



LEVEL OF CARE (LOC) and SPECIALIZED CARE INCREMENT (SCI)

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Level of Care (LOC) determination?

- A strength-based rate methodology designed to identify the individual care and supervision needs of children in home-based foster care. The score of the assessment translates to an appropriate payment rate to support placement.
- The LOC rates are: Basic/Level 1= \$1,037; Level 2=\$1,153; Level 3=\$1,271; Level 4=\$1,378 and Static Rate = \$2706. *Note: The Static Rate is applied on a temporary basis only for certain children with extraordinary care and supervision needs, until an LOC determination can be completed.
- LOC determinations commenced on April 1, 2021 for all children/youth in out-of-home care.

Why are LOC determinations necessary?

- To identify a child/youth's care and supervision needs.
- To inform the Resource Parent of the expectations for them to meet the needs of the child/youth in their care.
- To match the child/youth to an appropriate rate level.

How is an LOC rate determined?

- The Level of Care Children's Social Worker (LOC CSW) reviews all available documentation, including case records, court reports, mental health assessments, medical and school records and Child and Family Team (CFT) meeting notes.
- The LOC CSW reaches out to Resource Parent to complete the Resource Parent Reporting Tool together.
- The LOC CSW contacts the case-carrying CSW for additional information.
- The LOC CSW then completes the LOC scoring matrix, which consists of five domains (Physical, Behavioral/Emotional, Educational, Health, Permanency) that cover the primary needs of the child/youth.
- The youth's care and supervision needs are identified within the five domains and scored using a weighted point system.

When are LOC rate determinations completed?

- Within 60 days of the child/youth's placement or replacement.
- Redeterminations can also be requested through the youth's primary social worker, if the child/youth's care and supervision needs change.
- There is no annual LOC redetermination requirement.

LOC redetermination happens at each placement change. Does the rate change each time?

- Every new placement receives a new and complete LOC determination, since each Resource Parent may provide the youth with different care and supervision (for example: visits, activities, homework assistance, or community involvement). The rate may change or it may remain the same.

Are LOC determinations just for newly-detained youth, or for all youth in care?

- All children in home-based foster care settings are eligible for an LOC assessment.



What documents will Resource Parents receive after an LOC assessment is conducted?

- Resource Parents will be mailed or emailed the Resource Parent Reporting Tool, the completed LOC Matrix and the Scoring Tool. They will also receive a Notice of Action with instructions for the appeal process.

What is the Specialized Care Increment (SCI)? What happened to the D- and F-Rates?

- The SCI is a three-tiered payment schedule which compensates caregivers for the additional time, effort and expense required for children/youth with significant needs.
- All children/youth will be assessed for an SCI when they receive an LOC determination.
- The SCI replaces the D- and F-Rates.
- Existing D- and F-Rates will be evaluated within the new LOC/SCI guidelines as their reassessments come due, beginning on July 1, 2021.

What type of training is required for the SCI? Will D- and F-Rate certifications be grandfathered in?

- Initial SCI approvals require 16 hours of Resource Parent training (12 hours of a foundational curriculum, plus four additional hours of specialized courses, chosen by the Resource Parent). Six hours of specialized training, chosen by the Resource Parent, are required for annual certification each year thereafter.
- For existing D- and F-Rate caregivers who have already participated in the basic D- or F-Rate foundational training, six hours of additional courses will be required when their annual assessments come due.

How often is the SCI re-evaluated?

- Reassessments are conducted annually. More frequent reassessments might be required for some medically fragile children.

Where can I take the SCI training? How much does it cost?

- Classes are free!
- The 12-hour foundational curriculum is available through the Community College system: Foster and Kinship Care Education: <https://bit.ly/3lBH89C> or <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Educational-Services-and-Support/Student-Service/What-we-do/Foster-and-Kinship-Care-Education>]
- The specialized courses are available either through the Community College system, or through Foster Parent College: <https://www.fosterparentcollege.com/info/california.jsp>

When a child/youth is moving from a Short Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP) to a Resource Family Home, what LOC rate will they receive? What if they are released from a psychiatric hospital?

- In some cases, the temporary Static Rate may be applied, until LOC and SCI assessments can be conducted. If the new payment rate is deemed higher than LOC 1, it will be made retroactive back to the date of placement.

How many children/youth with Specialized Care Increment (SCI) can be placed in a household?

Two special rate children/youth can be placed in a household, unless a Regional Administrator approves an exception.

Will forms 149a & 561a be required for the Specialized Care Increment assessment?

- Yes, 149a and 561a forms will continued to be required for children with special medical needs.