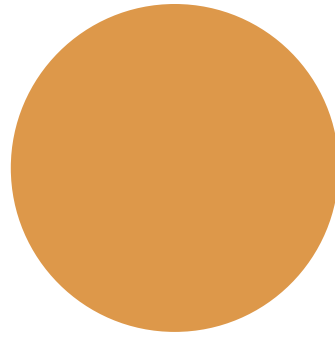


Affordable, Accessible Child Care

A report on South
Carolina's use of
COVID-19 federal relief
funds for child care



2020 - 2024



Making a difference in South Carolina's child care sector

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on families and businesses nationwide, especially in the child care sector. Several child care programs were forced to permanently close or decrease enrollment due to staff shortages. As a result, parents struggled to find care for their children while continuing to work.

In response to the economic impact of the pandemic, federal relief funds were allocated to states to help stabilize the child care sector.

South Carolina received nearly \$955 million in such funds, which was managed by the South Carolina Department of Social Services Division of Early Care and Education. Allocated through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Act (CRRSA), and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), these funds were intended to stabilize the child care sector, help families, and ensure that South Carolina's child care programs continue to provide affordable, accessible, and high-quality care.

This document provides an overview of how the South Carolina Department of Social Services used these funds to address the challenges faced by child care providers, support families, and promote long-term improvements in child care infrastructure across the state.



South
Carolina received
\$954.5 million

in COVID-19 federal
relief dollars for
child care







Federal relief funds for child care

Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, signed into law on March 27, 2020, was a stimulus bill aimed at combating the economic effects from the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the CARES Act, funds were allocated to states, tribes, and territories to help keep child care programs open to serve children and families.



South Carolina received **\$63.6 million** in CARES Act funding to help child care providers

Provider Type (based on licensed capacity)	Grants Allocated Through CARES Act	
	Round 1 COVID Emergency Grant	Round 2 COVID Support Grant
Small Child Care Centers (Up to 49 children)	\$10,000	\$15,000
Medium Child Care Centers (50-99 children)	\$13,000	\$20,000
Large Child Care Centers (100+ children)	\$15,000	\$25,000
Group Child Care Homes	\$5,000	\$7,000
Family Child Care Homes	\$5,000	\$7,000
Number of providers awarded	1,924	1,643

Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Act (CRRSA)

The Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Act (CRRSA), passed in December 2020, included provisions for child care to help support families and providers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. It allocated funding to assist child care programs with operational costs, ensure access to care for essential workers, and help families facing economic challenges. Through CRRSA, South Carolina offered five rounds of grants to child care providers.



South Carolina received **\$182 million** in CRRSA funding to help child care providers

Grants Allocated Through CRRSA

Provider Type (based on licensed capacity)	Round 3 COVID Support Grant	Round 4 COVID Support Grant	Round 5 COVID Support Grant	Technology Grant	ABC Quality Supplemental Grant
Small Child Care Centers (Up to 49 children)	\$16,000	\$27,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$33,339
Medium Child Care Centers (50-99 children)	\$21,000	\$37,000	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$33,339
Large Child Care Centers (100+ children)	\$26,000	\$47,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$33,339
Licensed Exempt (in ABC Quality)	-	-	-	\$35,000	\$15,000
Group Child Care Homes	\$7,000	\$10,000	\$12,000	\$10,000	\$9,000
Familial Child Care Homes	\$7,000	\$10,000	\$12,000	\$10,000	\$6,000
Number of providers awarded	1,807	1,744	1,761	1,728	1,108

CRRSA also covered:

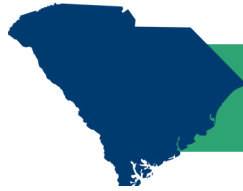
- Background checks for child care providers
- Copays for families receiving the Child Care Scholarship
- Subsidies over 85% state median income (SMI) up to 300% of the federal poverty level (FPL)



“
With the Technology Grant... our front and back doors now have security readers so the doors stay locked at all times.
- Child Care Program Director

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

In March 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was signed into law. ARPA provided direct relief to individuals, businesses, and state and local governments in response to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. South Carolina received ARPA funding for child care on April 15, 2021, which was divided into Child Care Stabilization Funds and Supplemental Discretionary Funds.



South Carolina received **\$708.9 million** in ARPA funding to help child care providers

Grants Allocated Through ARPA

Provider Type (based on licensed capacity)	Round 1 Stabilization Grant	Round 2 Stabilization Grant	Materials, Health & Safety Grant	Expansion/Operating Grant	ABC Quality Supplemental Grant
Small Child Care Centers (Up to 49 children)	Round 1 amounts were calculated by a formula depending on the set up of the provider	\$125,000	\$40,000	\$70,000	\$33,339
Medium Child Care Centers (50-99 children)		\$150,000	\$50,000	\$80,000	\$33,339
Large Child Care Centers (100+ children)		\$175,000	\$60,000	\$90,000	\$33,339
Licensed Exempt (in ABC Quality)		\$75,000	-	\$60,000	\$15,000
Group Child Care Homes		\$50,000	\$10,000	\$27,000	\$9,000
Family Child Care Homes		\$35,000	\$8,000	\$20,000	\$6,000
Number of providers awarded	1,942	1,765	2,052	2,095	1,136

ARPA also covered:

- Subsidies over 85% state median income (SMI) up to 300% of the federal poverty level (FPL)

From 2021 to 2023, these subsidies helped **3,215** children for a total of **\$11 million**



I was able to help parents more with their child care fees. I had a family that didn't just seem to ever have it. I was able to keep their children using the Stabilization Grant.

- Child Care Program Director







GRANT SPOTLIGHT: SC BOO\$T

Funded through ARPA

SC BOO\$T was a pilot program that provided bonuses directly to qualified individuals employed in child care facilities in South Carolina. This was a unique chance for child care professionals to receive supplemental wages while doing the job they love using a limited, one-time source of federal money. The program was created in response to data revealing low wages for the early childhood workforce. We are working to help bridge the gap in the wage discrepancy for the early care and education workforce. SC BOO\$T is administered by the South Carolina Department of Social Services' SC Endeavors program.

Eligibility

The pilot program was available for the following child care professionals:

- Teacher
- Assistant Director
- Assistant Teacher
- Co-Director
- Director
- Floater
- Non-Teaching Professional Staff
- Non-Teaching Support Staff
- Primary Care Provider
- Aide
- Curriculum Coordinator

Note: Substitutes, volunteers, and interns did not qualify for SC BOO\$T.

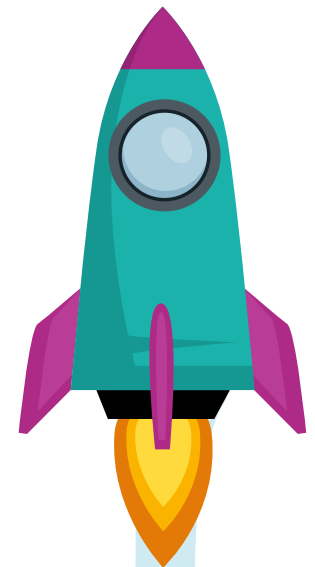
To qualify for SC BOO\$T, child care professionals had to meet the following criteria:

- Work in a DSS regulated program
- Be employed within the same program for 6 months or more
- Be in a direct care position
- Have verified employment within the registry
- Have current SC Endeavors Registry Career Ladder level
- Complete the salary/wage information in the SC Endeavors registry
- Earn equal to or less than \$24 per hour for direct care staff. Directors, owners or family/group providers can earn equal to or less than \$30 per hour.

Funding Amounts

Amounts were distributed per the SC Endeavors Registry Career Ladder level and were divided between two 6-month payments. If applicants continued to meet the eligibility requirements, the payment were automated.

Career Ladder Level	6-Month Payment	6-Month Payment	Annual Amount
Level 1	\$1,100	\$1,100	\$2,200
Level 2	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$2,400
Level 3	\$1,300	\$1,300	\$2,600
Level 4	\$1,400	\$1,400	\$2,800
Level 5	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$3,000
Level 6	\$1,600	\$1,600	\$3,200
Level 7	\$1,700	\$1,700	\$3,400
Level 8	\$1,800	\$1,800	\$3,600
Level 9	\$1,900	\$1,900	\$3,800
Level 10	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$4,000



SC BOO\$T distributed more than **\$25 million** to **9,806** child care professionals in South Carolina



GRANT SPOTLIGHT:

SUCCEss GRANTS

Funded through ARPA

The SC Start-Up Child Care (SUCCEss) Grants were developed to provide support through training and technical assistance during the first six to 12 months of operation to eligible applicants. As milestones are met, financial incentives can be obtained to support and ensure the program's participation in professional development opportunities and individualized coaching. Accepted applicants could increase their financial stability by completing set goals, and maintaining business and regulatory standards as they continued to work towards continual quality improvement for their new program. Applicants were encouraged and supported in their application to the ABC Quality program.

Eligibility

To qualify for the SUCCEss Grant, prospective providers had to meet the following criteria:

- Not be a child care program associated with a chain, franchise, or other larger organization that provides support through funding, resources & materials, or physical space.
- Ensure all information submitted through the application is complete and true
- Agree to the terms and conditions of the work required for the SUCCEss Grant project
- Ensure providers, co-owners, partners, and/or director(s) have never had a child care license revoked or denied by DSS Child Care Licensing or any other state licensing or child care regulatory agency
- Attend the DSS SC Child Care Licensing Orientation meeting and the SUCCEss Grant introductory meeting

Approved Use of Funds

All funds awarded to participants must be used for expenses related to the child care program and within these general categories:

- Personnel Costs
- Educational Supplies and Classroom Equipment
- Rent/Lease, Utilities, Business Insurance
- Playground & Outdoor areas
- Facility Maintenance & Improvement
- Marketing Fees
- Furniture, Fixtures, & Equipment
- Technology
- Consultant, Planning, or Service Fees



47 licensed child care centers and **68** family child care homes were approved for the SUCCEss grants

4-Tier Process

Funding was divided into four tiers. Participants had to complete all requirements in each tier to receive payment and approval, and to move to the next tier. Each approved participant will be assigned a Child Care Licensig (CCL) Specialist and SC Child Care Resource & Referral (SC CCR&R) Quality Coach (QC) to help provide support, resources, and guidance throughout the project. All completed tier requirements will be approved by CCL and SC CCR&R before funds are distributed.

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Attend CCL orientation meeting	Attend Child Care Regulation training	Complete fingerprint, Central Registry process, and the rest of the Licensing application for approval	Attend Staff Recruitment and Retention for Center-based Programs training
Attend SUCCesS Grant introductory meeting	Attend Director 101 training or Director Regulation training	Attend the Financial Reports and Internal Controls training	Attend the Infant/Toddler Safety Basics training
Complete SC Endeavors organizational profile	Attend Marketing for Child Care Programs training	Attend Intro to Infant/Toddler Safety training	Attend at least one technical assistance session with QC or SC Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC) Specialist
Complete SUCCesS Grants application	Participate in at least one technical assistance session with SC CCR&R QC	Complete SC Child Care Inclusion ADA Basics for Child Care Providers training	Complete Pediatric First Aid and CPR training
Participate in at least two technical assistance sessions with SC CCR&R QC		Attend Meal Planning training	Complete 15hr Health & Safety Pre-Service Certificate course
Submit required documents to CCL		Participate in at least one technical assistance session with SC CCR&R QC or SC Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC) Specialist	Work with SC CCR&R QC to develop action plan for goals to be accomplished before ABC Quality application
Develop and submit an approved architectural plan to the Chief Fire Marshal. A clear Fire Plan review must be completed		Provisional evaluation and provisional permit issued	Regular permit issued if the program has no deficiencies, OHAN investigations, or founded complaints
Attend Budgets, Projections, and Planning training			

Funding Amounts Distributed Per Tier Completion

Provider Type <small>(Based on licensed capacity)</small>	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	Total
Family Child Care Homes/ Group Child Care Homes	\$4,000	\$6,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$30,000
Small Child Care Center (up to 49 children)	\$12,000	\$14,000	\$16,000	\$18,000	\$60,000
Medium Child Care Center (50-100 children)	\$17,000	\$19,000	\$21,000	\$23,000	\$80,000
Large Child Care Center (100+ children)	\$22,000	\$24,000	\$26,000	\$28,000	\$100,000

ABC Quality

What is ABC Quality?

ABC Quality is South Carolina's only rating and improvement system for child care and early education. While licensing sets standards for health and safety, ABC Quality is voluntary for child care programs and promotes excellence in meeting the total needs of children.

Expect the highest quality services of programs participating in ABC Quality. Every program that has earned a rating does more than provide the basics. Having a letter rating (of any level) is proof a program goes above and beyond to provide the kind of child care children need to thrive.



The ABC Quality Levels

A+

A

Consistently and effectively promotes quality practices. Awarded the highest quality standard score.

B+

B

Demonstrates strategies to increase program quality. Awarded a high quality standard score.

C

Meets health and safety requirements. Quality standards exceed licensing requirements.

P

Quality score is pending. Provider meets pre-requirements and can accept child care scholarships.

E

Legally exempt programs serve children age 5 and up and are open less than 4 hours daily or on school holidays. If a program has both an E rating and an A/B/C quality level rating, all ABC Quality eligibility criteria have been met.

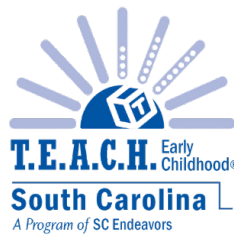
Number of providers newly enrolled in ABC Quality 2019-2024

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
60	47	248 [#]	144	58	117 [*]

[#]Includes 199 programs enrolled with a Pending Quality level. This number reflects programs enrolled as emergency enrollments due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Programs with this status met only eligibility criteria to participate.

^{*}As of 9/30/2024

Our Programs & Partners





The Division of Early Care and Education is a division of the South Carolina Department of Social Services.

Data current as of December 4, 2024