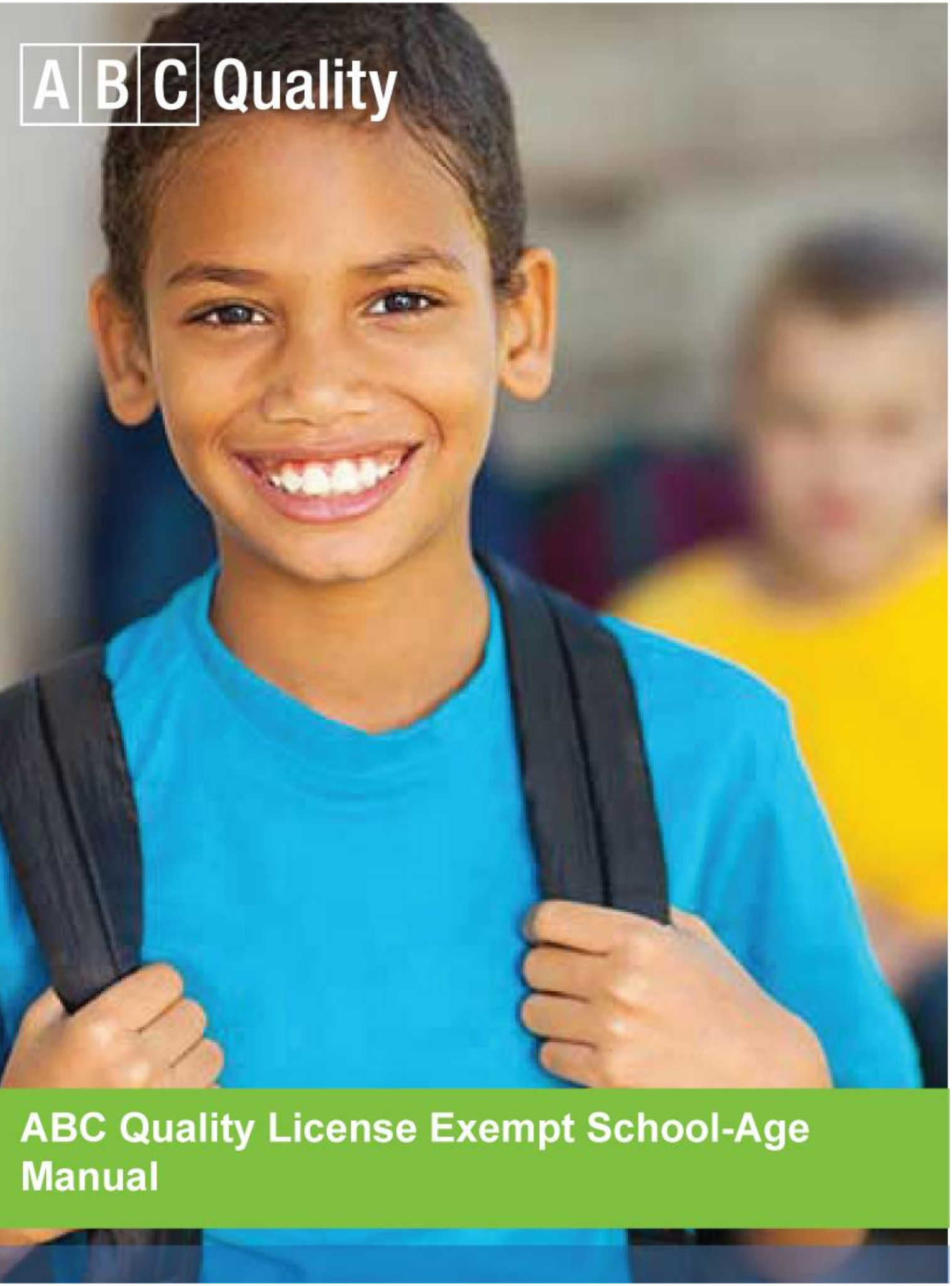

ABC Quality

ABC Quality License Exempt School-Age Manual

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Chapter 1 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), has been in existence since 1992. It provides the foundation for an early care and education system through a framework to assess, improve, promote, and communicate the quality of early learning and development.

1.1 ABC Quality

- Connects families to quality early care and education programs with the support of an easy-to-understand rating system. https://abcquality.org/
- 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 early childhood programs to participate in the SC Scholarship Program (SC Scholarship), a CCDF program that pays child care providers so they can care for children whose families qualify for an income-based scholarship.

1.2 The ABC Quality Rating and Improvement System

- Provides early childhood programs 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 scchildcare.org website and determines a program's level of SC Scholarship funding.
- Represents standardized criteria for program observation, documentation, curriculum planning, and continuous quality improvement.
- Aligns with SC Endeavors, SC's Professional Development and Credentialing System (a standardized early childhood workforce knowledge and competency framework with a corresponding progression of credentials).
- Aligns with the SC Early Learning Standards (a framework of criteria for children's growth, development, and learning that educators rely on to plan curriculum).

1.3 ABC Quality Contact information:

There are two offices of ABC Quality geographically. Each office is responsible for programs in designated counties. Locate the county your program is in using the charts below. Once you have located the county, you will see the address and phone number for the ABC Quality Office that you may call if you have questions. By using the map located here, you can also see who the assigned ABC Quality Assessor is for your county.

ABC QUALITY COLUMBIA			
SC Department of Social Services 3150 Harden Street Extension Columbia, SC 29203	Program Manager: Cathy A. Kovacs	Phone: 803-898-2772	Fax: 803-898-4510

Counties Served:							
Aiken	Beaufort	Chesterfield	Dillon	Georgetown	Kershaw	Marlboro	Sumter
Allendale	Berkeley	Clarendon	Dorchester	Hampton	Lee	Newberry	Williamsburg
Bamberg	Calhoun	Colleton	Fairfield	Horry	Lexington	Orangeburg	
Barnwell	Charleston	Darlington	Florence	Jasper	Marion	Richland	

ABC QUALITY GREENVILLE			
Greenville Technical College P. O. Box 5616, Station B MS 6001 Greenville, SC 29606-1947	Program Manager: Beverly B. Hunter	Phone: 864-250-8468	Fax: 864-516-1947

Counties Served:					
Abbeville	Chester	Greenwood	McCormick	Saluda	York
Anderson	Edgefield	Lancaster	Oconee	Spartanburg	
Cherokee	Greenville	Laurens	Pickens	Union	

Chapter 2 Definition of License Exempt and Benefits of Participating in ABC Quality

2.1 Definition of License Exempt

A License Exempt Program is a center-based program that serves school-age children and is not required to be licensed as determined by the SC Licensing Law, if they meet the following:

- Does not operate more than four hours per day total during the time school is in session. The four hours include any transportation time and if parents are late picking up children
- Operates consecutive sessions of 3 weeks or less during the summer
- Does not serve children under five years of age

2.2 Benefits for Programs

ABC Quality is a tool parents use to identify high-quality child care programs. The benefits for child care programs 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 elevating the child care profession and child care system
- Increased voucher payments based on quality level

- As providers join and earn higher ratings, the program will systemically improve the quality of the state's early education system

2.3 Benefits for Families

ABC Quality is a tool to support families as they make important educational and care choices for their children. The benefits for 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
- 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 during the primary grades
- A quality education that supports children in school achievement

2.4 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 school. This will build support at both the policy and appropriations levels

Chapter 3 Overview of the ABC Quality Enrollment Process and How to Apply for ABC Quality

3.1 Overview of Enrollment Process

a. Learn about ABC Quality

Visit our website at www.scchildcare.org

Click on "Program". Then click on "ABC Quality Rating & Improvement System"

Under "Related Documents & Links," are many documents and resources (including this manual) to help in your journey.

Take the "ABC Quality April 2018 Webinar" (under General Documents) to get an overview of the review process implemented in 2018. Additionally, new webinars/courses will be added.

Take the "License Exempt School Age Program 2022 Webinar" particularly geared for License Exempt School Age Programs.

Take the FREE online orientation, Understanding ABC Quality" and receive training credit from SC Endeavors.

b. Apply to Participate

Submit an on-line application to apply for enrollment in ABC Quality.

Receive a call from your assigned ABC Quality Assessor upon acceptance of your application.

c. Receive Professional Development and Technical Assistance

You will be assigned a Quality Coach from the South Carolina Child Care Resource & Referral Network (SCCCRRN). The Quality Coach can assist you in navigating this process and in the development of your policies, if needed.

d. Meet Eligibility

Submit your eligibility documents**.**

e. Receive your Quality Level

- Receive the Process Quality Review (On-site classroom observations) and Health & Safety Inspection.
- Submit your program's Structural Quality Review (portfolio) on-line by uploading documents and policies into your account in SC Endeavors.
- Receive Quality Performance Report and Quality Level.
- Market your program.

f. Reconnect with your Quality Coach

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

3.2 How to Apply for ABC Quality

ABC Quality is a voluntary program. The following outlines the process of what must be done if the provider would like to apply for enrollment in ABC Quality. Applications are done on-line through each child care program's Organization Profile account in SC Endeavors. Acceptance of an application does not guarantee enrollment. There will be "How-to-Guides" to help you navigate the application process. **Special Note:** Please review Chapters 4, 5 & 7 before submitting an application to ensure you are able/willing to meet the eligibility criteria.

a. Contact the ABC Quality Office that serves the county your program is located [See 1.3] to notify them of your interest to participate.

b. An ABC Quality Assessor will be assigned to your program and will contact the program to do the following:

- Review general ABCQ enrollment requirements
- Review requirements of operating legally
- Discuss the process of verifying the program's exemption status. The Quality Assessor will send the *ABCQ Vetting Form* to the program to complete and return to the Quality Assessor along with any handbook and/or flyers that will enable ABC Quality to verify the programs exemption status as a License Exempt Program. See 4.2.1 for requirements
- Notify the program via email if exemption verification is approved or if not, will inform the program reason for denial or what is still needed
- Upon approval of exemption verification, the Quality Assessor will email the program an *ABCQ Enrollment Form* with directions to complete and where to submit. The form contains identifying information which will allow us to provide your program with a CC #. The CC # will identify you in the SC Endeavors System. Without this number you will not be able to register the Organization Profile nor complete the on-line application for ABC Quality. The CC # will also enable you to complete the required background checks for all

staff. Note: Currently, there is no charge for the background checks; however, if this changes programs will receive notification.

c. Receive the CC #: The CC # for your program will be sent via email to the program from the Compliance Coordinator with ABC Quality. The email will include links on how to set up the program's Organization Profile, add/verify employees and how to apply for ABC Quality.

d. Create The Professional Profile: The Owner/Director/School-Age Supervisor will create/register an individual Professional Profile account for themselves in SC Endeavors [See 4.2.2].

e. Create The Organization Profile: Once the CC # is created, the program can create and the Organization Profile account in SC Endeavors. [See 4.2.2]

f. Staff Create their Professional Profile: Each staff member caring for children will create an individual Professional Profile account in SC Endeavors.

g. Invite Staff to Join The Organization Profile: The Owner/Director/School Age-Supervisor will Invite each staff member to join the program's Organization Profile account.

h. Submit Application: Once steps "a through g" above are completed, you may complete and submit the on-line application to the ABC Quality Rating and Improvement System. To access the application in the Organization Profile, click on the ABC Quality Tab or look on the left-hand side of the window. There will be a vertical menu bar. Place the cursor on the menu and it should open and you will see "ABC Quality". Click on this and you will be directed to complete the application for enrollment in ABC Quality.

i. Contact the assigned ABC Quality Assessor if you do not see the link or have any questions.

j. When you are completing the application, the status will show "*In application*".

k. Upon submittal of the application, the status will show "*applied*".

l. The application will be accepted or denied. If accepted, the status will change to "*application accepted*". If the application is denied for any reason, the status will show "*denied*". You will receive an email with details of the denied application.

m. If the application is incomplete, ABC Quality will contact the provider and explain the incomplete items and move the application back to "*applied status*" so that the items may be completed, and the application submitted again.

n. Upon acceptance of your application, then the following will occur:
   1. ABC Quality Assessor will contact you to discuss financial documents that will be needed to set up your account in SC Scholarship, so payments can be made
   2. The Compliance Coordinator will email you with instructions on how to obtain background checks, so you may start the process of getting background checks for all staff.
   3. You will begin working on the following:
      - Submit Eligibility documentation (Program and Staff) to the ABC Quality Assessor
      - Obtain background checks for all staff
      - Sign the Provider Agreement electronically
      - Complete the Structural Quality Portfolio by uploading documents and policies (9.3.1)

o. The ABC Quality Assessor will contact you to schedule a date to conduct the on-site observation assessment and Health & Safety Inspection.

Important Note: New programs who have not completed all requirements within six months of having their application accepted will have their application cancelled. The program must wait three months to reapply.

Chapter 4 Eligibility Criteria to Participate

Eligibility criteria for participation as a License Exempt School-Age Program in ABC Quality includes meeting all program and staff eligibility criteria.

4.1 Program Operations:

4.1.1 Has been in operation for at least six months at the time application is made for enrollment. Exceptions: 1) a provider who purchases an existing program enrolled in ABC Quality AND who has ABC Scholarship clients connected. This does not apply to programs who do not have clients connected.

4.1.2 Operates during the school year or year-round. Summer-only programs are not eligible to enroll, as they would not be able meet all eligibility criteria and be assigned a Quality Level before the program ended.

4.1.3 Program operates within legal parameters which means:

a. Operates only four hours total or less per day during the time school is in session to include any transportation time (if provided), and if parents pick up children late.

b. Serves only children ages five years and older. SC Licensing Law prohibits programs who are not licensed from serving children under the age of five even if they attend public school.

c. Can operate full day during the time school is not in session for school holidays, teacher work days or any time the school (public/private) is closed.

d. Programs that operate year-round to include Summer: the summer program must operate in consecutive sessions of three weeks or less.

e. Programs who operate a Summer Camp in the Summer must operate in sessions of 3 weeks or less.

4.1.4 Offers regular consistent hours that meets the need of working parents. Drop-in, weekend only care, and only opening 1 – 3 days per week do not meet that criteria.

4.1.5 Must have at least one unrelated fee-paying child enrolled (cannot be the owner's own child).

4.1.6 Must have availability of a phone during the time children are present. Phone must be registered with 411. Note: does not have to be a land line phone.

See also, "Enrollment/Re-enrollment Exceptions" Chapter 18

4.2 Program Eligibility Criteria:

4.2.1 Verification of Exemption Status:

The program will go through an internal process that verifies program exemption status from licensure and that the program is operating within legal parameters according to SC Child Care Licensing Laws and regulations. The assigned ABC Quality Assessor will provide contact information for you and where you must send documents.

a. The program must submit documentation (via mail, email, or fax) to the assigned ABC Quality Assessor showing the program's: 1) hours of operation 2) the ages of children served, and 3) if summer camp is offered, the weeks each summer session runs. Acceptable documentation includes: flyers, Parent Handbook, and/or Program Handbook. If the provider has any social media accounts and has information posted on it about hours of operation and ages served, it must match what is in the documentation submitted.

b. During the time school is in session, the program cannot operate more than four hours total per day. This includes transportation time, staying open for late pick-ups, and operating before school **and** after school. The total amount of time cannot exceed four hours total per day, even if different children are served in the morning versus after school. Programs who operate more than four hours per day must become licensed. Click here to find the number for the Child Care Licensing Office in your region. Use the map, click on the county your program is in.

c. For programs that also operate a summer camp in addition to their school year program, Child Care Licensing Law requires that the program operate in sessions of three weeks or less, and this must be reflected in your documents. Example: First session operates June 5, 2023 – June 23, 2023, second session operates June 26, 2023 – July 14, 2023, and Third session operates July 17, 2023 – August 4, 2023.

d. Child Care Licensing Law specifies that children under the age of 5 cannot be served in License-Exempt School-Age Programs (regardless of whether the program is enrolled in ABC Quality). Programs that serve children under the age of five must become licensed. Click here find the number for the Child Care Licensing Office in your region. Use the map and click on the county your program is in.

4.2.2 Enrollment in SC Endeavors

SC Endeavors (scendeavors.org) is the professional work force registry for South Carolina's early childhood workforce. SC Endeavors maintains Learning Records of all training hours taken by staff in child care programs. It is also the "gateway" to apply for ABC Quality.

a. The person responsible for the program (e.g., the Owner or the School-Age Supervisor/Director) must:

1) Register an Organization Profile account in SC Endeavors for the program. This is done within the Owner's/Director's/School-Age Supervisor's Professional Profile account (See 4.3.2). Click here to see the How-to-Guide. Contact SC Endeavors at 864-250-8581 if you need assistance.

2) The Organization Profile must be fully completed with all classrooms, ages of children served, and staff assigned to each classroom. Incomplete information can cause the application to be denied.

3) The Owner or School-Age Supervisor/Director of the program's Organization Profile account must "invite" employed staff to join the Organization Profile. This is done once the staff have created/registered their professional account. The link to the How-to Guide in # 1 also explains how to do this.

4.2.3 Additional Program Eligibility Requirements:

ABC Quality will verify the following:

a. The program/owner has no history of having operated illegally pursuant to SC Child Care Licensing Laws.

b. The program does not have an active Out of Home Abuse and Neglect (OHAN) investigation.

c. If a violation occurs during the application/enrollment process or during the on-site assessment review, then the provider must wait an additional six months and re-apply.

d. The program provides child care services with a variety of activities. If the primary purpose of the program is something other than child care, e.g., gymnastics, karate, tutoring, dance, etc., then ABC Quality reserves the right to deny enrollment because Federal Regulations stipulate our funds are for child care services. An ABC Quality Assessor may make a visit to your program to determine if the services you provide would meet our requirement.

e. The program has an outside play area **on-site** that is protected from traffic and other hazards. Existing programs who utilize on-site play areas, particularly those in strip malls, and who do not have barriers or other methods to protect children from traffic or hazards must provide those items to ensure the safety of children.

f. The program has private restroom facilities inside the program, which are not accessible to outside entities. Programs that share restroom facilities with another business or are open to the public are not permitted. Exception: public schools where the program is housed.

g. The program has at least one flushing toilet per every 20 children enrolled.

h. The program's School-Age Supervisor/Director is not listed as a director or School-Age Supervisor at another Licensed/Registered/Exempt program.

i. Receive a passing score of at least 50 or higher and the Quality Performance Report and Quality Level.

4.2.4 Fire Inspection:

The program must submit a current clear signed Fire Inspection Report dated within two years of enrollment. If the program does not have one, they must request one through their local Fire Marshal. The Inspection Report must say "annual". It cannot say "courtesy" or "complaint". Any deficiencies noted on the report must be corrected immediately. **Exception: Programs operating in Public School District facilities are exempt from this requirement.**

- A repeat Fire Inspection must be done every two years thereafter.
- If the program makes any structural changes to the building or adds cooking facilities (stove), etc., then another Fire Inspection must be completed AND if applicable, the program must have written approval from the local zoning ordinance if major structural renovations are done.
- ABC Quality reserves the right to request a Fire Inspection at any time.

4.2.5 Health & Safety Inspection:

The program is required to have a Health & Safety Inspection by ABC Quality at the time of enrollment and annually thereafter. (See Health & Safety Inspection Chapter 6).

4.2.6 Written Policies:

The program is required to have the following written policies and procedures. The program must follow these procedures as written **and must communicate/train staff on these policies to ensure understanding and adherence.** It is recommended these be included in employee orientation. These are based on regulations from the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services regarding the health and safety standards established by the CCDBG Act. These will be checked upon enrollment and at the annual visit:

4.2.6.a Medication Policy

If the program administers medication, the policy must address:

1. The administration of any prescriptions or over the counter medication to children.
   - ✓ All medicine should be kept in the original container and labeled with the child's name
   - ✓ All medication must be locked and kept out of the reach of children
   - ✓ Medication must only be used for the child in which the medicine is labeled and authorized
   - ✓ Medication should only be given in the dosage specified on the label
   - ✓ Written parental consent on file to administer the medication with the name of the medication, dosage, and times to be administered
   - ✓ A medication log which shows the child's name, name of medication, dosage, date, time, and name of person administering the medication
   - ✓ Medication errors should be recorded, and parent/guardian informed immediately
   - ✓ Procedure for emergency medications for allergic reactions.
   - ✓ Return any unused/expired medications to the parent/guardian
   - ✓ Staff must wash hands before giving medication and after applying a medical ointment or cream in which a break in the skin (e.g. sores, cuts, or scrapes) may be encountered
2. Note: your policy could be that your program does not administer medication, and/or the parent would have to come to the program to administer the medication.
3. The program must follow the policy as written.

4.2.6.b <u>Emergency Medical Care Policy</u>

1. The policy must address the following:
   - ✓ Medical conditions under which emergency care and treatment is warranted due to allergic reactions.
   - ✓ Procedure to prevent emergencies due to allergic reactions, e.g., how will the program collect information of any child's allergies, and how will this information will be conveyed to staff along with information of what an allergic reaction might look like.
   - ✓ Steps to be followed if child has allergic reaction. Detailed information to include what medications should be administered per authorization of the parent, e.g., Epi Pen, Benadryl
   - ✓ Notification to parents who might bring snacks or treats to the class of any particular foods to be avoided
   - ✓ Steps to be followed in a medical emergency
   - ✓ The hospital or source of health care to be utilized
   - ✓ The method of transportation to be used
   - ✓ An emergency staffing plan
2. The program must follow the policy as written.

4.2.6.c <u>Emergency Preparedness Policy</u>

1. The policy must address the following:

What steps the program will take in the event the following occurs as a result of an emergency such as fire, a natural disaster or other threatening situations that may pose a health or safety hazard:

- ✓ Evacuation
- ✓ Temporary closure
- ✓ Relocation
- ✓ Shelter in place
- ✓ Lock-down

The policy will also address the following:

- ✓ Communication and reunification of children with families
- ✓ Continuity of operations
- ✓ Accommodations of children with disabilities, and children with chronic medical conditions
- ✓ The procedure to contact ABC Quality at 1-800-876-2223 if the facility must evacuate or needs to relocate during an emergency (when safe to do so)
- ✓ The policy must address emergency preparedness training/drills for staff, volunteers, and children
  - ➢ Types of drills: It must include the types of drills: e.g., fire, tornado, nuclear, and active shooter

2. Frequency of Drills: It must include frequency of practice drills. For programs that operate year round, practice drills will be conducted quarterly for each type of emergency. The program must document the occurrence of each practice drill to include date, time, type of drill. These must be kept on-site until reviewed.
3. The program will follow the policy as written.
   Resource: ABC Quality has a License Exempt Emergency Plan Template on our website that can be used/modified.

4.2.6.d Child Abuse and Neglect Policy

Child care providers are mandated reporters and have the responsibility to protect those who cannot protect themselves. As a mandated reporter, caregiving staff are an important part of the system to protect children.

1. The policy must identify:
   - ✓ The Child Abuse and Neglect Law:
     "Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), originally enacted in 1974 (Public Law 93-247) and reauthorized in 2010, is the largest body of legislation with regard to the fair, ethical, and ***legal*** *treatment of children and is intended to keep them free from all forms of* ***abuse*** *including physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological."*
   - ✓ Information on types of abuse or neglect that staff may look for. Examples include but are not limited to: Child has frequent injuries or "accidents," unexplained burns, cuts, bites, fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school or the explanation does not match the injury. Child is always watchful and "on alert," as if waiting for something bad to happen. Injuries appear to have a pattern or resemble an item such as

marks from a hand or belt. Child shies away from touch, flinches at sudden movements, or seems afraid to go home. Child arrives each day very hungry, unclean (body or clothing) or perhaps is covered in bug bites, takes food to eat at home, etc. – things that would suggest the child is not receiving proper care at home. The child may also share information with the staff regarding things that are happening in the home which places the child in danger, e.g., parents use illegal drugs or substances, or someone in the home is abusing them (physically or sexually)

- ✓ Procedures when staff suspect a child may be neglected at home and when staff see other staff abuse or neglect children in the facility. How to make a report. The policy will state:
  Suspected child abuse or neglect must be reported to:
  1) DSS Office of Child Protective and Preventive Services with The Office of Out of Home Abuse and Neglect (OHAN).
     DSS has implemented a centralized phone number for all counties to report suspected cases, or this may be done online at the following link. Both can be reported 365 days per year, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 1-888-227-3487 or https://dss.sc.gov/child-well-being/report-child-abuse-and-neglect/.
  2) DSS/ABC Quality at 1-800-876-2223.
- ✓ Mandated Reporter Law Section 63-7-310 (https://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t63c007.php)
- ✓ Procedure for training staff as mandated reporters
- ✓ Statement regarding the program's cooperation in allowing DSS staff to conduct any on-site investigation and/or obtain necessary documentation to include any video footage
- ✓ Release of staff and children's records as appropriate and upon request

2. The program must follow the policy as written.

4.2.6.e. Swimming Policy (if applicable)

1. The policy must address the following:
   a. Ratios to be maintained during swimming activities.
   b. Prohibition on the use of hot tubs, spas or saunas.
   c. Any on-site water source (if applicable), such as a swimming pool, stationary wading pool, or other water sources such as ditches, streams, ponds or lakes, will be made inaccessible to children by a secure fencing that is at least 4 feet high; exits and entrances shall have self-closing, positive latching gates with locking devices.
   d. Swimming activities must be supervised by a certified Lifeguard (See 7.2.1.c]. The program is responsible for verification of certification. (The Lifeguard cannot be counted in the child: staff ratios unless they are employed by the program and meet the background checks and eligibility criteria).

e. Swimming pools located at the center or used by the center should conform to the regulations of DHEC for construction, use, and maintenance.

2. The program must follow the policy as written.

4.2.6.f Transportation Policy (if applicable)

Note: The program must comply with Jacob's Law (see History of Compliance 7.2.5.l)

1. The policy must address the following:
   a. The child: staff ratios to be utilized.
   b. Written consent from the parent prior to transportation.
   c. Emergency medical information and contacts for each child.
   d. The vehicle(s) must have a current vehicle registration and insurance.
   e. The driver must have access to a cell phone.
   f. A First Aid Kit must be on the vehicle(s) during transport.
   g. A plan (if applicable) when children are picked up and dropped off from home. The plan should include, but is not limited to:
      - ❒ The driver/staff responsible for the child will have access to parental consent information with contact numbers
      - ❒ The driver/staff will have access to a cell phone
      - ❒ A designated place at the home where the parent/adult will meet staff to pick-up/drop-off child
      - ❒ The child will not be left at home unless a parent/authorized adult is there to receive the child
      - ❒ If the adult at the home is not familiar to the staff, they should request the adult's identification and verify it against the authorized list provided by the parent to receive the child
      - ❒ Procedure to follow if no one is at the child's home to receive the child, or the adult is not authorized
   h. Tracking procedures to ensure that no child is left in the vehicle at the end of the trip or left unsupervised outside or inside the vehicle during loading and unloading.
   i. Written transportation plans for routine travel must be on file outlining the route to be followed.
2. The program must follow the policy as written.

4.2.6.g Outdoor Time Policy

Outdoor play is not only an opportunity for learning in a different environment, it also provides many health benefits. Outdoor play allows for physical activity that supports maintenance of a healthy weight and better nighttime sleep and brief exposure of the skin to sunlight promotes the production of vitamin D that growing children require.

1. The program must develop a policy which states:
   - ✓ Children are taken outdoors for play daily, weather permitting. Caution should be taken in the event of inclement weather. (Please see the Glossary for definitions of "weather permitting" and "inclement weather")
2. The program must follow the policy as written.

4.2.6.h Discipline and Child Maltreatment Policy

SC Scholarship and ABC Quality serve a very vulnerable population of children. When corporal punishment and child maltreatment occurs, it threatens the safety and security of children, especially those who are already experiencing some type of trauma in their lives.

The program should have additional behavioral guidance policies for how staff should deal with disruptive behavior.

1. The program must develop a policy/statement which indicates:
   - ✓ The program prohibits the use of corporal punishment and maltreatment of children. The statement should list samples of maltreatment. The statement will be signed and dated annually by all staff

     Corporal punishment: C*orporal punishment is the use of physical force to the body as a discipline measure. Corporal punishment is physical force to the body that includes but is not limited to spanking, slapping, biting, shaking, and jerking children by their arms, or dragging them by their legs*

     SC Child Care Licensing Law prohibits the use of corporal punishment on any child in a child care setting. This includes the owner and employed staff whose child(ren) is enrolled in the program, and any parent of an enrolled child who might discipline their child before leaving the premises of the program

     Child Maltreatment: Child maltreatment includes all types of abuse and neglect of a child under the age of 18 by a parent, caregiver, or another person in a custodial role (e.g., clergy, coach, teacher). There are four common types of abuse. They are: sexual, physical, emotional and neglect. The following are examples (but not limited to) of abuse and neglect that may occur in a child care setting: *physical harm, withholding food, water, restroom use, or affection; verbally threatening a child; yelling at a child; shaming, inappropriate discipline such as washing a child's mouth out with soap as a punishment, etc*
2. The program must follow the policy as written.

4.2.6.i Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Policy

Attendance at a child care facility may expose a child to an increased risk of acquiring infectious diseases. Many types of infectious germs may be contained in human waste (urine, feces) and bodily fluids (saliva, nasal discharge, tissue and injury discharges, eye discharges, blood, and vomit).

The program must address how they will help to ensure that infectious diseases are prevented or minimized while children are in care.

1. The policy must address the following:
   a. Health observation of children daily.
   b. Separation of children who show symptoms of a communicable disease or infestation, e.g. pinkeye, lice, mumps, flu, etc. Include where child will be kept until parents arrive/how ratios met/contact of parents.
   c. Exclusion or dismissal of children who are ill, and what types of illnesses should preclude parents from bringing the child to the program (e.g., fever, flu, pinkeye, strep, etc.).

d. Hand washing by children to prevent the spread of germs, e.g., after using the restroom, before eating meals/snacks, after handling animals, etc.

e. Hand washing by staff: prior to preparing food; after contact with children while preparing food; after handling bodily fluids or after applying medication/ointments where there is a break in the skin; after handling animals; after cleaning or handling the garbage.

f. A procedure to notify parents when children have been exposed to an infectious disease.

g. The program requires copies of immunization records for all enrolled children unless the family provides a certificate of religious or medical exemption; and must have a protocol for unvaccinated children in the event of an outbreak.

h. Cleaning/Disinfecting Schedule of the facility/areas where children are served.

i. Staff health to include the current health assessment and TB test.

2. The program must contact ABC Quality when at least two or more children have a communicable disease. This may be reported via phone or email to your ABC Quality Assessor.

3. The program must follow its written policy.

4.2.6.j <u>Handling, Storage, and Disposal of Hazardous Materials and Biological Contaminants Policy</u>

1. The policy must address the following:

a Toxic substances must be stored out of the reach of children in a locked cabinet. Toxic substances or hazardous materials include but are not limited to: chemicals, cleaning products, disinfectant sprays, insecticides, gasoline products.

b Toxic substances must not be used while children are present.

c Flammable materials should be stored in a separate building or area away from high temperatures and ignition sources, inaccessible to children.

e. Toxic substances/hazards must be stored away from food and medication.

f. Poisonous plants must not be allowed in the center.

g. Chemicals used to control odors must not be allowed, e.g., moth balls, air fresheners, essential oils, toilet/urinal deodorizer blocks.

h. Procedures when staff must come in contact with bodily fluids resulting from a child injury or illness. Include disposal of material that comes into contact with bodily fluids.

2. The program must follow its written policy.

4.2.6.k <u>Safe Release of Children Policy</u>

1. The policy must address:

a. Procedure when the person picking up the child is not on the list of authorized persons.

b. Procedure if the person picking up the child does not appear to be capable of providing safe care (e.g., person may be under the influence).

c. Procedure if parent notifies program that someone else will pick up the

child.

2. The program must follow its written policy.

4.2.6.l Parental Access Policy

1. The policy must address:
   a. Parents have unlimited access to their children during the hours the program is in operation.
2. The program must follow its written policy.

4.3 Program Staff Eligibility Criteria:

All eligibility requirements must be met at enrollment and continuously maintained for all staff who are responsible for the care and supervision of children**. Special Note**: Any non-caregiving staff in the program when children are present, such as janitorial/maintenance, must complete the comprehensive background checks. If they come after hours when the children are not present, then they do not have to complete the background checks.

Any new staff hired after the program is enrolled in ABC Quality must meet certain eligibility items before being allowed to work with children. The following table indicates what eligibility criteria must be met before staff are allowed to work with children and which criteria must be met within 90 days of hire.

Special Note: For providers who have multiple sites enrolled and transfer staff within locations: If a staff is hired for location "A", but prior to their 90-day deadline to complete all eligibility and annual training hours, is transferred to location "B", the 90-day time frame still applies from the date hired at location A.

	Eligibility Requirements for Staff	Complete prior to working with children	Complete within 90 days of hire
4.3.1	Must be 18 years of age, have High School Diploma/GED, have six months experience working with children or be supervised by a teacher with more than 1-year experience.	X	
4.3.2	Enrollment in SC Endeavors		X
4.3.3	Health documentation – TB and health assessment	X	
4.3.4	Comprehensive Background checks	X	
4.3.5	Pediatric First Aid		X
4.3.6	Infant/Child CPR		X
4.3.7	Discipline & Maltreatment Statement	X	
4.3.8	SC Health & Safety Pre-Service Certificate		X

4.3.9	ABC Quality Code of Ethics	**X**	

4.3.1 Staff

All staff who are responsible for the care of children must meet the minimum staff education/qualifications. *If the program employs/contracts staff more than once a week for purposes of regular instruction/homework assistance/extracurricular activities regardless of whether persons are considered in the child to staff ratios or not, these staff must meet all of the eligibility requirements.*

must be 18 years old.

a. must have a valid high school diploma or GED. Programs are responsible for ensuring that staff hired have verifiable high school diplomas and college degrees. **NOTE: SC Endeavors will verify the validity and acceptance of all High Schools Diplomas and College Degrees upon the employee's application for the Career Ladder Placement).** See Glossary for definition of High School Diploma.

b. must have at least 6 months verifiable experience working with children or must be supervised by a teacher with more than 1-year experience until they have six months experience. **Note: Many school-age programs wish to utilize high school students. ABC Quality does not allow them to work in the program as they are not able to meet the background check requirements or high school completion/equivalency.**

4.3.2 Staff Enrollment in SC Endeavors

a. Professional Profile Account: Each staff must create/register an individual Professional Profile Account in the SC Endeavors Registry (www.scendeavors.org). If a staff member has already attended training in SC before 2019, they may already have a Professional Profile Account. They can enter their information and the Registry will search for it and guide them through the steps to connect with it. If they a new to the field or have never taken training, they will need to create a new individual Registry account to receive a Registry ID number. This number is used to link the SC Pre-Service Health & Safety Certificate and any future trainings received to the staff's Learning Record in SC Endeavors so that credit can be received for the training. Click here for a how-to guide on creating and registering your account.

b. Career Ladder Placement: Each staff will apply for a Career Ladder Placement. This is done within the Professional Profile in the Review the How to Guide to apply for a Professional Profile and earn Career Ladder Placement. The Career Ladder Placement will allow the program to earn points on the Structural Review for staff education.

4.3.3 Health Documentation

All staff must have the required health documentation:

a. Clear TB test – done once.

b. Staff Health Assessment (DSS Form 2926) completed, signed and dated by a physician or health care provider at enrollment and every four years thereafter. **Note:** If a provider is applying for enrollment and already has this statement or a clear TB Test (because maybe they were enrolled before), it can be accepted as long as it is within four years of the enrollment date.

4.3.4 Comprehensive Background Checks

The CCDBG Act's comprehensive background check requirements state that all child care members (including prospective staff members) for all child care programs eligible to deliver CCDF services must have a comprehensive background check by SCDSS. The authority for the background checks is Senate Bill 595, signed by the Governor on May 16, 2019 authorizing the CCDBG Act's comprehensive background check requirements in South Carolina. Upon acceptance of your application, you will be contacted with instructions for completing these.

Who must have the background checks:

This includes the following persons who are on the premises while children are present:

- All direct caregiving staff/teachers
- School-Age Supervisor and/or Leadership who are on-site
- Administrative Staff
- Janitorial and Maintenance Staff
- Cook and Bus Driver
- Volunteers

These checks must be completed and have a satisfactory determination prior to the person working in the facility. Results of Background Checks will be sent to the Director/Site Supervisor for each person.

The background checks fall into 2 main categories:

a. **SLED/FBI Fingerprint:**

This includes the state fingerprint results, the federal fingerprint results, and the NCIC Sex Offender check results.

- If the results indicate that there is no conviction that excludes the person from working, then the person is cleared to work with children.
- If the results indicate that there is a conviction that excludes the person from working, then the person cannot be hired to work on the premises during the hours the children are present. The person will also receive a copy of this letter.
- The person can request an appeal as indicated in the letter to them; however, during the appeal they are not allowed to work in the program during the hours the children are present.
- ***See # C Timelines for requirements for completion***

b. **Central Registry for Abuse and Neglect**:

The Central Registry results include both the In-State check and Out-of-State Abuse and Neglect check (if applicable).

- If the results indicate the person is not on the Central Registry, the person is cleared to work with children.
- If the results indicate that the person's name is on the Central Registry, then the person cannot work on the premises during the hours children are present.
- If at any time during employment, a staff member's name is placed on the Central Registry, they cannot work in the program while children are present. This includes all persons in the facility including cooks, bus drivers, volunteers, administrative staff, etc.

- When a person is placed on the Central Registry, they are notified via mail. The letter indicates the procedures to request an appeal. If an appeal is filed, the staff is not allowed to work in the program when children are present during the appeal.
- ***See # C Timelines for requirements for completion***
  Please Note: It is possible to receive a clear Central Registry, but not a clear SLED/FBI fingerprint result and vice versa. A negative result from either prevents the person from working.

c. **Timelines**

The CCDBG Act's comprehensive background check requirements state that the background checks must be completed:

- Prior to working with children
- If there has been a lapse of employment in the child care industry that lasts 6 months or longer
- SLED/FBI must be repeated every five years after initial completion
- Central Registry must be repeated every two years after initial completion

4.3.5 Pediatric First Aid

Any person responsible (including emergency persons) for the care or supervision of children must have and maintain current Pediatric First Aid (in-person and hands-on training by a nationally recognized training provider). ABC Quality offers free training through the National Safety Council.

4.3.6 Infant/Child Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)

Any person responsible (including emergency persons) for the care or supervision of children must have and maintain current infant/child CPR certification (in-person and hands-on training by a nationally recognized training provider). ABC Quality offers free training through the National Safety Council.

4.3.7 Discipline and Maltreatment Policy Statement

All staff must sign and date the program's written Discipline and Maltreatment Policy statement at enrollment and annually thereafter prohibiting corporal punishment and maltreatment of children. The statement should specify that if the owner or employee's child(ren) attends, corporal punishment and maltreatment are still prohibited.

4.3.8 SC Health and Safety Pre-Service Certificate

All staff responsible for the care or supervision of children must complete the SC Health and Safety Preservice certificate through ProSolutions or ECD 101 through a SC Technical College. The SC Health and Safety Pre-Service Certificate consists of 15 hours of training. The training is on-line training and there is no cost. (Note: if a staff took the previous 27-hour Health and Safety Pre-Service Certificate, then it is not necessary to take the 15-Hour Pre-Service Certificate.) The following topics are covered in the training:

- Child Development: Milestones from Birth to Age 12 (1 Hour)
- Keeping Children Safe: Building and Classroom Safety (1 Hour)
- Essentials of Outdoor Safety in South Carolina (2 Hours)
- Emergency Preparedness: Better Safe Than Sorry! (1 Hour)
- Responding to Medical Emergencies (1 Hour)
- Recognizing and Reporting Suspected Child Abuse in South Carolina (2 Hours)

- Transportation Safety Basics in South Carolina (1 Hour)
- My Plate: Helping Children Make Healthy Food Choices (1 Hour)
- Infectious Disease Control, Immunizations and Bloodborne Pathogens: Kick Those Germs to the Curb! (1 Hour)
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) (1 Hour)
- Prevention of Shaken Baby Syndrome and Abusive Head Trauma (1 Hour)
- Administering Medication in Child Care Settings (1 Hour)
- Prevention of and Response to Different Types of Allergies (1 Hour)

To access the free training after receiving the Registry ID number from SC Endeavors: Go to the following website and click on *"Featured Products"*.
https://www.prosolutionstraining.com/southcarolina/

4.3.9 ABC Quality Code of Ethics

All staff must sign the ABC Quality Code of Ethics at enrollment and annually acknowledging their understanding and adherence to the Code of Ethics.
https://www.scchildcare.org/media/tiugpxzd/abc-quality-code-of-ethics-statement-3-8-22.pdf

Chapter 5 Additional Requirements:

The following training is required annually. Note: For new enrollments, this does not have to be met but will be checked at each annual visit for the previous calendar year.

5.1 Annual Training Hours:

a. School-Age Supervisor/Director

Must obtain twenty (20) clock hours of training annually in child development/early childhood. At least one hour must be on Blood Borne Pathogens and at least two hours must be related to health and safety. CPR and First Aid are not included in the 20 hours. The remainder of the training hours may come from topics such as Growth & Development, Discipline, Curriculum, Social Emotional, Nutrition, and Administration, etc.

b. Caregiver

Must obtain fifteen (15) clock hours of training annually in child development/early childhood. At least one hour must be on Blood Borne Pathogens and at least two hours must be related to health and safety. CPR and First Aid are not included in the 15 hours. The remainder of the training hours may come from topics such as Growth & Development, Discipline, Curriculum, Social Emotional, and Nutrition, etc.

Notes:

- If staff complete the SC Pre-Service Health & Safety 15 Hour Certificate, this can be counted towards meeting this annual training requirement for that year.

- **Training must be on the staff's learning record with SC Endeavors to count towards meeting the annual requirement.**
- Blood Borne Pathogen training is free and can be taken from Pro-Solutions at the following website. This can be taken every year. Click on "featured products." https://www.prosolutionstraining.com/menu/?d_id=4

5.2. Meal Requirements

a. All meals and snacks provided by the program must be in compliance with the applicable USDA Food Program Meal Pattern Guidelines. This applies even if meals are contracted for purchase through a vendor/caterer.

b. If parents bring their children's food to the program, the program shall have a small supply of nutritional food and beverages available in the event a parent fails to bring the child's food. Note: As a provider, you may be eligible to participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), which can reimburse you for snacks/meals if you serve healthy food.

5.3 Reporting Requirements

The program is required to self-report the following to ABC Quality **within 24 hours** of the incident:

- A child has been seriously injured at the program and medical attention was required
- Two or more children have contracted a communicable disease
- The program closes temporarily due to a communicable disease
- A death of a child or staff member at the facility has occurred
- A child is missing from the premises
- A child was left unattended in a vehicle, on the playground, or in the facility
- There has been a report to the Site Supervisor/Director/Owner of alleged child abuse by a staff member
- The facility has received damage as a result of fire, flood, storm, etc
- Emergency personnel were called to your facility (fire, police, ambulance)
- The program had to evacuate or needed to relocate during an emergency (call when safe to do so)

The program is required to self-report the following to ABC Quality **within 48 hours** of the incident:

- The program is under investigation by the Office of Out of Home Abuse and Neglect (OHAN)

Chapter 6 Health and Safety Inspection

The CCDBG Act of 2014 requires that ABC Quality conduct an annual health & safety inspection of all License Exempt School-Age programs enrolled in ABC Quality. The law requires States to make the results of monitoring and inspection reports available on our website for consumers at www.scchildcare.org. Programs will be asked

to sign the health & Safety Inspection; however, refusal to sign will result in the ABC Quality Assessor marking "Refused to Sign" and the results will still be posted on our website. **Health and Safety Inspection Form**

Beside each item on the checklist, you will see the regulation number where it can be found in this manual. These will be verified during the on-site inspection. These inspections will be conducted at the time of enrollment and then at the same time as the annual unannounced visit every year thereafter. All items marked non-compliant are required to be corrected and a follow-up inspection will be conducted.

Chapter 7 History of Compliance:

Maintaining a clear history with regulatory requirements is the beginning foundation of all quality child care and ensures that children are being cared for in safe environments. This is a major component of participation in the ABC Quality Rating & Improvement System. According to Caring For Our Children, National Health and Safety Performance Standards for Early Care and Education Programs, American Academy of Pediatrics, 4th Edition, regulations ensure that children are provided what they need for quality nurturing care. When providers continually receive violations for not meeting ***ratios, supervision, and serious health and safety regulations***, this does not ensure a safe environment, or one that is conducive to learning.

License-Exempt School-Age programs do not fall under the jurisdiction of Child Care Licensing and are thus not monitored by Child Care Licensing. However, as a requirement for participation in ABC Quality, License-Exempt School-Age programs must comply with the same Licensing regulations that address ratios, supervision, and health & safety. ABC Quality must ensure that children are protected while in care, and one of those ways is for providers to demonstrate compliance to the regulations.

7.1 Definition

a. No reoccurring or multiple deficiencies or significant event posing substantial threat to the health or safety of the children that involve supervision, compliance with ratios, or health and safety violations.

- *Reoccurring* Violations is defined as a violation(s) during a single visit that poses a substantial threat to children's health and safety, AND that was also cited during a previous visit(s)
- *Multiple Violations* is defined as having 3 or more violations during a single visit OR violations that occur during 3 or more separate visits within a one-year period of time that pose a substantial threat to children's health and safety
- *Significant Event* is defined as (but not limited to) any environment, situation, or occurrence that poses substantial threat to the health and safety of children
- *Substantial Threat* is defined as any action, condition, or event that results in children being placed in impending danger or harm
- *Operating Illegally* is defined as programs operating more than four hours per day during the time that public school is in session, or more than 3-week sessions during the summer months or serving children under the age of 5 years

c. Conditions that could pose a *substantial threat* can include, but are not limited to:

- children left alone in the facility or children who leave the facility unsupervised
- sewer backed up in facility with children present
- no water in the facility with children present
- no heat or air conditioning in facility in extreme weather conditions with children present
- fire alarm disconnected (if applicable)
- lack of supervision resulting in a child leaving the facility unnoticed
- lack of supervision resulting in child left at another location such as restaurant, park, zoo, etc
- children removed due to abuse or neglect by Licensing, OHAN, or Child Protective Services staff
- smoking, consumption of alcoholic beverages, or use of other non-prescription narcotic or illegal substances on the center's premises during the hours of operation
- Withholding food from a child(ren)
- Maltreatment of a child(ren)

7.2 Regulations

The following outlines the regulations that License Exempt School-Age programs must comply with in order to maintain a history of compliance. These are a part of meeting History of Compliance. They are listed on the Health & Safety Inspection Checklist and will be checked at enrollment and at each annual visit. **Note:** Some items such as background checks and CPR/FA are also eligibility criteria, and if not maintained are considered as also not meeting history of compliance because they could impact the safety of the children.

Programs must comply with the following:

7.2.1 Ratios and Group Size

All staff working with children must be qualified to be counted in the ratios. (See 7.2.4 Qualified Staff). It is strongly recommended that each program have an Emergency Person who can be contacted in case the regular staff person calls in sick or is on vacation. If the program only has two staff persons and one is not able to work or has to run errands during the time the program is in operation, this will cause the program to be out of compliance with ratios and supervision.

The following ratios must be met as established by Child Care Licensing Statute:

a. **Classroom, Outdoor and Field Trip Ratios**

These are the child to staff ratios set by state statute as a minimum for health and safety. These apply at all times when children are present on the premises and during activities away from the facility such as field trips:

Child's Age	***Staff: Child Ratio***
5 to 6 years	1:20
6 to 9 years	1:23
9 to 13 years	1:23

b. **Water Safety Ratios**

These ratios are to be met when children are at the pool or an outing with water.

Child's Age	**Staff: Child Ratio**
5 years	1:6
6 years and older	2:25

c. **Lifeguard Certification**

All swimming activities must be supervised by a person with current lifeguard training certification. Lifeguard is defined as a person having the qualifications of and possessing a current American Red Cross, YMCA, or equivalent Lifeguard Certificate, current First Aid Certificate and current CPR (which can be infant/child, child, or child/adult) Certificate. The Lifeguard cannot be counted in the child: staff ratios unless they are employed by the program and meet the background checks and eligibility criteria.

d. **Group Size**

This means that according to the age of the children, the group size cannot exceed this number of children, either in a classroom or in a "grouping" of children.

If the facility has small classrooms, ABC Quality will staff and recommend a safe group size for the indoor play space based on at least 35 square feet per child. Only spaces accessible to children and designated for activities will be considered in the calculations

Child's Age	***Mandatory ABC Quality Group Size***
5 to 6 years	60
6 to 9 years	69
9 to 13 years	69

Group size is evaluated during an onsite visit from ABC Quality staff of children observed in all classrooms in the program. Group size is determined by the age of the youngest child in the group. Group size requirements are applied during meals and rest time. Maximum group size does not apply during outdoor time (please note outdoor play space capacity is determined by calculating 75 square feet per child. Program should not exceed this capacity while outdoors).

7.2.2 Supervision

Adequate supervision means staff persons are physically near, readily accessible, aware, and responsible for the ongoing activity of each child. The following are mandatory components of supervision and must be maintained:

a. Staff must be physically near children and have ready access to intervene when needed.
b. All staff working with children on any day must be qualified in order to meet ratios and supervision.
c. Staff talking on cell phones to conduct personal business or any activity (such as cleaning while children are present) that takes the staff's focus from the children is considered a lack of supervision.
d. When child: staff ratios and group size are not maintained, this results in a lack of supervision as there is not enough adults to adequately supervise the children.
e. At least two qualified staff must be on the premises at all times during operating hours, even if not needed to meet the ratio/group size.
f. One of the staff present must be the Site Supervisor, Director or designee.

g. A designee shall be appointed during any absence by the Site Supervisor or Director. The designee shall have access to all records.

h. Children's whereabouts must be tracked throughout the facility, and during activities away from the facility. The purpose of tracking is not intended for attendance, although some providers use it for both. The purpose is to ensure the safety of the children by staff knowing each child's whereabouts from the time they enter the care/supervision of the program until the time they leave the program. Tracking ensures that children are accounted for, and are not left behind on playgrounds, in classrooms, or on field trips.

The following indicates components that must be included to be considered met.
Tracking:

- Begins when the child enters the care/supervision of the program, whether they step foot into the facility directly or are transported from school by the program to the facility
- Is completed <u>daily</u> for each room or group of children
- Is completed on-site and in "real time" (updated continuously, if children move)
- Is dated
- Contains: Children's Name, and Age
- Contains: the staff names(s) for those working/present that day
- Indicates if particular staff are assigned to a group of children. It will list the staff name and all children the staff is responsible for and the time the staff became responsible for the children. Example: if children arrive and are gathered in a large space, the tracking will list the caregiver and the children the caregiver is responsible for along with the time the caregiver became responsible for the children. Then if the children are later split up into groups, the tracking must reflect this with the time the children moved from the large group to a smaller group along with the name of the caregiver responsible
- Indicates the arrival time of each child in the care/supervision of the program to include if the child is assigned to a particular caregiver (be it arrival on the bus or at the facility). Cannot be "ranges of time", e.g. 2:30 – 3:30 pm
- Indicates the exit time each child leaves the care/supervision of the program and is released into the custody of their parent/guardian (when parent picks up)
- Indicates any time a child transitions/moves to 1) supervision of another caregiver, 2) another room 3) outside 4) bathroom if located outside room, etc. If child goes to bathroom, tracking should reflect when they left and when they came back
- Indicates if a child is absent (only if the facility also uses tracking as attendance)
- Has a key or legend on the sheet, if the program uses abbreviations?
- Can be done from a tracking app; but must be able to be printed if needed. Note: if on the day of the visit the Assessor cannot determine if the app meets the tracking requirements, the item for tracking will be marked no. The provider may submit corrective action after the visit with documentation that the app meets
- Programs are required to keep copies of tracking sheets on file in the facility for the previous 12 months. Once 12 months of sheets have been accumulated, then as

each additional month is complete, the provider may dispose of the oldest tracking sheet

- Programs needing assistance in implementing tracking may contact SC Child Care Resource & Referral Network (SC-CCR&RN) at 888-335-1002, and your Quality Coach can assist you. Your ABC Quality Assessor can also assist in connecting you with a Quality Coach

7.2.3 Background Checks

All caregiving staff responsible for the care of children have all background checks with a clear determination prior to working with children. See Program Staff Eligibility Criteria (Chapter 4) 4.3.4 Comprehensive Background Checks.

7.2.4 Qualified Staff

All staff must meet the eligibility criteria; however, only these items below will be considered towards history of compliance:

a. TB Test with negative results.
b. Health Assessment renewed every 4 years.
c. Clear background checks (SLED/FBI and Central Registry) prior to working with children.
d. Age appropriate CPR (completed within 90 days of employment for new hires).
f. Age Appropriate First Aid (completed with 90 days from date of employment for new hires).

7.2.5 Transportation of Children

If the program provides or arranges transportation, the following requirements apply:

a. Child: staff ratios must be met during transportation.
b. The program must have written consent on file from the parent prior to transportation.
c. The vehicle has age appropriate restraints in good repair (if applicable). **See Section 56-5-6530 from T**he SC Department of Transportation website for exceptions. https://scdps.sc.gov/buckleupsc/safety_belt_law
d. The program must ensure each child is secured in an individual, age appropriate safety restraint at all times the vehicle is in motion (if applicable).
e. The vehicle has current registration and proof of insurance.
f. The driver must have a valid regular or commercial driver's license.
g. Program must track children entering and exiting the vehicle.
h. Children must not be left unattended in the vehicle.
i. A First Aid Kit must be available in the vehicle.
j. The driver must have access to a cell phone during transport.
k. The driver must have emergency contact information for each child.
l. The program must comply with Jacob's Law, Section 56-5-195. https://www.scchildcare.org/media/8962/Jacobs-Law.pdf

7.2.6 Indoor Environment

a. Facility is free from hazards and litter.
b. Temperature in the facility shall be maintained between 68 – 80 degrees Fahrenheit as appropriate to the season while children are present.
c. Measures shall be taken to ensure the facility is free from insects, rodents, and other vermin.
d. Facility must be kept clean and sanitary.

e. The facility must have running water at all times.
f. Liquid soap and disposable paper towels must be provided at each sink.
g. Furniture, toys, and equipment are clean, in good repair and meet the US Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC), if applicable.
h. Hazardous materials and chemicals must be kept locked and out of the reach of children (e.g., cleaning supplies, or poisons such as bug spray, or medications).
i. Animals present (no reptiles or rodents) must be healthy and present no apparent threat to the health and safety of children. They must be clean, properly housed, fed, and cared for, and have the required current vaccinations on file at the facility, as appropriate.
j. No weapons are allowed on the premises.
k. Staff bags and other personal belongings must be kept out of the reach of children.
l. Smoking, consumption of alcoholic beverages, or use of other non-prescription narcotic or illegal substances are prohibited on the premises (indoor and outdoor) or while transporting children during the hours of operation.

7.2.7 Outdoor Environment

a. The playground or other areas used by children are free of trash and litter.
b. The building and physical premises are safe for the presence and care of children. This includes the identification of and prevention of hazards that can cause bodily injury, such as electrical hazards, vehicular traffic, and bodies of water.
c. Playground areas must be kept safe, e.g., grass kept cut; no fire ants; poisonous plants removed; no poisons/chemicals (bug spray, insecticides, gasoline, etc.; no standing water; sharp objects such as nails removed; fence in good repair with no gaps or openings; and no large overhanging tree limbs that are broken which could fall and cause injury, etc.
d. Playground equipment must be safe, firmly anchored, meet the US Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC), and be rated for commercial use.
e. Cushioning material such as mats, wood chips, or sand shall be used under climbers, slides, swings, and large pieces of equipment. Cushioning material shall extend at least six (6) feet beyond the equipment and swings.
f. Children shall be restricted from unsafe areas and conditions (such as traffic, parking areas, ditches, and steep slopes) by a fence or natural barrier that is at least 4 feet in height.
g. The use of hot tubs, spas, and saunas are prohibited.
h. The use of trampolines is prohibited.
i. The use of inflatable houses, or inflatable water slides, etc., are prohibited.
j. Any on-site water source (ponds, swimming pools, streams, etc.) must be made inaccessible to children by a secure fencing that is at least 4 feet high; exits and entrances shall have self-closing, positive latching gates with locking devices.
k. A First Aid Kit must be brought outdoors when children are present or stored outdoors in a secure locked location. It must include an Epi Pen prescribed by a doctor for any child that requires one.

7.2.8 Food Preparation/Service

Some programs prepare meals and/or snacks on-site. Others purchase meals from a vendor or they are provided by the local School District if the program is housed in a School.

a. Food must be properly stored, labeled, and dated. Containers of food, food preparation equipment, and single service articles shall be stored at least 6" above the floor, on clean surfaces, and in such a manner to be protected from splash and other contamination. Food not subject to further washing or cooking before serving shall be stored in such a manner to be protected against contamination when the food requires washing or cooking. The storage of food or food equipment, utensils, or single service articles in toilet rooms and under exposed sewer lines is prohibited. (Note: for providers who use a food vendor, or the school provides meals and/or snacks, the program must still ensure that any food delivered is stored properly until served).
b. Proper hair restraints must be worn when food is prepared on-site OR when food provided by a vendor/school district must be "plated" by the program staff from containers.
c. Appliances (e.g., refrigerators, microwaves) must be kept clean.
d. Refrigerators must have a working thermometer and the temperature must not exceed 45 degrees Fahrenheit.
e. All cleaning supplies and poisonous chemicals must be stored away from food and made physically inaccessible to children.
f. Food preparation areas are cleaned and sanitized before and after use.
g. Service areas where food is served to the children and where the children eat are cleaned and sanitized before and after use.

Chapter 8 Provider Agreement

8.1 Issuance of Provider Agreement

a. Provider Agreements are signed Agreements between the provider and SCDSS.
b. Provider Agreements are electronic and made available to the provider to sign once ABC Quality has accepted the provider's application and the application status has changed to "application accepted".
c. The Provider Agreement must be signed before the program will be assigned their Quality Level.
d. The Provider Agreement is effective for a period of <u>one year from the date the Quality Level is assigned</u> by ABC Quality, regardless of when it is signed by the provider. The Quality Level assignment date is considered the end date of the Provider Agreement.
e. Provider Agreements are provider/owner-specific and address-specific.
   - Another provider/owner cannot take over operation of the facility and operate under the same Agreement
   - Per the Provider Agreement, providers are authorized only to serve children at the enrolled and ABC Quality approved site listed on the Provider Agreement. Children are connected to a specific provider in SC Scholarship and they must be served where they are connected. Serving children at an unapproved location potentially places children in harm and is grounds for termination
   - If the provider has two or more locations enrolled, they may not switch or transport children between locations without notifying SC Scholarship for authorization. Children will appear on the SVL for the location in which they have been connected

8.2 Expiration of the Provider Agreement

The provider's enrollment in ABC Quality expires on the end date of the Provider Agreement, which is one year from the date the Quality Level was assigned.

8.3 When an Agreement Becomes Null and Avoid

Because Provider Agreements are address-specific, when a provider moves, the Provider Agreement becomes null and void and ABC Quality has the right to close the provider file (16.2.6).

- ABC Quality is under no obligation to allow the provider to enroll at the new location (regardless of whether they have obtained the appropriate regulatory document/Exemption
- If SC Scholarship clients are connected, a two-week notice will be given
- ***This is not appealable***

8.4 Non-Renewal of The Provider Agreement

The following are reasons a Provider Agreement will not be renewed:

- The program does not reapply for enrollment prior to the expiration of the Provider Agreement (this date coincides with the quality Level expiration date). **Important Note:** Non-application indicates consent that the provider no longer wishes to participate in ABC Quality
- The program does not reapply and submit all eligibility documentation and the Structural Quality Portfolio (if it is the 3rd year) at least 30 days prior to the expiration of the Provider Agreement. When this occurs, ABC Quality cannot guarantee that the on-site assessment can be completed timely to ensure the program receives a Quality Level before the Provider Agreement expires
- The program does not meet History of Compliance at the time of the application for enrollment
- The program is on a Quality Improvement Plan with ABC Quality
- The program has an open Out of Home Abuse and Neglect (OHAN) investigation
- The program received two consecutive on-site assessments with a score of less than 50 points
- The program's owner's name has been placed on the Central Registry for Abuse and Neglect
- If the Provider Agreement cannot be renewed, a letter will be sent by certified mail giving a 2 week notice that the agreement will not be renewed and an end date. This will be the last date the provider may expect to receive payment for any clients served through SC Scholarship
- ***Non-Renewal of the Provider Agreement is not appealable***

8.5 Criteria for Renewal of Provider Agreement and Quality Level

All programs must:

a. Recertify their License Exempt status every third year in conjunction with the resubmittal of the Structural Quality Portfolio.
b. Complete new Central Registry checks every two years for all staff.
c. Have a clear History of Compliance to include:
   - ❒ No open investigation with the Office of Out of Home Abuse and Neglect (OHAN). See **Glossary** for definition.
   - ❒ Not on a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) with ABC Quality.
d. Renewal of Provider Agreement and Quality Level by logging into their SC Endeavors organization profile and submitting a new application every year.
e. Submit and meet all eligibility criteria (Program and Staff) every year.

f. Submit the Structural Portfolio as required every third year.

g. Receive a score of at least 50 points total on the comprehensive review.

- ❒ Programs that score below 50 points total on their comprehensive review will be allowed to reapply and sign one more Provider Agreement; however, will be required to participate in a Quality Improvement Plan and receive technical assistance from the SC Child Care Resource & Referral Network

Chapter 9 ABC Quality Framework

9.1 Enrollment and Renewal

The program must apply for participation in ABC Quality and **re-apply for renewal each year** thereafter prior to the expiration of the Provider Agreement (Quality Level).

- For existing providers, reminder notices will be sent via the email address on file at various intervals prior to the expiration of the Provider Agreement/Quality Level
- The program will log-in to their Organization Profile account in SC Endeavors and re-apply for renewal in ABC Quality. Programs will be given a deadline to re-apply. If the program misses the deadline to re-apply, ABC Quality may re-apply on the program's behalf.
- Programs who do not re-apply for renewal risk their participation status in ABC Quality and could be cause for termination.

9.2 Standards and Indicators:

The standards and indicators used by ABC Quality are based on research and practice and are focused on the health and safety of children, staff education and qualifications, supportive staff-child interactions, and meaningful learning activities.

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 **6 Elements of Quality** (4 Structural and 2 Process).

Structural Elements	Process Element
I. Program Administration and Structure II. Staff Education and Professional Development III. Child Well-being IV. Family Communication, Engagement and Cultural Competency	V. Intentional Teaching Practices VI. Ratios and Group Size
Documented via submission on-line	*Documented via observed criteria defined by the Process Quality Guide – Preschool and Process Quality Guide – School-Age*

9.3 Quality Assessment Review and Scores

9.3.1 Structural Quality Portfolio Online Assessment

The Structural Quality Assessment, or "portfolio" is a part of the program's overall score to determine the program's level of participation in ABC Quality. The Structural Quality are the policies the program has implemented. Upon enrollment, the provider will submit evidence for indicators they meet as a part of their ABC Quality application in the SC Endeavors Registry. Evidence submitted will be validated by a Quality Assessor. Programs will earn points for the indicators that are met.

a. Every three years beginning from the date of enrollment, the program is required to resubmit their Structural Quality Portfolio online assessment. If programs would like to attempt to improve their Structural Quality Score, they may choose to resubmit their Structural Quality Portfolio every year upon the annual review and do not have to wait until the third year.

b. Each staff member employed (including leadership) since the last review is required to have a Professional Profile with SC Endeavors. If staff choose not to apply for a Career Ladder Placement, then ABC Quality will not be able to score *Element II Staff Education and Professional Development* in its entirety, and thus the program may not receive all points for this section of the Structural Quality Assessment.

9.3.2 On-Site Assessment

a. A minimum of one unannounced visit per year will be conducted.

b. During the visit, a Quality Assessor will complete an on-site evaluation using the *Process Quality Guide – Preschool and Process Quality Guide – School-Age.* Additionally, each classroom will be assessed for ratios and group size. These are considered the "Process Elements of Quality", which are the observable experiences children have in child care and includes the social, emotional, physical and instructional aspects of early care and education.

c. Eligibility criteria will be reviewed for any new staff hired since the last visit and updated for all other staff.

d. The annual Health & Safety Inspection will be conducted, and the results will be published on www.scchildcare.org.

9.3.3 Scores

Where do the points come from?

Both the Structural and Process Quality Assessments are points-based. Programs earn points based on their strengths by meeting indicators through a portfolio/document submission (Structural Quality Assessment) and an on-site observation (Process Quality Assessment). The points earned are calculated for program's total final score that equals the program's quality level.

a. Structural Quality Scoring – 83 points possible for each program.

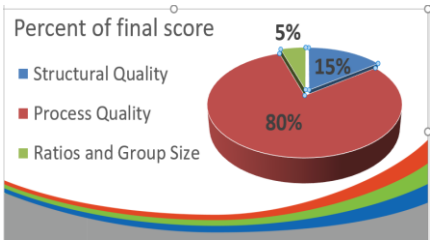
b. Process Quality Scoring – 100 points possible per classroom observed .

c. Ratios and Group Size – 10 points possible per classroom (5 points earned for meeting ratios and 5 points earned for meeting group size).

d. Bonus points- 3 points added to the final score.

9.3.4 Percent of Final Score:

This chart shows the total possible percentage points that can be earned from the types of assessments. The largest percentage comes from the Process Quality Assessment which is the observation of what takes place in the classroom.



9.3.5 Threshold Scores:

Quality Level	Threshold Scores
A +	96-100
A	86-95
B+	81-85
B	71-80
C	50-70

9.3.6 How the final score is calculated

This is an example of how a program might score and how the final score is calculated. Please note that scores are based on percentages and this is represented by the final score:

Happy Days Child Development

Type of Assessment	# of Classrooms	Possible Points (that could have been earned)	Actual Points Earned	Take the points earned and divide by the possible points	Then multiply this number received by the percentage from the pie chart in 9.3.2(Percent of Final Score) that corresponds to the type of Assessment (e.g. Structural, Process, etc.)
Structural	----------	**83** per program = **83**	**80** out of 83	80 ÷ 83 = 96	96 x .15 = 14.40
Process	5 observed	100 per class (5 x 100 = **500**)	**467** out of 500	467 ÷ 500 = 93	93 x .80 = 74.4
Ratio/Group	5	10 per class (10 x 5 = **50**)	**35** out of 50	35 ÷ 50 = 70	70 x .05 = 3.5
Bonus Points		**3**	**3**		92.30 + 3= 95.30
					Total 95.30 Level A

9.3.5 Determining the Quality Level

Based upon the "Total" score received, look at the Threshold Chart above in 9.3.5, to determine the Level. The final score for the example Happy Days Child Development falls within the Level A threshold and thus the program earned a Level A Rating.

9.4 Corrective Action Process

Providers must meet all requirements at enrollment. When annual reviews are conducted, and the provider does not meet all requirements, then ABC Quality will follow it's corrective action process outlined below.

Enrollment Review: The program must earn 50 points or more on the combined Structural Quality and Process Quality Review to be eligible to enroll.

❒ Programs that score below a 50 at enrollment must wait 1 year before reapplying. If the program receives technical assistance from the SC Child Care Resource & Referral Network and participates in a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) they may reapply in 6 months. ABC Quality will verify completion of the QIP.

Structural and Process Quality Review:

Annual Review: The program received less than 50 points on the combined Structural Quality Review and the Process Quality Review.

❒ Programs that score below 50 points total on their comprehensive review will be allowed to reapply and sign one more Provider Agreement. ABC Quality recommends participation in a

Quality Improvement Plan and technical assistance from the SC Child Care Resource & Referral Network to improve scores in the next annual review.

- ❒ Programs must score at least a total of 50 points on their next review to continue to participate in ABC Quality
- ❒ A total score below 50 points for two consecutive reviews will be staffed for termination or non-renewal of the Provider Agreement

Eligibility Criteria:

Annual Review: Programs do not meet all eligibility criteria at the annual review.

- ❒ 1st Notice of Corrective Action Needed: The provider will be provided with a Site Report outlining deficiencies found. The Site Report is signed by the provider; however, refusal to sign it does not exempt the program from submitting the required documentation to remain enrolled. The provider is given 15 days from the date of the review to submit any corrective action before the report is finalized
- ❒ 2nd Notice of Corrective Action Needed: If the provider does not submit any corrective action from the 1st Notice or the corrective action is not satisfactorily met, the provider will receive their finalized report and be given another 15 days to submit corrective action
- ❒ 3rd Notice of Corrective Action Needed: If all corrective action is still not submitted, a letter is mailed to the provider giving a final 15 days to submit everything
- ❒ If corrective action is not received by the final deadline, then the program's file is sent for staffing for termination or non-renewal of the Provider Agreement

Health & Safety Inspection

Annual Review: Programs do not meet all items on the Health & Safety Inspection.

Items not met will be listed on the Site Report and the corrective action process will be followed as noted above (under Eligibility Criteria). Providers may submit evidence for items not met such as photos, documentation, or receipts, etc. showing correction. For those that cannot be verified through photos, documentation, etc, then a follow-up on-site visit will be done to verify correction. A follow-up Health & Safety Inspection will be posted on scchildcare.org showing all items have been corrected.

9.5 Assessor Reliability

ABC Quality is committed to scoring each observed classroom using the *Process Quality Guides* accurately and reliably, as well as the ABC Quality Structural Portfolio. All ABC Quality Assessors have extensive education, training, and experience with classroom practice, observation, and assessment. They have been trained to remain objective and unbiased when observing a program. There are 4 State Quality Anchors reliable to each other who then provide a rigorous orientation process for the state team of Quality Assessors. Testing for reliability requires a minimum of three assessments conducted jointly 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.

9.6 Reclassification

Reclassification is when a provider is moved from one Level to another within the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).

- Moving from one level to another occurs if the program's score received from the Structural Quality Assessment Review with the Process Quality On-Site Assessment Review falls within another Level
- If the program moves up a Level in the QRIS, then a rate change request for an increase in payment rates will be processed
- If the program moves down a Level in the QRIS, then a rate change request for a decrease in payment rates will be processed
- **Reclassification is not appealable**

9.7 ABC Quality Partner Agencies

SCDSS partners through contracts with the following agencies in an effort to assist and support child care programs in providing quality child care. You may contact these partners for the services they can offer, if you feel you need assistance. There is no charge to programs for these services.

SC Child Care Resource & Referral Network

SC Child Care Resource & Referral (SC CCR&R) is a team of dedicated, experienced ECE professionals (Quality Coach) working to promote high-quality early care and education (ECE) in South Carolina. SCCR & R provides free, statewide services to South Carolina's families, early childhood programs, and communities in its efforts to connect, support, and engage ECE stakeholders across the state.

www.sc-ccrr.org
scccrr@mailbox.sc.edu
1-888-335-1002

SC Program For Infant Toddler Care

The SCPITC promotes a responsive, relationship-based approach to infant/toddler care. The positions advocated by the South Carolina PITC are based in sound child development and family support research, theory and practice. The SCPITC is adapted from the Program for Infant/Toddler Care in California at the WestEd Center for Child and Family Studies which is recognized nationally and internationally for their effective training strategies emphasizing an approach that encourages self-reflection and builds on the strengths of individual programs and teachers. SCPITC also offers "Be Well Care Well", "SC Beginnings", and SCIMHA" consultation.

www.scpitc.org
info@scpitc.org

SC Child Care Inclusion Collaborative

The South Carolina Child Care Inclusion Collaborative is committed to connecting child care providers, partners, and families with high quality resources to support the inclusion of children with disabilities in child care settings.
www.scinclusion.org
803-777-8483
scic@mailbox.sc.edu

9.8 Other Resources

Look in Statewide Child Care Resources on our website (www.scchildcare.org) , for additional resources.

Chapter 10 Provider Business Procedures

10.1 Introduction

We are very excited to have you be a part of ABC Quality!

The ABC Quality Rating & Improvement System (ABC Quality) is a federally funded program administered by the SC Department of Social Services. We are also a voluntary program.

ABC Quality strives to protect the health and safety of children in child care, help parents make informed consumer choices and access information to support child development, provide equal access to stable child care for children eligible for SC Scholarship, and enhance the quality of child care and the early childhood workforce.

To join the ABC Quality family, you must sign a Provider Agreement which signifies you agree to comply with requirements set forth in this Manual. Therefore, it is very important that you read his document in its entirety. Any questions should be referred to ABC Quality.

10.2 General Information

As a part of ABC Quality, providers understand and agree to the following:

a. Providers are independent business owners. Enrollment is strictly voluntary.
b. Enrollment in ABC Quality is not a guarantee of parents with scholarship vouchers for any program.
c. Providers should not view participation in ABC Quality as a primary means of support for their business.
d. Providers agree to meet and maintain the eligibility requirements, additional program standards above regulatory requirements, and documentation relating to attendance and SC Scholarship Payment. Provider payment rates in SC Scholarship are based on the Level of participation and the provider type. Providers are paid the rate they charge to all others, up to the highest SC Scholarship maximum rate for the level assigned.
e. Providers who participate in ABC Quality must not charge private paying clients less than what is being charged for SC Scholarship clients. If the program offers discounted rates or scholarships to other populations (e.g. employees or low-income parents), the program must have a clearly

documented policy of how this is administered, e.g. number of slots, qualifications to obtain scholarship/sliding fee (income/family size, is there an application, who approves applications, where does the funding come from, etc. It must contain as much detail as possible. The discounts must be administered fairly. **This must be made known to ABC Quality at the time of enrollment or if implemented after enrollment.** Without this documentation, ABC Quality considers this charging private paying clients less than SC Scholarship clients.

f. ABC Quality does not guarantee providers will receive clients, nor does ABC Quality refer clients to providers. Clients voluntarily choose the provider that best meets their needs.

g. Providers agree to cooperate with any investigations conducted by SCDSS staff, e.g. complaint visits, OHAN visits, etc. to include allowing staff to be interviewed and to allow access to video footage, if available.

h. Our website, www.scchildcare.org, is a resource for providers and is continually updated as new information becomes available. If you do not already receive our newsletter, please use the link on this website to enter your email address to be added to the mailing list. As documents are added or revised, they will be added to "ABC Quality Resources". The date they were revised will be reflected in the footer. The provider shall be responsible for compliance to the amended procedures for the purpose defined.

10.3 Who to Call and When

This is a short guide to help you if any of the following occur, and where to report it. You may call or submit this in writing via email. Please do not send any information with your SVL.

ABC QUALITY

CONTACT US AT:

ABC Quality Contact (See 1.3 for contact Information)

The items marked with an * require paperwork or documentation and ABC Quality will inform the program to notify what is needed)

Please let us know if any of the following occurs:

- ❒ Change in facility address or payment address*
- ❒ Change in phone number
- ❒ Change in FEIN or Social Security Number*
- ❒ Change in the On-Site Supervisor/Director
- ❒ Change in hours of operation*
- ❒ Closing of facility temporarily or permanently
- ❒ If provider needs to add or delete an age group*
- ❒ Change in Regulatory Status*
- ❒ Change in Rates*
- ❒ Plans to sell facility/change of ownership or entering management agreement
- ❒ There has been a report of alleged abuse
- ❒ The program has at least two children with a communicable disease
- ❒ The police, ambulance, or fire department were called to the facility
- ❒ The program had to evacuate (when safe to do so)

SC SCHOLARSHIP:

CONTACT US AT:

SC Scholarship
ATTN: Provider Team
S. C. Department of Social Services
P. O. Box 100160
Columbia, South Carolina 29202-3160

Phone: (800) 262-4416
Fax: (800) 310-5417

Please let us know if any of the following occur:

- ❒ When a child has missed ten consecutive days
- ❒ Inquiries regarding payment if payment not received after 10-14 working days from the date of SVL receipt by the SC Scholarship
- ❒ Provider is going to discontinue services to a client
- ❒ Provider will be temporarily closed for a week or longer
- ❒ Clients fail to attend the program after authorization is given
- ❒ Provider has trouble accessing the on-line SVL or needs help with the password

Chapter 11 Amendment of Provider's Enrollment

A provider's enrollment can be amended at any time after enrollment in ABC Quality. The provider must notify the assigned ABC Quality Assessor directly if any changes or amendments need to be made to their enrollment and send any documentation to the Assessor.

♦ **PLEASE DO NOT SEND ANY CHANGES WITH YOUR SERVICE VOUCHER LOG (SVL). They are not forwarded to ABC Quality.**

Amendments may occur for, but are not limited to, the following reasons:

11.1 Provider Rates Changes

Rate changes can be requested by the provider or can be initiated by ABC Quality if the provider moves up or down in the ABC Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Rate Increases

Providers who increase their child care rates may request a rate increase.

a. The provider may call ABC Quality or SC Scholarship to request a Rate Change Form be sent to them.

b. **Effective July 1, 2022, rate changes may only be approved one time per calendar year from the date of the last rate increase.**

c. The rate form is signed and dated by the provider and returned with the required documentation (#d) to SC Scholarship at ProviderRateForms@dss.sc.gov.

d. Required documentation: The provider must include a copy of their published/written child care rates [e.g., written fee policy, parent handbook with rates included] along with any correspondence given to parents notifying them of the rate increase. The rate increase will not be processed without this information. Providers who do not currently have a written fee policy [outlining what rates they charge] are strongly encouraged to

develop one. IMPORTANT: Providers must not charge private paying clients less than the amount charged to SC Scholarship clients.

e. Providers will receive written confirmation that the rate increase has been approved and processed; however, at times SC Scholarship may contact the provider and give verbal confirmation first. Providers should contact SC Scholarship if they do not receive either verbal or written correspondence in response to their request. **It is the provider's responsibility to make sure their rate increase has been received and processed by SC Scholarship. Rate increases will not be applied retroactively.**

f. Once approved, the rate increase will not immediately take effect for those clients currently being served by the provider. The payment rate will remain the same until the client's eligibility period is renewed. If the client continues to select the provider, then the new payment rate will be effective for the client with the date of their new eligibility period.

EXCEPTION: Foster care children are the only clients immediately connected at the new rate.

g. Any new clients selecting the provider on or after the date of the rate increase will be paid at the new rate.

h. If the provider charges more than the maximum allowed by SC Scholarship, then only the maximum will be paid. The provider may require the client to pay any difference between their rate and the maximum paid by SC Scholarship. Note: the Client Handbook also tells the client they must pay the difference. It is recommended that if you do charge more that you inform the client of this upon accepting them as to avoid any misunderstandings.

Rate Decreases

Providers who decrease their rates **must** notify SC Scholarship and request a Rate Change Form.

a. The same procedures as outlined in Rate Increases will be followed with the exception that all rate decreases will be **effective immediately** without regard to the client's eligibility status.

b. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** failure to notify SC Scholarship of a decrease in rates will result in a recoupment of funds for the time period the provider continued to receive a higher payment rate than was charged to private paying clients. Additionally, the program could be staffed for termination for fraudulently billing SC Scholarship.

11.2 Addition or Deletion of Additional Age Group

- Providers can request to add another age group(s) not previously enrolled by contacting ABC Quality. Providers must be currently providing child care services for the age group. License-Exempt providers are not allowed to serve children under five years of age
- An on-site visit is required for child care centers to add age groups
- Providers can request to add half-time or full-time for an age group already enrolled
- Providers should request to delete an age group if they are no longer serving an age group or do not want to be enrolled for that age group

11.3 Change in Facility's Regulatory Status

- Once notified, ABC Quality will send the appropriate paperwork to change the facility's status from License Exempt to a Licensed Center

11.4 Change in Name of Child Care Facility

- ABC Quality will send the appropriate paperwork to be completed and returned in order to make the change

11.5 Change in Program Location

If the provider moves to another location, the following must occur:

- The provider must notify ABC Quality as soon as possible, but no later than 15 days prior to the move
- **The provider must only serve the children at the facility enrolled**. When a provider moves, the exemption status becomes invalid and the provider must go through the exemption process for the new location and submit to ABC Quality prior to the move
- If the provider needs to temporarily relocate due to unforeseen circumstances, such as the facility floods, renovations, etc., they must notify ABC Quality for approval to move the children
- The provider's file with the old address will be closed
- ABC Quality is under no obligation to enroll the new location
- The facility must submit new documents to verify exemption status
- If the provider meets the following, then the enrollment will be processed at the new location:
  - Exemption status at the new location is granted
  - Program demonstrates a history of compliance
  - Site Supervisor/Director remains the same
  - Eligibility requirements are met
  - At least 75% of the caregiver staff remains with the program

11.6 Change in the On-Site School Age Supervisor/Director of Child Care Facility

- Once notified there is a change in the Director/On-Site Supervisor of the child care facility, ABC Quality will update its records to include SC Scholarship

11.7 Change in Mailing/Payment Address or Phone Numbers

If there is a change in the facility phone number, payment/mailing address, or service address because of 911:

- ABC Quality will send the appropriate paperwork to be completed and returned in order to process the address change

11.8 Change in Telephone Number

- Once notified, ABC Quality will update its records to include SC Scholarship

11.9 Change in Hours or Days of Operation

- The provider must submit revised parent handbooks, flyers, or any documentation showing the new hours of operation and/or days of operation
- ABC Quality will re-verify the program's exemption status

Chapter 12 Records

The following records **are required to be kept on-site, as required by federal regulations.** If the School Age Supervisor/Director is going to be away from the location, a designated person in charge must have access to all records. **If records are not on-site during the assessment visit, the assessor will note that the provider does not meet the requirement.** This means that Quality Assessors are not going to travel to another location to review records. If a program has multiple sites and keep records in a central location, then copies must be kept on-site. Providers should establish good record keeping methods and maintain all documentation in an orderly fashion. Records must be kept confidential.

12.1 Attendance

Daily attendance records must be maintained for each child served through SC Scholarship. Attendance must be kept for a minimum of 5 years plus the current year or until the program has been audited.

- Attendance may be documented in several different ways which include the following:
  - ✓ Recording days and actual hours of attendance in a roll book or log sheet to include the USDA Log Sheet
  - ✓ Using sign-in/sign-out sheets Using computer logs, etc. IMPORTANT NOTE: If provider uses sign-in/sign-out sheets, and the parents fail to sign-in or sign-out, the DSS Auditors may recoup funds
- Records must be legible and easily readable. If using the computer, please make sure the font is a size that can be easily read
- The child's name on the attendance must match the name on the SVL. The child's given name, not a nickname, should be recorded
- Records must match the absences reported on the SVL submitted for the period. Providers must accurately report all absences on the SVL indicating "0" for the hours attended and the absence reason code or the actual number of hours attended daily (whole numbers only)
- A provider may be required to repay funds if the provider cannot provide accurate documentation that the child attended the program
- Daily attendance records may be requested to resolve a discrepancy between two different providers when a child's date of attendance is in question

SCDSS Audit staff regularly conduct audit reviews and failure to have this documentation can result in recoupment of funds if the provider cannot show documentation of attendance. SCDSS audit staff created a helpful information sheet for providers, "Internal Audit Information and Recommendations".

12.2 Tracking Sheets

Providers must maintain the tracking sheets for a period of one year [Refer to Glossary Tracking # 21.56].

12.3 Receipts for Grant Purchases

Providers must maintain receipts on-site for items purchased under any grant received for a period of five years plus the current year for audit purposes. It is suggested that copies of receipts be made as sometimes original receipts fade over time and cannot be read.

12.4 Service Voucher Log [SVL]

Providers must maintain copies of the SVL on-site for a period of five years plus the current year for audit purposes.

12.5 Staff Records

An individual file must be kept **on-site** for each staff employed. Information should include, but not be limited to, the following:

a. Name and Job Title of Staff (e.g. Director, Site Supervisor, Lead Teacher, or Assistant Teacher, etc.).
b. Documentation of CPR Certification.
c. Documentation of First Aid Certification.
d. Signed and dated ABC Quality Code of Ethics.
e. Copy of all Background checks and results (SLED/FBI, Central Registry NCIC, and Sex Offender Registry).
f. Original copies of Non-Criminal Justice Applicant Privacy Rights Notification (DSS Form 1081) and Privacy Act Statement (DSS Form 1083).
g. Staff Health Assessment.
h. Signed and dated Discipline and Maltreatment Policy prohibiting the use of corporal punishment and maltreatment.
i. TB Test results or applicable statement.

13.6 Child Records

An individual file should be kept on-site for each child enrolled through SC Scholarship. Information should include, but not be limited to, the following:

a. A "Child Enrollment Form" which includes the following information: Parent name; child's complete name; child's sex, age and date of Birth; Social Security Number of parent(unless foster child, then SS# of foster child), address; contact information to include emergency contact; medical conditions or allergies staff need to be aware of; and the names of any individual authorized to pick the child up from the program. It is helpful to cross-reference each child's file with other children from the same family, especially when the last names are different. ABC Quality has a sample Child Enrollment Form on our website that you may use. It can be found under Related Documents & Links on our website.
b. Copy of current immunization record or religious or medical exemption statement for all children that attend the program.
    - **SC DPH Form 4024**: SC Certificate of Immunization for School and Child Care (*certificate of medical exemption is included on this form*).
        - **DPH-2740** accepted if issued on or before June 30, 2022, and no further immunizations are needed through 12th grade
        - **Military Forms DD-2766 or P-0630 with DPH-4375** can be accepted in lieu of the DPH-4024,
    - **SC DPH Form 1126**: South Carolina Certificate of Religious Exemption

c. Written parental authorization to transport children, if applicable.
d. Authorization/Connection Letter - describes the client's name and name of the child, amount of billing, start and stop dates, client fee amount (if applicable), and type of care.

e. Any correspondence from SC Scholarship related to the client.

13.7 Field Trip Records

ABC Quality allows providers to take children on field trips. Field trips can only occur during programs regular hours of operation. ABC Quality does not allow programs to take children on overnight field trips. (See Glossary Chapter 21 for definition of Field Trip #21.23). ABC Quality requires the following records to be present for each field trip. Failure to provide this documentation when requested can result in ABC Quality considering the event to be serving children at an unauthorized location.

a. A written plan of the field trip to include date, location, purpose, estimated length of field trip, and ratios that will be maintained.
   If the facility regularly takes a specific field trip such as to a movie or skating rink weekly, ABC Quality will accept a "blanket" statement only if it includes all the dates the activity will occur.
b. Written parental permission for the specific field trip.
c. Tracking sheets for the field trip.

Chapter 14 Complaints

14.1 Complaints

Complaints are a natural part of owning/running a child care facility. ABC Quality takes complaints seriously. The program and staff must cooperate with any investigation by ABC Quality and OHAN staff to review documents and view any video footage. Failure to do so could result in termination from ABC Quality.

- If ABC Quality receives a complaint on a License-Exempt School-Age Program from the general public, the complaint will be documented
- ABC Quality will make an unannounced visit to follow-up on the complaint based on the following criteria:
  Serious/significant/OHAN complaint: Quality Assessor will conduct a visit within 2 business days upon receipt of the complaint
  All other complaints: Quality Assessor will conduct a visit within 3 business days upon receipt of the complaint
- If the Office of Out of Home Abuse and Neglect (OHAN) receives and accepts a complaint, the complaint will be documented. An investigator with OHAN will make a visit to determine if abuse or neglect has occurred and will render a finding. The ABC Quality Assessor will also make a visit. The purpose of ABC Quality's visit will be to determine if any circumstances/regulations were not met and thus caused the possible abuse or neglect. Any findings from ABC Quality will be documented in a letter sent to the program
- If ABC Quality receives a complaint alleging the program is either operating more than four hours per day during the school year or serving children under the age of five years and it is verified by ABC Quality through an on-site visit, ABC Quality will notify Child Care Licensing that the provider is operating illegally, and this incident could result in termination
- During any normal annual visit by ABC Quality, if it is observed the program is either operating more than four hours per day during the school year or serving children under the age of five years, ABC Quality will notify Child Care Licensing that the provider is operating beyond the parameters of a legal operation, and this incident could result in termination

- Any complaint received by ABC Quality that involves an injury to a child will be referred to the Office of Out of Home Abuse and Neglect (OHAN) (if the complainant hasn't already reported it)
- Any findings by ABC Quality will be documented in a letter sent to the program
- Deficiencies will be posted on our website at scchildcare.org
- ABC Quality may make a follow-up visit to verify correction of deficiencies
- All complaints received, and subsequent correspondence will be kept on file with ABC Quality and are public record

Chapter 15 Voluntary Withdrawal from ABC Quality

ABC Quality is and has always been a voluntary program. Providers can voluntarily withdraw their participation at any time by the following ways: in writing, via letter or email or by not re-applying for enrollment in ABC Quality upon expiration of the Quality Level. Providers should notify ABC Quality directly. If SC Scholarship clients are connected, we request at least a two-week notice so clients may find another provider. Providers who have received a grant must stay in the program for the period required by the grant, or the grant funds will be recouped.

If the provider requests to voluntarily end/terminate their enrollment agreement, and then later requests to rescind the termination of their agreement, ABC Quality is under no obligation to do so, particularly if the provider's file has been closed in SC Scholarship.

Any program that fails to apply for renewal of their ABC Quality Level in the SC Endeavors Workforce Registry by the expiration date of their current quality level will be withdrawn from participation in ABC Quality as a "voluntary withdrawal". *Renewal applications are submitted in the program's Organization Account.*

Voluntary termination of a provider's enrollment agreement is not appealable.

Chapter 15 Adverse Actions by ABC Quality

There are times when ABC Quality finds it necessary to initiate termination of a provider's enrollment. ABC Quality does not take termination lightly.

15.1 Termination of the Provider's Enrollment by ABC Quality

ABC Quality will initiate termination of a provider's enrollment agreement during any enrollment period if the provider fails to comply with the requirements of ABC Quality to maintain enrollment.

IMPORTANT: Because ABC Quality is a federally funded program, if the provider's enrollment is terminated, it is possible that other federally funded programs in which the provider also participates, such as the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), may seek disqualification from the program.

Any time termination is initiated, the Director of Early Care and Education reserves the right to remove all ABC children from the facility during the termination/appeals process.

The following list includes **(but not limited to)** reasons that ABC Quality will initiate termination of a provider's enrollment during the time the Provider Agreement is in effect. These terminations **are appealable**. (see Appeals Process Chapter 18).

1. Failure to Maintain History of Compliance to Regulations,
    a. The program is not in compliance with History of Compliance.

2. Failure to Comply with the CCDBG Act's comprehensive background check requirements:
    a. The program is not in compliance with the comprehensive background check requirements.

3. Failure to Meet the Program and Staff Eligibility Criteria: The program is not in compliance with meeting Program and Staff Eligibility Criteria.
4. Failure to Maintain Required Program Assessment Scores: The program does not meet the minimum total score required to maintain enrollment.
5. Use of Corporal Punishment or Maltreatment of Children: The use of corporal punishment or maltreatment of a child(ren) by the owner of the facility or, the use of corporal punishment or maltreatment of a child(ren) by staff in the facility, and the owner/operator did not take appropriate action. If further instances of corporal punishment or maltreatment occur at the facility within any 12-month period, termination of enrollment will occur.
6. Owner Name Placed on the Central Registry of Abuse and Neglect: Owners whose name is placed on the Central Registry cannot have a program enrolled in ABC Quality.
7. Staff Name Placed on the Central Registry of Abuse and Neglect: Staff whose name has been placed on the Central Registry and the owner/operator has not prohibited the staff from being in the facility.
8. Failure to Submit Required Corrective Action: The provider does not correct the deficiencies/violations within the timeframe allowed (including any extension of time allowed for correction). **If the provider submits all corrective action after the termination letter has been received, ABC Quality is under no obligation to rescind the termination.**
9. Failure to Provide Child Care Services at Enrolled Address and/or providing services at a location that is not enrolled and the child is not connected to: The provider is serving children at a location other than the enrolled address.
10. Failure to Operate during Stated Hours of Operation: There are 3 documented incidents of non-compliance with the stated hours of operation during any 12-month period.
11. Failure to Maintain Phone Service: The program does not 1) have phone service (after 30 days to obtain), 2) has a non-published number, or 3) did not have phone service 2 times within any 12- month period of time, as verified by ABC Quality, or SC Scholarship.
12. Misuse of ABC Grant Funds: The provider did not comply with the terms and conditions of a grant and the provider did not reimburse ABC Quality within the timeframe given for reimbursement (including any extension of time approved). Funds will be recouped.
13. Fraud: The provider has committed fraud. Funds may be recouped for the period of time the provider did not qualify for the funds.
14. Owner, Director, and/or Operator Guilty of Fraud in A State-Funded or Federally-funded Program: 1) The owner/operator is found guilty of committing fraud in another state-funded or federally funded-

program., or 2) the director is guilty of committing fraud in another state-funded or federally-funded program and the director is retained in the capacity as director of the facility.

15. Verbal or Physical Abuse by Provider Towards SCDSS Staff: 1) The provider has a second offense of cursing or yelling at SCDSS staff employed with the Division of Early Care and Education. The provider was sent a certified letter after the 1st offense describing the incident and informing the provider that another such incident would result in termination being initiated or 2) The provider threatened, or physically assaulted staff during the course of conducting ABC Quality business.
16. Refusal to Allow SCDSS Representatives Access to the Facility: The provider refused to allow representatives with SCDSS access to the premises or in the building of an enrolled child care facility while on official business during operating hours of the facility and the provider is open for business.
17. Refusal to Cooperate With Any Investigation by ABC Quality/OHAN/DSS: The provider refused to cooperate with an investigation to include allowing access to video footage or refusal to allow the interview of employees/parents.
18. Smoking/Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages/ Use of Non-Prescription Narcotic or Illegal Substances on the Premises (to include in vehicles when children transported): The program has been cited for the use of the above during the hours the children are present.
19. Owner is Cited for Operating Illegally at the Enrolled Location Or Another Location: 1) The owner of the program has been found to be operating beyond the legal parameters of a License Exempt School Age Program (illegal operation) as defined by Child Care Licensing, or 2) The program has been found to be operating a program at another location that is deemed an illegal operation. This was found by either Child Care Licensing, DSS staff or staff from a SCDSS partner agency.
20. Failure to comply with the Provider Business Procedures: The program has failed to comply with the requirements in the Provider Business Procedures.

15.2 Exceptions to Termination of a Provider's Enrollment

The following terminations **are not appealable**. The following list includes (but not limited to) reasons that ABC Quality will close a provider's file. In the following situations, even though ABC Quality considers this a closing of the provider's file, SC Scholarship terminates the provider's enrollment in the SC Scholarship System and sends the provider a termination letter. The following are reasons a provider would be terminated:

1. Program has closed:If the provider notifies ABC Quality they are no longer operating, then ABC Quality will close the provider's file. If ABC Quality is notified by parents that the program is/has closed, then ABC Quality will attempt to contact the provider to verify and the file will be closed.
2. Facility is vacant: The facility where the enrolled program is housed is vacant and no one is there. This can be verified either by an on-site visit or by another method. The ABC Quality Assessor will attempt to contact the provider to determine the status of the program. This renders the Provider Agreement for this location null and void and the file will be closed. If SC Scholarship clients are connected, SC Scholarship will contact the parents immediately. If the provider has moved, ABC Quality is under no obligation to enroll the new location, as moving children is also a violation of the Provider Agreement.
3. ABC Quality cannot reach anyone either at the facility (on-site) or by phone during the normal hours of operation: ABC Quality will send a letter notifying the provider they must contact ABC Quality within five working days of receipt of the letter or their file will be closed. If there is no response by the provider, the file will be closed. If SC Scholarship clients are connected, SC Scholarship will contact the parents immediately.

4. The provider has not responded to attempts to contact them: If ABC Quality staff attempts to contact the provider via phone messages, emails, or leaving a "Record of Visit Form" at the facility and the provider does not respond, a letter will be sent notifying the provider they must contact ABC Quality within five working days of receipt of the letter or their file will be closed. If there is no response by the provider, the file will be closed. If SC Scholarship clients are connected, SC Scholarship will contact the parents immediately.
5. Facility Changes Ownership: A change in ownership renders the Provider Enrollment Agreement null and void, as it is not transferrable. It also invalidates the exemption verification. The provider's file will be closed. The new owner may apply for enrollment by completing the application process and meeting the enrollment requirements. There is no wait period for the new owner. If SC Scholarship clients are connected, ABC Quality will try to ensure a smooth transition; however, this is dependent upon notification prior to the sale.
6. Facility Moves: When the program moves to another location, this renders the Provider Agreement null and void as it is address specific. The provider's file will be closed. The provider may request to enroll the new location as long as all eligibility requirements are met; however, ABC Quality is under no obligation to enroll the new location.
7. Provider Has No Children Enrolled (private-pay or SC Scholarship): When providers are open but do not have children enrolled, ABC Quality cannot conduct observations and therefore the provider is unable to meet the Process Quality Assessment. Providers who have not had any children (private-pay and SC Scholarship) for at least one year will be closed.
8. Program does not offer consistent hours or days of operation: SC Scholarship clients need consistent care in order to participate in work, or school. When providers offer varying days or hours of operation, such as only drop-in care or weekend care, etc., this does not allow clients consistent care. SC Scholarship does not pay for drop-in care or weekend care. The provider's file will be closed.
9. Provider does not apply for renewal of annual review: When providers do not re-apply for renewal of their annual review, an assessment cannot be conducted. Failure to re-apply is cause for termination.

15.2 Reconsideration of Termination

This section outlines the process for the reconsideration of adverse decisions to terminate a provider who fails to meet History of Compliance requirements. This does not apply to other reasons for termination.

ABC Quality will issue a termination letter to any enrolled provider who fails to maintain a history of compliance. History of Compliance is defined in Chapter 6 of this manual. Upon receipt of the letter, if the provider disagrees with the decision to terminate, they may do the following:

a. Request a fair hearing in writing from the Office of Administrative Hearings within 30 days from receipt of the letter. Failure to do so, renders the decision final. Requests for a hearing can be sent via ABC Quality below:

   Program Manager
   ABC Quality
   3150 Harden Street Extension
   Columbia, SC 29203

b. In the request for a fair hearing, the provider may also send any information the provider believes would mitigate the findings and conclusions that led to the decision to terminate and/or which might alter the decision to terminate. The provider may send information as identified below:
   - Any contributing factors that led to the provider's non-compliance and any efforts to correct the issues prior to receiving the termination letter;
   - A statement of any corrective action, along with any accompanying documentation/evidence the provider would like to submit in support of their request;
   - Accompanying documentation can be pictures, invoices paid for services to have something repaired, etc. (may come from owner or upper management or the provider staff);
   - A plan, if any, for future corrections or improvements that will be implemented (may come from owner or upper management or provider staff);
   - Evidence of owner or upper management involvement to support the corrections. This can be communicated via a conversation or a meeting with ABC Quality initiated by the owner or upper management;

c. Upon ABC Quality's receipt of the request for a fair hearing, ABC Quality will forward the provider's request to the Office of Administrative Hearings within one business day.

d. ABC Quality staff which includes the Program Manager, Compliance Coordinator, ABC Quality Anchor and ABC Quality Assessor will review any documents/evidence submitted by the provider and within 15 days of receiving the request for a fair hearing will notify the provider in writing of the reconsideration decision. Provider will be notified by mail, or email. The following factors will be considered:
   - The provider's history of compliance with meeting regulations related to ratios, supervision, and serious health and safety regulations to include the frequency of violations, Quality Improvement Plans (QIP) the program has been on and the reasons, and if the program has received any warning letters from ABC Quality notifying the provider they were in jeopardy of not meeting history of compliance;
   - The provider's compliance with other ABC Quality requirements, e.g. meeting eligibility for staff and submittal of corrective action within the designated time frame;
   - The number of SC Scholarship clients connected to the provider.

e. The decision rendered by ABC Quality can be one of the following:
   - **Upheld** – ABC Quality upholds the decision to terminate and the provider must proceed with an administrative fair hearing for a final agency decision
   - **Rescinded with conditions** – the termination is rescinded based upon the provider's agreement to complete corrective action and be placed in an Interim Status (see below)
   - **Rescinded without conditions** – the termination is rescinded with no further action necessary for the provider

f. If termination is **Rescinded with conditions**:
   - ABC Quality will place the program on a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)
   - Program will be referred to the SC Child Care Resource & Referral Network for specified technical assistance
   - The provider must submit a written plan to ABC Quality outlining any additional corrective actions that have been implemented and/or planned in the future within two weeks from the decision to rescind with conditions

- ABC Quality will place the provider in an **"Interim Status".** Interim Status is defined as a temporary status of no more than six months. The purpose is to allow the provider time to work through issues that caused initiation of termination and to focus on quality improvements to avoid termination. The six-month period of time will be as follows: the QIP will be for a three-month period of time to allow correction of the problem(s) and then the additional three-month period will be for successful implementation of corrections/improvements.
- Failure to successfully complete the requirements of the QIP and/or successful implementation of corrections at any point during the Interim Status period will result in ABC Quality initiating termination of the provider and the provider may request a fair hearing, but would not be eligible for the reconsideration process
- The provider will be subject to regular reviews and submission of portfolio documents during the Interim Status

Chapter 16 Waiting Period for Re-Applying

Re-applying for enrollment in ABC Quality does not guarantee enrollment.

16.1 Waiting Period for Re-Applying

Providers must wait one calendar year from the actual termination, denial of enrollment, or closure date before they can re-apply to ABC Quality. Re--applying is not a guarantee of enrollment. This applies to the following:

- The provider voluntarily terminates the Provider Agreement
- ABC Quality initiates the termination of the Provider Agreement
- Upon expiration of the Provider Agreement, ABC Quality does not renew the Agreement

If a provider appeals ABC Quality's decision to terminate the Provider Agreement, the actual termination date would be the date the appeals process ends (date provider is actually terminated in SC Scholarship) and the one year would be from that date.

- Program scores below a 50 at Enrollment
  - If the program receives technical assistance from the SC Child Care Resource & Referral Network and participates in a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) they may reapply in 6 months. ABC Quality will verify completion of the QIP.

16.2 Exemption of Waiting Period

If extenuating circumstances exist, the Director of Early Care and Education may grant an exemption to the 1 year wait to re-apply for enrollment, if recommended by ABC Quality. No exemption will be granted for providers who are terminated for failure to maintain History of Compliance with regulatory requirements.

Chapter 17 Enrollment/Re-Enrollment Exceptions

ABC Quality reserves the right to deny enrollment or re-enrollment, as this is a voluntary program, and ABC Quality is responsible for ensuring the best quality and safe environments for South Carolina's most vulnerable children. **Denial of enrollment is not appealable.**

Any time a new provider requests enrollment, ABC Quality has the right to request the owner to submit legal documentation verifying ownership or change of ownership. This would include documents signed by a real estate attorney and deed if the building was purchased. If the building the provider is in is leased and just the business is sold, then legal documents from an attorney and any other documents that can verify a purchase was made such as, but not limited to, a cancelled check from the owner to the seller, or any notarized financial document showing a transaction was made. An IRS FEIN Letter and a Limited Liability Corporation (LLC) document are not acceptable as proof of such transaction. These documents are subject to verification/approval from the DSS Attorney. ABC Quality also reserves the right to request the owner to provide a notarized statement that the previous owner has no financial or personal interest or association (to include working there) with the child care facility.

17.1 Reasons a provider is ineligible to enroll or re-enroll in ABC Quality:

a. Death of a Child: When a negative action by a provider results in the death of a child at a facility.

b. Fraud: Providers found guilty in court of committing or who have committed fraud with ABC Quality or SC Scholarship.

c. Falsified documents: Providers who falsify or misrepresent official or legal documents (e.g., birth certificates, degrees, transcripts, etc.), or other ABC program documents (SVL, attendance records) and submit them to the ABC Quality or who may have submitted them in the past to Child Care Licensing, if provider was previously regulated.

c. Administrative or Judicial Determination of Abuse and/or Neglect: If the name of the facility's owner is on the Central Registry of Abuse and Neglect, the facility is ineligible for enrollment, even if the owner is not on-site during the hours of operation. Facilities with employees whose name is on the Central Registry of Abuse and Neglect are also ineligible for enrollment as long as the employee continues to be employed and/or present at the facility.

d. Ineligibility to Participate in Publicly Funded Programs: Any institution or its principals who are ineligible for any other publicly funded program due to the above criteria are prohibited from participating in ABC Quality at any level. However, this prohibition does not apply if the institution or principal has been fully reinstated in, or determined eligible for, that program, including the payment of any debts owed.

e. Programs With Two Occurrences of an Adverse Action Taken Against them and/or Have Not Been Offered Another Agreement by ABC Quality: If there have been at least two instances whereby the provider was either terminated by ABC Quality and ABC Quality was upheld, or if ABC Quality could not offer the provider another Provider Agreement, the provider cannot re-enroll. This can be two instances of the same or a combination.

f. Programs Who Received A Grant and Did Not Comply With The Terms And Conditions Of The Grant: If the provider did not meet the terms and conditions of the grant, e.g. provider did not stay enrolled for the stated amount of time, and the funds were not paid back.

g. Two Programs Within The Same Physical Structure Or Address: When an existing provider wants to enroll a second program, and the program is housed either within the same structure or

property then the second program cannot be enrolled. For example, if two programs are operated within a community center or a church.

h. Providers Who Have Operated Illegally: 1) Providers who have been found to be operating a program without a permit (illegal operation) by Child Care Licensing or by DSS staff or partner agencies prior to becoming enrolled with ABC Quality, or 2) if an existing ABC Quality provider is either found to be operating illegally at the enrolled site, or if the provider is operating another location that is deemed an illegal operation.

i. Programs who do not have bathrooms located inside the facility and share the bathroom with other entities.

j. Programs who do not have a Designated Safe On-Site Play Area Outside for children: To enroll, the program must provide a designated safe play area away from vehicular traffic or other possible hazards. If cars are present, the program must provide secure barriers for protection against bodily injury.

k. Summer Only Programs: Programs who are only in operation 2-3 months are not able to complete the Enrollment Process and receive a Level before they close for the Summer.

l. The owner previously had a licensed/registered program in which the license was revoked or withdrawn: The owner will not be allowed to enroll.

17.2 Reasons a provider may be ineligible to enroll:

These will be staffed on a case-by-case basis and ABC Quality reserves the right to deny enrollment/re-enrollment.

a. Programs Whose Primary Business is not Child Care: Providers whose primary business is not child care (e.g., karate/martial arts, dance studios, gymnastics and tutoring facilities). Existing programs in ABC Quality can remain enrolled as long as they meet other requirements.

b. Programs with an open OHAN investigation: Any provider that has an open OHAN investigation cannot enroll until the case has been successfully resolved.

c. Programs Terminated Previously for an offense that could have impacted the health & safety or well-being of the child(ren): The following are some offenses (but not limited to) for which a provider may have been terminated: A *Significant Event* as defined under History of Compliance, hiding children from DSS employees to avoid being cited for being out of ratio/over-capacity, or serving children at locations unknown to SCDSS employees.

d. Programs Who Change Ownership when negative actions have been taken by DSS: Providers who want to change ownership (usually to a family member) in order to keep the program enrolled.

e. Programs Terminated for the use of Corporal Punishment or Maltreatment of a child:
If ABC Quality allows the provider to re-enroll, the provider will be required to provide documentation that they have taken at least 3 hours of training specifically related to behavior and guidance. This can be formal training or training provided by a technical assistance provider.

f. Programs not meeting History of Compliance or found to have a violation during on-site enrollment visit: If the program is found to not meet History of Compliance they are not eligible to enroll. If during the on-site enrollment visit a violation is found (e.g., is out of ratio, unqualified staff, etc., then the enrollment cannot continue. The program must wait six months to reapply in both cases and cannot have any more violations.

g. Programs with extremely small playgrounds: If the playground can only accommodate 3 – 4 children comfortably, but the program serves a large number of children, the program may not be able to provide outdoor play for all children.

i. Multi-site providers with many programs enrolled who continuously does not meet eligibility or history of compliance and wants to enroll a new location: The new location will not be enrolled until the programs demonstrate compliance.

j. Program Score Below 50 at Enrollment Review: The program must earn 50 points or more on the combined Structural Quality and Process Quality Review to be eligible to enroll. Programs that score below a 50 at enrollment must wait 1 year before reapplying. If the program receives technical assistance from the SC Child Care Resource & Referral Network and participates in a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) they may reapply in 6 months. ABC Quality will verify completion of the QIP.

Chapter 18 Appeals Process

The provider may appeal adverse actions such as termination or de-enrollment of an age group **pursuant to the SCDSS's regulations [Reg. 126150, et seq.]**. The following is not appealable: 1) the natural ending of the provider enrollment period based on the expiration date, 2) provider closure, 3) failing the assessment scores during an enrollment visit 4) not being enrolled due to a violation that occurs during the on-site enrollment visit 5) denial of enrollment/re-enrollment.

A certified letter will be sent to the provider notifying them of any adverse action with the instructions of how to request an appeal. If the certified letter is returned or is never delivered for whatever reason through no fault of SCDSS, then another letter will be sent by regular mail. An email may also be sent at the same time. To appeal the decision, a request must be made in writing within 30 days from receipt of the letter. The letter will give instructions on where to send the request the appeal.

The request may be made by the provider or a person acting on his/her behalf, such as a legal representative, relative, or friend. Staff must not impede, limit, or interfere in any way with the client's right to request a fair hearing. Once a representative has been appointed by the provider, then all communications regarding the hearing and appeal are required to be made with that representative.

If the request for appeal is not submitted to SCDSS within the 30-day period, the right to challenge termination will be lost and the decision will become final. If the provider submits their request for an appeal by regular mail, it is the provider's responsibility to ensure that their request for an appeal has been received.

Once the Division of Appeals and Hearings receives a written appeal request from the program, they will notify the provider in writing of the date and time for the hearing. A decision is not made on the day of the hearing. The decision is made after reviewing the testimony and evidence. If the decision rendered is not agreeable to the provider, the provider may appeal further to the Administrative Law Court which is outside of DSS for judicial review of their case. Any costs associated with this are the responsibility of the provider.

Special Note: During the appeal process, the program is not eligible for the following opportunities: grants, promotions or recognitions of the program and any special projects offered by SCDSS.

SC SCHOLARSHIP CLIENTS DURING AN APPEAL:

Once a provider has requested an appeal, they enter the "appeals status" and no new connections for SC Scholarship clients will be allowed to be made to the provider. Providers may continue serving current children connected through the end of their current eligibility period. If they are renewed for another eligibility period, this is considered a "new connection" and thus they will not be able to continue to select you, and thus will have to find another child care placement.

Chapter 19 Fraud

ABC Quality takes fraud very seriously. It is our intent through this manual that ABC Quality strives to make known its expectations of providers for participation in the program, along with subsequent consequences for non-compliance.

ABC Quality maintains a 1-800 number for complaints and this number can be used by the public to reports complaints and incidents of fraud.

Definition:

ABC Quality refers to fraud as the following (but not limited to):

a. Intentionally making a false statement;
b. Misrepresentation regarding a material fact;
c. Failure to disclose a material fact/information;
d. Any action that results in obtaining, attempting to obtain, or continuing to receive funds through SC Scholarship, which the provider would not otherwise qualify to receive, or to circumvent or help others circumvent the requirements of ABC Quality;
e. Billing for services and receiving payment for services or goods that were not obtained in accordance with requirements of ABC Quality, and the Provider Enrollment Agreement.

Examples of this could include: billing clients for services when payment is being received through SC Scholarship for the service (other than the client co-pay or difference between what SC Scholarship pays and the provider rate), serving SC Scholarship clients at an unauthorized location, continuing to bill for clients who have left the program, allowing another provider or location that is not enrolled to use your Federal ID or Social Security number to connect children, collecting the payment and distributing it to them, submitting documentation showing what the program's weekly child care rate is but then charging private paying clients a lesser amount, submitting falsified documents such as a high school diploma/degree and CPR/First aid cards, etc.

Any complaint or suspicion of fraud will be investigated by ABC Quality. The investigation will begin no later than 3 business days from receipt of the complaint. Investigations may or may not include an on-site visit, particularly if ABC Quality is able to obtain documents/information through other means such as obtaining written documents (records/receipts/SVLs). ABC Quality may conduct investigations alone or in conjunction with other Division of Early Care and Education staff. ABC Quality may also refer the provider to the Division of

Internal Audits or Office of Inspector General depending upon the nature of the fraud. As an ABC Quality provider, you must agree to cooperate with the investigation which may be by allowing an on-site visit(s) or by providing requested documents.

If ABC Quality determines there is evidence to support the claim of fraud, or if the provider refuses to cooperate with the investigation, then ABC Quality will initiate termination and funds could be recouped.

Chapter 20 Grants

As funds permit, ABC Quality may be able to offer Grants to providers. Providers who receive a grant(s) must stay in the program for the period required in the grant agreement (if applicable) and comply with all terms and conditions of the grant. If the provider does not comply by staying in the program for the required amount of time or does not purchase the approved items in the grant, recoupment of grant funds will be initiated for all or part of the grant as applicable. This will be done, if possible, by withholding the provider's last payment. **Grant Recoupments are not appealable.** Therefore, providers should evaluate their personal situations before committing to the requirements of the grant.

If a previous recoupment has been initiated against the provider perhaps because of an audit, overpayment, or if the provider owes money to the Government due to an IRS lien, and funds are being recouped from the provider through their payments, then the provider will not be eligible for any grants offered at that time due to the fact that SC Scholarship will automatically take the grant money in payment towards the recoupment or lien. If at the time a grant is offered, and the provider is under a repayment for an IRS Lien, the provider should not enter into the grant as the IRS will intercept this money for repayment.

Failure to use grants funds properly may result in the initiation of an audit by the ABC Quality or SCDSS Audit staff and disqualifies the provider from future grant opportunities.

Chapter 21 Glossary

Definitions of key terms are presented to ensure clarity and understanding. These definitions express the administering agency's intent and meaning for the terms identified.

ABC Quality Rating & Improvement System (ABC Quality)

A Quality Rating & Improvement System, the South Carolina statewide child care assistance program along with Child Care Scholarship funded by Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) and state match. ABC Quality is the first point of contact for providers wishing to participate and serve children through Child Care Scholarship. There are two offices of ABC Quality geographically

Child

The recipient of child care services.

Child Name

The first name of the child.

Field Trip

A trip planned by the program to take students to an off-site location to study/experience something first-hand. The purpose of the trip is recreational or educational and occurs at facilities or institutions open to the public where a fee may or may not be charged. Field trips should provide students with different experiences outside their everyday activities. The objective of a field trip is to learn, be exposed to a different environment, and be able to try new things. Examples of field trips can include, but are not limited to: Museums, Zoological Parks, Public Parks, Nature Centers, Bowling, Skating, Movies, Library, Animal Farms, Fire Stations, etc. Other types of field trips can be staffed on a case-by-case basis.

Illegal Operations

Child Care Licensing is the authority for interpreting the Child Care Licensing Laws. Any program that is not Licensed or Registered by Child Care Licensing which operates more than 4 hours total per day, operates more than three weeks at a time during the summer, and serves children under the age of five is considered to be operating illegally.

Inclement Weather

Inclement weather is defined as a wind chill factor at or below 20 degrees Fahrenheit or at or above a heat index of 90 degrees Fahrenheit by the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, and the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education (2010)

Less than Half-Time Care

Less than fifteen (15) hours of child care service provided during a week. No registration fee is allowed for this care-type. This care-type applies only to Welfare Reform participants receiving subsidized child care and must be used in conjunction with full and half-time care.

Level A

Programs that consistently and effectively promote quality practices as defined through ABC Quality Standards and Indicators.

Level B

Programs that develop strategies to increase program quality as defined through ABC Quality Standards and Indicators.

Level C

Programs that meet health and safety requirements and aware of the importance of quality as defined through ABC Quality Standards and Indicators.

License-Exempt Center-based Provider

A provider who, by definition, does not meet the requirements to be a licensed facility. License-Exempt Providers must operate less than 4 hours total per day during the school
year which includes transportation time if so provided, and during the summer may only operate in sessions of 3-weeks or less. License-exempt providers cannot serve children under age 5.

Office of Out of Home Abuse and Neglect (OHAN)

Located within SCDSS, this office is responsible for investigating complaints reported regarding incidents that occur outside a child's home environment, such as day care facilities, foster homes, etc.

Provider Identification Number

The Federal Employer Identification Number [FEIN] or Social Security number of the provider. This number identifies the provider for purposes of payment, tracking and reporting.

SC Child Care Resource & Referral Network (SC-CCR&RN)

A partner agency with ABC Quality who provides services to child care providers related to technical assistance for licensing regulations and the requirements of ABC Quality. There is no cost for this service.

Child Care Scholarship (Operations Center)

The authorized child care voucher system management center that is available to provide assistance to clients and providers, and to handle child care applications, funding, and connecting.

- Providers call: 1-800-262-4416 for notification requirements and/or questions concerning ABC Program procedures.
- Parents call: 1-800-476-0199 for any questions.

Site Supervisor

The on-site staff person responsible for the daily operation of the program including, but not limited to, supervision of staff and children. The Site Supervisor can only have responsibility for one program and may not hold another full-time job during the hours of center operation.

Site Supervisor Designee

The on-site Designee assumes the responsibilities of the Site Supervisor for limited periods of time, when the Site Supervisor is not on the premises.

South Carolina Department of Social Services [SCDSS]

The administering state agency for ABC Quality and Child Care Scholarship and the agency responsible for administering the Welfare Reform, Family Independence Program.

Staffing Provider

An internal process whereby ABC Quality staff, which includes managers and assessors, review the facts of a provider's situation and the policies and procedures of ABC Quality before making any decisions that would bring adverse actions for the provider.

Tracking

A written procedure to account for the presence of each child as the child enters and exits the premises, enters and exits a vehicle, or moves to a new location in or around the center.

Weather Permitting

Weather permitting means no heavy precipitation, thunder, lightning, or weather advisory.

Week

Monday through Sunday.