

ABC Grow Healthy Best Practices for Child Care Centers
CCDF Quality Initiative

ABC Grow Healthy is a quality initiative to prevent childhood obesity in South Carolina's Child Care Quality Improvement System. ABC Grow Healthy represents state policy change in nutrition and physical activity for over 900 child care centers participating in the voluntary ABC Child Care System.

HISTORY:

- A SC team attended a Leadership Summit in Orlando, Florida in May 2008 for a briefing on the Southern Collaborative on Obesity Reduction Efforts (SCORE) and made plans to focus on the ABC quality improvement system in SC to include a focus on nutrition and physical activity practices and to integrate childhood obesity efforts across state agencies and other entities.
- SC received a small grant from the Council of State Governments in 2008 to pilot an initiative with 5 child care sites to improve the quality of the child care environment as related to children's health by establishing healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors.
- SC DHEC then received a CDC grant to collaborate with ABC Child Care to create and implement a statewide program policy centered around nutrition and physical activity based on the findings from the 2008 Council of State Governments grant.

ABC Grow Healthy Description:

- Following an extensive cross-walk of national, state and local standards/recommendations on nutrition and physical activity for young children by USC researchers, a list of 34 recommendations was presented for adoption consideration by ABC.
- A pilot was conducted in 19 representative ABC child care centers in the upstate, midlands, and low-country of SC to test the 34 recommended standards and provide feedback on cost, feasibility, and impact of implementing the recommendations.
- Based on feedback from the pilot child care centers and careful consideration of cost, feasibility, and child impact, the recommendations were reduced, revised, and placed on a continuum for implementation by centers at Levels A, B, and C.
- Repeated presentations have been conducted at early childhood conferences over the past 2 years to create awareness of the issue, the role that child care can play in addressing childhood obesity in SC, and ABC's role in state level voluntary policy changes.
- Key initiative partners have included: SC DHEC, SC DSS ABC Child Care, USDA CACFP, Head Start Collaboration Office, and the ECCS initiative.

ABC Standards Change:

- SC is currently integrating the ABC Grow Healthy Best Practices for Levels A, B, and C into the ABC Child Care Program Standards.
- A nutrition researcher from Duke University received a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to evaluate the impact of policy change in South Carolina and has conducted pre-assessments in South Carolina in anticipation of the ABC policy changes. Follow-up visits are scheduled for late 2012 to measure the impact of policy change on children's nutrition.
- The ABC Program has introduced the best practices to Level A, B, and C ABC child care providers. Technical assistance to providers and a small incentive program for successful implementation of ABC Grow Healthy Best Practices are planned.