



**A B C** Quality

Understanding ABC Quality

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## About ABC Quality

South Carolina is committed to an early care and education system that focuses on building high quality, comprehensive programs that provide integrated services. This commitment reflects a vision that every child in South Carolina will have equal opportunity for success in school based on equitable access to a high quality early care and education system.

ABC Quality, South Carolina's statewide quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), provides the foundation for such an early care and education system through a framework to assess, improve, promote, and communicate the quality of early learning and development.

### ABC Quality

- Connects families to quality early care and education programs with the support of an easy-to-understand rating system.
- Offers coaching, professional development, and resources to early care and education providers to improve the early education environment and teaching practices and to support each child's learning and development.
- Enables child care providers to become eligible for SC Voucher, a program that pays providers so they can care for children from low-income families.

### The ABC Quality Framework

- Provides early childhood program personnel with the criteria, tools, and resources they need to improve the quality of their programs.
- Serves as criteria used to determine a program's *ABC Quality Level* – the quality rating that is indicated on the website and influences a program's level of SC Voucher funding.
- Represents standardized criteria for program observation, documentation, curriculum planning, and continuous quality improvement.
- Aligns with SC's Professional Development and Credentialing System (a standardized early childhood workforce knowledge and competency framework with a corresponding progression of credentials).
- Aligns with SC's Early Learning Standards (a framework of criteria for children's growth, development, and learning that educators rely on to plan curriculum).

## Benefits of Participating in ABC Quality

### Benefits for Providers

ABC Quality is becoming the primary tool parents use to identify high quality child care programs and to compare one program with another. The higher your program's rating, the more you can use it to market your program and attract new families. The benefits to child care providers include:

- Customized support and assistance to improve quality;
- Grants, awards and other financial supports;
- Free professional development and scholarships to conferences;
- Outreach and marketing to families;
- A roadmap for strengthening the quality of care and an opportunity for lifting up the child care profession and child care system;
- Increased voucher payments based on quality level; and
- As providers join and earn higher ratings, the program will systemically improve the quality of the state's early education programs.

### Benefits for Families

Families should make sound educational choices for their children and have options that will help children reach their full potential. ABC Quality helps child care programs increase their quality to make more quality options available to families. The benefits to families include:

- Supportive and developmentally appropriate environments for children that support their overall growth and development;
- Clear letter ratings to help families find quality child care for their children;
- Reliable quality child care that allows parents to work, have fewer absences and be more productive resulting in long-term earnings increases of up to 30 percent;
- Inclusion of families in discussions about their children's development and ways to support healthy development;
- Assistance for families in advocating for their children, increasing the likelihood of families to stay involved as their children enter school, thereby increasing their children's likelihood of graduating high school; and
- A quality education that prepares children in their first five years of life for school achievement and high school graduation.

### Benefits for the Community

- ABC Quality can demonstrate to policymakers that a quality early care and education system can increase children's readiness for success in kindergarten. This will build support at both the policy and appropriations levels.
- Every dollar invested in quality early education saves \$7 in special education, public assistance, corrections and lost taxes. The rate of return for quality early childhood education is ten percent per year. An \$8,000 investment at birth brings nearly an \$800,000 return over the child's life.

## Navigating the Process of ABC Quality

### Learn about ABC Quality, <http://scchildcare.org/>

- ✓ Take our FREE online orientation and receive training credit, <https://www.prosolutionstraining.com/southcarolina/>
- ✓ Review ABC Quality information online

### Apply to Participate

- ✓ Contact us at 1-800-763-2223 or [abcquality@dss.sc.gov](mailto:abcquality@dss.sc.gov)
- ✓ Receive a welcome call from ABC Quality Staff
- ✓ Create your organizational profile in SC Endeavors, <https://scendeavors.org/>
- ✓ Submit your application

### Receive Professional Development and Technical Assistance

- ✓ Receive Quality Coach Assignment
- ✓ Conduct a self-assessment
- ✓ Develop Quality Improvement Plan

### Meet Eligibility

- ✓ Submit your eligibility documents

### Receive your Quality Level

- ✓ **Structural Quality Review** (portfolio submission)
- ✓ **Process Quality Review** (On-site classroom observations)
- ✓ Receive Quality Performance Report
- ✓ Market your program

### Reconnect with your Quality Coach

- ✓ Ongoing Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) helps your program systematically and intentionally improve services and increase outcomes for the children and families you serve.

## Eligibility to Participate

To be eligible for participation in ABC Quality, programs must meet and maintain the following:

1. Current, regular license/approval/registration (or exemption) with evidence of history of compliance with SC licensing regulations. Prior to enrollment, regulated providers must have a clear history of compliance for six months with no violations related to ratios, supervision, or serious health and safety violations, cannot be on a Corrective Action Plan with Child Care Licensing and/or active OHAN investigation (*History of compliance is defined as having no frequent or multiple deficiencies or a significant event posing a substantial threat to the health or safety of the children that involves supervision, compliance with ratios, or health and safety violations*); and/or;
2. Head Start and other early care and education programs operated by military or tribal programs must show substantial compliance with their regulatory agency;
3. Current Pediatric First Aid and Infant/Child CPR certification for all staff responsible for caring for or supervising children;
4. Completion of the [SC Health and Safety Pre-Service Certificate](#) or ECD 101 by all staff responsible for caring or supervising children upon enrollment and within 90 days of hire for new staff;
5. Signed acknowledgement from all staff confirming their knowledge of and adherence to the ABC Quality Code of Ethics (see ABC Quality Forms).

## ABC Quality Framework

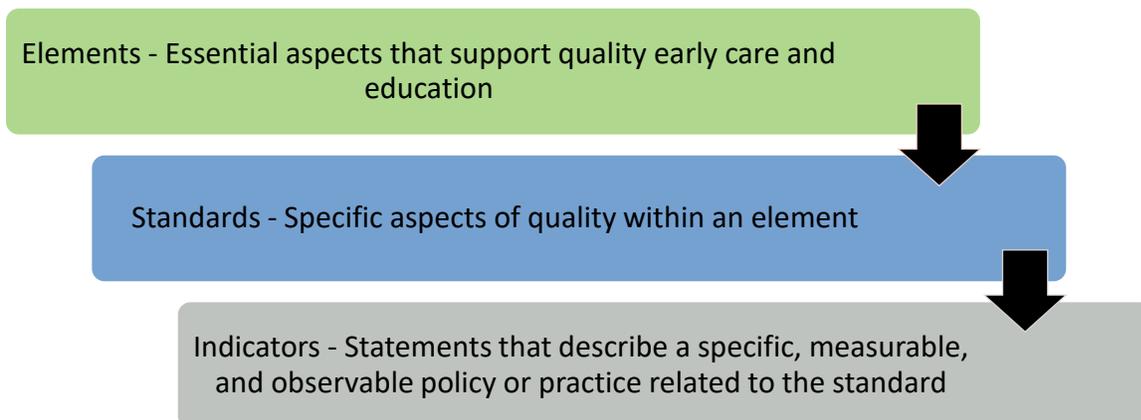
Structural and process elements frequently define early care and education quality. (Howes et al., 2008; Layzer & Goodson, 2006; Sylva et al., 2006; Thomason & La Paro, 2009). Similarly, these two elements comprise ABC Quality’s framework:

- **Structural Elements of Quality** – Refers to the administrative and policy aspects of early care and education. Structural elements include policies and procedures that systematically influence the program’s quality; such as, program organization, staff education/professional development, and the well-being of children and families.
- **Process Elements of Quality (Intentional Teaching Practices)** – Refers to the observable experiences children have in child care and includes the social, emotional, physical and instructional aspects of early care and education. (Howes et al., 2008; Pianta et al., 2005; Thomason & La Paro, 2009).

ABC Quality has identified **5 Elements of Quality** (4 Structural and 1 Process).

Structural Elements	Process Element
1) Program Administration and Structure 2) Staff Education and Professional Development 3) Child Well-being 4) Family Communication, Engagement and Cultural Competency	5) Intentional Teaching Practices
<i>Documented via a portfolio, reviewed onsite.</i>	<i>Documented via observed criteria defined by ABC Quality’s Intentional Teaching Tool (ITT).</i>

Elements of quality are further defined through Standards and Indicators.



## Four Structural Elements of Quality

The following provides definitions and rationales for the ABC Quality Framework and the criteria used for Structural Elements of Quality and Intentional Teaching Practices. This information is provided to support your program's self-assessment and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Process.

### **Element I: Program Administration and Structure**

**Standard I.A** Organizational Structure / Program Operations

**Standard I.B** Policies and Procedures Relating to the Care of Children

### **Element II: Staff Education and Professional Development**

**Standard II.A** Education - Program Leadership/Administrators

**Standard II.B** Education - Teachers

**Standard II.C** Ongoing Professional Development

### **Element III: Child Well-being**

**Standard III.A** Nutrition

**Standard III.B** Physical Health

**Standard III.C** Mental Health

**Standard III.D** Child Screening and Referrals

### **Element IV: Family Communication, Engagement and Cultural Competency**

**Standard IV.A** Family Communication, Engagement and Cultural Competency

## Process Element of Quality

### **Element V: Intentional Teaching Practices**

**Standard V.A** Responsive and Sensitive Care

**Standard V.B** Language and Communication

**Standard V.C** Guidance

**Standard V.D** Program Structure

**Standard V.E** Early Learning

**Standard V.F** Environment

## Assessor Reliability

ABC Quality is committed to scoring each observed classroom using the Intentional Teaching Practices Tool (ITT) accurately and reliably. All ABC Quality program assessors have extensive education, training and experience with classroom practice, observation and assessment. They have been trained to remain completely objective and unbiased when observing a program. There are 4 State ITT anchors reliable to each other who provide a rigorous orientation process for the state team of Quality Assessors. Testing for reliability requires a minimum of three assessments conducted by the assessor and anchor. Reliability is measured by reaching consensus on 85% of the tool's indicators. Once the assessor is determined reliable, she/he will conduct observations independently. Each assessor and anchor undergo periodic rechecks to assure objectivity and reliability in scoring.

## ABC Quality Level Determined by Threshold Scores

Quality Level	Threshold Scores
A +	95-100
A	89-94
B+	83-88
B	77-82
C	50-76