



Del Norte
Child Care
Council

Payment Assistance Programs

CAPP

Parent Handbook

Del Norte Child Care Council

212 K Street

Phone: (707) 464-8311

Fax: (707) 464-8313

Overview of the Alternative Payment Program

The Alternative Payment Program (APP) is a child care subsidy program, operated in accordance with the California Code of Regulations, Title 5, and California Department of Social Services. Funding is provided through the California Department of Social Services and Federal Child Care and Development Block Grant.

The AP Programs offers a choice of child care arrangements for parents, such as family child care, center based care, or by a friend or relative. Parents may select their child care provider to meet their individual needs. Del Norte Child Care Council makes reimbursements for child care services directly to the family's selected provider, on the parent's behalf.

In order to participate in the program, a family must meet the eligibility and need requirements determined by the State of California.

Mission Statement

The mission of Del Norte Child Care Council is to enhance the quality of life in Del Norte County, by promoting the healthy growth and development of children and families through provision of quality family, provider, and child care services.

Parent's receiving childcare payment assistance services are expected to follow their child care providers' policies and procedures, in addition to those of Del Norte Child Care Council.

NOTE: When used in this Handbook, the term "parent" refers to a biological parent, adoptive parent, stepparent, foster parent, caretaker relative, legal guardian, domestic partner of the parent, or any other adult living with the child who has the responsibility for the care and welfare of the child.

This Handbook applies to Subsidized Child Care Assistance, including the Alternative Payment Program, Stage II and Stage III programs, and does not include policies for Stage I Child Care Payment Assistance.

Enrollment for Services

At enrollment, parents must provide proof of **eligibility** and **need** for childcare. Additional information about the family and child is gathered at that time, and program policies and procedures are explained. Enrollment must be completed and approved by APP Specialist before childcare services can start.

Admission Priorities

First Priority:

Is given to families whose children are recipients of child protective services, or who are at risk of being neglected, abused, or exploited or at risk of thereof, upon written referral from a legal, medical, or social services agency.

Second Priority:

Is given to all children and families that meet the income and need eligibility requirements.

Waiting List

If there is a Waiting List, families will be ranked based on gross monthly income and family size. Families with the lowest rank will be served first. When two or more families have the same ranking the family has a child with exceptional needs shall be admitted first. If there is no family with child with exceptional needs, the family that has been on the waiting list the longest shall be admitted first.

Eligibility Requirements

Subsidized childcare is only available when care of the child is not otherwise provided by school, or another person or entity, such as a public school, a private school, a State-Funded preschool, an after-school program, or other entity. To determine the family's eligibility for Childcare Payment Assistance, the child must be under the age of thirteen at initial certification or recertification, lives in California while receiving services, and one or more of the following must be met:

- The parent is a CalWORKs Cash aid recipient
- The family is income eligible
- The child is receiving child protective services; or child is identified as being abused, neglected, or exploited or at risk thereof
- The family or one member of the household, counted in the family size, is certified to receive benefits from any one of the following means-tested government programs:
 - Medi-Cal
 - CalFresh
 - The California Food Assistance Program
 - The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
 - The Federal Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
 - Head Start, Early Head Start
 - CalWORKs, child only cash aid
 - Any other designated means-tested government program, as determined by the department

Need Criteria

The family must have reason(s) for needing childcare services, such as:

- The parent is employed or self-employed

- The parent is seeking employment
- The child is receiving child protective services
- The child is identified as being abused, neglected or exploited or at risk thereof
- The parent is enrolled in vocational training
- The parent is enrolled in educational program
- The parent is seeking permanent housing for family stability
- The parent is incapacitated

24-Month Eligibility and Income Reporting

Once the parent's application for services is approved, the family's services are certified for no less than twenty-four (24) months. The family is considered to meet the eligibility and/or need requirements for no less than 24 months, with the following exceptions:

- When the recalculation of income, based on provided documentation that indicates the family's adjusted monthly income exceeds the income eligibility threshold. (The family is responsible and shall report changes, within 30 calendar days of any current and on-going income changes that causes the family's adjusted monthly income, adjusted for family size, to exceed the eighty-fifth percent (85%) of State Median Income).
- When a child is 12 years old at initial enrollment or recertification, that family must be certified for no less than 12 months.
- Change in residency outside of California
- When there is substantiated evidence of fraud that invalidates the initial certification, and the family is not otherwise eligible.
- When the family has abandon the care

Family's Right to Request Changes

A family may, at any time, voluntarily request to reduce a family fee, or increase their certified schedule, and shall provide applicable supporting documentation for the requested change.

When a family voluntarily requests a reduction to their certified schedule, the parent shall submit a written request that includes the days and hours per day requested and the date of the proposed reduction. The parent must acknowledge in writing they understand they may retain their current certified schedule and that a decrease to their certified schedule would replace their current schedule, and if they choose to increase their certified schedule at a later time, they will be required to provide additional documentation.

Continuing Eligibility/Recertification

Families shall be recertified for services no later than 50 calendar days following the last day of the certification period, which was the day the agency representative signed the last application for services. If the recertification is not completed within those 50 calendar days, a notice of action will be issued terminating child care services for failure to recertify on time. At recertification, current eligibility and need documentation is gathered, and services will be approved or denied.

Monthly Family Fees

In addition to share of cost, parent may be required to pay a monthly family fee.

- Monthly fees are determined, based on the family size, adjusted gross monthly income, and hours of childcare approved per month.
- For families with more than one child receiving care, fees are charged for the child who utilizes the most care.
- Families in which any individual counted in the family size is receiving CalWORKs cash aid are exempt from paying family fees.
- Families receiving services because the child is at risk of being neglected or abused or children who are recipients of Child Protective Services may be exempt from paying fees if requested by the referrant.
- Monthly Family fees are billed by Del Norte Child Care Council once each month and must be paid in advance of the month for which care is provided.
- **Monthly Family fees must be submitted directly to Del Norte Child Care Council by or on the first of every month and are delinquent if not received by 5pm on the 7th of the month. For instance: July Monthly Family fees will be billed by the 16th of June, and are due no later than 5pm on July 1st, they become delinquent at 5pm on July 7th.**
- If fees are delinquent, a Notice of Action to terminate services will be issued. Del Norte Child Care Council will accept a reasonable plan for payment of past due Monthly Family fees, as long as current fees continue to be paid in full.
- Parents must contact their APP Specialist to set up a payment plan for delinquent fees.
- If services are terminated for delinquent Monthly Family fees, families must wait at least 30 days from the effective date on the NOA, and pay all delinquent Monthly Family fees before they can again be considered for services from Del Norte Child Care Council.

Approved Childcare Schedule / Voucher

Childcare Vouchers are used to document childcare attendance. Vouchers are sent directly to the childcare provider. If a provider does not receive a voucher for a child before the first day of the attendance period, call Del Norte Child Care Council AP program staff to find out why.

The voucher notes the childcare schedule, based on the certified need of the family. The childcare schedule is the maximum number of hours allowed for the child. If a parent uses more childcare hours than the maximum, it is the parent's responsibility to pay the difference to the provider.

Completing the Voucher

It is the parent's responsibility to make sure the voucher is completed correctly. In order to ensure prompt reimbursement, the following guidelines for completion should be followed.

- All entries on the voucher(s) must be made in **BLUE or BLACK INK**, no pencils.
- Parents or their authorized representative are to indicate the actual time their child enters and leaves the childcare facility daily.

- Vouchers must be signed daily and at the bottom certifying under penalty of perjury that all information is true and correct for voucher(s) to be paid.
- Del Norte Child Care Council will not reimburse any hours that a school age child should be enrolled in public or private education or any other child development program. If child uses services when he/she should be in school, please document the reason. (Examples: school closure, snow day, child too ill to attend school)
- Del Norte Child Care Council pays for a maximum of 10 documented non-operation days per fiscal year. (Parent is responsible for payment if provider exceeds their 10 days)
- A parent may obtain an alternative provider when the child is ill but is limited to 10 days per fiscal year. If the parent provides physician verification, payment may go beyond 10 days.
- **If a voucher is lost or damage, please call Del Norte Child Care Council as soon as possible to request a duplicate. Duplicate vouchers will only be issue depending on the damage or if it was not received at the beginning of the month. No duplicate vouchers will be issued after the pertaining month is over.**

Documenting Split Shifts

When a child leaves for school from the childcare program, and returns from school to the childcare program, the child may be signed “in” and “out” by the provider. However, the parent, or their authorized representative, must still sign the child “in” at the beginning of the day as well as “out” at the end of the day. This format is also used when a child goes to another program or activity during the day. When schedules are split between two days, the child must be signed “in” on the day the child arrives, and “out” on the day the child leaves. If the parent drops the child off at 10:30pm on the 1st, picks the child up at 8:00am on the 2nd, and goes back to work at 10:30pm that night.

If we notice errors in the way vouchers are completed, we will utilize the following steps:

1. If we find an error, we will immediately call the parent to attempt to correct the issue over the phone.
2. If this same error occurs on a future vouchers, the parent will be asked to come into our office to be shown how to complete vouchers.
3. If this error is ongoing, parents may have their childcare services terminated.

Reimbursement for Childcare

Reimbursement for childcare is issued directly to providers.

If the parent chooses a provider to do the care in the child’s home, the parent must acknowledge, by signing a self-attestation, that the parent is considered the employer and is responsible for complying with any applicable federal and state employment laws, including but not limited to minimum wage requirements.

Childcare providers are NOT employees of Del Norte Child Care Council but are independent contractors who operate childcare businesses. This is important to remember when considering filing for unemployment compensation and income tax purposes.

To be paid promptly, vouchers must be received by Del Norte Child Care Council by the third of every month. However, if the 3rd falls on a weekend or holiday, vouchers are considered late after 5pm on the first business day following the 3rd of the month. For vouchers received after the above mentioned deadline, reimbursement will be processed to be paid on the 15th of the month. Vouchers received after the 3rd will be set aside until the next processing period.

Complete and accurate vouchers will be date stamped and processed for payment. Incomplete or inaccurate vouchers will be set aside for follow-up with the parent.

Payment will not be approved for a voucher that is received more than 60 calendar days after the due date.

Del Norte Child Care Council fiscal year ends June 30th. Without an approved extension, vouchers received after July 3rd will not be paid.

Del Norte Child Care Council mails checks or makes the direct deposit to providers by 5:00 pm on the 15th. Checks are not available to be picked up. Delays in the adoption of a state budget may influence Del Norte Child Care Council's ability to meet this commitment. If this occurs, providers will be notified.

Parent's Share of Cost (Co-Pay)

Parents are responsible for childcare expenses not paid by Del Norte Child Care Council. Those expenses are paid directly to the provider. Parent's share of cost may be affected by a change in providers, childcare schedules, provider rate/fee changes, the child's age, or changes to the market rate ceilings.

Del Norte Child Care Council pays providers in accordance with the provider's usual and customary rate schedule, as long as the charges fall within the market rate ceiling for Del Norte County.

Broadly Consistent Attendance

Del Norte Child Care Council AP Specialists are responsible for reviewing vouchers to determine if the days and hours of services used by the parent were "broadly consistent" with the certified hours. If hours used are not broadly consistent such as:

1. The parent is using less hours or more hours that will cause the family fee to be change to Part-time or Full-time.
2. The parent is using a schedule that will cause a change in the Reimbursement Benefit type or benefit amount.
3. Anything else that does not match the certified need for care.

If review of the vouchers indicates the services used by the parent were not broadly consistent with the services authorized, the APP Specialist shall contact the parent to correct.

Steps to correct the inconsistency of attendance:

1. APP Specialists will contact the family to see if there is a change in need. If there is and depending on the situation, the family will be reminded of their rights to submit a written

request to reduce their schedule or encourage to submit documentation to increase their schedule.

2. The family fee will be changed accordingly to the family's need, part-time or full- time.
3. If attendance records are coming back blank, the case manager will contact family to find out the reason for not using care.

Abandonment of Care

When the family has not been in communication with the provider for seven (7) consecutive calendar days and has not notified the provider of the reason the family is not using services, the provider is responsible to notify Del Norte Child Care Council.

Del Norte Child Care Council case worker shall attempt to contact the parent via phone call or email informing the parent that failure to communicate with Del Norte Child Care Council their reason for not using care, may result in termination of childcare services. A termination of services notice of action shall be issue based on abandonment of care when there has been no communication with the provider or Del Norte Child Care Council for a total of 30 consecutive calendar days.

Overpayments and Underpayments to Providers

Del Norte Child Care Council shall take steps to promptly correct any overpayment or underpayment for childcare services. DNCCC shall collect overpayments if it determines that it is administratively cost effective. If payments are made to a childcare provider for childcare during a period when the client was not eligible, the client is responsible for the erroneous payment. Overpayments resulting from suspected fraud on the part of the client or childcare provider shall be referred for investigation to the proper authority.

Adjustments May Be Made After Payment Is Issued If:

- Auditing of records reflects provider errors in charges submitted for payment
- The maximum amount that can be paid changes retroactively
- Changes occurred in the funding source rules and/or regulations
- A calculation error was made by Del Norte Child Care Council staff
- It appears that fraud may have been committed

Fraud Policy

Fraud is defined as intentional deception/s or misrepresentation/s made by a person with knowledge that the deception could result in some unauthorized benefit to him/herself or some other person. Funds that pay for subsidized childcare services are public taxpayer dollars. Del Norte Child Care Council is required to actively prevent fraud and to act promptly if fraud is suspected. If any party obtains childcare funds or benefits by deliberately providing inaccurate or incomplete information, Del Norte Child Care Council shall actively pursue recovering such funds. Parents are required to accurately

represent their income, family size, age of child(ren), work schedule, daily sign in and sign out, and any changes to same as well as to all aspects of program participation described in the Parent Handbook.

Providers are required to accurately represent attendance, rates charged to the public, change in licensing status, and all other information described in this document. Credible information received by Del Norte Child Care Council from any source regarding possible misuse of public funds will be treated seriously and investigated by Del Norte Child Care Council staff and/or law enforcement. Recovery of funds may be pursued through a collection agency, small claims court, or the District Attorney's office. Falsification of information or any deliberate act that wrongfully secures childcare payments is cause for termination from the program.

Referrals to Providers/Parent Choice

Information on how to select a childcare provider is provided to parents along with referrals to childcare programs. DNCCC staff do not endorse, rate, recommend, or evaluate programs or providers—each parent is strongly encouraged to carefully interview and visit a prospective provider or several providers before making a decision.

Non-Discrimination Clause

DNCCC does not discriminate on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, gender, ethnic group identification, race, ancestry, national origin, religion, color, or mental or physical disability, in determining which children are served. DNCCC welcomes the enrollment of children with disabilities, understands the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to make reasonable accommodations for such children, and implements those accommodations.

Confidentiality of Records

The use or disclosure of information maintained in parent and provider files will be limited to

DNCCC staff, representatives of the funding sources, Community Care Licensing, and other authorized entities. Normally, information will not be released without prior written permission. Upon written request, parents and providers may access information in their file in the presence of a DNCCC staff member. Nothing in the file may be removed by the parent.

Parents and providers should be aware that program staff, during the course of administering the program, may exchange information with the Childcare Food Program, and Resource and Referral Program.

Denial/Termination of Payment Assistance Services

The following are grounds for denial/termination of services:

- Failure to follow DNCCC's policies and procedures.
- Falsification of information required by Del Norte Child Care Council.
- Failure to provide required paperwork, failure to respond to messages.
- Abandonment of services and parent is not responding to phone calls, messages or mail.
- Non-payment, or late payment, of parent fees.
- Lack of cooperation with program staff.
- Threatening the mental or physical well-being of DNCCC staff, including verbal abuse.

Appeal Procedure for Parents

If a parent disagrees with an action, the parent must file a request for a hearing with Del Norte Child Care Council within 14 days of the date the Notice of Action (NOA) was received, if mailed, the 14 calendar day period is extended by five (5) calendar days.

- Upon filing a request for a hearing, the intended action will be suspended until the review process has been completed.
- Within 10 days following the receipt of the request for a hearing, DNCCC will notify the parent of the time and place of the hearing. The time and place of the hearing will, to the extent possible, be convenient for the parent. The hearing will be conducted by DNCCC's Executive Director.
- The parent, or parent's authorized representative, is required to attend the hearing.
- If the parent, or the parent's authorized representative, fails to appear at the hearing, the appeal will be deemed abandoned. If requested by the parent, DNCCC will arrange for the presence of an interpreter at the hearing.

The Executive Director will explain, to the parent, why DNCCC is taking the intended action. During the hearing, the parent will have an opportunity to explain why they believe DNCCC was incorrect. DNCCC staff will present any material facts which may have been omitted by the parent.

- The Executive Director will mail a written decision to the parent within 10 days after the hearing.

If the parent disagrees with the decision, the parent has 14 calendar days from the date of that decision to appeal to the CDSS's Childcare and Development Division (CCDD).

- If the parent does not submit an appeal to the CCDD within 14 calendar days, the appeal will be deemed abandoned, and DNCCC will implement the intended action.

Submit the appeal to:

California Department of Social Services
Childcare and Development Division
Attn: Appeals Coordinator
744 P Street,
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: 916-322-1273
Fax: 916-323-6853
Email: CDSSappeals@cdss.ca.gov

The parent will specify, in the appeal, the reason(s) why they believe Del Norte Child Care Council's decision was incorrect. A copy of DNCCC's Notice of Action, and written decision, must be submitted with the appeal. To ensure that Del Norte Child Care Council will not take action on the date specified, the parent must send a copy of the appeal to DNCCC.

Upon receipt of an appeal, the CCDD may request copies of the basic data file and other relevant materials from Del Norte Child Care Council. The CCDD may conduct investigations, interviews or mediation necessary to resolve the appeal.

The decision of the CCDD will be mailed to the parent and DNCCC within 30 days after receipt of the appeal.

Del Norte Child Care Council will comply with the decision of the CCDD immediately upon receipt thereof. If DNCCC's determination that the family is ineligible is upheld by the CCDD, services to the family will cease upon receipt of the CCDD's decision.

No expense incurred by the parent in the course of preparing or submitting the appeal will be paid by DNCCC.

Requirements for Provider Participation

To insure maximum parental choice, families are given a referral list to assist them in choosing a childcare provider from a full range of licensed and license-exempt childcare options. Del Norte Child Care Council does not make recommendations to specific programs. Upon request, basic childcare information is also provided.

Providers must sign a Statement of Understanding/Guidelines verifying they:

- If licensed, will submit, to DNCCC, a valid childcare license issued by Community Care Licensing (CCL) and keep licensing requirements current.
- If considered to be exempt from licensure, will register under the TrustLine system. Grandparents, Aunts and Uncles are not required to be TrustLine'd.
- Are at least 18 years of age and show proof of age with a photo ID
- Submit photocopy of Social Security Card or EIN #
- Complete and submit to Del Norte Child Care Council all applicable forms.

- Will provide DNCCC with a yearly self-generated statement of the childcare facility's usual and customary rates and fees for childcare, and their days and hours of operation. DNCCC will request updates usually in July of each year.
- If the provider has a rate change mid-year, the provider must submit a notice at least 2 weeks before the change can take effect.
- Agree to not discriminate based on sexual orientation, gender, ethnic group identification, race, ancestry, national origin, religion, color, or mental or physical disability, when determining which children are served. Del Norte Child Care Council welcomes the enrollment of children with disabilities, understands the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act to make reasonable accommodations for such children, and implements those accommodations.
- Will allow parents unlimited access to their children.
- Will provide accurate, complete, and legible attendance documentation in accordance with Del Norte Child Care Council policies included in these Written Materials and any other supporting documents.
- Agree, if exempt from licensing to successfully complete pediatric First Aid, and Adult, Child and Infant CPR within 60 days from the provider orientation. To continue receiving payment from DNCCC, training must be kept current.

If all requirements are not met by the timelines stated during orientation, the parent will receive notification that childcare payments will stop to that provider. Time that elapses between the final date of payment and successful completion of the requirements will not be reimbursed by DNCCC.

The occurrence of any of the following is cause for immediate termination of payment to, and agreement with a provider:

- The wrongful death of a child in care.
- The physical, sexual, or emotional abuse of a child in care.
- An act of violence occurring while a child is in care.
- A child in care is missing from the facility without being signed out.
- An incident that threatens the health or safety of a child in care.
- Exhibiting hostile, non-cooperative or threatening behavior towards SCCC staff.
- Unsafe physical environment
- Numerous complaints
- Revocation of CCL license
- Falsification of documents /or claiming childcare when the care was not provided.

Providers must notify Del Norte Child Care Council immediately whenever they are in violation of Community Care Licensing regulations.

Procedure for Changing Providers

Parents have the right to change providers at any time. However, it is the parent's responsibility to contact Del Norte Child Care Council AP program staff to determine that the new provider is eligible to receive reimbursement.

Complaints Against Providers

Only complaints about health and safety issues will be considered.

Parents using license-exempt care may file a complaint against the provider using the following procedure:

- The complaint must be in writing, include the nature of the complaint, the time and date of occurrence, the name and address of the provider and shall be signed and dated by the parent. Complaints will be deemed substantiated solely by the parent's written declaration. Upon receipt of a complaint, Del Norte Child Care Council will inform the license-exempt provider of the parent's complaint and inform the provider of their right to submit a written rebuttal. Parents will be advised that serious health and safety issues should be referred to Del Norte County Child Protective Services.

A record will be kept of parental complaints concerning an exempt provider's failure to meet the standards specified in the Health and Safety Self-Certification. This information will be available upon request.

Parents using **licensed** care may file a complaint against a provider using one of the following procedures:

- Call Community Care Licensing @ 1-844-538-8766 or email letusno@dss.ca.gov directly.

Note: Parents have the right to call Community Care Licensing to see if complaints have been lodged against a provider they are using or are considering using.

- or -

- Call Del Norte Child Care Council and explain the health and safety concern. If there is indication of a licensing violation, the complaint will be passed on to Community Care Licensing.