

IHSS Colorado Application Checklist

For Colorado parents applying for In-Home Support Services and paid caregiving through Health First Colorado.



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How IHSS works

In-Home Support Services, or IHSS, is one way to receive services under Community First Choice, a Health First Colorado benefit. An attendant provides the care in your child's home and in the community. IHSS can cover homemaker services, personal care, and health maintenance activities. The approved hours come from an assessment of the help your child needs with everyday life and health-related tasks. An approved IHSS agency employs the attendant and handles payroll. You or your child's authorized representative have a say in who provides the care and how it runs day to day. Colorado's IHSS is a different program from the one with the same name in California, so use Colorado sources when you look up the rules and the pay.



If you run into a waitlist or a delay, stay in contact with your case manager and ask what else is available while you wait. Another IHSS agency might serve your area, or other Health First Colorado services could meet your child's needs. Write down who you contacted, when you called, and what you were told, so follow-up is easier.

Good to know

Some Colorado parents may be paid to provide approved care for their own minor child. A parent who lives with the child is paid only for services the case manager decides meet Colorado's definition of Extraordinary Care, and that decision has to be made before the care is given. Extraordinary Care means care beyond what a parent would normally give a child of the same age who does not have a disability or chronic illness, and that is needed to protect your child's health and keep them living at home.

Does my child qualify?

Your child has to qualify for the service, and the person who will be paid has to meet the caregiver rules. Check off what you can confirm today and take the rest to your case manager.

☐ **My child qualifies for Health First Colorado**

Health First Colorado is Colorado's Medicaid program. Your child has to meet the financial requirements for full Medicaid benefits.

☐ **My child is enrolled in Community First Choice**

Colorado rules make IHSS available only to members enrolled in Community First Choice.

☐ **My child meets an institutional level of care**

Community First Choice requires this, and the state's level of care assessment decides it. A child already enrolled in a home and community based services waiver automatically meets it.

☐ **My child has had a needs assessment**

The assessment sets which services and hours are approved, based on the help your child needs with everyday life and health-related tasks.

☐ **I know a diagnosis alone does not set the hours**

An autism diagnosis does not set how many hours of IHSS a child receives. The assessment looks at the care your child needs.

Does my child **qualify?** (continued)

☐ **My child has an authorized representative who is not the paid caregiver**

Every member under 18 has to have an authorized representative, and that person cannot be paid as the attendant. In a two-parent household, one parent can be the representative and the other can be paid. A sole parent who is the representative cannot also be the paid caregiver.

☐ **The person who will be paid is at least 16 years old**

Colorado rules set 16 as the minimum age for an IHSS caregiver.

☐ **That person can safely do the tasks in the care plan**

Caregivers have to show they can safely perform the tasks included in your child's care plan.

☐ **The case manager has agreed the care counts as Extraordinary Care**

Services have to be on the approved care plan and authorized in advance. A parent who shares a home with the child is paid only for care the case manager decides is Extraordinary Care, and that decision has to come before the care is given.

☐ **I understand the limit on paid parent homemaker care**

A parent or guardian who provides homemaker services to their own minor child counts as a legally responsible person. Since June 13, 2026, Colorado pays for up to 7 hours of homemaker care a week for each child, which the rule writes as 364 hours a year. That is the total for all legally responsible persons together, so two parents share the same 7 hours.

How to apply for IHSS in Colorado

Step 1: Get a Health First Colorado eligibility determination

After you enroll your child in Health First Colorado, the state checks whether they meet an institutional level of care, which Community First Choice requires. To apply for IHSS, contact your local case management agency. A case manager can help you work out what type of care your child needs and explain what happens next.

Step 2: Request a needs assessment

An assessment is required to determine what your child needs and which services are authorized. When you describe your child's daily care, say what they can do on their own, where they need help, and what happens when no one is there to help.

Step 3: Choose an IHSS agency

If your child is approved, you choose an approved IHSS agency that serves your area. That agency hires the attendants, runs payroll, provides training, and makes sure services meet Medicaid requirements. Ask each agency about caregiver pay, enrollment timelines, training requirements, and how much support they give families.

Step 4: Enroll as the paid caregiver

Once you've chosen an agency, you complete its employment and enrollment requirements before you start providing paid services. Approval for IHSS doesn't make every hour of care payable, because your child's authorized care plan sets the services and hours Medicaid will cover.

What **IHSS** covers and what it does not

May be covered when authorized	Not paid by IHSS
Homemaker services	Companionship, which Colorado rules say isn't an IHSS benefit
Personal care	Hours that aren't in the approved care plan
Health maintenance activities	Care from a parent that the case manager has not approved as Extraordinary Care
Help with everyday or health-related tasks your child can't do alone	Every hour a parent spends caring for their child

Colorado also limits the hours one support plan can authorize. The limits are 4,750 hours of health maintenance activities, 2,500 hours of personal care, and 1,125 hours of homemaker services, and the state has a process for exceptions. Colorado also caps the hours one caregiver can work for one child each week: 84 hours through December 2026, 70 hours from January 2027, and 56 hours from July 2027, with a process for exceptions. There is no standard hourly wage for Colorado IHSS caregivers. The state publishes Medicaid reimbursement rates for IHSS services, but those amounts go to the IHSS agencies and are not automatically the attendant's wage. What an attendant earns can depend on the agency, the type of care, and other employment factors. Ask each agency what it pays IHSS attendants and whether the rate changes by type of care. Also ask how overtime is paid and what benefits or paid time off are available.

IHSS, CDASS and Community First Choice compared

Program	What it is	Who hires and manages attendants
Community First Choice (CFC)	A Health First Colorado benefit that provides certain long-term services and supports.	Depends on whether you receive those services through IHSS or CDASS.
In-Home Support Services (IHSS)	One way eligible members receive and direct some of those services.	An IHSS agency employs the attendants and handles many employer responsibilities.
Consumer-Directed Attendant Support Services (CDASS)	The second way eligible members receive and direct some of those services.	You or your child's authorized representative have more control over hiring, training, scheduling, and managing attendants.

The right fit depends on how much responsibility your family wants to take on and which option your child qualifies to use. A member cannot receive IHSS and CDASS at the same time. Colorado expanded access to IHSS through Community First Choice beginning July 1, 2025.

Contact and waitlist log

Date	Agency or case manager	What they said	What I asked for	Next step

Sources

Sources change over time, so check each one before you act on it.

In-Home Support Services, Colorado HCPF

<https://hcpf.colorado.gov/in-home-support-services>

Community First Choice option, Colorado HCPF

<https://hcpf.colorado.gov/community-first-choice-option>

Consumer-Directed Attendant Support Services, Colorado HCPF

<https://hcpf.colorado.gov/consumer-directed-attendant-support-services>

Medicaid sustainability and long-term services and supports, Colorado HCPF

<https://hcpf.colorado.gov/medicaid-sustainability-and-ltss>

Colorado IHSS and CDASS rules, 10 CCR 2505-10 8.7000, Colorado Secretary of State

<https://www.sos.state.co.us/CCR/DisplayRule.do?action=ruleinfo&ruleId=3451&deptID=7&agencyID=69>

Operational Memo 26-042, seven hour weekly homemaker limit for legally responsible persons, Colorado HCPF

[https://hcpf.colorado.gov/sites/hcpf/files/HCPF%20OM%2026-042%20Implementation%20of%20a%20Seven%20\(7\)%20Hour%20Weekly%20Homemaker%20Limitation%20for%20Legally%20Responsible%20Persons.pdf](https://hcpf.colorado.gov/sites/hcpf/files/HCPF%20OM%2026-042%20Implementation%20of%20a%20Seven%20(7)%20Hour%20Weekly%20Homemaker%20Limitation%20for%20Legally%20Responsible%20Persons.pdf)

Operational Memo 26-043, weekly cap of 56 hours per caregiver per member, Colorado HCPF

<https://hcpf.colorado.gov/sites/hcpf/files/HCPF%20OM%2026-043%20Implement%20a%20Weekly%20Cap%20of%2056%20Hours%20Per%20Caregiver%20Per%20Member%20for%20Select%20Long-Term%20Services%20and%20Supports.pdf>

This kit is general information and is not medical or legal advice. Talk to a qualified professional about your child's situation.

Where ABA therapy fits alongside paid caregiving

IHSS helps eligible children with authorized daily living and health-related tasks. ABA therapy works on building skills and on behaviors that affect everyday life. Your child may receive ABA therapy while also receiving other Medicaid-covered services, if they qualify. If your child is autistic and you're balancing therapy with caregiving, Alpaca Health works with Colorado families on ABA therapy and coverage questions.



When you are ready

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<https://secure.alpacahealth.io/signup>



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