care and welfare of the child.

Residency Documentation:

Evidence of residency shall be documented by:

- Any evidence of a street address or post office address in California, or
- If a person is identified as homeless, a declaration of intent to reside in California.

#### **d. Family Fees and Co-Payments**

Families may incur a co-payment and/or a Family Fee.

- A co-payment is that portion of a child care provider's rate that exceeds the applicable Regional Market Rate ceiling and is paid by the parent directly to the provider.
- A Family Fee is calculated by the agency and is the portion of the child care cost paid by the parent based on their income, family size and certified need for child care. Not all families will have a fee.

#### **Family Fees:**

- Paid directly to the provider and for the child who is in care longest: typically the youngest child.
- Assessed either on a flat monthly full-time fee or part-time fee, based on hours of certified child care for the month, income, and family size.
- A certified need of less than 130 hours per month will be assessed at a part time fee and a certified need of 130 hours per month or more will be assessed at a full time fee.
- The certification on the bottom of the certificate must be signed by both the parent and the provider attesting that the family fee was paid in full.
- Failure to pay Family Fees will result in a Notice of Action for Termination.

### **V. How Families are Selected**

#### **a. Centralized Eligibility List (CEL)**

The CEL is a list of families who would like to be enrolled on the Payment Program. The list is in rank order based on family size and income. Should funding become available the next most eligible family is contacted (lowest rank first) unless a referral is received from the Children's Service Division (CSD) for a child who is at risk of abuse or neglect. Those families identified as "at risk" have priority.

## **b. Priorities**

When funding is available and enrollment needs to occur, a list will be generated from the CEL. Families will be screened for eligibility and need according to the following priorities:

- CSD Referral
  - At risk of neglect or abuse
  - Children and families who are income eligible. Within this priority, families with the lowest gross monthly income in relation to family size (rank) will be contacted for enrollment first.
    - If two or more families are in the same rank in relation to income and family size, the family that has a child with exceptional needs has priority.
    - If there is not a family of the same rank with an exceptional needs child, the family in which the primary home language is a language other than English shall have priority.
    - If there is no family of the same rank that has an exceptional needs child or no family in which the home language is a language other than English, then the family in the same rank who has been on the waiting list the longest shall have priority.
  - For purposes of determining order of income eligibility, public assistance grants shall be counted as income
- VOCS may not deny services to nor assign a lower priority to a family that needs less than full-time services. If it is necessary to dis-enroll families, families shall be dis-enrolled in reverse order of these admission priorities.

## **VI. Enrollment Process**

### **a. Notification Process**

VOCS staff will contact clients that are eligible for enrollment via phone and mail to set up an appointment. Three attempts are made to contact the client within a two (2) week period. If there is no contact made, the enrollment process will end. If contact is made, an appointment will be scheduled with the client to

complete the enrollment process. The client will be given a list of documentation and information to bring to the appointment.

**b. Application for Services**

Families apply for subsidized child care by completing an application for services which must be completed with Valley Oak Children Services staff.

**c. Notice of Action**

You will receive, by regular mail, a Notice of Action (NOA) from VOCS regarding an Approval, Recertification, Denial, Termination, or Change in services or income. Families have appeal rights if they do not agree with the action described on the NOA. The instructions are detailed on the back of the Notice of Action.

**VII. How to Continue on the Program**

**a. Recertification**

Families are considered eligible for services for not less than twelve (12) months (C1AP, C2AP, C3AP) or 24 months (CAPP, CCTR) before having to complete a Recertification.

**b. Fee Payment**

When a child care provider indicates that Family Fees have not been paid, a Notice of Action for Termination will be mailed to the family by VOCS. If Fees have not been paid by the effective date of the NOA, the family's services will be terminated.

**c. Notification of Changes**

Parents/guardians must notify VOCS within thirty (30) calendar days if their income exceeds 85% of the State Median Income (SMI). Families may voluntarily report changes and submit documentation:

- To reduce Family Fees,
- To increase services/child care,
- To decrease services/child care, or
- To extend their period of eligibility.

| Change  | Notification Time Period  | Comment  |
|---|---|--|
| Change in address or phone number   | As soon as possible   | Could result in VOCS not being able to reach you re: your child care subsidy.                                    |
| Change in child care provider   | Advance notice required. At least 2 weeks in advance of change. | May cause duplicate financial obligations for the parent.  |
| Increase in child care services   | Voluntary reporting   | Documentation will be required to support an increase in child care services.                                    |
| Decrease in child care services   | Voluntary reporting   | Written parental statement under penalty of perjury and if applicable, additional documentation may be required. |
| Decrease in Family Fees   | Voluntary reporting   | Documentation will be required to support a decrease in Family Fees.   |
| Income exceeding 85% of the State Median Income (SMI)   | Within 30 days  | Documentation will be required to determine if family's income exceeds 85% of SMI.                               |
| Child starting or stopping school (i.e. State Preschool, HeadStart, TK, K or other in-person instruction) | Advance notice, if possible.                                    | Could result in adjustments to child care. Additional documentation may be required.                             |

#### **d. Agency Policies, Procedures and Requirements**

Parents are responsible for keeping VOCS informed of any changes to address, phone number, need for child care (increase or decrease), provider and/or income exceeding 85% of State Median Income (SMI). The parent will sign an application and an agreement, which includes the following information:

- The hours of child care needed and a daily schedule of care,
- The amount of Family Fees (Full Time, Part Time or Based on Schedule),
- Recertification timelines,
- Attendance Policy requirements i.e. signing the child/ren in and out daily at the place of care, and documenting and signing absences,
- An agreement to notify VOCS within 30 days if income exceeds the 85% of SMI,
- Requirement to secure a physical examination and evaluation for non-school age child(ren) cared for by a non-license exempt provider, including age appropriate immunizations, prior to or within three weeks of first day of child care (some medical exemptions may apply),
- Participation in decisions regarding your child,
- Change of child care provider within a 2 week time frame to allow VOCS to make the change. Unreported and unapproved changes in child care providers will not be reimbursed,
- The fair hearing process, and
- Information on choosing child care appropriate to the family's need.

Parents who cease care from any child care facility in a non-emergency situation are to adhere to the provider's usual and customary policies regarding the termination of services. In addition, parents must contact VOCS at least 2 weeks prior to ending or beginning child care.



## VIII. Program Policies

### a. Attendance & Absences Policy

Certificates are the primary record documenting child care and is the official document used by VOCS to make reimbursements to child care providers.

Certificates must include:

- The name of the child,
- The date range of services,
- Actual TIMES in and out entered on a DAILY basis,
- Absences documented and signed,
- Parent and Provider signature at the end of the month attesting to the accuracy.

In addition, Certificates must be:

- Submitted by the 13<sup>th</sup> of the month following care,
- An accurate reflection of child care used - falsification of Certificates is grounds for immediate termination,
- Broadly consistent (75% of child care used is consistent) with certified and authorized need for services,
- Complete and accurate at time of submission in order to be reimbursed within 21 calendar days.

Failure to follow the above policies will result in contact (phone call) from VOCS, a “Warning Letter” and then a Termination Notice of Action (parent)/Termination letter (provider). **In addition, failure to follow the Attendance Policy could result in unreimbursed care.**

It is an intentional Program violation to knowingly submit certificates that reflect inaccurate or false information and is grounds for immediate termination. VOCS will make every effort to help parents and providers understand the correct use of certificates. Please contact your caseworker if you have questions.

**b. Suspension in Services**

Parents who would like to temporarily suspend child care and do not have a need for services may submit a request to do so in writing. Families requesting child care to be suspended may not be out of child care for more than 12 weeks. Failure to be in child care within 12 weeks will result in a Notice of Action for Termination.

**It is the intent of Valley Oak Children’s Services to encourage parents to maximize their child(ren)’s early learning and care experience in accordance with California Department of Social Services “Guidance”, Title 5 Regulations, Education Code, Welfare and Institutions Code, and 12 or 24 month eligibility.**

**IX. General Policies**

**a. Confidentiality of Records**

The use of, or disclosure of, financial or other information maintained in the family’s file is limited to use directly connected with the administration of programs offered by VOCS. No other use of family information will take place without the prior written consent from the parents or guardians. Parents or guardians of children enrolled in the program shall have access to all information contained in their family file.

VOCS does not evaluate child care programs, facilities, or make recommendations to specific care providers or programs, nor does VOCS influence or make placements of children. Instead, VOCS promotes and encourages parental choice by providing complete and current information, as well as assistance to parents on the types of care available.

**b. Uniform Complaint Procedure**

It is the intent of Valley Oak Children’s Services, Inc. (VOCS) to fully comply with all applicable State and Federal laws and regulations. Individuals, agencies, organizations, and interested

third parties have the right to file a complaint regarding VOCS alleged violation of Federal and/or State law. This includes the allegations of unlawful discrimination (Education Code sections 200 to 220 and Government Code section 11135) in any program or activity funded directly by the State or receiving Federal or State financial assistance. Complaints must be signed and filed in writing with the State Department of Social Services.

California Department of Social Services  
Child Care and Development Division  
744 P Street, MS 9-8-351  
Sacramento, CA 95814

If the complainant is not satisfied with the final written decision of the California Department of Social Services, remedies may be available in Federal and State court. The complainant should seek the advice of an attorney of his/her choosing in this event. A complainant filing a written complaint alleging violation of prohibited discrimination may also pursue civil remedies, including, but not limited to injunction, restraining order, or other remedies or orders.

**c. Grievance Procedure**

If you have a concern with a caseworker or any problem with VOCS you may file a Community Complaint with the Chief Executive Officer of the Agency. This is not a substitute for, nor does it replace, the appeal process of a Notice of Action. This process is for issues pertaining to the Agency (VOCS) or concerns with customer service. VOCS will do everything possible to resolve any issues. It is best to put your concerns in writing; however, you may call the Chief Executive Officer.

**d. Other Policies**

**Parental Complaints Regarding Providers**

Licensed Child Care Settings: Parental complaints regarding licensed child care providers may be submitted to Community

Care Licensing, 520 Cohasset Road, Suite 170, Chico CA 95926, and (844) 538-8766. Anyone who requests a child care referral has the right to review licensing reports and substantiated complaints pertaining to the child care provider.

License Exempt Child Care Settings: Parental complaints may be submitted directly to VOCS and only complaints received about health and safety non-compliance will be considered. The complaint must be in writing and include: the nature of the complaint, date and approximate time of the occurrence, the name and address of the provider of whom the complaint is about and be signed and dated by the parent. These complaints shall be deemed substantiated solely by the parent's written declaration. Upon receipt of a complaint, VOCS will inform the license exempt provider of the complaint and inform the provider of their right to submit a written rebuttal. VOCS will also notify the parent and provider that reimbursement will cease in fourteen (14) days unless VOCS receives a written declaration signed by both parties stating that the health and safety deficiency has been corrected. Serious health and safety concerns will be referred to Children's Services Division, Butte County Department of Social Services.

VOCS is only concerned with health and safety issues. Again, it is your responsibility to make proper notification to VOCS so that care for your children can transition smoothly from one care provider to another and to ensure that no duplicate reimbursements are created.

A record of parent complaints will be maintained concerning a license exempt provider's failure to meet health and safety standards as specified in the Health and Safety Self-Certification. Upon receiving an inquiry regarding a specific license-exempt provider, VOCS will inform the requestor the general nature of the complaint and whether or not the provider submitted a rebuttal. Parents may submit complaints directly to VOCS.

## **X. Termination Policies**

A family or care provider may be ineligible for participation in the Child Care Payment Program for any of the following reasons:

- The family no longer meets eligibility or need requirements
- The parent knowingly submits false or inaccurate information
- Refusal to pay Family Fees
- Non-attendance (in excess of Suspension of Services - 12 weeks)
- Abandonment of Care
- The program does not have the funds to continue participation
- Threatening, rude, or disrespectful behavior on the part of parents or providers toward VOCS staff
- Failure to notify VOCS within 30 days of income exceeding 85% of the State Median income.

Repeated submission of inaccurate or incomplete certificates and intentional falsification of certificates is grounds for immediate termination of services for parent and providers. VOCS will provide three opportunities for technical assistance prior to termination.

If within the regular course of child care it is discovered that any child care provider has a Felony conviction, has had a substantiated child abuse report, has had Trustline denied, or if VOCS is notified of a revocation of a license from Community Care Licensing, involving the provider or any household member, provider eligibility will be immediately terminated. Reimbursement for child care will also stop immediately if it is discovered that the environment where care is provided does not meet health and safety standards as required by the State of California, Department of Social Services.

NOTE: Parents or providers receiving child care subsidies through an Alternative Payment Program will be liable for the cost of services provided if it is determined that need and/or eligibility for services was based on intentional misrepresentation or failure to report information timely that impacts eligibility for the program.

## **XI. Provider Selection**

### **PARENTAL CHOICE – MAKING AN INFORMED DECISION**

#### **a. Licensed Providers**

Licensed Child Care Providers: As a parent you have the right to get information about any substantiated or inconclusive complaints about a child care provider that you select for your child(ren). Information is public and is available by calling Community Care Licensing - 520 Cohasset Road, Suite 6, Chico CA 95926, (844) 538-8766. You are **HIGHLY ENCOURAGED** to review any information on any child care provider you are considering. VOCS does not recommend child care providers; we only provide referrals to licensed child care providers. It is your responsibility and decision to choose the care provider that works best for you.

#### **b. License Exempt Providers**

License exempt providers must abide by the regulations set forth by the Department of Social Services regarding Trustline Registration and Health and Safety Requirements.

License exempt providers who are exempt from Trustline Registration because they are an aunt, uncle, or grandparent related by blood, marriage or adoption must certify this relationship under penalty of perjury in order for the exemption to apply.

License exempt providers and parents must complete all appropriate Agency exempt paperwork in order for continued participation.

## **XII. Child Care Reimbursements**

### **a. Regional Market Rate**

An appropriate benefit level or Regional Market Rate Ceiling (RMR) will be established based on the family's documented need for services. Child care costs will be reimbursed using either the applicable RMR ceiling or the provider's customary rate whichever is less. Information about the RMR is available on the State of California Department of Social Services website <https://rscsc.adm.dss.ca.gov/>.

Selection of the Regional Market Rate ceiling will be discussed with parents based on their certified need for child care services and the type of provider selected. If a parent chooses a provider that charges more than the Regional Market Rate Ceiling, the parent is responsible to pay the difference to the provider (co-payment).

Variable schedules are those that vary throughout the month and will be reimbursed according to the providers usual and customary charges or at the appropriate RMR ceiling based on the parents certified need for care; whichever is less. The appropriate RMR ceiling may be determined on an average number of hours used in the month. The average is calculated by dividing the number of hours used in the month by 4.33. Fixed schedules are those that are set and predictable in regards to the number of days and hours of care needed.

### **b. Provider Days of Non-Operation**

- VOCS will reimburse licensed providers for 10 closed days per Fiscal Year.
- If a parent needs care during one of their provider's closed days, a substitute provider can be reimbursed. VOCS must approve the use of all substitute providers prior to use.

**c. Reimbursement of One Provider (some exceptions may apply)**

Only one provider of child care services per child will be reimbursed when the provider's hours of operation can accommodate the certified need for child care.

**d. Excused & Unexcused Absences**

Parents must sign and document absences on the Certificate. A full signature is required. Reimbursement for absences are based on the child care schedule and the provider's policy on file with the agency.

Excused Absences include:

- Court Ordered visitation (this does not include joint physical custody arrangements)
- Illness or quarantine of a child or parent. The type of illness does NOT need to be stated
- Family Emergency. Absences of this type would include but are not limited to problems with transportation or an accident involving the person or property of a family member
- Death or illness of a family member
- Court appearance or restraint by law enforcement of any family member.

Best Interest of the child Days (BIDs)

Reimbursement for these absences are limited to ten (10) days per Fiscal Year, per child except for those families specifically identified by the Children's Services Division as at risk of abuse or neglect. BIDs are only applicable to the CDSS, CCDD FCCH CCTR (FACES) program. Parents must sign the certificate using a full signature clearly stating the BID reason.

Best Interest Day absences include:

- Non-Court ordered visitation with relatives
- Parental vacations
- Special enrichment opportunities (i.e. trip to a museum)
- Extra-curricular activities such as Scouts, 4H, Camp Fire
- Parent is given a day off by the employer and decides to spend it with their child
- Religious reasons.



### Abandonment of Care - Unexcused Absences

Occasionally a family discontinues child care services without notifying VOCS and/or the provider. The first day that the child does not attend and the parent does not call to explain the absence is the start of the parent abandoning child care. It is required that child care providers promptly notify VOCS after 7 consecutive calendar days of unexplained absences and no contact with/from the parent. This notification allows VOCS to contact the parent and determine if child care will continue.

If the family does not return to child care or contact the provider or VOCS, the parent will be issued a Notice of Action for Termination 30 days after the first day of abandonment. On the same day the provider will be issued, in writing, a Provider Notice of Action Out of Compliance. Failure to be in contact or return to child care could result in termination from the program.

Reimbursement to child care providers is the sole responsibility of the parent or guardian. VOCS is authorized by participating parents to make reimbursements directly to the child care provider on their behalf.

### **XIII. Changing Providers**

It is the parent's responsibility to notify VOCS at least two (2) weeks in advance of changing child care providers. Care will not be reimbursed to another provider during the two week notice unless Licensing closed the provider or the provider waives the two week notice.

Families are limited to four (4) initiations of license exempt care in a fiscal year.

### **XIV. State of Emergency and/or Federal Natural Disaster:**

In the event that a State of Emergency and/or Federal Natural Disaster is declared and the impact directly effects our children, families, providers, staff and community, Valley Oak Children's Services (VOCS) is committed to upholding our Mission and our Core Values.

During a time of declared crisis, the VOCS Board of Directors declares that sections of Education Codes, Regulations, Policies, and Handbook are waived. The duration of the waiver is strictly at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer and the Board of Directors.

Waivers will be applied but not limited to:

- Child Care Attendance Records
- Attendance
- Absences
- Alternative Providers
- Closed Days
- Reimbursements
- Reduction in Services requirements

