



RESOURCE AND REFERRAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

I. Introduction and Policies

CocoKids is a private nonprofit agency that has provided a variety of services to children and families in Contra Costa County since 1976. CocoKids operates in accordance with all applicable state and federal laws governing nonprofit organizations, including a volunteer Board of Directors.

The Mission of CocoKids is to provide leadership to promote and advance quality care and early education. Through a variety of initiatives, programs and services, CocoKids partners with:

- Parents — to strengthen families.
- Child Care Providers — to build a system of quality care and early education that respects parents as primary caregivers and teachers, values diversity and encourages children to make positive life choices.
- Community — to broaden the base of support for children, families and quality care and early education.

Referral Policy:

CocoKids offers telephone and Internet referral services to help parents identify the licensed and license-exempt child care programs available in their neighborhoods. The referral service is staffed a minimum of 30 hours per week to all persons free of charge regardless of income level or other eligibility requirements. CocoKids does not recommend any particular child care provider, facility or service. These referrals are intended to provide parents with a maximum of choices, and should in no instance be thought of as a recommendation to a particular program or facility. Parents are informed that CocoKids has no duty to **supervise children, and that it is the parents' responsibility to choose a provider and monitor the quality of care. The term "parents" in this handbook refers to a child's mother, father, legal guardian, foster parents or responsible grandparent or relative. The term "provider" in this handbook refers to the person whose name appears as the responsible parties of the family child care or center facility licensed and issued by the State of California, The role of Community Care Licensing is to license and monitor family child care homes and child care centers, Their goal is to insure that licensed facilities comply with all California Health and Safety Regulations pertaining to Child Care.**

Non-discrimination Policy:

CocoKids refrains from religious instruction or worship and 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. If a child's parents speak a language other than English or are hearing impaired, information shall be provided either through written materials or through an interpreter in the language the parents understands.**

Notification of Parent Rights (Open Door Policy):

Parents are informed that prior to choosing a child care program, they have the right to review Community Care Licensing reports on facility site visits and substantiated complaint investigations. Parents also have **the right to visit their child's programs anytime during operating hours (Oliver's Law). Licensing regulations require both homes and centers to have an open-door policy, but they also state that anyone coming into the facility or home shall be respectful of the children's routines and activities (Health and Safety Code section 1596.875).** Child care centers must be available for drop-in visits by the public anytime during business hours. Homes must be available for inspection by the parents of children enrolled in their program

during business hours. CocoKids reserves the right to visit licensed homes and centers unannounced at anytime during hours of operation.

Americans With Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act is a federal law that welcomes the enrollment of children with disabilities in child care and prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities. It requires that child care providers **not discriminate based on a child's disability. Providers are required to offer reasonable accommodation** to enable children with disabilities to become fully included in the program. An accommodation is considered **"reasonable" if it does not cause "undue hardship" to the provider. This is assessed on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the provider's available resources. CocoKids' Inclusion Specialist can assist** providers in assessing and providing reasonable accommodations,

II. Programs at CocoKids

A. Parent Services:

CocoKids serves parents and families throughout Contra Costa County through Area Offices in Richmond, Concord, and Antioch.

1. Resource and Referral Services

CocoKids maintains a referral database on more than 1,500 caregivers in the county, including licensed family child care homes, child care centers, schools and recreation programs and other license- exempt **facilities. The term "licensed exempt facilities"** in this handbook includes in-home placement, co-ops, park and recreation departments and on-site school-age programs.

This computerized database contains the information used to create a list of potential child care options for inquiring parents. CocoKids assists parents in making informed choices about child care by answering questions about their options regarding:

- Different types of care
- How to find and evaluate care
- Help paying for child care
- Child behavior and parenting issues
- Current workshops and information materials

2. Warm-Line Parent Support

The Warm-Line is staffed a minimum of 30 hours per week by trained early childhood education professionals. All warm-line staff has also been given peer-counseling training. Topics of expertise include sibling rivalry, behavioral issues, help with finding affordable housing and concerns about returning to work. Anyone calling the referral lines can access the warm-line services.

3. Child Care Subsidies

Through the Child Care Fund Program, CocoKids provides sliding-scale child care subsidies for low- income families and families with children at risk. The Fund allows parents to choose from a wide range of child care options so that they may select the program that best meets the needs of their child and family. CocoKids also maintains an Eligibility List for those parents seeking assistance paying for their child care. As subsidy funds become available, parents are notified in order of priority. It is not a waiting list and priority is determined by family size and income as well as need. Interested parents are directed to contact CocoKids for information about eligibility requirements and for an application to get on our eligibility list.

B. Provider Services

CocoKids serves licensed child care providers throughout Contra Costa County through Area Offices in Richmond, Concord, and Antioch.

1. Referral Database

CocoKids maintains computerized files that list those licensed centers, licensed exempt facilities, and licensed family child care providers who choose to register with the Referral Department. These files are confidential and are not available to the public. The provider database houses information about the services providers offer. This database is used to create a list of available providers for parents who are seeking appropriate child care settings for their children.

2. Child Health and Nutrition Program

CocoKids' Child Health and Nutrition Department provides:

- Reimbursement for nutritious meals served in licensed family child care homes participating on the **USDA's Child Care Food Program.**
- Nutrition and health information is distributed to parents, family child care providers and child care centers throughout Contra Costa County and Alameda County.
- On-site training and consultations to child care providers.
- Nutrition Edition, a newsletter with information on child health, nutrition, safety and educational activities.

3. New Business Start-Up Classes (Road to Success)

Cocokids' Area Offices provide technical assistance to both new and established providers on the management and operations of child care programs. This assistance includes information about state licensing regulations, business practices (including balancing budgets, payroll, taxes, establishing policies and procedures) and best practices regarding child growth and development. This information is provided to providers as a workshop series entitled *Road to Success*. Part of the ongoing mission of CocoKids is to improve the quality of care in Contra Costa County. Agency staff encourages all providers to take part in this no cost workshop series as well as other training opportunities through CocoKids.

4. Provider Training and Support

CocoKids' Learning Institute offers a variety of workshops on caring for children. Workshops are offered in different parts of the County and in different languages. To better meet the needs of child care providers, the Learning Institute provides workshops with open enrollment and workshops **online, and on weekends and evenings** CocoKids also supports the inclusion of children with special needs in child care. A Lending Library loans adaptive toys, communication devices, videos, and much more. Expert staff is available to offer assistance to child care providers interested in caring for children with special needs.

III. Accessing Services

A. Resource and Referral Services - Parents

When a parent calls CocoKids for child care referrals, information is requested in order to make appropriate referrals. If parents submit requests through the Internet, follow-up calls may be made to ascertain additional information. The information received from parents is considered confidential and is only available to **CocoKids' staff.** The information obtained includes, but may not be limited to:

- a) **Caller's name and phone** number
- b) Home address and e-mail address
- c) Name of closest elementary school
- d) Days and hours child care is needed
- e) Number of children needing care, their gender and date of birth
- f) Type of care parent is considering (e.g. center, family child care, religious, preschool, before/after school, etc.)
- g) Types of services parent is considering (such as hot meals, toilet training, transportation need, etc.)
- h) **An assessment of child(ren)'s special needs or preferences**
- i) Interest in the educational background of providers

After discussing their options, parents are given a list of at least four (4) programs, based on availability. This list will include the names, phone numbers and relevant program information for the child care **providers who appear to best meet the family's needs. For reasons of confidentiality, family child care providers' addresses are not released.**

Additional parent education information is also available. CocoKids offers a pamphlet entitled "Choosing Child Care" to assist parents in making their child care choices. This pamphlet includes a checklist and information on how to interview prospective providers, information about regulations and the phone number of Community Care Licensing. Parents are encouraged to visit as many programs as possible and to contact the CocoKids if additional referrals are required.

B. Enrolling in the Referral Database - Providers

Once a provider becomes licensed, they are eligible to be enrolled in the referral database. CocoKids staff **will then make an appointment to visit the provider's licensed home or center. The provider must submit a copy of the facility license to the CocoKids to be placed in an agency provider file, These files are only available to CocoKids staff:**

1. Creating a Provider Profile

In order to create a Provider Profile, which will be used to help parents choose an appropriate child care setting, the following information is obtained and shared with parents:

- **Provider's** name, address and phone number (street address is not shared with parents)
- License Information
- **Elementary school nearest to provider's home**
- Days, hours and months of operation
- Ages of children served
- Number of openings
- Fees charged
- **Participation in the USDA's Food Program**
- Languages spoken
- Experience and/or **training of** children with special needs
- Transportation provided (if any)
- Fictitious business name (if any)
- Documentation of: (if any)
 - Completion of National Accreditation Program
 - Completion of State of California Child Development Permit (licensed Family Child Care Participants)

- o Participation on USDA's Child Care Food Program

2. Keeping the Data Base Current

One of the most important aspects of maintaining a database is keeping the information collected on providers as current as possible. CocoKids staff and Providers work together to accomplish this. Below is the role each play in ensuring that parents receive the most updated information possible.

a. Role of CocoKids

Resource and Referral Counselors will attempt to contact providers by telephone to update vacancies and complete a profile update quarterly. If we cannot reach a provider by telephone for a three-month period, **Cocokids will call community care licensing to confirm active status and good standing of child care provider. Once the postcard has been mailed, the provider's name will not be given as a referral until availability is confirmed.**

b. Role of the Provider

Whenever a provider has a change in vacancies, schedule, program, fees, etc. it is their responsibility to contact CocoKids as soon as possible. This is to insure that parents receive the most accurate and up-to-date information available.

3. Training and Technical Assistance

a. Enrollment in Classes

Through the CocoKids' Learning Institute both parents and providers can access a variety workshops geared toward child development and early education. Please call, e-mail or visit www.cocokids.org to be added to the e-mail list.

b. Periodic Site Visits

CocoKids offers providers the opportunity to have a staff person visit their home or center to provide assistance with various aspects of running their child care program. Providers can get advice on a wide variety of issues that include information on caring for children with special needs, nutrition, early care and education, behavior problems and how to set up appropriate play areas for children. Providers who choose to participate on the Child Care Fund subsidy programs, the Child Care Food program, Community Development Block Grant, Quality Rating Improvement System, and Early Head Start should expect announced and/or unannounced site visits to review daily menus or Attendance Sheets.

c. Diverse Training Services

To better meet the needs of providers workshops are offered in different languages and offered **online and on weekends and** evenings in different parts of the county. Please contact CocoKids if you have any special training needs.

d. Business Skills

Through CocoKids' Area Offices, child care providers are encouraged to attend *Road to Success*, which is a series of workshops designed to help new and potential family child care providers start their new **business. Contact CocoKids' Area Offices** or www.cocokids.org for details.

e. Web Site

CocoKids' Web site, www.cocokids.org, is a 24-hour resource for parents and providers. Many of the materials the agency offers during consultations and through its Area Offices are available on the website. Site users can also research employment opportunities, submit forms and communicate with CocoKids without coming into the office.

IV. Parent / Provider Complaints and Concerns

While CocoKids is not a monitoring agency, it does occasionally receive complaints from parents or concerned citizens about providers. CocoKids staff is not authorized to offer any advice to parents or providers that may be construed as legal advice. Our policy is as follows:

A. Disputes or Disagreements:

Complaints arising from money or contractual issues, care-giving styles, and/or personality differences are considered parent/provider disagreements. Parents are advised to discuss these differences directly with their provider. Concerns about contracts and/or money issues may also be referred to the Child Care Law Center, (415) 558-8005, info@childcarelaw.org.

B. Licensing Violations and Regulatory Concerns:

Complaints from parents or concerned citizens regarding health, safety, over-capacity, neglect or abuse, are **possible violations of the State of California's Health & Safety Regulatory codes and will be handled in the following manner:**

a. The person initiating the complaint will be asked to make a report to Community Care Licensing, (844) 538-8766 and if necessary, the local police department.

b. Complaints regarding child abuse may also be relayed to the **County's** Department of Children and Family Services, (877) 881-1116.

CocoKids will follow-up with Community Care Licensing within 24 hours to verify the status of the complaint.

If no report was made, CocoKids staff will file the complaint based on original information reported.

c. Staff hired by the CocoKids will **file a complaint with Community Care Licensing if CocoKids' staff** observes:

- Corporal punishment or personal rights violations
- Uncovered/unfenced pool or spa
- Children left unattended without adult supervision
- A provider is over the capacity authorized on the current license
- Timelines for correcting deficiencies are not met

C. Responding to Community Care Licensing Findings

Based on the investigation and findings of Community Care Licensing, CocoKids will:

a) Offer technical assistance to providers for whom a "**substantiated**" complaint has been determined by Community Care Licensing, and,

b) In certain cases, referrals to providers will be either temporarily or permanently suspended.

1. Temporary Suspension of Services

Referrals to a provider will cease temporarily and a provider will be placed on Inactive status when or if:

- a. **A licensee has received a “Probationary” license. The provider will remain Inactive for the period of time** indicated on the probationary license, and no referrals will be given out. Parents of any State subsidized children will be notified. AB72 (2005) created new regulations which requires all State subsidy programs to be notified in instances when Community Care Licensing has issued a Probationary License, a Temporary Suspension Order, or a Revocation. The regulations require parental notification, and in some instances, immediate removal of subsidized children.
- b. **A licensee has received a “Temporary Suspension Order”. The provider will remain Inactive until** Community Care Licensing has made a decision. Parents of any State subsidized children will be notified to remove their children immediately and choose another provider if State subsidy is to continue.
- c. Community Care Licensing requests the **agency’s** cooperation in the investigation of a licensing violation of a serious nature. In these rare cases, Community Care Licensing will notify CocoKids that the investigation has been satisfactorily completed. Providers on Inactive status will be notified if the status of the investigation lasts longer than 30 days.
- d. CocoKids staff is unable to contact a program and/or the program has not provided accurate or timely update information for a period which exceeds three months. (90 calendar days). The program will be re-instated once availability and updated information as been confirmed.
- e. The provider has moved and the license is invalid due to a change of address.

2. “Permanent” Suspension of Services

Referrals to a provider will cease permanently when or if:

- a. A provider goes out of business.
- b. A provider changes address and does not renew license.
- c. A **provider’s** license is **“Revoked”** by Community Care Licensing. Parents of any State subsidized children will be notified to remove their children immediately and choose another provider if State subsidy is to continue.
- d. Community Care **Licensing’s** investigation substantiates a **“serious”** complaint and it is determined by the **CocoKids’ Executive Director** (or designee) that the facility or situation is detrimental to the well-being of children.

3. Ineligible to Participate:

Providers who have breeched the regulations of State, Federal or locally funded programs may lose their eligibility to participate in those programs in the future. However, that action may or may not result in **“temporary” or “permanent” suspension from the referral files. That is, licensed providers may retain “active”** status in the Resource and Referral files while being ineligible for participation in other programs.

Providers will be notified in writing if referrals have been permanently discontinued. The notice to terminate referrals shall include the reason(s) for the decision and shall inform the provider of the process for appealing the decision.

V. Disclaimers and Appeals

A. Right to Refuse:

CocoKids retains the right to refuse to make referrals to a child care program, regardless of licensed status **when, in CocoKids’ judgment, the program seriously jeopardizes the health and/or safety of children.**

CocoKids reserves the right to terminate participation in CocoKids’ Child Care Fund subsidy program or the Child Care Food Program if a provider is found to be in violation of the rules and requirements of that program.



B. Appeal Procedures

Any provider who feels they have been unfairly placed on “Inactive Status” or permanently removed from the referral files by CocoKids has the right to appeal the decision.

A letter from the provider detailing, documenting and supporting their case, must be submitted to CocoKids. Appeal letters should be addressed to:

Office of the Executive Director
 CocoKids
 1035 Detroit Ave, Suite 200
 Concord, CA 94518

Within nineteen (19) calendar days following the receipt of an appeal, the Executive Director, or designee, will respond in writing.

If the provider disagrees with the decision of the Executive Director, a request for an appeal hearing with the Program Committee of the Board of Directors may be made. Arrangements will be made with the provider to determine a convenient time and place for the hearing.

The provider is required to attend the hearing. Failure to appear will be considered abandonment of the appeal.

The member of the Board of Directors or designee, acts as Hearing Officer and explains the legal, regulatory and policy basis for the intended action.

During the Appeal Hearing, CocoKids staff will present their documentation of the violation(s). The providers will be given an opportunity to explain why they believe the decision to remove them from the referral files was incorrect. CocoKids staff may present additional information.

The Hearing Officer will respond in writing within fourteen (14) calendar days of the appeal hearing. The decision of the Program Committee shall be considered final.

C. Indemnify and Defend:

CocoKids, as a nonprofit agency, releases all Board members and staff from legal responsibility. The staff is not authorized to offer any advice to parents or providers that may be construed as a recommendation of legal advice. Parents and providers have the option to participate in CocoKids programs in promise to indemnify and defend the agency against lawsuits or other legal action.

Website: www.cocokids.org

CocoKids Area Offices

West County	Central County	East County
3220 Blume Drive Plaza One – Suite 225	1035 Detroit Avenue, Suite 200	5095 Lone Tree Way
Richmond, CA 94806	Concord, CA 94518	Antioch, Ca 94531
(510) 758-KIDY (5439)	(925) 676-KIDS (5437)	(925) 778-KIDS (5437)
Subsidy Manager : Denishia Taylor-Watkins	Michelle Merryman	Tracy Muldrow

Candy Duperron Resource & Referral Program Manager
Margaret Wiegert-Jacobs Director of Learning Institute and Resource & Referral Department
Michelle Mortenson Director of Child Care Fund

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