

March 4, 2026

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**CHILD CARE BULLETIN (CCB) NO. 26-05**

The purpose of this Child Care Bulletin (CCB) is to provide best practices to support utilization of child care services in the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CaWORKs) Stage One Child Care program.



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March 4, 2026

CHILD CARE BULLETIN (CCB) NO. 26-05

GUIDANCE TYPE: INFORMATIVE

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS  
ALL COUNTY CHILD CARE COORDINATORS  
ALL CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT CONTRACTORS

SUBJECT: BEST PRACTICES TO SUPPORT UTILIZATION OF CHILD CARE SERVICES IN THE CALIFORNIA WORK OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TO KIDS (CALWORKS) STAGE ONE CHILD CARE PROGRAM

APPLICABLE PROGRAMS: CALWORKS STAGE ONE CHILD CARE PROGRAM

REFERENCE: [ASSEMBLY BILL \(AB\) 1808](#); [CHILD CARE BULLETIN \(CCB\) 23-34E](#); [MANUAL OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURE \(MPP\) SECTION 47-440.17](#); [SENATE BILL \(SB\) 120](#); [SB 140](#); [TITLE 5 OF THE CALIFORNIA CODE OF REGULATIONS \(5 CCR\) SECTION 18066.5](#); [WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE \(WIC\) SECTION 10227.5\(d\)\(3\)](#), [WIC SECTION 11323.2\(a\)\(1\)\(B\)](#), [WIC SECTION 10280](#)

## Purpose

The purpose of this Child Care Bulletin (CCB) is to provide best practices to support utilization of child care services in the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Stage One Child Care program.

## Background

Effective January 1, 2025, [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 1808](#) extended 24-month child care eligibility to families receiving CalWORKs Stage One Child Care services. This change allows families to receive child care benefits for a minimum of 24 months before requiring re-certification, or until the family transfers to CalWORKs Stage Two Child Care, in accordance with [Welfare and Institutions Code Section 11323.2\(a\)\(1\)\(B\)](#). This bill is intended to provide the added stability of child care by extending the time a family is certified to support completion of Welfare-to-Work (WTW) goals, help maintain employment and economic stability, and alleviate the stress of frequent CalWORKs child care recertification or fear of losing child care benefits due to minor, temporary changes in circumstances.

Since July 1, 2020, Stage One Child Care providers have been reimbursed based on enrollment for the maximum authorized hours of care instead of attendance. In September 2023, these statutory reimbursement policies were extended through June 30, 2025, in accordance with [Senate Bill \(SB\) 140](#) and, for family child care providers, the Memorandum of Understanding between the Child Care Providers United (CCPU) union and CDSS. On June 27, 2025, [SB 120](#) amended Welfare and Institutions Code Sections [Welfare and Institutions Code \(WIC\) Section 10227.5 \(d\)\(3\)](#) and [WIC Section 10280](#) to extend these policies through June 30, 2028.

Since implementation of this provision, CDSS has received reports of scenarios involving the non-utilization of child care reflected on submitted attendance sheets as described:

- A family approved for Stage One has been enrolled in child care but does not begin using the authorized child care.
- Families continually submit attendance forms with signatures but do not include documented hours of care, demonstrating a prolonged non-utilization of child care services.

## Guidance

There are a variety of reasons why a family authorized to receive Stage One may not be attending a child care program after enrolling. These may include, but are not limited to, transportation issues, changes in child care needs, illness of the child or family member, family emergencies, or changes in the WTW activities.

Stage One administrators shall not end the authorization or stop payment to the child care provider due to the non-utilization of care reflected on signed attendance sheets. The Abandonment of Care provision referenced in [5 CCR Section 18066.5](#) does not apply to Stage One.

The following are best practices intended to support counties and contractors in continuing to engage families to encourage use of authorized child care services:

Counties and contractors may engage with families to encourage use of the child care services they are authorized for by following up with families when signed attendance sheets reflect a non-utilization of care for an entire month. Follow up may include, but is not limited to:

**1) Contact the family directly via email, phone call, text, or all three to:**

- Determine whether the family's child care needs, including hours of care, have changed.
- Identify reasons for the non-utilization of child care, such as changes in employment or WTW activities, transportation challenges, extended illness, personal differences with the provider, or family emergencies, etc.
- Ask open-ended questions to allow the family to share what is happening for them.
- Suggest the family contact their WTW worker to discuss any changed supportive service or plan change needs, or to alert the worker of family crisis needs.

**2) Offer alternative child care options:**

- Inform families of their child care options and providers.
- Offer support to the family in making necessary child care changes based on their unique circumstances.
- Suggest that the parent/caretaker notify the worker of any child care changes without delay so they can assist the family in obtaining the best care that fits the family's needs as soon as possible.

**3) Ongoing engagement with families:**

- Create shared goals and a plan of action for the child's care.
- Ensure each family's unique child care needs continue to be met.
- Document outreach efforts and family responses through detailed case noting, which will include pertinent information if there is a need to refer to investigation.

The goal is to encourage families to use Stage One or other forms of available child care, assess why child care is not being used, and assist the family with barriers and challenges. If after the county or contractor follows the above recommendations, and still does not reach the family, the county or contractor must continue to maintain the family's eligibility during the 24-month period and pay the child care provider based on the enrolled family's maximum authorized hours of care, regardless of attendance under [WIC Section 10227.5\(d\)\(3\)](#).

Pursuant to [Manual of Policies and Procedures \(MPP\) Section 47-440.17](#), the CDSS reminds counties that suspected fraudulent overpayments shall be referred for investigation, subject to the county's criteria for fraud referrals.

If you are a Stage One Administrator and have questions regarding the information in this letter, please contact [StageOneChildCare@dss.ca.gov](mailto:StageOneChildCare@dss.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

***Original Document Signed By***

LUPE JAIME MILEHAM, EdD  
Deputy Director  
Child Care and Development Division