

# PARENT HANDBOOK

## EARLY LEARNING | 2025-26

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## **AGENCY MISSION STATEMENT, VISION, AND VALUES**

### **Mission**

Options for Learning is a leader in preparing children and supporting families for life success through innovative, quality child development programs.

### **Vision**

Unlocking the promise of every child.

### **Values**

- Respect, integrity, accountability;
- Professionalism;
- Advocacy;
- Right to access quality education;
- A great place for children and employees to work, learn, and succeed;
- Personal rapport between staff and families;
- Serving a culturally and economically diverse community;
- Innovative and creative contributions to our field.

## **WELCOME**

Thank you for choosing Options for Learning's Early Learning Program for your child care and preschool needs. We are pleased to have the opportunity to work with you and your child during these formative years when children are growing and learning every day.

Through our curriculum and teaching methods, we prepare children for kindergarten. The curriculum reflects the children's interests, cultures, and abilities while enhancing children's self-esteem and building respect for others and the world around them. All of this is achieved through meaningful teacher/child interactions during children's play.

This handbook's purpose is to inform parents of the program's goals and curriculum, acquaint families with the program's rules, and establish open lines of communication. Many of our program regulations are required by the State of California, Department of Education, Department of Social Services, Office of Head Start, and Community Care Licensing.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to reach out to your child's teachers, family advocate, or enrollment specialist. We are a united team working together for the benefit of your child, and we welcome your comments and suggestions to make the program even more valuable to you and your family.

Welcome to Options for Learning!

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

We offer center- and home-based options designed to meet the needs of the families in the communities we serve.

Our preschool program, serving children aged 2-5, is designed to meet the needs of all families, especially those who are working or in school. Many classes are open Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. A full-day, full-year infant/toddler program for children from birth to age 3 is also offered, as well as support services for expectant mothers.

Class sizes vary depending on funding for each class. We adhere to a staff-to-child ratio of 1:8 in our preschool classrooms, 1:4 in our toddler classrooms, and 1:3 in our infant classrooms.

Our toddler programs, which serve children aged 18-36 months, operate in a space that is separate from preschool-aged children. We follow the requirements set forth by the California Department of Education, California Department of Social Services, and Community Care Licensing.

A home-based program option is also available for families who prefer to have a parent educator come to their home rather than enrolling their child in center-based care. Families receive support, guidance, information, and child development services in their home. Children enrolled in the home-based program receive one home visit a week and two socialization experiences per month.

## **PARENTAL ACCESS**

Options for Learning assures that parents have unlimited access to their children, including written records concerning their children during normal office hours. Our centers and classrooms have an open-door policy during operating hours per California Health and Safety Code §1596.857. Parents of children receiving services in our programs have the right to enter and inspect the facility without advance notice during the normal operating hours of the facility.

To review or receive a copy of written records or sign-in/out records, parents are asked to complete a Request for Child's Records form. For currently enrolled families, the request will be processed within five to 10 business days. For previously enrolled families, the request may take 10 to 15 business days, as these records are stored in an offsite location.

## **COURT ORDERS**

Options for Learning ensures that the parents/guardians of children enrolled in our program have unlimited access to their child. For some parents, access to their child is restricted due to a court order for custody and/or a restraining order. If this applies to a

family's situation, they are asked to give Options for Learning a copy of the court order so staff can adhere to it.

*Without legal documentation, our program is unable to prohibit a parent's access to his or her child.*

## **IN THE CLASSROOM**

Options for Learning's early education professionals provide a safe, well-supervised environment. Children are encouraged to be actively involved in activities that meet their educational and developmental needs.

### **Teaching staff's education and experience**

Our child development experts are dedicated to addressing each child's unique linguistic, cultural, and developmental needs.

All staff have completed college training in early childhood education. Our lead teachers hold a Child Development Teaching Permit from the California State Department of Education. Most lead teaching staff have earned an associate's or bachelor's degree. Our staff members have a wide variety of teaching experiences and have respect and appreciation for the learning process. Our teaching teams provide a well-rounded program for the children in their care.

In addition to their educational background, all staff have been approved by the California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing division. A Department of Justice background check is obtained for all staff. Per the State of California Health and Safety Code, teaching staff are required to submit documentation confirming immunizations against influenza, pertussis (Tdap), and measles, in addition to a negative TB test prior to employment and periodically as applicable.

### **Photographs and video**

At the time of enrollment, parents indicate their consent for photographs and videos to be taken of their children by Options for Learning during the organization's normal activities and special events for use in the agency's website and marketing materials, news stories, or any other use deemed appropriate by Options for Learning.

Parents may only photograph or video their own children. Parents and visitors in our classrooms are **not permitted** to photograph or video other children or staff. Questions may be directed to the Communications Department.

### **Video monitoring policy**

To help keep teachers and children safe and ensure a well-supervised environment, Options for Learning uses video cameras at some locations in common areas of our facility. These cameras help us ensure children's safety, monitor classrooms, support staff training, and align with legal and licensing requirements.

Cameras may be placed in shared spaces like classrooms, hallways, entryways, and playgrounds. Cameras are never placed in bathrooms or any other private areas.

Only authorized staff are allowed to view the video recordings. These videos are not shared with the public, unless required by law.

### **Parent/guardian usage policy (livestream video access)**

Options for Learning provides parents/guardians of enrolled children with optional, secure livestream video access to designated common areas (as referenced above). Parents will receive an automatic invitation to register through a secure third-party platform. To simplify the process, your family's enrollment information will be pre-filled. Participation is voluntary. Livestream viewing is for real-time observation only and is subject to such limitations as duration and availability, as determined by the organization in its sole discretion. Recording, downloading, photographing, or otherwise capturing the livestream in any form is strictly prohibited and may result in revocation of access and other remedies as allowed by law. Viewing is limited to the enrolled child's parent(s)/guardian(s); access may not be shared. Parents must respect the privacy of all children, families, and staff visible in the livestream, report any concerns to site administration, and comply with the platform's terms of use. As a reminder, access is a privilege that may be suspended or revoked at the discretion of the organization for misuse or failure to comply with any applicable policy.

#### **■ Your privacy is important. And so is everyone else's.**

The livestream is provided for real-time viewing only. Any recording, screenshots, or sharing of the content is a misuse of this privilege, may be unlawful, violates the terms of service, and will result in suspension or termination of access.

#### **■ Log out after each session.**

Parents will be automatically logged out when their session is not active. For security purposes, parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring they log out fully. Unauthorized access resulting from failure to log out may result in loss of privileges.

#### **■ We are rigorous about security. You should be, too.**

Parents may not share their username or password. Staff review and approve each new account to ensure only authorized users can stream video. Parents/guardians are solely responsible for safeguarding login credentials and must immediately notify the organization of any suspected unauthorized access. The organization reserves the right to disable or revoke accounts where misuse, unauthorized sharing, or other security concerns are identified.

### **School readiness goals**

Our team partners with parents to prepare their children for success in kindergarten. Our school readiness plan explains the skills we develop during the school year and is shared

with all enrolled parents. All preschool children develop at their own rate, and our teachers work with each child to reach his or her full potential during these important early years.

## **Environment**

Our goal is to provide a safe, healthy, and welcoming environment that supports the broad developmental needs of each child in our program. Each year, an assessor completes the Thelma Harms Environment Rating Scale in each infant/toddler classroom and the CLASS Environment Rating Scale for preschool programs. Both of these rating tools are nationally recognized tools that assess the quality of care in early childhood programs. The program will use the results to make plans for continuous improvement.

In addition, our classroom environments are set up using our adopted curriculum. HighScope is a comprehensive, research-based curriculum that features exploration and discovery as a way of learning, enabling children to develop confidence, creativity, and lifelong critical thinking skills. Children connect to the natural world by spending time outdoors. The classroom extends beyond the classroom walls to an outdoor classroom where learning continues. The same developmentally appropriate learning opportunities are provided in the outdoor environment.

## **Curriculum**

Options for Learning's Early Learning Programs use the HighScope curriculum. Children work individually and in small and large groups. Daily activities include both indoor and outdoor experiences. Throughout the program day, children make many choices. They plan where to work, follow through with their plans, and then recall or discuss their completed activities with teachers and their classmates. Each day, children participate in learning experiences in the following key developmental areas:

- **Approaches to learning:** How one goes about acquiring knowledge and skills;
- **Social-emotional development:** The ability to regulate behavior and interact with peers and adults;
- **Physical development, health, and well-being:** Children discover their bodies' capabilities, learn how to use them, and cultivate a positive self-image;
- **Language, literacy, and communication:** Listening, speaking, reading, and writing;
- **Mathematics:** Comparing, patterns, spatial relations, math literacy, and counting;
- **Creative arts:** Relating models and pictures to real places and things, drawing, painting, pretending, role-playing, imitating, moving to music, exploring sounds, and singing;
- **Science and technology:** Observing, classifying, exploring, drawing conclusions, experiencing time intervals, and sequencing;
- **Social studies:** Developing social knowledge and understanding and social skills.

## **Desired Results Developmental Profile**

The goal of Options for Learning is to ensure that all children are making progress in the domains of physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development. We use the Desired Results Developmental Profile, a tool developed by the California Department of Education, Early Learning and Care Division (ELCD), to assess the development of children. Teaching staff assess each child's overall growth and development within 60 days of enrollment and throughout their enrollment in the program. The assessment is also used to plan and conduct age and developmentally appropriate activities for the children. Teachers will share the results from the DRDP with parents and will collaborate to identify individual goals for each child.

## **Continuous improvement**

Options for Learning conducts various levels of evaluation to ensure that the needs of the children, families, staff, and the community are being met. The process includes:

- Assessment of the program by parents using the Desired Results Parent Survey;
- Assessment of the program by staff using the Program Monitoring Instrument, Desired Results Developmental Profile, Environmental Rating Scale tools, CLASS, and California's Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Based on the results, goals, and action steps are developed and implemented.

## **Holidays and classroom celebrations**

We strive to be sensitive to our families in terms of holidays, birthdays, and special events. Any parent who would like to celebrate his or her child must first talk with the teacher.

It is important for children and families to celebrate special events and holidays. During any celebration, the daily routine must be followed, and the teacher will use the celebration as a learning experience.

Our organization does not have a cap-and-gown ceremony as part of its celebrations, but we do allow a small class end-of-the-year festivity.

## **Religious instruction**

Options for Learning does not provide religious instruction or worship for children enrolled in the program.

## **Site/class closures and consolidations**

Options for Learning observes 10 holidays each year: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Presidents Day, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, the day after Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. Our sites close early on

Christmas Eve, and the entire organization closes the week between Christmas and New Year's Day for winter break.

Classrooms may also close for additional days throughout the year for training and professional development for our staff. Teaching staff will post notices in advance, and parents will receive communication through Hubbe of these closures.

Occasionally, it may be necessary to close a site or to close early due to unforeseen circumstances. Parents will be promptly notified, and staff will try to shift services to another site to meet families' child care needs.

During breaks and around holidays, sites may combine care due to reduced attendance and to give staff time with family. Parents will receive advance notice via the parent portal, and information will be posted at the site. During these periods, all families still have access to child care.

## **CHILD ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Per regulations, families certified for subsidized child care services may receive those services for no less than 24 months. This means that a child may attend the program with the same approved schedule even if the family's need for services has changed. Due to the limited number of spaces for children in all our programs, it is important that families who are receiving services are those who will utilize the care.

### **Absences**

Parents are asked to notify site staff if their child is going to be absent via phone call or messaging through their parent portal. If the child returns to the program the day after being absent, the parent must note the absence and sign via the electronic sign-in system. Staff will only document absences for children who are absent for more than two consecutive days per the reason(s) the parent provides, including a request to utilize a child's best interest days.

The following reasons qualify as **excused** absences for children receiving subsidized child care:

- Child best interest days – vacation, spending time with the family, special events, etc. (limited to 10 days per school year – July through June);
- Court-ordered visitation for time spent with a parent or relative as required by a court of law (a copy of the court order must be on file);
- Doctor/dentist, mental health, counseling or therapy appointments for the child or parent/guardian;
- Illness or quarantine of the child or parent/guardian;
- Family emergency – defined as an incident occurring that results in a disruption of service due to a family's inability to participate in the program or due to a state of emergency order from state or local government (e.g., injury, removal of child from

home, death in the family, transportation issues, sibling illness, accidents, hospitalization, domestic violence, fear of deportation, sheltering in place medical leave of parent/guardian).

### **Abandonment of care**

Families may not be enrolled in a program if they are not using the services. Options for Learning may disenroll a family on the basis of abandonment of care when there has been no communication with a parent regarding a child's absences for a total of 30 consecutive calendar days. Site staff will attempt to contact the parent. If they are unsuccessful after seven consecutive calendar days, the family advocate will be informed to follow up with the parent. Multiple attempts to reach the parent will be made and documented within the 30 consecutive calendar days, including sending notice via text, email, or mail to the parent before action is taken to disenroll the child from the program. A Notice of Action for disenrollment will be issued if there has been no communication with the parent for 30 consecutive calendar days.

### **Field trips**

At enrollment, parents are asked to provide consent for their children to attend walking field trips provided by the program. Throughout the year, walking field trips may be taken to various locations near the child's school. When the class is planning a walking field trip, the date, location, departure time, expected time of arrival, and route will be posted.

Occasionally, offsite field trips are planned, such as a children's museum or the zoo. A separate permission slip will be issued for field trips that require bus transportation.

Parent volunteers will be requested to attend and assist in overseeing the children. To prioritize the safety of our students, we kindly request that volunteers refrain from bringing unenrolled children, allowing their full attention to be dedicated to the supervision of our enrolled children.

Options for Learning covers all field trip costs for children, staff, and volunteers.

### **Daily schedule**

An important component of the HighScope curriculum is the daily routine. By maintaining a consistent daily routine, children develop a sense of control and a feeling of confidence. A daily routine also helps teachers organize time to offer the children challenging learning experiences.

During the summer months, teachers adjust the time of day that the children go outside. There may be other times throughout the year when a classroom may adjust the schedule based on the specific needs of the site. Parents can find the daily schedule on the parent board.

## **Drop-off and pick-up process**

Options for Learning abides by Community Care Licensing regulations, which require that a child be brought into the classroom and picked up from the classroom by the parent or an authorized adult (18 years of age or older). A full signature (first and last name) is required to sign a child in or out. Our programs utilize an electronic sign-in/out system that timestamps when a child is being signed in or out. Parents must never sign in ahead of time or for a day that the child did not come to the center.

Children can only be picked up by parents or other adults whom the enrolling parent has listed on the emergency card and assigned a PIN for electronic sign-in/out. TEACHERS CANNOT MAKE EXCEPTIONS. Staff will *not* release the child to an adult who is not on the list.

To ensure the safety and well-being of all children left in our care, when picking up a child, parents or authorized representatives must produce picture identification anytime a staff member requests to see it. It is strongly recommended that parents always enter the site with their ID or be prepared to return to the vehicle or home to get it.

People listed on the emergency card will also be called in the event a child becomes ill and staff are not able to reach the parent to pick up the child.

## **Late pick-up policy**

It is important that children be picked up from the center at the end of class time. Parents/guardians must contact the center if they will be late. If the parent/guardian is unable to pick up the child, he or she must arrange with someone on the emergency card to pick up the child.

If a student is not picked up by the end of the day and staff have not been able to reach a parent or other authorized persons listed on the student's emergency card within a reasonable time, staff may have to contact law enforcement to take responsibility for the child.

## **Transportation**

Options for Learning does not provide transportation to or from any of its programs.

## **Meals**

Options for Learning participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, which provides children with a healthy breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack.

A six-week menu has been developed to meet the nutritional needs of our children and follows the specific meal pattern requirements set by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). Meals are served family-style; children are encouraged to serve and clean up after themselves. Menus are posted on the parent board in the classroom.

Children in full-day sessions receive two nutritious meals and one snack per day, while children in part-day sessions receive one to two nutritious meals per day.

## **Dietary modifications**

Options for Learning programs maintain environments that are free from tree nuts, fish, and pork products. If a child has allergies to a specific food or cannot eat a specific food due to religious reasons or dietary restrictions, the parent may complete a Request for an Alternative Meal form, which can be obtained from the program office. A doctor's note specifying what food the child cannot eat is required to make any food accommodations. For religious reasons, the parent can submit a declaration specifying the foods that cannot be consumed, along with a substitution. A child will not be excluded on the basis of medically necessary dietary restrictions.

In many cases, reasonable dietary modifications for a child with a disability are managed within the meal pattern requirements when a well-planned variety of nutritious foods is available. However, the needs of a child with a disability may involve requests for accommodations that do not meet the meal pattern requirements. All meal services will be in the most integrated setting appropriate to meet the child's needs.

Options for Learning will implement procedures for parents or guardians to request modifications to meal service for children with disabilities and to resolve grievances. Such procedures will provide a one-week advance notice to parents of children with medically necessary dietary restrictions of daily menus with sufficient information about meal ingredients and product sourcing to ensure the parents are able to review meals to ensure safe and equal access for their child. Procedures to address requests to accommodate students with disabilities in the classroom in compliance with Section 504 or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) may be used to fulfill this requirement.

Upon knowledge of a child's food allergy, Options for Learning shall:

- Notify parents and guardians of the process for requesting meal modifications to accommodate a child's disability;
- Convene a meeting with the child's parent(s) to develop an individualized meal plan to meet the child's unique needs in an integrated setting. The meeting and plan should be in accordance with Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act.

The accommodation process will be a team effort, with collaboration between Options for Learning personnel and the child's parent(s). The team will develop a plan to address the child's needs and integrate the child into the classroom as efficiently and expeditiously as possible.

If a parent raises any grievances related to requests for modifications based on a disability, Options for Learning shall arrange for an impartial hearing process to resolve said grievances, which includes:

- The opportunity for the child's parent or guardian to participate, be represented by counsel, and examine the record;
- Provision of notice in writing of the final decision, including the reason(s) for the decision and a procedure for review.

### **Napping (full-day programs)**

Children have a daily rest time. Each child is provided with a cot/mat, sheet, and blanket for rest time. Since blankets and sheets are provided, parents are asked not to send these items with their children. Parents are also asked not to provide pillows for their children, as there is no space to store them in the classrooms.

### **Special needs and inclusion**

We consider each individual child's unique needs. We support and practice the inclusion of children with varied abilities. To the extent possible, we make specific adaptations and accommodations that are reasonable and do not affect the operation of the program.

If a child is receiving early intervention services from a regional center or special education services from a local school district, the child's teacher and our Inclusion Department will work closely with the family and the service provider to support the child. We collaborate with parents and community partners to develop the appropriate program to support a child's needs.

If a parent believes his or her child has a learning difference or has a concern about the child's development, the parent is encouraged to talk with the teacher or family advocate. The conversation will be confidential. Staff will work with the parent to determine if the child would benefit from additional educational support in the classroom.

### **Discipline**

For many children, this is their first experience at school. Teachers work with the children to help them develop appropriate social skills. When problems arise, the teacher focuses on helping the children learn to talk about the problem instead of hitting, biting, or other inappropriate behavior. Parents are asked to support our efforts to teach appropriate classroom behavior and to be patient when a child is struggling to learn how to play in a group.

Options for Learning does not practice corporal punishment. Teachers work with children and use a variety of strategies and approaches to help redirect their behavior. Such strategies and approaches provide choices that help children feel validated and heard and them with time to think of a different action.

## **Clothing and shoes**

An extra set of clothes must be kept on site at all times. Parents are asked to provide a complete change of clothes in a shoebox or Ziplock bag labeled with the child's name in case clothing becomes soiled.

Children will be climbing, running, jumping, and working with clay and paint daily. Children should come to school dressed so that they can actively participate in the program. Comfortable shoes that fit securely are very important for the child's safety. Fine clothing, open-toed shoes, open-heeled shoes, and flip-flops are not appropriate for preschool due to the active play that occurs throughout the day.

Parents are asked to label their children's belongings with the child's first and last name. Staff are not responsible for lost items.

## **Items from home**

We ask that parents **not** send personal items from home to the classroom. If a child has a special toy or personal item he or she would like to bring to share with the other children, parents should speak with the teacher in advance. Teachers will ask parents to take home items brought to class if it was not planned. Teachers cannot be responsible for lost or broken items brought to the site.

## **Health and wellness**

To ensure that children receive the best possible education, they need to be healthy and feel well when at school. When a child arrives at the site, the teacher will perform an informal health check. Children may not be accepted into class if they have a fever or otherwise demonstrate that they are too ill to participate in the program that day.

Parents should not send children to school with a communicable disease. Children who become sick while at school and are unable to participate in the program must be picked up by the parent or other adult listed on the emergency card within one hour when contacted by staff.

## **Physical health and well-being**

Physical, dental, and developmental screenings are essential for helping children progress and reach important milestones. These screenings support early identification of potential concerns and ensure that children receive the care and services they need to thrive.

To support this, our programs actively track and request information to ensure that:

- Families have continuous access to medical and dental care;
- Children have active medical insurance;
- Physical exams and well-baby checks are completed in their entirety.

This process helps us identify children who may benefit from referrals or additional comprehensive evaluations.

Routine physical exams and well-baby checks play a critical role in detecting potential health issues before they become more serious. By keeping children up to date on these exams, doctors and licensed health care professionals can:

- Monitor growth and development;
- Identify early signs of illness or developmental delays;
- Provide timely interventions and referrals.

Ongoing documentation may be requested by the health services team to ensure that each child receives continuous, comprehensive care and that any emerging health or developmental needs are addressed properly. Below are examples of what may be requested:

- Physical exams and well-baby checks;
- Dental exams;
- Developmental screenings (vision/hearing tests);
- Immunizations records;
- Other health-related documentation as needed.

## **Immunizations**

The California School Immunization Law requires that children be current on their immunizations (shots) to attend child care. Diseases like measles spread quickly, so children need to be protected before they enter our facilities. In most cases, proof of the following immunizations is needed before a child can attend a child care facility:

- Polio (IPV) – three doses;
- Diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (Tdap) – four doses;
- Measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) – one dose on or after the child’s first birthday;
- Hib – one dose on or after the child’s first birthday;
- Hepatitis B (Hep B) – three doses;
- Varicella (VAR or VZV) – one dose.

If a child does not have an immunization record or a child has not received all required immunizations, the parent should make an appointment as soon as possible. In most cases, children who have not received one or more required immunizations but are on schedule may enroll and attend while they catch up on these immunizations.

If a licensed physician determines an immunization should not be given to a child because of medical reasons, a medical exemption can only be issued through the [California Immunization Registry – Medical Exemption website](#) (CAIR-ME). Schools and child care facilities may only accept new medical exemptions that are issued using CAIR-ME.

Per the State of California Health and Safety Code, teaching staff and volunteers are required to submit documentation confirming immunizations against influenza, pertussis (Tdap), and measles, in addition to having a negative TB test prior to employment and periodically as applicable.

## Exclusions

To ensure the health and safety of all children and staff, children will be excluded from school to allow time to rest, recover, and receive appropriate treatment for illness if they exhibit any of the following symptoms:

- Fever higher than **100.4° F** accompanied by other symptoms such as:
  - Diarrhea;
  - Vomiting;
  - Earache;
  - Headache;
  - Sore throat;
  - Fatigue that limits participation in daily activities;
  - Signs of irritability or confusion;
  - Undiagnosed rash;
  - Uncontrolled runny nose that interferes with participation.

**Note:** Fever alone may not always require exclusion, but when paired with any of the symptoms, it indicates a higher likelihood of contagious illness and the need for rest and monitoring. Children must be fever-free for **at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication** before returning to the program.

Children will also be excluded if they exhibit **any of the following symptoms on their own**, regardless of fever:

- Vomiting two or more times within the past 24 hours;
- Diarrhea two or more times within the past 24 hours;  
*For diarrhea or vomiting not attributed to dietary changes or medications (e.g., antibiotics), children may return once symptoms have resolved in 24-48 hours.*
- Undiagnosed rash;
- Undiagnosed eye discharge until clear or until released by a physician;
- Lice (until completely nit-free);  
*Children must be completely lice and nit-free to return to the program. If live lice or nits (including empty eggs) are found, children may not be accepted into the program.*
- Impetigo – 24 hours after treatment has begun or until released by a physician;
- Ringworm – 24 hours after treatment has begun or until released by a physician;
- Inability to comfortably participate in the daily routine.

If a child becomes ill while in the program, the parent/guardian will be contacted and expected to pick up the child promptly. Children may return to the program when:

- They are symptom-free as outlined above, or
- They have received appropriate treatment and/or medical clearance stating they pose no serious health risk to themselves or others.

For COVID-19, please review our [COVID-19 Mitigation Plan](#).

It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to inform teachers and/or the health services team if a child has a contagious illness. The health services team may follow up with families to gather additional information and provide support or resources as needed.

## **Medication**

If a parent gives a child medication before coming to school, the parent *must* inform the teaching staff to ensure the child's safety and well-being.

If a child is on medication for a medical condition and it must be administered while at school, an Individual Health Plan *must* be completed before the child enters/returns to school, and the medicine *must* be in the original container and labeled with the child's name, doctor, name of medication, dosage, and when it is to be taken. The parent will need to complete a Medication Administration Form to allow staff to administer medication to the child.

If a child requires over-the-counter medication, the parent must also complete a Medication Administration Form. The medication will be given according to the instructions on the label and must be appropriate for the child's age. Medication will be given at the time specified, and a written record will be kept.

All medication, whether over the counter or prescription, *must* be submitted to the health coordinator. The health coordinator will review all the medication forms and health care plans with the parent/guardian to ensure proper training is provided to the staff assigned to administer the medication during program hours.

## **Incidents/injuries**

If a child is injured at school, an incident report will be completed, and a copy will be shared via the parent portal. Parent/guardians will be contacted and made aware of the injury/incident. Staff will administer proper first aid to the child. If it is determined that a physician's care is needed, the parent/guardian will be contacted immediately, and emergency card instructions will be followed. If the parent or other designated parties listed on the emergency card are unavailable, the child will be taken to the nearest hospital for care with an adult from the classroom.

## **Dental health**

Dental health is just as important as overall physical health, and as part of the daily routine, children brush their teeth. According to the American Academy of Pediatric

Dentistry (AAPD), “Tooth decay is the number one chronic infectious disease among children in the U.S.”

In our programs, children do not rinse after brushing to ensure that they are receiving the benefit of the fluoride from the toothpaste. As recommended by AAPD, “When determining the risk-benefit of fluoride, the key issue is mild fluorosis versus preventing devastating dental disease. A ‘pea-size’ amount of toothpaste (approximately 0.2 mg fluoride) is appropriate for children aged 2 through 5 years. Parents should dispense the toothpaste onto a soft, age-appropriate-sized toothbrush and perform or assist with toothbrushing of preschool-aged children. To maximize the beneficial effect of fluoride in the toothpaste, rinsing after brushing should be kept to a minimum or eliminated altogether.”

### **Diapering and toilet learning**

We strive to support every child’s developmental milestones, including diapering and toilet learning, in a safe, hygienic, and respectful manner. Staff are committed to working closely with families to implement individualized toilet learning plans that align with each child’s readiness and the family’s preferences. Diapering will be conducted regularly throughout the day and as needed.

Staff will partner with families to create a personalized toilet learning plan that is consistent with the child’s readiness, routines, and developmental needs. Parents are encouraged to share progress at home so staff can maintain consistency during the day.

Options for Learning provides disposable diapers and wipes for children in the infant/toddler classrooms and on home-based program socialization days. Parents may choose to bring diapers to be used just for their child if they want a specific type other than what the program is providing.

### **Healthy Schools Act – Pest Management**

In accordance with the Healthy Schools Act of 2000, parents receive annual notification of planned pesticide use. This notification informs parents of the pesticides that could be used at a site and about our notification process per our Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan, which is available on the Options for Learning website and at each site and the office.

Our goal is to minimize the use of pesticides; pesticides will only be used when no other choice is available. When possible, pesticides will be used over a weekend; however, they may be used during the week in emergencies. Pesticides that are not safe for use around children will never be used.

### **Emergency preparedness**

Each classroom is equipped with a survival kit should there be a major disaster. Our program maintains a three-day supply of emergency food and water at all sites.

Classrooms practice fire drills, earthquake drills, shelter-in-place, and lockdown drills each month to ensure children and staff to be prepared in the event of an emergency. In the event of a true emergency, notifications are sent to parents/guardians via the parent portal and email. Such notifications may include vital information, updates, and instructions for pick-up or drop-off, or for temporary emergency closure of a classroom or site. Parents should have notifications enabled in the parent portal to ensure they receive important notifications.

### **Parent involvement**

Parental involvement in a child's education lays the foundation for future success. There are many ways to be involved in school, and parents are encouraged to actively participate.

### **Donations**

We welcome and encourage families to donate recycled items to the classrooms. Parents will not be asked to purchase items to be donated. Some commonly donated items include scrap paper, dress-up clothes, buttons, cereal boxes, empty containers, paper towel tubes, beads, egg cartons, and wrapping paper. Parents may request a receipt for tax purposes for donated items.

### **Classroom participation and volunteering**

The most important thing a parent can donate to our classrooms is time. Parents are encouraged to take time each month to join their child's class. Participation and classroom expectations vary by program session.

Parents/caregivers can participate in the classroom by assisting with mealtime, helping with clean up, preparing activities, filling glue bottles, joining block play, mowing the grass, and planting a garden.

A relative, legal guardian, or foster parent of a child in the facility may volunteer and interact with children (e.g., read to children, play games, play a music instrument) once all required documentation and processes (e.g., proof of vaccination against pertussis (Tdap), measles, and influenza, including a TB test) have been approved by the Enrollment Department.

### **Parent meetings**

Parents are encouraged to meet with site supervisors, teachers, or family advocates to discuss topics affecting the enrolled children and families and to gain valuable information and ideas. These meetings are also an opportunity for parents to better understand the program or other topics of interest. Parent groups meet monthly or every other month in person or virtually. All parents are encouraged to attend parent meetings.

Parents who attend are entered into a raffle to win educational items to benefit their child and family.

Each parent group elects a chairperson and a representative to attend the Options for Learning Parent Advisory Committee or Head Start Policy Council. The Policy Council and Parent Advisory Committee provide parent input into decisions that affect our early learning programs.

### **Policy Council**

For families whose children attend a Head Start site, classroom representatives are elected every fall. Elected parents receive brief training to prepare them for participation on the Policy Council. The Policy Council meets monthly during most months of the year at a time that is voted on as most convenient for everyone.

### **Parent Advisory Committee**

The Parent Advisory Committee is composed of site representatives from every site who are elected each fall. Site representatives, along with the Policy Council representatives, attend the Parent Advisory Committee meetings twice a year at a time that is voted on as most convenient for everyone.

### **Communication**

Maintaining open communication between home and school ensures the best program for parents and their children. Parents are encouraged to talk to their child's teachers on a regular basis. Parents should download the Hubbe parent app on their mobile device from the [Apple App Store](#) or [Google Play Store](#). The Hubbe parent portal offers a messaging feature so the parent can maintain regular communication with their child's teacher. Parents/caregivers will receive a direct invitation and instructions on how to download and set up their parent portal upon enrollment. Parents/guardians may also message their family advocate through the Hubbe parent portal if they have questions or need support. It is important that parents enable notifications in the app to ensure they do not miss important messages and updates.

Parent surveys, sent via the parent portal or email, are another important way for parents/guardians to communicate their needs, interests, and ideas for continuous program improvement. Surveys are essential to maintaining open communication and engagement with our families.

### **Confidentiality**

Options for Learning respects our families' right to privacy. Personal identifiable information will not be shared with other agencies or parents without the written permission of a parent/guardian, except in specific situations required by law or

regulation. All staff, volunteers, and parents are informed of the confidentiality policy and reminded to keep all information regarding families confidential.

### **Parent conferences**

Two parent-teacher conferences are scheduled during the school year. These conferences allow teachers to share information with parents concerning their child's social and cognitive development and assessment results, as well as program goals and objectives. Parents who would like information at other times during the year on how their child is doing in the class may speak directly to the teacher and request a conference appointment.

### **Home and school partnership visits (home visits)**

Some program sessions are required to complete two home and school partnership visits (also referred to as home visits) each year. Upon enrollment, parents/guardians complete a brief survey to share their preferences and availability to schedule their first visit. A quality home visit establishes open communication between parents and staff and allows everyone involved to gain insights into the development of the child and to work together to support the child.

Home visits allow children to see their parents and teachers partnering in their education. The family advocate and/or the classroom teacher meets with the parent/guardian to review the child's and family's strengths, needs, and interests and to establish a family partnership agreement. A family partnership agreement gives parents the opportunity to make personal goals for themselves and their families, as well as specific goals for their child's school readiness. These interactions provide children with an opportunity to observe their parents showing a commitment to their educational experience by welcoming their teacher into their home. Children also see their teacher showing a special interest in seeing where they live and meeting the people who are an important part of their lives.

### **IN THE OFFICE**

Depending on the program, paperwork and documentation may be required to demonstrate a family's eligibility and need for services. Our programs must meet the requirements of the Office of Head Start and the State of California. Our office team includes enrollment specialists, family advocates, health resource specialists, and more.

Parents enrolled in our programs must refer to all policies and regulations mentioned in this parent handbook, as well as all forms signed during the application and enrollment processes. The following sections provide information to help parents understand and meet the requirements mandated by laws, regulations, and policies that fund our early learning programs.

## **Requested documents**

The State of California and the Office of Head Start require that we collect certain data and obtain supporting documentation to determine eligibility for care and to comply with health requirements. When parents receive a written request for documentation, all items must be submitted by the due date to avoid disenrollment or interruption of child care services.

## **Changes in contact information**

To help ensure that teaching staff and office staff have the correct means of communication, parents must notify the office **immediately** if there are:

- Changes in home, cell, or work telephone numbers or email addresses;
- Changes in emergency contact phone numbers.

Parents must also update contact information appropriately in the Hubbe parent portal. If a child is to be withdrawn from the program, parents must notify the office of the child's last day. Notifying classroom staff is **NOT** sufficient — parents *must* contact their enrollment specialist or family advocate by phone, email, Hubbe parent portal message, or text message.

## **SPECIFIC RULES AND REGULATIONS**

### **Non-discrimination**

Options for Learning is a private nonprofit, equal opportunity organization offering child care services to families regardless of sex, sexual orientation, gender, ethnic group identification, race, ancestry, national origin, religion, color, mental or physical disability, or age or on the basis of a person's association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics.

### **Americans with Disabilities Act**

Options for Learning is committed to providing an inclusive environment where all children can thrive. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), we ensure:

- Equal access to all programs and services for children with disabilities;
- Individualized assessments to determine how best to support each child's needs;
- Reasonable modifications to policies and practices to accommodate children with disabilities (e.g., assistance with toileting, medication administration, or behavioral support);
- Accessible communication methods for families with hearing, vision, or speech disabilities;
- Physically accessible facilities that support safe and inclusive participation.

We do not exclude children based on the nature or severity of their disability. Our goal is to foster a welcoming, supportive learning environment for every child and family.

### **Fraud/deceit policy**

If Options for Learning determines that a recipient of services has misused funds in any way, provided fraudulent information to establish initial or ongoing eligibility, and, in fact, the recipient was not eligible or did not have a qualifying need for the amount of services provided, Options for Learning shall notify the recipient. A Notice of Action (NOA) shall inform the recipient of the termination date.

Any family terminated for fraud-related reasons will no longer be eligible for any Options for Learning programs.

### **Client non-admittance and disenrollment policy**

Options for Learning is committed to serving the families and children in our programs. Our goal is to provide a safe and pleasant atmosphere for all individuals. Children, parents, staff, and community members are expected to demonstrate positive conduct (non-aggressive, non-threatening, non-intimidating behavior; refraining from using verbally or non-verbal abusive language or tone). We work together with families to achieve children's success in developing conflict resolution skills. Behavior that interferes with the learning and working of others or threatens the health and safety of children, staff, and/or other clients may lead to suspension or disenrollment from the program.

For children ages 0-5, Options for Learning will comply with the suspension and expulsion requirements in the California Code, Welfare and Institutions Code—WIC § 10491.1 and follow the appeal due process requirements specified in 5 CCR sections 18119-18122. The program will decide whether to enroll a child or family for services, admit a family, or disenroll a family, and the parent will be notified in writing.

**Circumstances that may prevent services or lead to disenrollment of services for the family include but are not limited to:**

- The client refuses to follow legitimate instructions, directions, or program policies and procedures;
- The client has verbally threatened staff or physically assaulted staff and/or children;
- A weapon or drugs have been brought into an Options for Learning facility;
- The client has stalked and/or harassed staff, children, or other clients.

**Circumstances that may lead to a *child's suspension* include but are not limited to:**

- The child continuously leaves the class setting;
- The child displays physical aggression toward another student or staff member;
- The child causes mental or physical distress to another child or staff member;
- The child is suspended for part of the day from the public school where the Options for Learning program is located.

A **suspension** results when the child's behavior poses a serious safety threat that cannot be reduced or eliminated without temporary removal from the program.

Circumstances that may lead to a **child's disenrollment** include but are not limited to:

- Persistent physical aggression;
- Persistent property destruction;
- Causing self-injury or injury to others;
- Being expelled from the public school (no longer attending) where the Options for Learning program is located.

A child's **disenrollment** from the program results when the child's behavior is persistent and presents a serious safety threat. The program will deem it necessary to disenroll the child when it has exhausted all methods to support the child.

### **Suspension and expulsion process and limitations**

Prior to the suspension or disenrollment (expulsion) of a child from the program due to their behavior, Options for Learning will:

- Not encourage a family to leave the program due to the child's behavior(s);
- Work with the parent, the teacher, and professionals to create a plan to help the child stay safe and involved in the program;
- Screen a child, with the parent's written consent, to understand their needs and provide support, including referrals to community resources;
- Only suspend a child if there's a serious safety concern;
- Disenroll the child if continued enrollment would present a serious safety threat to the child or other children; staff will work with the parent to find alternative appropriate placements or referrals and, to the greatest extent possible, support direct transition to a more appropriate placement;
- Notify the parent in writing of the child's suspension or disenrollment (expulsion) from the program and their right to appeal the decision (refer to [appeal due process](#) section of this handbook).

### **Continuity of care**

If a family is disenrolled from one of our programs, Options for Learning will make every effort to assist families with their child care needs by providing information and referrals to other programs in their service area to ensure their continuity of care.

### **Uniform Complaint Policy**

Options for Learning's clients have the right to file a complaint or grievance regarding alleged unlawful discrimination or alleged violations of federal or state laws or regulations pertaining to activities or deficiencies of the program. To file a complaint or grievance, Options for Learning Uniform Complaint Procedure is to be followed. Parents may request a copy from their family advocate or by calling 626-699-8070.

## Department of Social Services

Our child care facilities are required to meet licensing regulations of the Department of Social Services (DSS) – Community Care Licensing. As part of the enrollment process, parents will be asked to complete the following licensing forms:

- Notification of Parents' Rights (LIC 995);
- Personal Rights (LIC 613A);
- Identification and Emergency Information (LIC 700);
- Consent for Emergency Information (LIC 627);
- Child's Preadmission Health History – Parents Report (LIC 702);
- Physician's Report – Child Care Centers (LIC 701).

The DSS has the authority to inspect the file that Options for Learning maintains on each child. The file contains the application for service, health history, emergency care information, and all other documents used to establish eligibility for the program.

The DPS has the authority to observe the physical condition of a child, including conditions that could indicate abuse or neglect, and to have a licensed medical professional examine a child.

### Child abuse

California law requires certain persons to report known or suspected child abuse. As such, our staff members are mandated reporters.

A mandated reporter who, in his or her professional capacity or within the scope of his or her employment, has knowledge of or observes a person under the age of 18 years whom he or she knows or **reasonably suspects** has been the victim of child abuse or neglect **must** report the suspected incident. The reporter must contact a designated agency immediately or as soon as practically possible by telephone. [Penal Code §11166(a)]

Our staff members are trained annually on the signs and symptoms of these types of child abuse:

- **Physical injury:** inflicted by other than accidental means on a child;
- **Sexual abuse:** sexual assault or sexual exploitation of a child;
- **Neglect:** negligent treatment, lack of treatment, or the maltreatment of a child by a person responsible for the child's welfare under circumstances indicating harm or threatened harm to the child's health or welfare;
- **Willful harming or injuring or endangering a child:** a situation in which any person inflicts, or willfully causes or permits a child to suffer, unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering, or causes or permits a child be placed in a situation in which the child or child's health is endangered;

- **Unlawful corporal punishment or injury:** willfully inflicted upon a child and resulting in a traumatic condition.

## **QUALIFYING FOR CALIFORNIA STATE PRESCHOOL AND FULL-DAY CHILD CARE**

Certification of enrollment is based on family eligibility, income, and need for full-day child care. The enrolling parent is responsible for providing documentation of the family's total sources of income and need for child care services. Staff are required to verify all information submitted.

### **Admission priorities**

Options for Learning maintains a waitlist of families who are eligible to receive subsidized services funded by the California Department of Education, Department of Social Services, and/or services funded by the Office of Head Start. Families are ranked based on admission priorities set forth by our funding sources, which consider income eligibility, categorical eligibility, and age eligibility.

Enrollment in CCTR state-funded programs is based on enrollment priority. Priority enrollment is given to families with a Child Protective Services (CPS) case or children who are at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. The second priority is determined by income eligibility ranking priorities:

1. Within the priority, families with the lowest gross monthly income in relation to family size will be admitted first;
2. If two or more families are in the same priority in relation to income, the family that has a child with exceptional needs will be admitted first;
3. If there is no family of the same priority with a child with exceptional needs, the child with the primary home language other than English will be admitted first;
4. If there is no family of the same priority in which the primary home language is a language other than English, the family of the same priority that has been on the waiting list for the longest time will be admitted first before moving to the next rank number on the list.

Enrollment priorities for CSPP state-funded programs are as follows:

1. Child is recipient of Child Protective Services or at risk of being neglected, abused, or exploited (with a written referral from a legal, medical or social services agency);
2. Children with exceptional needs who are income-eligible;
3. Children with disabilities who are over the income eligibility threshold;
4. Eligible children who are not enrolled in transitional kindergarten (these children are prioritized in income ranking order):
  - a. If two or more children are within the same ranking, the child who is a dual-language learner shall be admitted first;

- b. If there are no children who are dual-language learners, the child who has been on the waitlist for the longest shall be admitted first.
5. Families whose income is not more than 15% above the income eligibility threshold; these families will be prioritized as follows:
  - a. If two or more children are within the same ranking, the child who is a dual-language learner shall be admitted first;
  - b. If there are no children who are dual-language learners, the child who has been on the waitlist for the longest shall be admitted first.
6. Families who meet income eligibility without establishing a need for services (these families will be prioritized in income ranking order);
7. Families who reside within the school boundary of an approved Free Reduced Priced Meals (FRPM) elementary school (these families will be prioritized in income ranking order).

Enrollment priorities for federally funded programs are:

1. Families who are homeless, providing foster care, or on public assistance (TANF, SSI, SNAP);
2. Families with a referral from social services/CPS or who are at risk and are income eligible;
3. Families with and Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) who are income-eligible;
4. Families with and Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) who are over income;
5. A child with suspected disabilities with a referral from a doctor or professional who is income-eligible;
6. A sibling of currently enrolled children who is income-eligible;
7. A single parent who is working or attending school and is income-eligible;
8. A family that was previously enrolled and is income-eligible;
9. A family with a child who is 3 years old on or before Sept. 1, and is income-eligible;
10. A family with three or more family members that is income-eligible;
11. A family with a short- or long-term parental disability that is income-eligible;
12. Families that fall between 100% to 130% of the federal poverty guidelines.

### **Contracted hours**

For full-day programs, the enrollment specialist will determine the hours needed for care at the time of enrollment based on when parents are working, in school, or deemed incapacitated. This also includes any requested travel or sleep time. For part-day programs, children's schedules are based on the operating hours of the site/session. These hours are called "contracted hours." Parents are expected to bring their child to the site and to pick up their child according to these contracted hours. For full-day programs

during the school year, all preschool children must be at the site by 9 a.m. to participate in the preschool portion of the day.

Parents wanting to increase their contracted hours must notify their enrollment specialist so their file can be updated. Additional documentation may be requested. Parents may not bring their child at different times until the change of hours is approved.

## **Fees**

For families enrolled in a full-day, state-subsidized program, fees are charged in accordance with the State of California Department of Education and Department of Social Services regulations to provide **full-day child care services**. Not all families are required to pay a fee. Fees are calculated based on income, family size, and monthly contracted hours. Fees are due before the month the child receives care (e.g., February fees are due Feb. 1) and are considered late after the 7th of each month. Submitting late payments may lead to disenrollment from the program.

The State of California requires that fees be charged for every day of enrollment, whether the child is in school or not. **The family will be charged for all absences due to illness, vacation, etc.**

Fees are assessed by family. If a family pays another provider for child care, they may be able to receive a credit for those fees. Parents may inquire with the family fee specialist or their enrollment specialist.

**Fees are not assessed for families with children enrolled in part-day program sessions or sessions funded solely by the Office of Head Start.**

## **Making payments**

All payments can be made through our [Family Fees Payment Center](#). Families will be provided with the necessary information to set up their accounts.

## **Recertification and updates**

According to the regulations of the State of California, all families who enroll in subsidized child care services must receive no less than 24 months of service. Families with children enrolled in a session funded by the State of California will receive a Notice of Action at the time of their enrollment that specifies their 24-month eligibility period. All families must be recertified for services once each contract period at intervals not less than 24 months. At the time of recertification, parents must provide documentation to determine their continued eligibility and need for full-day care.

## **Residency verification**

Regulations require any evidence of a street address or post office address to verify that parents and children live in the State of California. Children must live in the state of

California while services are received. A person identified as homeless may submit a declaration of intent to reside in California. (5CCR, §17744)

## **Eligibility**

Several factors are considered when determining a family's eligibility for the program.

### **Family size**

A parent is defined as the biological, adoptive, stepparent, foster, caretaker relative, legal guardian, domestic partner of the parent, or any other adult living with the child who has responsibility for the care and welfare of the child as identified by the parent.

A family is defined as the parents and the 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 their biological or adoptive parent, "family" shall be considered the child and related siblings.

Family size is determined by information provided by the parent on the application county welfare records, foster care placement records, or other documentation indicating the relationship of the child to the parent determined reliable by Options for Learning.

When children who are counted in the family size reach the age of 18, they are considered adults and, at the time of recertification, will no longer be counted as part of the family size.

### **Eligibility status**

Families must fall into one of the five eligibility status categories: 1) Child Protective Services, 2) current aid recipient, 3) income-eligible, 4) homeless, or 5) child with exceptional needs. Documentation supporting a family's status must be provided. Options for Learning will verify the submitted documentation per Education Code §8263(a)(1).

#### **1) Child Protective Services §17773**

##### **Documentation for "at-risk" children:**

A written referral, dated within the six months immediately preceding the date of application for services, from a legal, medical, social service agency, or shelter. The referral must be completed by a legally qualified professional (a person licensed under applicable laws and regulations of the State of California to perform legal, medical, health, or social services for the general public) and include:

- That the child is at risk of abuse and neglect and that child care and development services are needed to reduce or eliminate that risk;
- Probable duration of the at-risk situation;
- Name, address, phone number, and signature of the person making the referral.

### Documentation for “protective services”:

A statement from the local county welfare department, child protective services unit, certifying that:

- The child is receiving child protective services and child care and development services are a necessary component of the child protective services plan;
- Probable duration of the child protective plan;
- Name, address, phone number, and signature of the person making the referral.

If the written referral specifies that the family is exempt from paying fees, then the parent is not required to provide documentation of income. Families who qualify under CPS do not have to demonstrate a “need” for the program. A CPS referral letter meets both eligibility and needs requirements.

## 2) Current aid recipient §17757

Documentation for aid recipient:

- Notice of Action (NOA) from the Welfare Department for the month preceding certification or recertification;
- Receipt of cash aid (TANF verification) for the month preceding certification or recertification;
- Other means of obtaining verification, such as Passport to Services, LRS (LEADER Replacement System), CalWORKs, etc. for the month preceding certification/recertification.

## 3) Income eligible §17762

For initial enrollment and recertification, families must fall within the limit of the State Median Income (SMI) for their family size as determined by the State of California. See the Income section for documentation requirements.

## 4) Homelessness §17771

Documentation to determine homeless status:

A written referral from an emergency or transitional shelter, a local education agency liaison for children and youth experiencing homelessness, a Head Start program or other legal, medical, or social service agency §17771(1), or a written parental declaration written under penalty of perjury that the family is experiencing homelessness §17771(2).

## 5) Children with exceptional needs – Education Code §8205(h)

Children with exceptional needs, as defined in EC Section 8205(h), are categorically eligible for services. Only children with exceptional needs may be enrolled under this eligibility criterion. Any other children in the family who do not meet the definition of

exceptional needs may be enrolled based on any of the other eligibility categories for which the family is otherwise eligible.

## Income

Adjusted monthly income is the family's total countable income from all sources after allowable deductions (such as garnished child support) and must be at or below the State Median Income (SMI). Parents and all individuals counted in the family size are **required** to provide documentation of **all** their income sources. Options for Learning is required to request additional information as needed to meet requirements.

Income sources include but are not limited to the following:

- Gross wages or salary, advances, commissions, overtime, tips, bonuses, gambling, or lottery winnings;
- Public cash assistance (TANF) (parent is responsible for providing documentation);
- Self-employment income (including wage draws), which should result in gainful employment;
- Disability or unemployment compensation;
- Workers' Compensation;
- Spousal support, child support, financial assistance received for housing costs or car payments;
- Cash portion of employer-paid benefits;
- Survivor or retirement benefits;
- Rent received for a room within the family residence;
- Financial assistance for the care of a child living with parent;
- Allowances for housing or automobiles;
- Portion of student grants not for educational purposes;
- Proceeds from real property;
- Pension or retirement payments;
- Other income for gain.

Income that is determined to be non-countable will be excluded from family total income.

Listed are some examples:

- Foster care grants, payments, or clothing allowance for children placed via child welfare services;
- Food stamps on EBT;
- Tax refund;
- GI bill entitlements.

## Income categories

**Regular and steady:** Income that is consistent and ongoing month to month (set income from all income sources, such as basic wages for set work hours, set child support payments, etc.).

Documentation for current income for initial enrollment and recertification – one month's income from the preceding two months from all income sources:

- Weekly pay frequency: most recent four checks;
- Semi-monthly/bi-weekly pay frequency: most recent two checks;
- Monthly pay frequency: most recent check.

**Fluctuating:** Unpredictable days and hours of employment, overtime, or self-employment without a determinable pattern. In addition, any source of varied income that is received regularly, such as ongoing commission and bonuses. Irregular earnings or income, such as lottery winnings, inheritance, back child support payment, or net proceeds from the sale of real property or stock.

Documentation for fluctuating income for initial enrollment and recertification – for CDSS programs: at least two months' income, up to 12 months of all income sources, if the income contributes to an affirmative eligibility determination and/or reduced applicable family fee:

- Weekly pay frequency: eight most recent checks;
- Semi-monthly/bi-weekly pay frequency: four most recent checks;
- Monthly pay frequency: two most recent checks;

For CSPP programs, the average of the parents' income from the preceding 12 months will be collected.

## Need for services

Full-day, state-subsidized services shall only be available to the extent to which the parent meets a need that precludes the provision of care and supervision of the family's child for some part of the day. In addition, there is no parent in the family capable of providing care for the family's child during the time services are requested, and supervision of the family's child is not otherwise being provided by a school or another person or entity.

Families who are eligible for subsidized child care and development services based on income or being a current aid, recipient must meet a need criterion. The need criteria are 1) employment, 2) seeking employment, 3) vocational training (leading directly to a recognized trade, paraprofession, or profession), 4) educational program for English language learners or to attain a high school diploma or general educational development certificate, 5) seeking permanent housing, and 6) incapacitation.

## **Employment and wage documentation**

Options for Learning is required to verify all employment information and wage documentation, independent of the parent. A parent must complete the Employment Verification Form with all necessary information to enable enrollment staff to verify the information with the parent's employer. The parent's employer can also provide all employment information directly to Options for Learning with the parent's signed release. §17762

- Payroll stubs or other records of wages issued by the employer for periods of time, as requested by enrollment staff, to determine current and ongoing income. See also the Income section of this handbook.
- For parents who are independent contractors or otherwise self-employed, documentation requires a declaration of need under penalty of perjury that includes a description of the employment and an estimate of the day and hours worked per week; a self-employment verification form with verification of business establishment attached as applicable; and copies of the most recently filed income taxes as applicable. In addition, parents must provide as many documents as possible listed in the self-employment form provided at initial enrollment.
- Parents who are paid cash or receive non-payroll checks or checks without payroll deductions may be required to provide additional information indicating their employment complies with employment laws and income tax requirements in place for the State of California and the federal government.

## **Seeking employment**

If the basis of need for services is seeking employment, child care and development services shall occur on no more than five days per week and for less than 30 hours per week. Parents are only enrolled on a seeking employment status if they are actively looking for employment. §17766

- Parents on a seeking employment status must complete the Seeking Employment Plan of Action and Agreement form that contains a written statement under penalty of perjury clearly indicating the parent's plans to secure, change, or increase employment and shall identify a general description of when services will be necessary.

## **Vocational training**

If the basis of need for services is training toward a vocational goal, the following documentation is required. §17768

1. Parents must complete the Student Parent Policy *and* submit one of the following:

- a) Current class schedule, which may be an electronic printout that includes the name of the training institution and the dates that the current training period, as applicable, will begin and end;
  - b) Training Verification Form that must be signed and stamped by the training institution's registrar.
2. Ongoing eligibility for services based on vocational training is contingent upon making adequate progress. At recertification, the parent shall provide documentation of adequate progress from the most recently completed quarter, semester, or training period.

### **English Language Learner (ELL) courses, General Education Development (GED) certificate/High School Equivalency (HSE) certificate**

Parents must submit documentation evidencing the parent's enrollment in a recognized English Language Learner educational program or a program to attain a high school diploma or general educational development certificate. §17767

### **Seeking permanent housing**

If the basis of need is seeking permanent housing, child care, and development services shall occur on no more than five days per week and for less than 30 hours per week. The following documentation is required. §17772

1. The parent must complete the Seeking Permanent Housing Plan of Action and Agreement Form and one of the following:
  - a. A referral from a shelter indicating that the family is currently a resident and participant;
  - b. A statement from the parent signed under penalty of perjury indicating that the family is seeking permanent housing. The declaration shall include the parent's search plan to secure a fixed, regular, and adequate residence and shall identify a general description of when services will be necessary.

### **Incapacitation**

If the basis of need for full-day care, as stated on the application for services, is parental incapacity, child care and development services shall not exceed 50 hours per week. Documentation shall be included. §17769

1. The parent must complete the Statement of Parental Incapacity Form, which shall include a release signed by the incapacitated parent authorizing a legally qualified health professional to disclose information necessary to establish that the parent meets the definition of incapacity, pursuant to section 17769, and needs child care services.
2. The Statement of Parental Incapacity Form provided by the legally qualified health professional shall include:

- a. A statement that the parent is incapacitated and that the parent is incapable of providing care and supervision for the child for a part of the day. The days and hours per week that services are recommended to accommodate the incapacitation, taking into account the age of the child and the care needs. This may include time for the parent's regularly scheduled medical or mental health appointments.
- b. The name, business address, phone number, professional license number, and signature of the legally qualified health professional, and, if applicable, the name of the health organization with which the professional is associated.

### **Duration of services**

Upon verification of and establishing eligibility, a family shall be considered to meet all eligibility and need requirements for services for not less than 24 months. A family shall receive approved services for not less than 24 months before having their eligibility and needs recertified.

A family that establishes eligibility on the basis of income shall, and within 30 days, report increases in income that exceed the State Median Income (SMI) limit for their family size. Families will be notified at the time of certification and recertification of the dollar amount based on their family size.

Exceptions to the 24-month eligibility of services include families who exceed the SMI limit during their certification period or at recertification, as well as families who do not follow agency policies or have abandoned care. §17819.5

### **Family's right to voluntarily report changes**

Once certified, a family shall receive services for no less than 24 months without having to report changes in eligibility or need, with the following exceptions:

- Families certified as income-eligible when their adjusted monthly income adjusted for family size exceeds the State Median Income (SMI) limit as published by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. §17755
- Families who voluntarily report changes in order to reduce family fees, increase service schedule. §17756

A family may voluntarily request to reduce their certified schedule for reasons such as family leave, extended vacation, break in employment, school breaks, or other reasons as authorized by Options for Learning; however, they have the right to retain their current certified schedule. The decrease in their certified schedule will replace their current schedule. The family can elect to increase their service schedule at a later time and will be required to submit additional documentation.

## **Appeal procedure and parent appeal rights**

The parent appeal rights process is on the reverse side of the Notice of Action form. If a parent disagrees with an action as stated in the Notice of Action, the parent may appeal the intended action within 14 calendar days of receipt or 19 calendar days if received via mail. All Notices of Action will indicate the effective dates of action and the last day to appeal.

Upon the parents' request for an appeal hearing, the intended action shall be suspended, and child care services will continue until the appeal process has been completed. The review process is complete when the appeal process has been exhausted or when the parent abandons the appeal process. If the parents abandon the appeal, the proposed action will take place.

Within 10 calendar days of receiving the request for a hearing, Options for Learning will notify the parent to arrange a specific time and place for the hearing with a management staff member who is referred to as the hearing officer.

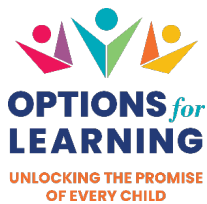
A parent's authorized representative is required to attend the hearing. During the hearing, the parent or designated authorized representative shall have an opportunity to explain the reason(s) he or she believes Options for Learning's decision was incorrect.

The hearing officer shall mail or deliver to the parent a written decision within 10 calendar days after the hearing.

If the parent disagrees with the final written appeal decision from Options for Learning, the parent has 14 calendar days in which to appeal to either the California Department of Education (for families enrolled in CSPP), or the California Department of Social Services (for families enrolled in CCTR). If a parent does not submit an appeal request to CDE/CDSS within 14 calendar days, the parent's appeal process shall be deemed abandoned, and Options for Learning may implement the intended action. The contact information and address for CDE are on the reverse side of all Notice of Action (NOA) forms.

For children ages 0-5 years, appeals relating to suspension and disenrollment (expulsion) for a child's behavior are to be submitted directly to the California Department of Education by submitting a written request for an appeal hearing to [EEDappeals@cde.ca.gov](mailto:EEDappeals@cde.ca.gov) no later than 14 calendar days after receipt of the notice.

Parents should contact Options for Learning for assistance or with questions regarding the appeal process.



# PARENT NOTIFICATION OF CHILD ATTENDANCE POLICY

In accordance with CCR Title V regulation §18066, §18066.5, §17819.5, Education Code 8208 (e) and agency policy

The number of spaces for children in all our programs are limited. Therefore, it is important that families who are receiving care are those who need it and will utilize it appropriately. Families are requested to communicate a reason for not using care within seven (7) consecutive days.

## A. Excused absences

There are days when your child will not be in care due to:

1. Illness/quarantine of the parent;
2. Illness/quarantine of the child;
3. Doctor/dentist appointments;
4. Court-ordered visitation (copy of court order must be on file at the program office);
5. Family emergency – defined as an incident occurring that results in a disruption of service due to a family’s inability to participate in the program or due to a state of emergency order from state or local government (e.g., injury, removal of child from home, death in the family, transportation issues, sibling illness, sheltering in place due to COVID-19);
6. “Child Best Interest” days (e.g., vacation, visiting relatives or days home with parent – other than illness);  
*Note: Ten (10) “Child Best Interest” days are allowed per child per contract year. Excused absences “in the best interest of the child” shall not be limited to 10 days during the contract period for children who are recipients of protective services or are at risk of abuse or neglect.*
7. Medical leave of the parent/guardian;
8. Impacts on child care facilities due to a state of emergency order from state or local government (e.g., sheltering in place due to a pandemic, air quality due to fires or extreme climate, curfews).

If your child has been absent for any of the above reasons, you must indicate the date(s) and reason in writing with a full signature for the absence to be excused (e.g., “John was ill” or “John was visiting grandparents”). The program may require documentation beyond the sign-in/out sheet or absence log.

## B. §18066.5 Abandonment of care

Options for Learning may disenroll a family on the basis of abandonment of care when there has been no communication regarding absences for a total of 30 consecutive calendar days.

I have carefully read and completely understand the above stated policy.

Parent name: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Please print)*

Child name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Please print)*

Child’s site (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_



# CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS FRAUD/DECEIT POLICY

If Options for Learning determines that a recipient of services has misused funds in any way, provided fraudulent information to establish initial or ongoing eligibility and/or need and, in fact, the recipient was not eligible or did not have a qualifying need for the amount of services received, Options for Learning shall notify the recipient. A Notice of Action (NOA) as specified in the California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 18095, shall inform the recipient of the termination date. Correspondence will be issued stating if the recipient is responsible for reimbursing Options for Learning for the costs of all services provided, including those services which may be provided during the appeal process should the recipient appeal termination or reduction.

Options for Learning may work with the recipient to determine a reasonable repayment plan to collect the appropriate amount within 12 months. If the recipient refuses to reimburse Options for Learning for ineligible services, refuses to pay the correct fee, or both, Options for Learning may file a claim through the Small Claims Court and/or refer the case to the District Attorney's Office.

Any family terminated for fraud-related reasons will no longer be eligible for any of Options for Learning's child development funded programs.

### Definitions:

**"Fraud"** is defined in Section of 1709 of the Civil Code as: One, who willfully deceives another with intent to induce him/her to alter his/her position to his injury or risk, is liable for any damage, which he/she suffers.

**"Deceit"** is defined in Section 1710 of the Civil Code as: A deceit, within the meaning of the last section, is either:

1. The suggestion, as a fact, of that which is not true, by one who does not believe it to be true.
2. The assertions, as a fact, of that which is not true, by one who has no reasonable ground for believing it to be true.
3. The suppression of a fact, by one who is bound to disclose it, or who gives information of other facts which are likely to mislead for want of communication of that fact, or,
4. A promise made without any intention of performing it.

As a recipient of child development services from Options for Learning, I acknowledge that I have read and agree to understand the above policy.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Initials of Options for Learning staff member \_\_\_\_\_



## CLIENT NON-ADMITTANCE AND TERMINATION POLICY

Options for Learning has a commitment to serve eligible families in our programs. However, in a limited number of circumstances, it may be impossible for Options for Learning to offer or continue to provide services to particular families.

A child may be terminated from the program based on the behavior of the client/child that threatens the health and safety of children and/or staff and/or other client.

The decision to not accept an application for care, not to admit a family or to terminate services to a family will be made by the director of the program(s) involved, and the parents will be notified in writing of the decision.

Circumstances that may prevent services or lead to termination of services are:

- The client refuses to follow legitimate instructions, directions, or program policies and procedures;
- The client has verbally threatened staff or physically assaulted staff and/or children;
- A weapon or drugs have been brought into an Options for Learning facility;
- The client has stalked and/or harassed staff and/or children and/or other clients;
- The client or children were previously terminated from another child care or comparable program for physical violence or bringing drugs or weapons into the program or other serious offenses;
- The child has had repeated, serious episodes of physical aggression against other children and/or staff and/or other clients;
- The child is expelled from the public school where the Options for Learning program is located (applicable to school-age children);
- Other serious offenses that would threaten the mental or physical safety of children or staff or other clients listed above may also lead to non-admittance or termination;
- Child repeatedly fails to remain with center-based staff whether group is inside or outside.

I have carefully read and completely understand the above stated policy.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name \_\_\_\_\_

Application: All Options for Learning programs

Originally adopted 1/95

Approved by board 9/24/03; Revised 9/03; 1/17



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