| This image is the logo for the Alameda County Social Services Agency. | **Michelle Love**  Assistant Agency Director | **Department of Children & Family Services**  1111 Jackson Street, Oakland, Ca 94607  510/268-2727; Fax: 510/268-2737  [lovemi@acgov.org](mailto:lovemi@acgov.org)  [http://alamedasocialservices.org](http://alamedasocialservices.org/) |
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Lori A. Cox, Agency Director

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The following information is being provided in response to the requirements of ACL 18-48.

# **About the SCI Rate**

The SCI is based on the emotional, developmental, and physical care needs of the child or youth. Alameda County uses a regional Special Care Rate Increment Matrix form (County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA – Statewide SCI Matrix)) in determining the amount of the SCI based on the qualifying factors that apply for the child or youth. The SCI Matrix has three sections: Behavioral Issues, Medical conditions, Developmental delays or disabilities. Items on the matrix form are listed within tiers.

## 1. Eligibility

1. Populations to be served: Resource Family Homes or licensed foster parents, NREFMs, and relatives are eligible for a special care rate. A special care rate may carry over to Kin-GAP, a non-related and non-dependent legal guardianship (NRLG) (with some exceptions), AAP, and Extended Foster Care (EFC). Children and NMDs in an FFA home, group home, SILP, or placed with a relative receiving ARC funding (Approved Relative Caregiver Funding Option) are not eligible for special care rates. A special care rate may be paid as part of an AAP or Kin-GAP (both federal and non-federal) rate.
2. Current SCI population: There are currently 126 youth in a foster care placement or legal guardianship home with an approved special care rate that will expire on or after 4/1/2018.
3. The types of behaviors and health conditions that will be paid under the special care program are included in the attached CWDA – Statewide SCI Matrix.

## 2. Payment Amounts

1. The SCI payments will be tiered using the SCI Matrix. The payment amounts are $100 for Tier 1, $200 for Tier 2, and $400 for Tier 3. The SCI total amount may include a portion for each area of the Matrix (Medical conditions, Developmental delays or disabilities, or Behavioral issues). The total amount that could be paid is $1,200 if the youth qualifies for Tier 3 in each area of the Matrix.

## 3. Criteria and Qualifying Factors

1. Alameda County will only use the CWDA SCI Matrix and not just some of the criteria from the form.

## 4. County Review Process and Secondary Review/Approval

1. For determining the SCI, the CWW assesses the child's special needs with information from the child’s caregiver and other CFT members, and uses information collected for the LOC. Using the information, the CWW will complete the SCI Matrix form.
2. After completing the form, the CWW must collect documentation for each item identified in the Matrix as a need of the child. There are two kinds of documentation used: supporting and collateral.
   * Supporting documentation can be in the form of CWS/CMS case dictation (with the specific behavioral issues noted in detail) or the most recent court report, both of which must be dated within 6 months of the effective date of the special rate.
   * Collateral documentation can be in the form of a psychological/medical evaluation, and/or a statement from a treating practitioner such as a therapist, pediatrician, psychiatrist, etc.  Collateral documentation is required for the approval of statements made in supporting documentation which outline the child's medical, developmental or psychological diagnosis. Collateral documentation must be dated within 12 months of the effective date of the special rate.
3. Forward the special care rate packet to supervisor for review. If the request is more than 2 months overdue, the Program Manager will also review and approve the request.
4. Forward the completed Matrix and the supporting documentation to the Rate Review Team. Each SCI request is reviewed to confirm that each item selected for the child on the Matrix is corroborated by documentation, as required. The reviewer also confirms that the child qualifies for each requested item, based on the information provided, and adds additional qualifying items as necessary.
5. If the SCI is approved:
   * The CWW will a copy of the 34-9 and form 34-12, Rate Setter Authorization Report.
   * If there are needed corrections or changes to the requested rate:
   * The CWW will receive notice from the Rate Setter that identifies the items from the Checklist that need additional documentation to support their approval.
6. If the SCI packet is incomplete:
   * The CWW will receive the SCR packet and form 34-10. The form will identify the needed changes to the packet in order for it to be approved by the Rate Setter.
7. If necessary, the CWW will resubmit the SCI packet or submit additional supporting documentation.
8. Once approved, the CWW will file a copy of the SCI packet in the case file.

The approved SCI may be in effect for no more than 12 consecutive months before renewal is required. The rate will expire at the end of the approved SCI effective period. However, the Child Welfare Worker (CWW) may initiate a new assessment/review by submitting a completed Matrix and other required documents to the Rate Setter.

1. SCI’s may be re-evaluated by the CWW at any time during the approval period. If there is a change in the child’s special needs, a new SCI packet must be submitted to the Rate Setter. If there are changes with the child (behavioral, physical, etc.) that justify a change to the rate during the time period of an existing SCI, the CWW should submit a new SCI packet.
2. The new SCI matrix and applicable processes will be implemented within 90 days of CDSS approval. This will allow Alameda County to notify staff and caregivers of the transition to the use of the new form and procedure. After the 90 days, new requests for a special care rate will be made with the CWDA – Statewide SCI Matrix and accompanying procedure. All existing special care rates will be allowed to expire and the renewal, if there is one, will be made with the new form and procedure.
3. A letter will be issued to existing caregivers notifying them of the new SCI plan. Also, whenever a special care rate application is considered for a child, the CWW will discuss the form and procedure with the caregiver.
4. The Department will use the NOA form that is available in CalWIN for SCI approval, denial, redetermination and discontinuance.
5. The existing point of contact for Alameda’s SCI program currently remains the same.

# **CWDA - Statewide SCI Matrix**

## **Overview**

Specialized care provides a supplemental payment to the family home provider, in addition to the Level of Care rate, for the cost of supervision (and the cost of providing that supervision) to meet the additional daily care needs of a child who has behavioral, emotional and/or physical (including health) challenges. Placement of children who need specialized care in family homes complies with State and Federal requirements that a child is entitled to placement in a family environment, in close proximity to the parent's home, and consistent with the best interest and special needs of the child. California's specialized care rate setting system promotes these concepts.

## **SCI Framework**

In order to determine an SCI, county agency staff must assess the child’s behavioral, emotional and/or physical (including health) challenges. The SCI rate is determined by the County child welfare agency through a process that should be described in the County’s Specialized Care Rate (SCR) Plan, which must be submitted to CDSS prior to implementation (Please refer to ACL 18-48 Supplemental Care Rate for any protocols in relation to the eligibility and application of the SCR to children. Counties can refer to ACL 18-06, ACL 18-6E, ACL 18-25, and 18-48 for the coordination of SCR and LOC.).

The CWDA Children’s Committee adopted this SCI Classification Matrix in March 2018 for all counties implementing an SCR plan. The intent of this framework is to better align SCI determinations to provide equitable consideration and support to caregivers of children with extraordinary needs. Note that this framework does not mandate uniform rates. Rather, it aligns the conditions by which foster children and youth are assessed so that children with similar needs, across counties, may receive an SCI. Counties continue to set their own rates for SCI payments.

## **Methodology**

CWDA Children’s Committee, with input from a county workgroup and other stakeholders, developed this SCI Matrix based on a review of county SCR plans. The conditions listed in the SCI Matrix represent common conditions identified across multiple county SCR plans that were reviewed by the SCI county working group for which caregivers provide additional support to a foster child/youth in their care. The SCI Matrix has been updated to the most recent Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V). Three Tiers were selected to differentiate acuity of needs. This SCI Matrix will be posted on the [CWDA website](http://www.cwda.org) and may be updated as needed.

## **Implementation**

Each county will determine its own SCI dollar amounts for each of the Tiers. Counties may further differentiate within each of the three Tiers by developing a range of funding within each Tier. For example, Tier 1 may have a “low”, “middle” and “high” with corresponding dollar amounts. Counties may also use their existing SCI protocols as long as it has the same or similar elements (e.g., multiple Tiers).

A County will assess the child’s behavioral, emotional and/or physical (including health) challenges to determine the level of SCI. The assessment should include, but is not limited to a consultation with a County Public Health Nurse, Clinical Social Worker or other County staff who have expertise in a child’s issues. The final determination of the rate is determined by the County and documented in the County’s SCI Plan.

The County may use the SCI Classification Matrix in the Addendum to determine if the child’s needs meet Tiers 1, 2, or 3 as a guideline to create their SCI Classification Tables in their individualized County SCI plan. The SCI Classification Matrix is not meant to encompass every issue, but serves as a foundation of like issues that meet Tiers 1, 2, or 3. If a condition does not exist in the Table, it is up to the County to determine whether the condition and possible associated Tiers are applicable under the County’s SCI plan.

It is recommended that an SCI assessment should be completed after a Child and Family Team meeting and after use of the LOC Protocol and any other relevant assessments. However, there may be circumstances in which an SCI is needed more immediately in order to stabilize a placement. In either case, the SCI can be paid retroactively to the initial date of the request. Upon assessing the level of need and the recommended level of SCI, the social worker or other child welfare staff will complete a County SCI request form. Any additional sign off will be determined by a County’s process. If approved, the information will be forwarded to the County’s Eligibility program through the County’s established process with the required eligibility documents so that payment can be authorized.

For questions regarding this SCI Matrix, please contact Loc Nguyen, CWDA CCR Consultant at [LNguyen@cwda.org](mailto:LNguyen@cwda.org) or 628-249-6821.