

Y+350N 090923030



Child Care Policy, Procedures and Billing Manual

To All Onondaga County Child Care Providers:

This manual has been compiled to summarize all of the information you may need as a provider of child care in one document. If changes occur to policies, procedures or billing processes, we will update this online manual as soon as possible.

If you have questions about information contained in this manual, the following is a list of current unit supervisors and contacts with their phone numbers. If you have specific case-related questions, please contact the child care worker assigned to the case before contacting the supervisor of that area.

- | | |
|--|--|
| ⇒ Accounting Division
4 th Floor, Civic Center
421 Montgomery Street
Syracuse, NY 13202 | <i>Anthony Morris</i>
435-2947
Fax 435-3590 |
| ⇒ Day Care Services Unit (DCS)
5 th Floor, County Office Building
600 South State Street
Syracuse, NY 13202 | <i>Ann Ricciardiello</i>
435-5683
Fax 435-5682 |
| ⇒ <u>JOBS</u>plus!
677 South Salina Street
Syracuse, NY 13202 | <i>Paul Winterton</i>
442-3242
Fax 442-3254 |
| ⇒ Protective/Preventive Cases
5 th Floor, County Office Building
600 South State Street
Syracuse, NY 13202 | <i>Carla Gianni or Ann Ricciardiello</i>
435-5683
Fax 435-5682 |

If you are unable to resolve your concerns by talking to the child care workers or their supervisors, please contact Steve Seifritz, Assistant Commissioner – Temporary Assistance at 435-2700 (authorization issues or general child care issues) or Anthony Morris, Administrative Supervisor – Administrative Services at 435-2947 (billing/payment issues). We are hopeful that this document will clarify our policies and procedures, and make the authorization and payment process smoother for you as child care providers. We appreciate the quality care you provide to our clients. Your efforts, collectively and individually, have made it possible for parents to realize their dreams in financially supporting their children and helping children remain with their families.

Sincerely,

David Sutkoway
Commissioner

ONONDAGA COUNTY CHILD CARE POLICY, PROCEDURES AND BILLING MANUAL

1.0 INTRODUCTION	3
2.0 TYPES OF PROVIDERS WHO PROVIDE CHILD CARE	3
2.1 FAMILY DAY CARE PROVIDERS/REGISTERED PROVIDERS	3
2.2 GROUP FAMILY DAY CARE PROVIDERS	4
2.3 DAY CARE CENTERS	4
2.4 SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE	4
2.5 LEGALLY EXEMPT (INFORMAL) CHILD CARE PROVIDERS	4
3.0 CONTRACTED VS. NON-CONTRACTED CHILD CARE	5
3.1 CONTRACTED CHILD CARE	5
3.2 NON-CONTRACTED CHILD CARE	6
4.0 CHILD CARE UNITS	6
4.1 DAY CARE SERVICES UNIT (DCS)	6
4.2 JOBS <i>PLUS!</i>	6
4.3 PROTECTIVE/PREVENTIVE (P/P)	7
4.4 FOSTER CARE DAY CARE	7
5.0 ABSENCE POLICY	7
5.1 GENERAL	7
5.2 HOLIDAYS	9
5.3 PLANNED PROVIDER CLOSINGS	9
5.4 EXTENDED ABSENCES/EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES	9
5.5 SNOW DAYS/EMERGENCY CLOSING POLICY	9
5.6 EXCESSIVE ABSENCES	10
5.7 ABSENCES DUE TO TRANSFER	10
5.8 ABSENCES DUE TO TERMINATION	10
6.0 AUTHORIZATION PROCESS	10
6.1 AUTHORIZATION NOTICE (“ACCEPTANCE LETTER”)	10
6.2 EXTENDING CHILD CARE AUTHORIZATIONS	11
7.0 DISCONTINUANCE/DENIAL NOTICES	11
8.0 BILLING	12
8.1 BILLING/PAYMENT PROCESS	12
8.2 OBTAINING BILLING FORMS	13
8.3 COMPLETING THE BILLING FORMS	13
8.4 PARENT FEES/FAMILY SHARE	14
8.5 NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT CONTRIBUTION	15
8.6 PARTIAL PAYMENTS	15
8.7 BILLING ERRORS AND OMISSIONS/RE-BILLING	15

8.8 OVERPAYMENTS	15
8.9 BILLING DISPUTES/APPEAL PROCESS	15
8.10 REGISTRATION FEES/ACTIVITY FEES/OTHER FEES	16
9.0 PROVIDER RECORDKEEPING	16
10.0 FRAUD	16
10.1 FRAUD ALLEGATIONS CONCERNING PROVIDERS	16
10.2 FRAUD ALLEGATIONS CONCERNING CLIENTS	17
11.0 RATES	17
12.0 ROTATING SHIFT	18
13.0 SEPARATE PROVIDER/CLIENT AGREEMENTS	19
14.0 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS	19
15.0 SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN	19
16.0 SECURITY DEPOSITS	20
17.0 TAX REPORTING	20
18.0 TRANSPORTATION	20
19.0 TRANSFERS BETWEEN PROVIDERS	21
20.0 WAITING LISTS	21
21.0 RESOURCES, INFORMATIONAL MEETINGS AND TRAININGS	22
21.1 CHILD CARE RESOURCE CONTACTS	22
21.2 INFORMATIONAL MEETINGS	22
21.3 TRAININGS	22

ONONDAGA COUNTY CHILD CARE POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND BILLING MANUAL

1.0 INTRODUCTION



- This document constitutes the operating policies and procedures for all child care providers who provide child care and receive payment for child care services through the Onondaga County Department of Social Services (OCDSS).
- OCDSS will have the most current *Child Care Policies, Procedures and Billing Manual* available on OCDSS website at <http://www.ongov.net/dss/dayCare.html>

2.0 TYPES OF PROVIDERS WHO PROVIDE CHILD CARE



The following are the types of child care providers covered by this manual and a list of child care resources.

Note: for information or guidance on licensing or registration issues, contact:

NYS Office of Children and Family Services
Syracuse Regional Office
The Atrium
100 S. Salina Street, Suite 350
Syracuse, NY 13202
(315) 423-1202

2.1 FAMILY DAY CARE PROVIDERS/REGISTERED PROVIDERS

Family Day Care Providers care for up to six children at a time in a residence. They may add one to two school-age children with approval of their Registrar (maximum allowable number includes the provider's own children who have not yet entered kindergarten). There must be at least one provider present for every two children under two years of age. Capacity must be approved by the provider's Registrar. Registered providers may provide overnight care as long as they are in compliance with New York State Regulations 417.3(c), 417.7(a), and 417.8(a). The local Registrar, Child Care Solutions, works under the auspices of the New York State Office of Children & Family Services.

2.2 GROUP FAMILY DAY CARE PROVIDERS

Group Family Day Care Providers care for up to twelve children at a time in a residence and may add up to four school-age children with approval of their Licensor (maximum allowable number includes the provider's own children who have not yet entered kindergarten). A provider must use an assistant when more than eight children are present and there must be at least one provider present for every two children under two years of age. Capacity must be approved by the provider's Licensor. Licensed providers may provide overnight care as long as they are in compliance with New York State Regulations 416.3(c), 416.7(a), and 416.8(a). They are licensed by the New York State Office of Children & Family Services.

2.3 DAY CARE CENTERS

Day Care Centers are licensed facilities that provide care for more than six children. They are licensed by the New York State Office of Children & Family Services.

2.4 SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE

School-age child care programs are in registered facilities and provide care for more than six children. They, generally, serve school-age children from kindergarten through age 12 and care for children during non-school hours. They also may provide care during school vacation periods and holidays. The local Registrar, Child Care Solutions, works under the auspices of the New York State Office of Children & Family Services.

Note: OCDSS does not pay for universal pre-kindergarten or Head Start programs.

2.5 LEGALLY EXEMPT (INFORMAL) CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

A. Legally Exempt Family Child Care

These providers are legally exempt from day care licensing or registration requirements but must meet minimum state and county health and safety standards. Legally exempt providers care for one or two unrelated children outside of the child's home or for up to 8 related children. They must be at least 18 years of age, or if less than 18 meet the requirement for the employment of minors. They may provide care for more than two children if it is three hours a day or less. They may be a relative of the child in care, except when they are legally responsible or a caretaker relative of the child(ren).

To receive subsidy payments these providers must be enrolled. Child Care Solutions is the enrolling agency for providers in Onondaga County. They are located at 6724 Thompson Road, Syracuse, NY 13211. They can be reached at: telephone 446-1220, FAX 446-2010 or e-mail [CCS@ childcaresolutionscn.org](mailto:CCS@childcaresolutionscn.org).

B. Legally Exempt Group Child Care

Legally-exempt group child care refers to care provided by those center-based programs, that are not required to be licensed by or registered with the NYS Office of Children and Family Services but which meet all applicable State or local requirements for such child care programs.

Caregivers of legally-exempt group child care include, but are not limited to:

1. Pre-kindergarten and nursery school programs for children three years of age or older, and programs for school-age children conducted during non-school hours, operated by public school districts or by private schools or academies which provide elementary

- or secondary education or both in accordance with the compulsory education requirements of the NYS Education Law, provided that such pre-kindergarten, nursery school or school-age programs are located on the premises or campus where the elementary or secondary education is provided;
2. nursery schools and programs for pre-school age children operated by non-profit agencies or organizations or private proprietary agencies which provide services for three or less hours per day;
 3. summer day camps operated by non-profit agencies or organizations or private proprietary agencies in accordance with Subpart 7-2 of the State Sanitary Code;
 4. day care centers, family day care homes and other child care programs located on federal property which are operated in compliance with the applicable federal laws and regulations for such child care programs;
 5. day care centers, family day care homes and other child care programs located on tribal property which are operated in compliance with the applicable tribal laws and regulations for such child care programs; and,
 6. school-age programs caring for six or fewer children.

To receive subsidy payments these providers must be enrolled. Child Care Solutions is the enrolling agency for providers in Onondaga County. They are located at 6724 Thompson Road, Syracuse, NY 13211. They can be reached at: telephone 446-1220, FAX 446-2010 or e-mail CCS@childcaresolutionscny.org.

3.0 CONTRACTED VS. NON-CONTRACTED CHILD CARE



Contracted providers receive a negotiated rate from OCDSS and are allowed to charge for absences up to the limits set forth in Section 5 Absences of this manual. Non-contracted providers do NOT get paid for absences but are paid at their private pay rate not to exceed the OCFS set market rate for the type of care provided

3.1 CONTRACTED CHILD CARE

A provider must be licensed/registered to enter into a contract with OCDSS (day care centers, school-age programs, family and group family day care providers).

- A. In addition to any policies and procedures outlined in this manual, contracted providers must adhere to all other requirements outlined in their contracts. Where there appears to be conflict between the two documents, language in the contract prevails.
 - For day care centers, school age programs, family or group providers to become contracted contact: Anthony Morris, Administrative Services Division, 4th Floor, Civic Center, 421 Montgomery Street, 4th Floor, Syracuse, NY 13202; telephone 435-2947.
 - If a provider changes status (e.g., from family day care to group family day care) the provider must request a new contract and submit a new private pay letter and a copy of his or her license.

- B. A contract is effective in the month it is returned and accepted by OCDSS. For example, if a contract ended in December and a new contract was returned with January's billing in February, January would be a non-contracted month. ***A contract will not be accepted unless it is complete.***

3.2 NON-CONTRACTED CHILD CARE

- A. Non-contracted providers cannot bill for absences or holidays.
B. By regulation, OCDSS cannot pay a non-contracted provider for Preventive child care.

4.0 CHILD CARE UNITS



There are four units through which a family might be eligible for child care assistance from Onondaga County:

4.1 DAY CARE SERVICES UNIT (DCS)

The Day Care Services Unit includes: (1) Transitional Child Care (TCC) - for families whose Family Assistance case has closed within the last year due to excess income, received Family Assistance three out of the last six months prior to case closing, and whose household income is under 200% of the State poverty level; (2) Low Income Day Care - for families earning under 200% of the State poverty level and not eligible under TCC; (3) Teenage Parent - for parents under the age of 19 and in high school; and (4) Temporary Incapacity - for families where there is medical verification that child care is needed and whose household income is under 200% of the federal poverty level. Furthermore the parent/guardian must have been employed and is expected to return to employment within 30 days.

4.2 JOBSPLUS!

JOBSplus! is Onondaga County's welfare employment program which is a partnership between Onondaga Community College and the Onondaga County Department of Social Services. Anyone who is receiving Temporary Assistance and who is deemed employable is mandated to participate with the JOBSplus! program.

Most jobseekers begin working with JOBSplus! immediately when they apply for Temporary Assistance. As applicants, if employment is in place or is found, JOBSplus! will work with clients to meet their day care needs within the parameters allowed by regulation. From the time of application for Temporary Assistance, JOBSplus! will provide child care for any activities required by JOBSplus! until full-time employment is obtained. At that point, child care responsibility is usually transitioned to the Day Care Services Unit.

Main Office:

- Rosamond Gifford Learn to Work Center,
677 South Salina Street, Syracuse, NY 13202

Hours: M – F, 8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Phone: 442-3242 Fax: 442-3254

Other JOBSplus! Offices:

- Bridge: 100 New Street, Syracuse, NY 13202
Phone: 475-7554 Fax: 475-3509
- Civic Center: TA/FS Intake/Application Unit, 2nd Floor, 421 Montgomery Street, Syracuse, NY 13202
Phone: 435-2526 Fax: 435-3599

Who to Call:

Any problem related to child care issues may be addressed to the individual participant’s Job Coach and/or Technical Assistant. If you cannot resolve your issue with their help contact the Supportive Services Team Leader, Paul Winterton (located at the main office at 442-3242).

4.3 PROTECTIVE/PREVENTIVE (P/P)

These cases involve families serviced by the Department of Social Services Child Protective or Preventive programs, whose children are not in foster care and where the child care is part of their “approved child welfare plan.” **Children receiving preventive child care must use a contracted provider.**

4.4 FOSTER CARE DAY CARE

Child care for children who have been placed in foster homes will be paid up to the market rate currently in effect. The provider will be paid, in most cases, by the County. Authorization must come from Children’s Division.

5.0 ABSENCE POLICY



5.1 GENERAL

- A. Legally exempt and non-contracted providers may not charge or request payment from the County for absences**, but must mark absences on the billing form for days that care is authorized, and the child is not present. *Note: non-contracted providers may choose to charge parents for absences that are not reimbursed by OCDSS, but this is a business decision each provider must make.*
- B. All licensed/registered providers** must maintain a daily sign-in sheet, which contains the child’s name, and a parent’s signature for both the time in, and time out each day. These sign-in sheets will be retained at the provider’s facility for use as requested by the County for auditing purposes for a minimum of one (1) year. Failure to maintain sign-in sheets, and produce them upon request, may warrant the County withholding payment until time of verification.

- C. A provider, who has a contract with the County (“contracted provider”), may be paid by the County for absences up to the following limits:

Type of Case	Regular Absences	Extended Absences
Day Care Services Unit, Preventive or Foster Care Cases, JOBS <i>plus!</i> cases	No more than 12 absences per quarter (see pro-ration chart below) <i>Important Note: See E below for information on countable versus non-countable absences</i>	No more than 3 additional absences per month with a maximum of 8 additional absences per quarter* (JOBS absences must be billed as “J”.)*

* Refer to **Section 5.4**

- D. Maximum regular absences are available based on the date the child enters care. A child beginning care at a provider may not be in a new case, but in a case transferred from another provider. If the case is a case transferred from another contracted provider, there may be no absences available for that child. The new provider may contact the Accounting Division if there is a question on the absences remaining on a transferred case.

1st month of calendar quarter	2nd month of calendar quarter	3rd month of calendar quarter
<u>Jan., April, July or Oct.</u>	<u>Feb., May, Aug. or Nov.</u>	<u>Mar, June, Sept. or Dec.</u>
1 - 15 12 days	1-15 8 days	1-15 4 days
16 -30 10 days	16 - 30 6 days	16 - 30 2 days

- E. Attendance reflected on billing must be actual, accurate, and complete when turned in as part of the billing process. Absences are to be indicated for all times that a child is authorized to be in care, the provider is available but the child is not present on that day. *For contracted providers, an absence will not be counted when the 30 hour threshold that defines a week of full-time care has been reached without the use of the absence. Example: child is authorized for full-time Monday through Friday, child attends for 8 hours each day Monday through Thursday and is absent on Friday. An absence should be marked on the billing form for Friday, but since the child has already attended 32 hours the absence would not count toward paid absences. To aid in the decision on whether to use an absence in calculating payment those absences that are not to be used should be indicated as an ‘N.’*
- F. For Protective/Preventive cases, notice must be given by the child care provider to the Protective/Preventive case manager and the Day Care Services Unit for each accumulated 5 absences in a quarter or a pattern of absences of a child, e.g., absent every Wednesday.
- Note: Case managers should be notified of all concerns involving the children.**
- G. If a child is authorized for care before and after school plus school holidays and is in attendance for a full day that is not a school holiday the provider must include an explanation as to why the child is in care and not in school (e.g., sick).

5.2 HOLIDAYS

Note: The number of allowable days is set by State regulation and is limited to 5 per calendar year.

The County will pay contracted providers for absences *when a child is authorized for care* on the following legal holidays: New Years Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas, and also, on Snow Days/Emergency Closings (see **Section 5.5**). However, the maximum number of allowable days under this section *and Section 5.5* is a combined 5 per child per calendar year. Payment is only available for children in receipt of a child care subsidy who would otherwise be present at the child care program. Also, payment is not available if the family must make other child care arrangements for that day.

5.3 PLANNED PROVIDER CLOSINGS

For closings, other than the holidays listed above:

- Providers are not allowed to bill for absences; and
- As much notice as possible should be given to clients to allow them sufficient time to arrange alternate care. Clients should be told to contact their child care worker to assist with the arrangement for and payment of the alternate provider.

5.4 EXTENDED ABSENCES/EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

For contracted providers, absences due to extenuating circumstances are available beyond the regular absence policy on a case-by-case basis. Three additional days in one calendar month are permitted, providing that absences do not total more than 20 days in any three-month period. The maximum additional absences that can be authorized in a quarter are 8. The provider must contact the child care worker (for *JOBSplus!* cases the supervisor must be contacted) to apply for these additional absences. The program supervisor must approve these absences.

The following may be considered extenuating circumstances:

- A. The child is unable to attend because the caretaker must appear in court or keep other appointments related to the provision of preventive, foster care, adoption, or child protective services or other needs set forth in the child's services plan;
- B. The child is ill or has a handicapping condition which requires medical care or treatment, or the child requires routine medical care or treatment;
- C. The child's family is homeless and the homelessness necessitates the child's absence from child care; or
- D. The child's parent/caretaker is participating in an approved education or training program and the child's absences coincide with a temporary suspension of such program for purposes of including, but not limited to, holidays, school conferences, and snow days.

5.5 SNOW DAYS/EMERGENCY CLOSING POLICY

The Department of Social Services will make a determination on each snow day, emergency closing, or extenuating circumstances request, but in no case will the County pay two different providers for the same time period.

5.6 EXCESSIVE ABSENCES

The day care provider **must** contact the Day Care case manager if the child has been absent 5 consecutive days and the provider has not received a discontinuance notice. This is a means of double checking the status of the case, even if the provider is not seeking extended absences and also so that the Department can check to see if there is any change in the client's need for the day care.

Note: Failure to notify the Day Care case manager may result in the limitation of absences paid.

5.7 ABSENCES DUE TO TRANSFER

The county cannot pay two providers for the same child. If a child transfers to another provider absences cannot be paid to the original provider.

5.8 ABSENCES DUE TO TERMINATION

A provider may not charge for absences if the provider has terminated the child(ren) from care.

6.0 AUTHORIZATION PROCESS



6.1 AUTHORIZATION NOTICE (“ACCEPTANCE LETTER”)

- A. **Providers who take children prior to receiving written authorization (except for emergency Protective or Preventive cases as outlined in D below) are not guaranteed payment by the County. The provider must consider a child a private pay client until they receive an authorization from the County.**
- B. An authorization is an agreement that the County will pay the client's child care costs up to the appropriate allowance (less parent fees/family share, if applicable) to a specific provider within the specified periods of authorization. The agreement is between the County and the client only. The County will only pay the specific provider for the days the child(ren) is(are) actually in attendance with the exception of allowable absences paid to contracted providers. The County will not pay two different providers for the same time period.
- C. If a parent uses a child care program above and beyond the authorized days and times, the parent is responsible for payment. The County will pay only for hours the client was working or in assigned activities and will not pay more than the authorized hours that will include travel time. If a provider is aware that the care is being given for reasons not stated, such as shopping, other appointments, etc., the case manager should be contacted.
- D. Providers will be notified in writing when a client is authorized to receive child care assistance. No representative for either the County or the provider should at any time issue or accept an authorization that is not in writing, except in the case of an emergency regarding a Protective, Preventive or Foster Care client. In this case, the Preventive/

Protective Day Care Unit and Foster Care Day Care Unit only can verbally authorize care and written authorization will follow as soon as possible.

- E. If timelines are pressing because of a parent's work or school schedule, the provider can ask the Day Care Unit or JOBS*plus!* worker to fax the authorization.
- F. Dates on the authorization form include the first and last days of service that is authorized.
- G. A copy of any corrections that are made to the original authorization (reduction in hours, or increase in parent fee, for example) will be sent to the provider prior to the date that the change is to take effect.
- H. Authorizations may be written as follows:
 - A total number of hours for which care is needed for specific days of the week.
 - If days of care are regular it will be noted on the authorization (e.g., M-F or M, W, F).
 - If a client works a rotating shift it will be noted on the authorization.
 - School-aged children needing care on school holidays will be authorized for a designated number of hours per day for school holidays.
 - If child care is to be authorized to a provider for a 6th day in a week, it will be separately notated on the authorization letter to ensure correct payment.
- H. If a client has lost his or her job, the worker may approve child care during the period that the client is seeking employment. This approval is given on a case-by-case basis and must be requested as soon as job is lost.

6.2 EXTENDING CHILD CARE AUTHORIZATIONS

If the County chooses to extend child care services beyond the date indicated on the initial authorization letter, an additional authorization letter indicating a new start and end date will be sent. If a new authorization letter extending care is not received by the provider prior to the end of the original authorization letter, the provider should assume the parent is no longer eligible for child care services.

7.0 DISCONTINUANCE/DENIAL NOTICES



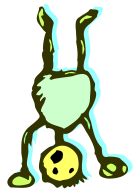
NOTE: This section does not apply to transfers to another child care provider - see Section 19 for information on "Transfers between Providers."

- A. Discontinuance notices will be sent to providers as a mechanism to keep providers informed of child care eligibility status, and, while not required by regulation, are important to advise day care providers of changes in eligibility for which they may bill.
- B. Providers will be mailed a notice of discontinuance prior to any change in child care eligibility status that affects the day care payment. Generally this will be ten days before

the discontinuance, however there is no guarantee. Notices to providers will be mailed at the same time they are mailed to clients. **By regulation a client is normally entitled to ten days notice, unless she or he waives his or her right. However only she or he may insist on it; a provider does not have that option.**

- C. A discontinuance notice is only necessary if authorized day care is reduced from the time period reflected in the most recent authorization letter.
 - When a client receives a letter of discontinuance, the provider will receive notification that the client is being discontinued. **No letters of discontinuance will be backdated.** They will reflect changes to authorization on or after the date of the letter unless there has been specific agreement between the provider and the County that the effective date of the change is prior to the date the letter is sent. In this case the date the agreement was made and the names of the people who agreed will be noted on the letter.
 - Day Care Services, Protective/Preventive, or Foster Care will send a “disregard discontinuance” notice if the client corrects the problem that caused them to receive a discontinuance notice. *JOBSplus!* and Foster Care Child Care will send a new authorization notice if care is to be continued.
- D. Providers will not be paid beyond the date noted on the discontinuance notice.
- E. Participants may be discontinued from child care assistance if it is determined that funding limitations exist. Priority for continuing assistance will be outlined in the County’s Consolidated Services Plan. Available on the County website at <http://www.ongov.net/dss/dayCare.html>
- F. Ten days’ notice cannot be guaranteed when a child is placed in foster care. Also, no payment can be made from the time the child is placed in foster care.
- G. Providers will be mailed a notice of denial when an application for Day Care Services has not been approved.

8.0 BILLING



8.1 BILLING/PAYMENT PROCESS

- A. All child care providers are expected to submit their billings for services after the last business day of the month.
- B. The County is committed to sending out provider payments for services in a timely manner. In most instances, payments will be made by the 15th business day of the month providing bills are received from the provider.
- C. The Accounting Department will not accept any calls regarding current payments until after the 10th business day of a month. After the 10th business day, a provider with questions may call the Accounting Department between 11:00 am - 12:00 pm and 2:00 - 4:00 pm at 435-2947.

- D. **Important: Providers may only bill for days a client worked or was in an assigned activity. If you believe a client is not utilizing child care for the purpose authorized (e.g., not working, not participating in employment activities or service activities) contact the assigned worker.**

8.2 OBTAINING BILLING FORMS

Billing forms may be obtained at:

1. **Accounting Division** 4th floor Civic Center 421 Montgomery St Syracuse, NY 13202
2. **Day Care Services Unit** 5th floor County Office 600 S State St Syracuse, NY 13202
3. **JOBS^{plus}!** 677 S Salina St Syracuse, NY 13202
4. **Child Care Solutions** 6724 Thompson Rd Syracuse, NY 13211

8.3 COMPLETING THE BILLING FORMS

- A. **DO NOT** submit a billing form if you do not have an authorization for a child.
- B. To be paid you must submit a *Request for Payment Form*.
- C. All day care billing forms should be sent to:
- Day Care Accounting
4th Floor, Civic Center
421 Montgomery Street
Syracuse, New York 13202
- or deposited in the drop box located near the Civic Center Madison St. entrance.
- D. Keep a record of your billing forms and a record of the expected amount owed to you by the Onondaga County Department of Social Services.
- E. *Request for Payment Forms* should be completed as follows:
1. Print your name, address, and phone number.
 2. Print vendor number (found in the upper right hand corner of the remittance statement).
 3. Print month and year of service billed (submit only one set of billings per month).
 4. Case information: use only one line per child, print case number (if known), case name, child's name and age. All children being provided day care can be listed on one form. Individual forms for each child/family are not necessary. Foster Care children will be billed on the same form as all other children.
 5. Licensed/registered providers fill in the actual number of hours of service provided to the nearest one-half hour. Legally exempt/informals must enter start and end times.
 6. If a child is authorized but not in attendance enter: A, absence; J, JOBS absence (only allowed with prior approval); or H, holiday, as appropriate.

Note: for contracted providers use N, non-paid absence, when child is not in attendance and you do not want a paid absence used (see also Section 5.1 E.)

7. If a child is authorized for care before and after school plus school holidays and is in attendance for a full day that is not a school holiday the provider must include an explanation as to why the child is in care and not in school (e.g., sick).
8. Compute billing charges. (OCDSS Accounting will complete the OCDSS only section; however, you may complete the provider section for your own benefit.)

- Using appropriate weekly, daily, part-day, or hourly rates, calculate the total charge.

Note: When a month ends in mid-week, the daily rate is used for each day in the beginning of the week that falls in the month being paid (if the hours total 30 or more the weekly rate would be used). The next month if in the remainder of the week the child ends up reaching 30 hours for the week then the weekly rate is applied. From the weekly amount, the amount already paid the previous month is subtracted out. A week is defined as starting on Monday and ending on Sunday.

If the hours that fall in the first month are 30 or greater, the weekly amount is paid. Any remaining days in the next month will be ignored since the provider has already received payment for that week.

- Deduct the parent fee.
 - Deduct any contribution from a non-custodial parent.
 - Final total is the Social Service Charge. (The expected amount from OCDSS.)
9. (a) For licensed/registered providers: sign and date bill (unsigned bills will be returned for signature, thus delaying payment).
 - (b) For legally exempt/informal providers the bill must be signed by the parent along with being signed and dated by the provider

Note: Do not submit your bill until all service for the month has been completed.

Note: Incomplete, unsigned, unreadable bills and bills that are submitted before all service for the month has been provided will be returned. Example: a bill submitted on 5/27 with an entry for 5/28 would be returned.

8.4 PARENT FEES/FAMILY SHARE

- A. It is the provider's responsibility to collect the parent fee/family share, and to notify the client if the parent fee/family share is late. The parent fee/family share is paid directly to the provider.
- B. The parent fee/family share is noted on the *Authorization Letter*.
- C. Parents are required to pay a parent fee/family share regardless of absences, vacations, etc. A parent fee/family share is to be paid to the provider who is authorized to bill and does bill for any particular period.
- D. Providers should send notice to the County if the parent fee/family share is late, and the County will either work with the client to adjust his or her budget and parent fee/family share if an error has been made, or send the client a discontinuance notice.

- E. The provider is responsible for notifying the County of any late parent fee/family share. In the event that the provider fails to notify the County of late parent fees/family shares, and the client wishes to transfer to another provider, the maximum the client will be required to pay prior to transferring to another provider will be the parent fee/family share owed, or \$250, whichever is less. Any remaining balance would be a private matter between the provider and the client.
- F. The parent fee/family share is deducted on a weekly basis (Monday – Sunday). The parent fee/family share is subtracted from the amount paid each week. If the parent fee/family share exceeds the payment for one child the remainder is applied to any siblings in care. No excess parent fee/family share is carried over to the next week. In split week situations any remaining parent fee/family share will be applied to any additional payments that fall in the next month.

8.5 NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT CONTRIBUTION

Family Court, or any court which has jurisdiction on child support issues, may order the non-custodial parent to pay toward the cost of child care. The child care provider will be informed of the non-custodial parent's contribution on the authorization letter.

8.6 PARTIAL PAYMENTS

The County will pay for all cases that are authorized on bills submitted by providers. If a bill contains a case(s) that initially does not have an authorization, Accounting will attempt to process further payment as quickly as possible once there is an authorization on the system for that case(s). It is anticipated that payments for cases whose authorizations have been corrected should be before the end of the month.

8.7 BILLING ERRORS AND OMISSIONS/RE-BILLING

Providers are responsible for carefully reviewing bills for accuracy before submitting them. However if a billing error is discovered, a provider may re-bill within 6 months of the original billing.

8.8 OVERPAYMENTS

In the event of an overpayment OCDSS reserves the right to seek restitution from a provider regardless of whose error caused the overpayment.

8.9 BILLING DISPUTES/APPEAL PROCESS

In the event of nonpayment for services for a client of the provider, the following procedure shall be followed until the variance is settled.

1. The provider must first review his or her work in an effort to find any error that may have caused the nonpayment.
2. The provider must notify the client's caseworker for authorization issues.
3. The provider may appeal to the supervisor of the worker.
4. The provider may appeal in writing to the Division Director of the unit that is authorizing the child care or the Administrative Supervisor of Administrative

Services if it is a payment calculation/accounting issue not an authorization issue. Contact information is listed in the cover letter to this manual.

As a final avenue of appeal, the provider may petition in writing to the Commissioner of Social Services, John H. Mulroy Civic Center, 12th Floor, 421 Montgomery Street, Syracuse, NY 13202

8.10 REGISTRATION FEES/ACTIVITY FEES/OTHER FEES

- Registration fees will be paid only to Day Care Centers. The County may pay a registration fee if it is charged as a *one-time only* fee and then only once per center per child. Registration fees may only be charged to the County if they are also charged to private pay parents/caretakers.
- The County will not pay activities fees.
- Contracted providers may not charge any OCDSS client additional fees that are over the approved rate for care (e.g., vacation time for provider).

9.0 PROVIDER RECORDKEEPING



Licensed\Registered providers are required to maintain an attendance sheet. The attendance sheet must indicate the drop-off and pick-up times for each child and be initialed by the parent or guardian. Unless requested by the accounting department, do not send these sheets with your billing forms. You are required to maintain these records for a least a year from the date of service and have them available for review by OCDSS.

10.0 FRAUD



10.1 FRAUD ALLEGATIONS CONCERNING PROVIDERS

- A. Cases will be referred to the OCDSS Legal Division anytime there is a question regarding any suspected misuse of the program, misrepresentation of eligibility documentation, suspected fraudulent bills submitted by a child care provider, or a provider receiving benefits or payments he or she was not entitled to receive.
- B. Allegations of provider fraud will investigated by the OCDSS Legal Division. Failure to fully cooperate with the investigation may result in discontinuance from the child care program.
- C. Payments will continue to the provider until the OCDSS Legal Division informs the Accounting Division to suspend payments. The provider and/or the client will be notified that an investigation is ongoing.

- D. Upon preliminary review of possible child care provider fraud, the provider will be interviewed by a fraud investigator and program or accounting staff as necessary.
- E. Upon a finding of fraud or improper billing, the provider will be required to make full restitution to the County by means of a repayment agreement developed by either the Legal Division or the Administrative Services Division. Failure to enter into the repayment agreement will result in discontinuance from the child care program until such time as a repayment agreement is established. Failure to make the required payments, as specified in the terms of the repayment agreement, will result in discontinuance from the child care program until such time as all delinquent payments are brought up to date.
- F. A second violation will result in restitution payments plus one-year suspension from status as a child care vendor for the County.
- G. A third violation will result in permanent disbarment as a child care vendor for the County.
- H. If after any investigation it is determined that the child care provider committed serious, intentional violations, the provider will be required to make full restitution, and at the discretion of the County, may be barred from continued participation in the child care program. In appropriate circumstances, the violation will be referred to the police and District Attorney for prosecution.

10.2 FRAUD ALLEGATIONS CONCERNING CLIENTS

- A. Cases will be referred to the OCDSS Legal Division anytime there is a question regarding any suspected misuse of the program, misrepresentation of documentation of eligibility, suspected fraudulent bills submitted by a client receiving benefits or payments she or he was not entitled to receive.
- B. If the Legal Division determines that a fraudulent act has occurred, the client's case will be closed and the provider will receive a discontinuance notice. In some cases a client will enter into repayment agreements and his or her case will remain open. In other instances, the case may be referred to the District Attorney's office.

11.0 RATES



- A. OCDSS will not pay more than providers charge private pay clients. OCDSS *cannot* pay more than the market rates established by New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). Each year (usually in November) OCDSS will send a letter to all contracted providers asking them to specify the rate they charge their private pay (non-County) clients. A provider may not charge OCDSS more than she or he charges private pay clients. If a non-contracted provider wishes to change the rate charged during the year she or he may contact the Accounting Division to request an updated "private pay" letter. OCDSS reserves the right to make only one rate adjustment per year. Providers must have a private pay letter on file before they will receive a child care payment from OCDSS.
- B. OCDSS will pay providers by the type of provider and the age of the child.

C. Change in age category - if a birthday occurs which will result in a change in rate for a child, the new rate will become effective the first day of the following billing period. When a child turns 13 years old, all child care will be terminated effective on his or her birthday, unless the child is receiving Preventive Day Care. Then on a case-by-case basis care may be continued until the end of the school year. Also child care may continue beyond a child's 13th birthday if there is existing medical documentation that the child needs continuing care.

D. The following rate definitions apply per NYS regulations:

Weekly	These rates are applied when child care services are provided for 30 or more hours over the course of five or fewer days in a single week.
Daily	This rate is applied when the child care services are provided for at least six but fewer than 12 hours per day.
Part Day	This rate is applied when the child care services are provided for at least three but fewer than six hours per day.
Hourly	This rate is applied when the child care services are provided for fewer than three hours per day.

F. A contracted provider may not charge OCDSS clients more than their OCDSS rate. Non-contracted providers may not charge more than the NYS Market Rate for the county where they provide care.

G. If a provider changes from one provider type to another (e.g., from Family Day Care to Group Family Day Care) it is the responsibility of the provider to notify Anthony Morris, Accounting Division (435-2947) of the change in provider type. The appropriate pay rate changes will then be made. The provider must submit a new private pay letter and copy of the new license. If the provider is contracted, a new contract must also be signed and returned. Any increase in rates will be effective for the billings of the month in which the contract and all required documents are received and accepted by OCDSS, e.g., if a contract is returned and accepted in January, January's billings received in February will be the first paid under the new rate.

12.0 ROTATING SHIFT



- A. Authorization letters for clients with rotating shift schedules will contain the maximum hours of care the client may need.
- B. Verification that child care is provided only during hours the client is working will be accomplished through the recertification process, random checking, and fraud investigations.

13.0 SEPARATE PROVIDER/CLIENT AGREEMENTS



Providers can enter into separate agreements with OCDSS clients concerning issues such as notification of withdrawal, pick up times, lateness. Contracted providers may not enter into separate agreements with OCDSS clients for any issues involving extra charges such as vacation time for providers, or extra fees.

14.0 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS



Any provider who establishes and operates a scholarship program for private pay clients must do all of the following:

- Collect donations or conduct fundraisers for the scholarship program that have been specifically earmarked for the scholarship program;
- Designate a fund or account separate from his or her operating account for scholarship funds;
- Develop an application process for the funds that does not discriminate against OCDSS clients;
- Establish clear eligibility requirements; and
- Provide OCDSS with above information.



15.0 SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

- A. OCDSS is authorized to pay a higher rate for special needs children. The provider must complete a special needs application.
- B. The additional funding is available:
 - For a child who meets the criteria for special needs (refer to application for special needs funding) and meets all other eligibility criteria for child care funding;
 - When a completed application with all appropriate verification is submitted and approved;
 - Only for the period of approval; and
 - Only for incurred additional costs as the result of caring for such children.
- C. A new application re-verifying all eligibility criteria must then be submitted prior to the end of the approval period if ongoing funding is being sought.

- D. Applications are available online at [Special Needs Application](#) or by calling - 435-2700 x304. Requests should be submitted to the Temporary Assistance Division, 3rd Floor, Civic Center, 421 Montgomery Street, Syracuse, NY 13202.
- E. Further information about apply for Special Needs funding, including current maximum rates is available in the [Special Needs Cover Letter](#)

16.0 SECURITY DEPOSITS



OCDSS does not pay security deposits.

17.0 TAX REPORTING



All child care payments made to providers over \$600 annually must be reported to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). An IRS Form 1099 will be submitted to the IRS reporting all County child care payments. You are required to report this non-employee compensation on your tax return and you are allowed to take business expenses against the income. For more information contact the IRS or your tax advisor.

A provider cannot be paid until an IRS W-9 form is completed and returned to OCDSS.

18.0 TRANSPORTATION

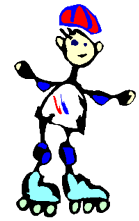


Transportation for child care will only be provided and paid where permitted by applicable state regulations. OCDSS will pay for Day Care Center operated/contracted transportation services based on client need as long as the total charge for the client is less than the state-approved market rate for the center if being paid with child care funds. Payments for Day Care Center operated/contracted transportation services may exceed market rate if paid through *JOBSplus!*.

Day Care Centers offering transportation must have filed documents stating that the transportation services are operated or contracted for by the center and the rates charged must be filed annually with OCDSS accounting.

No other transportation costs related to child care can be paid.

19.0 TRANSFERS BETWEEN PROVIDERS



Note: Procedures regarding transfers are different than those for discontinuances of care (see Section 7.0)

- A. OCDSS policy is that a client has the right to choose his or her child care provider, and therefore may transfer to a new provider. **OCDSS does not require that notice be given to the provider**; however, OCDSS does require that a new authorization be in effect before the client may begin to use a new provider.
- B. Existing authorizations are only valid for the provider indicated on the authorization letter. Switching children from one site to another, even within the same day care organization, must be prior approved. **The earliest effective date of such a transfer will be the date OCDSS is notified and approves of the change in provider. The start dates of these authorizations will not be backdated**, unless a verbal agreement between the child care worker and the provider has been reached and this must be written on the letter.
- C. Providers who choose to accept children prior to receiving written authorization or prior to the start date, or after the end date, as indicated on the authorization letter are doing so **AT THEIR OWN RISK**.
- D. Before a client who is receiving child care assistance through the Day Care Services Unit is permitted to transfer to a new child care provider, she or he must notify the child care worker. The Day Care Services Unit worker will contact the former provider and check on the payment of outstanding parent fees/family share. If parent fees/family share are paid, the worker will authorize child care with the new provider. The provider is responsible for notifying OCDSS of any late parent fee/family share. In the event that the provider fails to notify OCDSS of unpaid parent fees/family share, and the client wishes to transfer to another provider, the maximum the client will be required to pay prior to transferring to another provider will be the parent fee owed, or \$250 whichever is less. Any remaining balance would be a private matter between the provider and the client.
- E. The previous provider may not charge for absences if the provider has terminated the child(ren) from care.
- F. Providers may choose to enter into an agreement with the client requiring the client to provide a certain number of days notice before the child is moved. This would be a contract between the client and the provider, one to which OCDSS is not a party. Should the client violate this agreement the resolution is between the two parties involved.
- G. **Under no circumstances will OCDSS pay two providers for the same time period.**

20.0 WAITING LISTS



If it is determined by OCDSS that child care spending is at a maximum level based on funding, a waiting list will be established. Interested parents can complete a waiting list application.

Completed applications will be prioritized based on criteria in OCDSS's Consolidated Services Plan. ([CSP for Day Care](#))

21.0 RESOURCES, INFORMATIONAL MEETINGS AND TRAININGS



21.1 CHILD CARE RESOURCE CONTACTS

Child Care Solutions is a resource for providers throughout Onondaga County. It is the primary child care referral source in OCDSS. Child Care Solutions also administers the USDA Food Program, provides mini-grants to help providers, and holds training and meetings to benefit child care providers. For more information, contact 446-1220, CCS@childcaresolutionscny.org or visit their website at www.childcaresolutionscny.org.

21.2 INFORMATIONAL MEETINGS

A. Day Care Centers

Upon request OCDSS will send representatives to the Day Care Center providers' meetings held at monthly at Child Care Solutions.

B. Family and Group Family

Semi-annual informational meetings will be held at OCDSS for Family and Group Family providers in the spring and fall. Providers will be notified of the dates of these meetings through inserts with their payments and the dates will be listed on the website when scheduled. Pre-registration is required to attend these meetings.

Note: These informational meetings are NOT trainings.

21.3 TRAININGS

OCDSS may conduct trainings for providers when major changes in policy or procedures occur. If a training is scheduled providers will be notified through inserts with their payments and there will be information regarding the training posted on the website.