

HOW DO I GET HELP PAYING FOR CHILD CARE?



THERE ARE THREE MAIN WAYS FAMILIES GET HELP PAYING FOR CHILD CARE:

1. Subsidized Child Care Programs

Your child may enroll in a program that gets subsidies directly from the state. It could be a child care center, state preschool, or family child care network.

2. Vouchers (Child Care Payment Assistance Programs)

You may find the child care you want and sign up with an "alternative payment program," which will pay the provider directly. You can choose any kind of care — a center, licensed family child care, or a caregiver who is exempt from license requirements because they care for children of just one other family besides her own.

3. Head Start

Your child may enroll in Early Head Start (0–3 yr olds) or Head Start (3–5 yr olds). These programs are federally funded and follow federal income eligibility rules. If your child has special needs, you may receive priority, regardless of your income.

IS MY CHILD ELIGIBLE FOR A STATE CHILD CARE SUBSIDY?

Eligibility is based on your family income, the number and ages of your children, where you live, and your family's needs. You are eligible if:

- Your child has special needs

OR

- You are working, in school or training, looking for work, disabled, seeking permanent housing, or receiving Child Protective Services

AND

- Your income is below the "ceiling" for your family size. As of 2026, that's:

FAMILY SIZE	INCOME PER MONTH (BEFORE TAXES)
1 – 2	\$7,119
3	\$8,054
4	\$9,636
5	\$11,178
6	\$12,720
7	\$13,009
8	\$13,298

**NOTE: HEAD START HAS DIFFERENT ELIGIBILITY RULES.*

SUBSIDIZED CHILD CARE IS NOT NECESSARILY FREE!

If your income is very low, the state pays the whole child care bill. If it's higher but still under the ceiling, the state pays part and you pay part.

IF YOU ARE IN CALWORKS

You are entitled to receive child care, but only if you need it to work, attend school, training, or job club, or look for a job. CalWORKs child care has three stages:

Stage 1: When you're new to the CalWORKs program.

Stage 2: When you are working and either still receiving cash aid or you stopped receiving aid within the previous 24 months.

Stage 3: You can continue to receive child care for children up to age 13 as long as you remain income-eligible.

Here are the steps to get CalWORKs child care:

Step 1: When you enroll in CalWORKs, in order to get child care, you must ask your Employment Counselor to send a "child care request form" to 4Cs.

Step 2: Work with a 4Cs referral specialist to make the best child care choice for you and your family.

Step 3: You and your child care provider will work with the payment program staff on the details of the payment process.

IF YOU ARE NOT IN CALWORKS

The bad news is: You don't automatically get a child care subsidy even if your income qualifies! (See chart on the front.) That's because the state provides only enough funding for about one-third of eligible families. But you can:

- Call 4Cs Resource and Referral Line at 510-244-0506 to speak with a specialist about programs that fit your and your child's needs and how to get on their waiting lists.
- Contact Parent Voices to join with other parents and campaign for enough funding for all eligible families:
www.parentvoices.org



FINDING SUBSIDIZED CHILD CARE IN SOUTHERN ALAMEDA COUNTY

There are various programs in southern Alameda County that provide subsidized child care, however you will probably have to wait a while for an opening. Families are served according to state and federal funding priorities, not on a first-come, first-served basis.

Here are the steps to take to find subsidized care:

Step 1: Contact 4Cs by calling 510-244-0506 or visit www.4calameda.org/subsidy to receive a city-specific subsidized child care options.

Step 2: Call each program you are interested in and ask if they have a subsidized child care opening. If there are no current openings, ask to be added to their waiting list.

Step 3: Inform all the programs you have signed up for if your contact information changes—you don't want to miss out on any offers of child care!

Step 4: Inform the programs when your income or family size changes. For example, if your income goes down, you move up the priority list.

Step 5: Be sure to respond to any communications from the child care programs you signed up for, so they know you're still interested.



FOR MORE CHILD CARE INFORMATION,
VISIT 4CS WEBSITE:

www.4calameda.org/parents-families

WHERE DOES THE MONEY COME FROM?

Subsidies for all programs, except Head Start, are a combination of local, state, and federal funds. The federal government pays for Head Start. All these programs exist because parents and other champions of children and families organized and advocated for them.