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Structural Quality Clarification Guide
Center Based

ABC Quality

DSS SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT of SOCIAL SERVICES

ABC Quality *Structural Quality Clarification Guide: Center Based*

ABC Quality, Division of Early Care and Education, South Carolina Department of Social Services

ABC Quality has served as South Carolina's Early Care and Education Quality Rating and Improvement System for 30 years. It has expanded from two quality levels to the current five quality levels. The ABC Quality Intentional Teaching Tool represents the work of a team of experienced ABC Quality assessors and experts representing measurement and content to build a new strength-based assessment tool integrating practices, field research and expert consultation.

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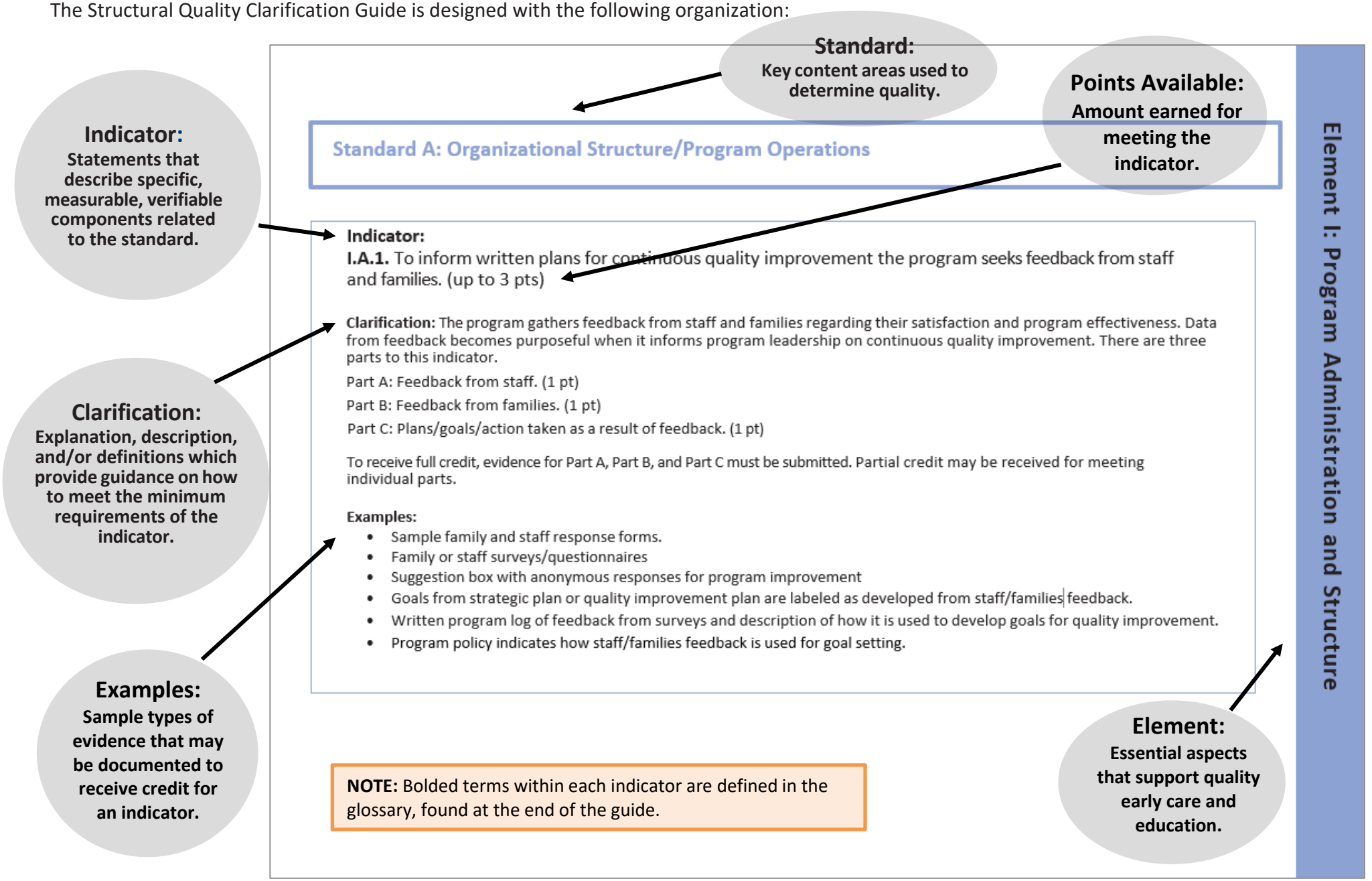
Organization of the Structural Quality Clarification Guide

The *Structural Quality Clarification Guide: Center-based* is a program level assessment of administrative and policy aspects of early care and education. The Structural Quality Clarification Guide is designed with the following organization:



Structural Quality Portfolio Documentation and Scoring

Programs submit evidence that showcase their strengths to meet the intention of the structural quality indicators as a part of their ABC Quality review. Programs are able to electronically upload appropriate documentation or evidence for each indicator within the Structural Quality Portfolio.

Each program is encouraged to collect evidence that is meaningful and relevant to them. Programs are not expected to meet and provide evidence for each indicator, but instead to collect only evidence for indicators that are currently being implemented or practiced at the time of the review. Therefore, programs also have the option to select that they do not yet meet the indicator.

In order to submit for scoring, all elements within the online portfolio must be reviewed and each of the indicators must be answered. Once submitted, a Quality Assessor reviews the evidence and determines if it meets the requirements of the indicators. If met, points are applied towards their Structural Quality score.

Once scored, the Structural Quality Portfolio showcases a program's strengths within the elements of:

- Program Administration and Structure
- Staff Education and Professional Development
- Child Well-being
- Individualized Family Communication and Engagement

Element I: Program Administration and Structure

The program's leadership provides organizational structure and operational supports to strengthen the overall effectiveness of the program for staff, children, and families.

Standard A: Organizational Structure/Program Operations

Standard B: Policies and Procedures Relating to the Care of Children

Standard A: Organizational Structure/Program Operations

Indicator:

I.A.1. To inform written plans for continuous quality improvement the program seeks feedback from staff and families. (up to 3 pts)

Clarification: The program gathers feedback from staff and families regarding their satisfaction and program effectiveness. Data from feedback becomes purposeful when it informs program leadership on continuous quality improvement. There are three parts to this indicator.

Part A: Feedback from staff. (1 pt)

Part B: Feedback from families. (1 pt)

Part C: Plans/goals/action taken as a result of feedback. (1 pt)

To receive full credit, evidence for Part A, Part B, and Part C must be submitted. Partial credit may be received for meeting individual parts.

Examples:

- Sample family and staff response forms.
- Family or staff surveys/questionnaires
- Suggestion box with anonymous responses for program improvement
- Goals from strategic plan or quality improvement plan are labeled as developed from staff/families feedback.
- Written program log of feedback from surveys and description of how it is used to develop goals for quality improvement.
- Program policy indicates how staff/families feedback is used for goal setting.

Indicator:

I.A.2. The program implements practices to encourage assignment of familiar and consistent teachers in classrooms. (up to 5 pts)

Clarification: Consistent and familiar teachers support children's ability to develop secure relationships, manage feelings of security and regulate behaviors. Program must develop policies, procedures, and/or plans to ensure that children receive care from a consistent group of teachers. The program's written policies, procedures and/or plans include at least 1 and up to 5 of the following strategies:

- Developing a plan to ensure children remain in assigned classrooms without the use of shifting to maintain ratio.
- Establishing regularly assigned teachers that cover at least 85% of the program's hours of operation.
- Limiting grouping to less than 15% of the program's hours of operation.
- Limiting the number of floaters, substitutes, or others who would fill-in for regularly assigned teachers to no more than 3 per classroom.
- Establishing a coverage plan for teacher absences, lunch breaks, and planning time to provide a consistent and limited group of staff for each classroom.
- Practicing **primary care** for children under age 3**.**
- Program developed individualized strategy that supports practices that promote familiar and consistent teachers in classrooms.

To receive credit, the program must submit evidence of at least 1 and up to 5 strategies in written policies, procedures, or plans that promote familiar and consistent teachers. Each different strategy (up to 5) that promotes consistent teachers earns 1 point.

Examples:

- A staffing plan that is used to coordinate maintaining ratios without the use of shifting children.
- Classroom lists of assigned teachers with their work hours.
- Schedule of hours of operation for each classroom and times when children are grouped into other classrooms.
- List of assigned floaters and substitutes for each classroom.
- Coverage plan that provides list of staff who help with breaks and absences for each classroom.
- Program policy to promote primary care for children under age 3.

Standard B: Policies and Procedures Relating to the Care of Children

Indicator:

I.B.1. The program has a transition policy that includes practices to support successful **internal and external transitions**. (up to 3 pts)

Clarification: Internal transitions are when children move to new classrooms within the center. The internal transition policy describes criteria for determining when a child may transition. It also describes the practices that the program has put in place to support successful transitions for children within the program.

External transitions are when new children join the program, or a child permanently leaves the program to attend another program or school environment. The external transition policy describes how the program supports children and their families as they arrive and/or leave to prepare for a new environment.

There are two parts to this indicator.

Part A: Internal transition policy (2 pts)
Part B: External transition policy (1 pt)

To receive full credit, evidence for Part A and Part B must be submitted. Partial credit may be received for meeting individual parts.

Examples:

- Part A) Written program policy describing how internal transitions are supported, such as:
  - Planning for when to transition a child based on their individual needs.
  - Communication strategies with families to collaborate on the transition.
  - Plan for gradual transition, to include visits to the upcoming classroom prior to the transition.
  - Continuity plan to ensure children remain with a group of children or teacher to develop consistent supportive relationships prior to a transition.
- Part B) Written program policy describing how external transitions are supported, such as:
  - Incoming families and children are oriented to the program and classroom.
  - Program provides meet and greets with the teacher and program leadership for new families.
  - Intake conference for the program to learn about the child/family and to share more information about the program and classroom.
  - Encouraging exiting families to visit the new program.
  - Sharing child assessments and other details with the family to bring to the new program.
  - Moving up to kindergarten strategies, such as reading books, visiting the school, inviting a kindergarten teacher to visit to answer questions.
  - Graduation or moving up ceremony.

Indicator:

I.B.2. The program has a written policy to ensure children of all abilities are able to participate. (up to 4 pts)

Clarification: Children of all abilities have opportunities to interact meaningfully with their peers and environment. There are two parts to this indicator.

Part A: The program's **Policy** includes: (2 pts)

- **Confidentiality** statement;
- A description of two or more **communication strategies** used with parents to learn about individual child needs and necessary supports for the child's participation;
- A process for determining reasonable **modifications and accommodations** to include children with varying abilities in all activities and routines; and
- **Specialized services** to support children with special needs that are carried out in the classroom setting.

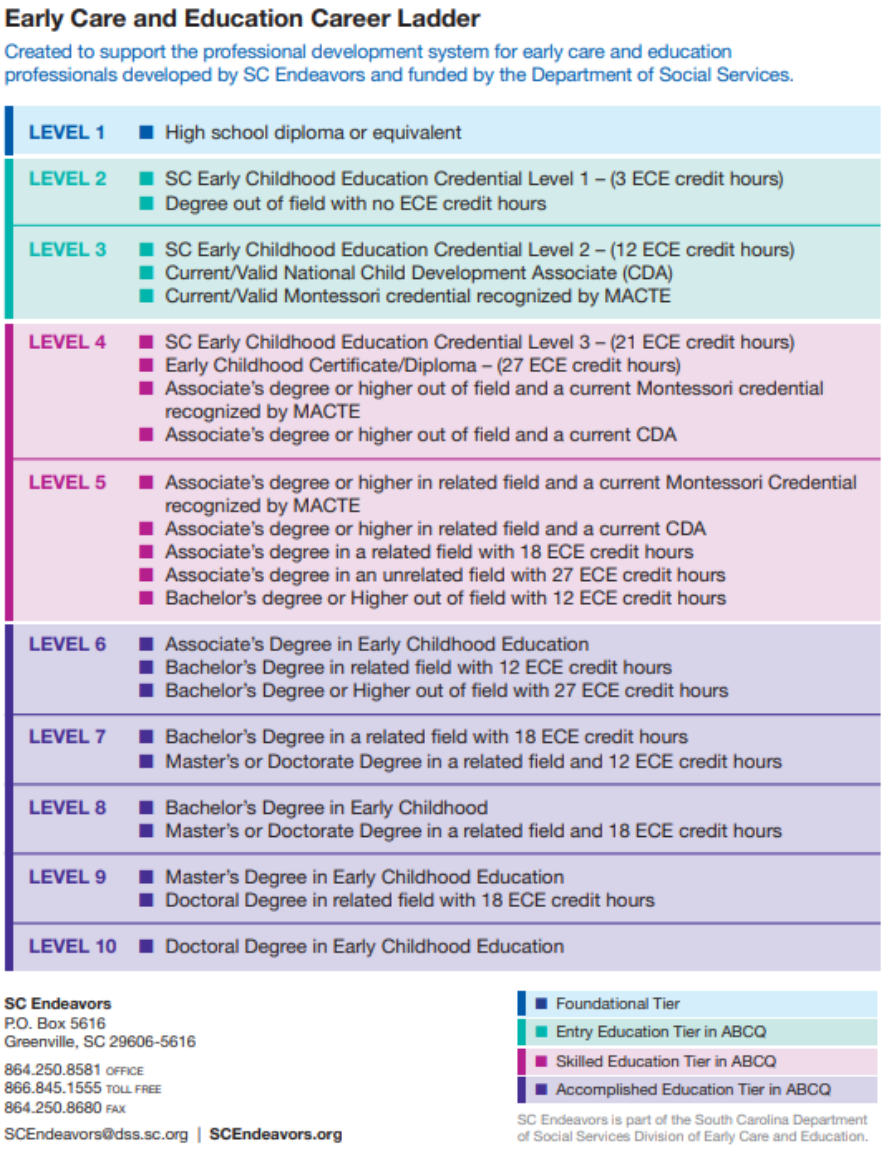
Part B: The program's **Policy** includes: (2pts)

- Plans for teachers to participate in the Individualized Care Plans (**Individualized Family Service Plan** (IFSP) and/or **Individualized Education Plan** (IEP) if parents request; and
- Plans for teachers to use goals from the IFSP/IEP to support a child's individual learning.

To receive full credit, evidence of all components for Part A and Part B must be submitted. Partial credit may be received for meeting individual parts. These components may appear separately in different parts of program's policy manual/handbooks, which can be uploaded as separate documents.

Example: Program's written Policy that addresses the required components for Part A and/or Part B.

Element II: Staff Education and Professional Development



Early Care and Education Career Ladder

Created to support the professional development system for early care and education professionals developed by SC Endeavors and funded by the Department of Social Services.

LEVEL 1	High school diploma or equivalent
LEVEL 2	SC Early Childhood Education Credential Level 1 – (3 ECE credit hours) Degree out of field with no ECE credit hours
LEVEL 3	SC Early Childhood Education Credential Level 2 – (12 ECE credit hours) Current/Valid National Child Development Associate (CDA) Current/Valid Montessori credential recognized by MACTE
LEVEL 4	SC Early Childhood Education Credential Level 3 – (21 ECE credit hours) Early Childhood Certificate/Diploma – (27 ECE credit hours) Associate's degree or higher out of field and a current Montessori credential recognized by MACTE Associate's degree or higher out of field and a current CDA
LEVEL 5	Associate's degree or higher in related field and a current Montessori Credential recognized by MACTE Associate's degree or higher in related field and a current CDA Associate's degree in a related field with 18 ECE credit hours Associate's degree in an unrelated field with 27 ECE credit hours Bachelor's degree or Higher out of field with 12 ECE credit hours
LEVEL 6	Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Education Bachelor's Degree in related field with 12 ECE credit hours Bachelor's Degree or Higher out of field with 27 ECE credit hours
LEVEL 7	Bachelor's Degree in a related field with 18 ECE credit hours Master's or Doctorate Degree in a related field and 12 ECE credit hours
LEVEL 8	Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Master's or Doctorate Degree in a related field and 18 ECE credit hours
LEVEL 9	Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education Doctoral Degree in related field with 18 ECE credit hours
LEVEL 10	Doctoral Degree in Early Childhood Education

The program ensures that administrators and teachers are well- educated and well-trained in the field of Early Care and Education. The program supports staff's continuing professional development.

- Standard A: Education Qualifications
- Standard B: Staff Evaluation and Ongoing Professional Development

Education Tiers:

SC Endeavors has a Career Ladder which is aligned to the ABC Quality Education Tiers. ABC Quality partners with SC Endeavors for the evaluation of education documents. Refer to the Early Care and Education Career Ladder to find education qualifications at the color- coded Education Tier levels.

Note:

Each Education Tier is built on the foundation of meeting the staffing qualifications defined in the Child Care Licensing Regulations (114-503 K). A high school diploma or GED is the minimum staff qualification for Child Care Licensing and therefore does NOT meet any of the Education Tiers. Early care and education professionals are encouraged to move up the tiers to advance their practice and understanding in the field.

Standard A: Education Qualifications

Indicator:

II.A.1. All staff have a career ladder level. (2 pts)

Clarification: All staff must have verified employment with the program in the SC Endeavors registry and have obtained a career ladder level by having their education evaluated. To receive credit, all staff must have a career ladder level.

Example:

- SC Endeavors Staff Report

Indicator:

II.A.2. All **program leadership/administrators** have a SC Endeavors Career Level and meet education qualifications. (Up to 9pts)

Clarification: All program leadership/administrators must have verified employment with the program in the SC Endeavors registry and complete their professional profile and earn a career ladder level in SC Endeavors. To receive credit:

- All program leadership/administrators meet or exceed Entry Tier. (3pts)
- All program leadership/administrators meet or exceed Entry Tier AND at least one administrator meets or exceeds Skilled Tier. (3pts)
- All program leadership/administrators meet or exceed the Skilled Tier qualification AND at least one Administrator meets or exceeds the Accomplished Tier. (3pts)

Examples:

- SC Endeavors Staff Report

Indicator:

II.A.3. Teachers have a SC Endeavors Career Level and meet education qualifications. (up to 9pts)

Clarification: All teachers must have verified employment with the program in the SC Endeavors registry. Teachers complete their professional profile and earn a career level in SC Endeavors. To receive credit:

- A minimum of 30% of teachers meet or exceed Entry Tier. (3pts)
- A minimum of 60% of teachers meet or exceed Entry Tier. (3pts)
- 90% of teachers meet or exceed the Entry Tier qualification. (3pts)

Examples:

- SC Endeavors Staff Report

Standard B: Staff Evaluation and Ongoing Professional Development

Indicator:

II.B.1 Program leadership provides early care and education professionals with an **annual written evaluation** based on supervision and observation of performance, which includes feedback on strengths and areas that need improvement. (up to 3pts)

Clarification: There are two parts to this indicator:

- Part A: Written, annual staff evaluations are conducted by the program leadership. (1pt)
- Part B: The staff evaluation provides performance feedback to employees, includes both strengths and areas in need of improvement. Strengths and weaknesses can come in the form of a rating scale, open-ended comments, checklists, and/or feedback from performance evaluations. (2pts)

To receive full credit, evidence of Part A and Part B must be submitted. Partial credit may be received for meeting individual parts.

Examples:

- Program's staff evaluation form that includes feedback and protocol on how frequently they are conducted.
- Written policy that details the staff evaluation process.

Indicator:

II.B.2. The results of written evaluations inform staff professional development plans and/or targeted staff supports to improve practice. (2 pts)

Clarification: Staff evaluations are used to support staff in their professional growth. Program leadership may identify areas that need improvement/goals, or a teacher may express areas of interest during the evaluation process. Once identified, professional development plans and/or targeted staff supports are located to enhance learning and improvement of practice. To receive credit, evidence of how staff evaluations are used to support professional growth must be submitted.

Example:

- Professional development plan with timeframes to meet goals based on staff evaluation.
- Staff evaluation that incorporates next steps for professional growth and targeted supports.
- Policy in the staff handbook regarding how staff evaluations determine professional development plans and/or other supports.

Indicator:

II.B.3. All **program leadership/administrators** exceed 20 hours of training in the calendar year (Jan – Dec). (2 pts)

Clarification: South Carolina regulations require that child care directors receive 20 hours of training each year. ABC Quality expects program leadership/administrators to go above and beyond minimum standards. Training hours are verified on the PREVIOUS calendar year. All program leadership/administrators must have verified employment with the program in the SC Endeavors registry and their training must be recorded on SC Endeavors learning record/training transcripts. To receive credit, all of the program's leadership staff must exceed 20 hours of annual training. New employees hired within the previous calendar year will be required to exceed a pro-rated number of hours based on the number of months employed. New employees who have been hired within the calendar year of their current ABCQ Assessment will not be included in total. Credit cannot be received if no employees from the previous calendar year remain employed.

Example: SC Endeavors Staff report.

Indicator:

II.B.4. Teachers exceed minimum standards for annual training. (Up to 3 pts)

Clarification: South Carolina regulations require that child care professionals (excluding Emergency Persons) receive 15 hours of training each year. ABC Quality expects teachers to go above and beyond minimum standards. Training hours are verified based on the PREVIOUS calendar year. All teachers must have verified employment with the program in the SC Endeavors registry and training must be recorded on SC Endeavors learning record/training transcripts. New employees hired within the previous calendar year will be required to exceed the pro-rated number of hours based on the number of months employed. New employees who have been hired within the calendar year of their current ABCQ assessment will not be included in the total. Credit cannot be received if no employees from the previous calendar year remain employed.

To receive credit:

- At least 30% of teachers exceed 15 hours (1 pt)
- At least 60% of teachers exceed 15 hours (1 pt)
- At least 90% of teachers exceed 15 hours (1 pt)

Example: SC Endeavors Staff report.

Indicator:

II.B.5. Staff receive specific training in evidence-based practices and supports for social-emotional development and behavioral health. (1 pt)

Clarification: Within the annual training hours that staff receive, 1 hour must cover topics that support children's social emotional development. Topics could include: positive guidance strategies, developing friendships, and supporting children's social, emotional, mental or behavioral health. Training hours are verified based on the PREVIOUS calendar year (Jan.-Dec.). All staff must have verified employment with the program in the SC Endeavors registry and training will be counted only if the training is approved through SC Endeavors (registered and/or certified). New employees who have not been employed for a full calendar year are not included in the staff who need to meet this indicator. Emergency persons are not included in the calculations for staff. Credit cannot be received if no employees from the previous calendar year remain employed.

To receive credit, 90% of staff must receive at least 1 hour of annual training in social-emotional development and/or behavioral health.

Example: SC Endeavors Facility Staff ABC Quality Training Detail Report that documents relevant training for staff in social-emotional development such as:

- Pyramid Model http://www.pyramidmodel.org
- Conscious Discipline https://consciousdiscipline.com
- Child Guidance
- Trauma-informed care
- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)

Note: If a training is not identified with the social-emotional qualification, the program must submit the training event ID listed on training section of the personal profile to be reviewed by the SC Endeavors Registry for consideration.

Indicator:

II.B.6. Staff receive at least one hour of training related to infant feeding or child nutrition each calendar year. (1 pt)

Clarification: Within the annual training hours that staff receive, 1 hour must cover child nutrition, infant feeding, and/ or USDA meal requirements. Training hours are verified based on the PREVIOUS calendar year (Jan.-Dec.). All staff must have verified employment with the program in the SC Endeavors registry and training will be counted only if the training is approved through SC Endeavors (registered and/or certified). New employees who have not been employed for a full calendar year are not included in the staff who need to meet this indicator. Emergency persons are not included in the calculations for staff. Credit cannot be received if no employees from the previous calendar year remain employed.

To receive credit, 90% of staff must receive at least 1 hour of annual training in child nutrition.

Examples:

- SC Endeavors Facility Staff ABC Quality Training Detail Report that documents relevant training for staff in child nutrition or infant feeding.

Note: If a training is not identified with the nutrition qualification, the program must submit the training event ID listed on training section of the personal profile to be reviewed by the SC Endeavors Registry for consideration.

Indicator:

II.B.7 Staff receive at least one hour of training related to children's movement/physical activity each calendar year. (1 pt)

Clarification: Within the annual training hours that staff receive, 1 hour must cover children's physical activity. Physical activities are those activities that supports gross motor development and planning for indoor/outdoor movement activities. Training hours are verified based on the PREVIOUS calendar year. All staff must have verified employment with the program in the SC Endeavors registry and training will be counted only if the training is approved through SC Endeavors (registered and/or certified). New employees who have not been employed for a full calendar year are not included in the staff who need to meet this indicator. Emergency persons are not included in the calculations for staff. Credit cannot be received if no employees from the previous calendar year remain employed.

To receive credit, 90% staff must receive at least 1 hour of annual training in children's movement and/or physical activity.

Examples:

- SC Endeavors Facility Staff ABC Quality Training Detail Report that documents relevant training for staff in children's movement and/or physical activity.

Note: If a training is not identified with the physical activity qualification, the program must submit the training event ID listed on training section of the personal profile to be reviewed by the SC Endeavors Registry for consideration.

Indicator:

II.B.8. The program has a written plan/procedure to orient staff. (Up to 2 pts)

Clarification: There are two parts to this indicator.
Part A: The program has a written plan/procedure that states new staff are oriented within 30 days of hire. (1pt)

Part B: The written plan or procedure must provide staff with information about the program and review the following topic areas: parent and family handbook/policies, personnel policies/staff handbook, ABC Quality Standards, and the SC Early Learning Standards. (1pt)

To receive full credit, evidence of Part A and Part B must be submitted. Partial credit may be received for meeting individual parts.

Examples:

- Checklist that states when staff are oriented and lists the topics that are covered.
- Policy/procedure explains that new staff are oriented within 30 days and lists what content is covered.
- Program training plan that states what content is covered and notes that it was conducted for a new employee who was hired within the past 30 days.

Element III: Child Well-Being

The program supports children's well-being through policies, procedures, and support services that are essential for healthy growth, learning, and development.

Standard A: Nutrition
Standard B: Physical Health
Standard C: Healthy Social-Emotional Development
Standard D: Child Screening and Referrals

Standard A: Nutrition

Indicator:

III.A.1. The program has a **nutrition policy** to support the health and well-being of children. (Up to 3 pts)

Clarification: Nutrition education and positive food experiences are ways programs help children increase understanding of the relationship between food and health, shape their attitudes toward food, and build a foundation for healthy eating habits for a lifetime. Developing a Nutrition Policy guides programs' practices related to meals, accommodations and nutrition education.

There are three parts to this indicator:

Part A: The program's nutrition policy includes: (1pt)

- Plans to ensure that children receive healthy and well-balanced meals that meet nutritional requirements by following the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal pattern requirements for all meals/snacks;
- Prohibition on using food as reward/punishment; and
- Accommodation for individual allergic needs of children.

Part B: The program's nutrition policy includes: (1pt)

- All components in Part A
- Accommodation of special dietary requirements of children based on physical, religious or cultural beliefs;
- Planned and/or informal opportunities to learn about healthy eating are provided to children at least once a week; and
- Teacher practices to encourage healthy eating.

Part C: The program's nutrition policy includes: (1pt)

- Meets all component for Part A and B
- Guidelines for foods offered during holidays and celebrations;
- Plans to educate families about child nutrition; (Plan to educate parents can come in the form of a policy or evidence of brochures/handouts or other types of nutritional education)
- Plans for fund-raising with non-food items (If the program does not conduct any fundraising, credit can still be received, however this must be documented by the program).

To receive credit, evidence of all components for Part A, Part B, or Part C must be submitted. These components may appear separately in different parts of program's policy manual/handbooks.

Example: Program's nutrition and/or discipline policies if necessary (may be a part of staff and/or parent handbook).

Indicator:

III.A.2.* The program develops and maintains menus that reflect nutritionally, well-balanced meals and/or snacks for all children. (Up to 3 pts)

Clarification: Programs that offer meals and/or snacks to children in their care play an important role in supporting health, wellness and development through the provision of nutritious food and beverages. Menu planning facilitates the purchase and preparation of meals and/or snacks to ensure they are balanced and nutritionally adequate. Menus must be current (dated within 45 days of the submission) and clearly labeled (e.g. 100% juice, unflavored 1% milk, whole grain) for all meals and snacks provided. Two weeks of menus must be submitted. If additional weeks of menus are submitted, all will be evaluated to ensure compliance.

There are three parts to this indicator:

Part A: The program's menus reflect: (1 pt.)

- All meals and/or snacks are planned and served to meet children's nutritional requirements as recommended by following the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program meal pattern requirements (applies to children who have transitioned to solid food);
- Unflavored whole milk must be served to 1 year olds; unflavored skim or 1% milk must be served to children 2 years and older;
- 100% juice is allowed once per day in the appropriate serving size.
- Sugar-sweetened beverages are not served; and
- Sweet foods are served no more than two times per week.

Part B: The program's menus reflect all of Part A and: (1 pt.)

For programs serving a) 2 meals and 1 snack or b) lunch and 2 snacks or c) lunch and 1 snack:

- Fruit (not juice) is served at least two times per day;
- A vegetable, other than white potatoes, is served at least once per day;
- Whole grain foods are served at least once per day;
- High-fat meats are served no more than two times per week; and
- Fried/pre-fried foods are served no more than one time per week.

For programs serving a snack only:

- Fruit (not juice) is served at least two times per week;
- A vegetable, other than white potatoes, is served at least two times per week;
- Whole grain foods are served at least two times per week;
- High-fat meats are served no more than two times per week; and
- Fried/pre-fried foods are served no more than one time per week.

Part C: The program's menus reflect all of Part A, Part B, and: (1 pt.)

- A vegetable, other than white potatoes, is served at least two times per day; (Not required for programs serving a snack only)
- Whole grain foods are served at least two times per day; (Not required for programs serving a snack only)
- Sweet foods are served no more than one time per week;
- High-fat meats are served no more than one time per week; and
- Fried/pre-fried foods are served no more than one time in a two-week period.

To receive credit, each menu submitted must meet of all components for Part A, Part B, or Part C. This indicator is not applicable to programs that do not serve any meals and/or snacks.

Example: 2 weeks of current menus.

*N/A for programs where parents provide ALL meals and snacks.

Standard B: Physical Health

Indicator:

III.B.1. The program's **physical activity policy** and practices encourage the well-being of children. (Up to 3 pts)

Clarification: Physical Activity is vital to children's overall health and development. The benefits of physical activity include but are not limited to cardiovascular health; stronger muscles and bones; improved coordination, balance, posture and flexibility; emotional development and social competence. Developing a Physical Activity policy guides program practices that encourage movement, limit screen time, and promote an active lifestyle.

There are three parts to this indicator:

Part A: The program's physical activity policy includes: (1pt)

- Promotion of a safe, **least restrictive environment** for infants and toddlers at all times;
- No **screen time**, media viewing, or computer use for children under age 2;
- Not using or withholding physical activity as punishment.
- Frequency and amount of time provided for daily active outdoor play for all children.
- Description of appropriate dress for outdoor play.
- Teacher practices that encourage physical activity.

Part B: The program's physical activity policy includes all of Part A and: (1pt)

- Education provided to families about children's physical activity.
- Education provided to families about limiting screen time.

Part C: The program's physical activity policy includes all of Part A, Part B and: (1pt)

- Plan that provides for indoor active play to be provided, equivalent to the amount of time allocated for outdoor play, in the event of **inclement weather.**
- Limits to the amount of screen time, media viewing, or computer use allowed for children age 2 and older.

To receive credit, the program's written physical activity policy and/or practices must meet all the components for Part A, Part B, or Part C. However, these components may appear separately in different parts of program's policy manual/handbooks/planning.

Examples:

- Program's written physical activity policy and if needed, discipline policy (may be a part of staff and/or parent handbook).
- Agenda from parent meetings.
- Brochures/handouts/newsletters.

Standard C: Healthy Social-Emotional Development

Indicator:

III.C.1. The program's **discipline policy** is founded in an understanding of social-emotional development/ behavioral health. The program staff collaborate with parents to plan developmentally appropriate strategies to support children with challenging behaviors. (Up to 4 pts)

Clarification: Positive guidance promotes self-control, teaches responsibility and helps children make thoughtful choices. It is the shared responsibility of families and programs that requires mutual respect and collaboration between home and care provider. A written discipline policy supports programs and families to promote the intentional teaching of social-emotional skills as they guide children toward positive behavior choices. There are two parts to this indicator:

Part A: A program's discipline policy must outline the positive guidance strategies that will be used to prevent challenging behaviors and appropriately respond to challenging behaviors. These strategies must be developmentally appropriate and promote the social-emotional and well-being of children. (2pts)

Part B: Must meet Part A AND program staff (administrators, teachers) and parents work together to teach children appropriate behaviors to meet their needs. The strategies to teach these behaviors must be developmentally appropriate. (2pts)

To receive full credit, evidence for Part A and Part B must be submitted.

Examples:

- Program's discipline policy that outlines positive guidance strategies from resources such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Conscious Discipline and Pyramid Model.
- Written guidance policy that describes how strategies are developed jointly with parents and program.
- Program's policy describes how they support early identification of child's behavioral health needs in partnership with the family.
- Family/teacher conferences regarding behavior.

Indicator:

III.C.2. The program adopts a policy to limit or eliminate **suspension and expulsion**. (up to 4pts)

Clarification: The program's written policy includes how it limits or eliminates suspension and expulsion with strategies support children and families. There are two parts to this indicator.

Part A: A program's policy must outline how it limits or eliminates suspension and expulsion. (2 pt)

Part B: Must meet Part A AND include 2 or more strategies to support children and families such as, prevention measures, parent and program collaboration, alternative options, and/or a transition process. (2 pts)

To receive full credit, evidence for Part A and Part B must be submitted.

Example: Program's written policy limits or eliminates the use of suspension and expulsion, with strategies support children and families.

Standard D: Child Screening and Referrals

Indicator:

III.D.1. The program conducts vision and hearing screenings. (2 pts)

Clarification: Within 90 days of enrollment hearing and vision screenings are conducted on all children who are not enrolled in school. Vision and hearing screening may be provided on site or off site by a local health professional and/or community agency. Parents may provide the program a statement that these screening have been conducted by their health professional. To receive credit, evidence of the program ensuring children have vision and hearing screenings within 90 days of enrollment must be submitted. (2pts)

Examples:

- Written policy that explains the process for implementation of vision and hearing screenings.
- Letter, contract, program results, or statement from professionals who conduct vision and hearing screenings that also indicate frequency.
- Parent consent forms for vision and hearing screenings that indicate when the screening will be/was conducted.

Indicator:

III.D.2. The program conducts **developmental screenings** and shares information about a child's growth and progress, based on results of the screenings, with families confidentially according to the instruments' implementation timeframe. (up to 4 pts)

Clarification: Developmental screenings provide a snapshot of children's development at that time. These tools capture areas of children's strengths as well as areas that may need additional support and/or intervention.
There are two parts to this indicator:

Part A: The program utilizes a nationally recognized developmental screening tool. Screenings are conducted within 90 days of enrollment and repeated annually for all children who are not enrolled in school. (2pts)
Part B**:** Part A must be met AND information about a child's growth and progress, based on results of the screenings, is shared with families confidentially according to the instruments' implementation timeframe. (2pts)

To receive full credit, Part A and Part B must be met.

Examples:

Part A:

- Written program policy or sample parental consent form that describes and explains what and how often a nationally recognized screening tool is used by the program to screen all children. Such as:
  - The Ages and Stages Questionnaires©, Third Edition (ASQ-3TM) is widely used developmental screening tool to determine if young children (1 month-5 ½ years) are at risk for a developmental delay.
  - The Battelle Developmental Inventory.
  - Brigance IED III.

Part B:

- Program policy regarding families receiving the information and results of the screenings being conducted.
- Agenda from parent-teacher conference that includes evidence that screening results were addressed.

Indicator:

III.D.3. The program partners with families to make appropriate referrals based on parental concerns/requests, child screening, and/or on-going documentation. (3pts)

Clarification: Programs that provide effective referrals strengthen and support children and families by providing connections to services that meet their identified interests, concerns and/or needs. Linking families to appropriate agencies that provide evaluations, resources, and/or services for children's development (physical, social-emotional, cognitive, and language) can improve their later outcomes.

Program responds to parents' concerns related to child screening and/or on-going documentation and assists parents in seeking appropriate referrals and resources. Programs and families develop a positive relationship with reciprocal communication in order to provide referrals/resources to families pertaining to their children. To receive credit, the program must have a written policy or procedure for referral services which include the family.

Examples:

- Example of recommendation or referral forms to appropriate agencies (i.e. pediatrician, social-emotional health services, or other intervention supports).

Indicator:

III.D.4. The program collaborates with experts, professionals, and community resources/agencies/organizations to support children and families regarding medical, developmental, social-emotional health, and/or other needs. (up to 3 pts)

Clarification: Programs should develop relationships with experts, professionals and/or organizations (e.g. local school district, BabyNet, SC Inclusion Collaborative, etc.) to collaborate and partner to address concerns and questions during the monitoring and screening process. These partners should help guide programs in supporting children with developmental delays.

To receive credit, the program must provide evidence of partnerships/collaborations at least 1 and up to 3 agencies/community resources. Each different partnership (up to 3) that demonstrates a collaboration earns 1 point.

Examples:

- Correspondence with partner organization (e.g, email, letters, invitations).
- Feedback/summary report from partnering agency.
- Policy regarding who the program collaborates with to support children and families.
- Sign in record of therapist/interventionist participation in program.
- Copy of partner agreement with agency.

Element IV: Individualized Family Communication and Engagement

The program engages with families to provide consistency and familiarity in children's care and demonstrates that each family is unique and valued.

Standard A: Individualized Family Communication and Engagement

Indicator:

IV.A.1. The program orients incoming families to their program in a way that meets the individual family's needs. (3 pts)

Clarification: Programs should identify processes and resources that they may draw upon to ensure that all families are received into the program with the information and understanding they require to be comfortable and well-informed. Programs must have a plan to acquaint families in a way that meets their individual needs. To receive credit, the program must have a written plan that describes how they will support incoming families in learning about the program.

Examples:

Plan to acquaint new families with the program, which may include:

- Parent handbooks that meet family needs
- Translation services
- Open house
- Program tours
- Family welcome meeting
- Website with program information/updates and policies

Indicator:

IV.A.2. The program utilizes a method to collect information about the child and their family. (up to 4 pts)

Clarification: The program collects information about the child and family they serve to better meet their needs. Information is collected on all children in the program regardless of age to include the following:

- Family preferences regarding routine care
- Temperament
- Dominant languages
- Social/emotional needs
- Special accommodations

To receive credit, evidence of at least 1 topic of information about the child and their family (from the list above) must be submitted up to a total of 4. Each different topic (up to 4) that gathers information about the child and their family earns 1 point.

Examples:

- Child intake form that collects information about the child and family (e.g. *Getting to Know You* form).
- Questionnaire to parents about their child and family.

Indicator:

IV.A.3. The program communicates with families in multiple ways. (up to 4 pts)

Clarification: Programs communicate with families to share information and updates in multiple ways. Information shared relate directly to experiences that impact the child and events that occur at the program. To receive credit, evidence of at least 1 and up to 4 methods used must be submitted. Each different method of communicating with families (up to 4) earns 1 point.

Examples:

- Policy statement regarding daily family/teacher communication.
- Providing daily communication sheets about the child's day.
- Daily communication app.
- Mailed or emailed letters.
- Newsletters or flyers of events.
- Emails
- Website with regular updates to events.
- Photo of family bulletin boards with current information.
- Policy providing regular family/teacher conferences or family meetings.
- Open house.

Indicator:

IV.A.4 The program maintains a resource list and/or literature from appropriate services/agencies to support children and families. (up to 4 pts)

Clarification: Programs that maintain a comprehensive list of local, state and/or national agencies and resources are better prepared to support families who are seeking additional support and information.

The resource list consists of local/regional resources and agencies. The focus must be on supporting families who need information that supports the needs of the family (e.g. parent education, child care scholarships, family counseling, libraries, local parks, financial supports, translation services, behavioral or social-emotional resources, therapy services, early intervention services, job training, housing, literacy, violence prevention, substance abuse prevention, food pantries, etc.).

To receive credit, at least 1 resource that supports families (up to 4) must be submitted. Each different resource (up to 4) earns 1 point.

Examples:

- Informative brochures from agencies that support families.
- Lists of contact information of local agencies that assist families and those who provide social-emotional health support.
- Policy that describes how the program maintains a list of at least 4 local resources to support families.
- Photos of bulletin board display that contains at least 4 resources for families.
- Program website includes list of local resources for families.

Indicator:

IV.A.5 The program offers a minimum of 2 family/teacher conferences annually. (3 pts)

Clarification: Family and teacher conferences are opportunities to discuss the child's developmental progress and classroom experiences. It also provides time for the family to share important information about their child. The program must allocate time to offer at least 2 conferences to each family annually. This practice goes beyond offering conferences at the parent's request. The program has a written statement that is conveyed to families, describing the frequency and plan for family/teacher conferences.

To receive credit, the program must submit documentation that is shared with families, describing the frequency and plan for family/ teacher conferences.

Examples:

- Policy statement regarding family/teacher conferences.
- Policy statement in enrollment packet, parent handbook.
- Announcements of parent conferences in newsletter, website, email.
- Family/Teacher conference form with frequency conducted.

Indicator:

IV.A.6 The program demonstrates multiple methods to support family engagement. (up to 3 pts)

Clarification: Family engagement occurs when programs and families work together in partnership to build relationships to support children's learning, healthy development, and family well-being. Family engagement occurs when strategies are planned based on families' interests and preferences that are responsive and supportive to their needs.

To receive credit, the program must submit evidence of at least 1 method (up to 3) used to engage families within the past year. Each different method of engaging with families (up to 3) earns 1 point.

Examples:

- Sign-up sheets for family members to volunteer and participate in program activities/field trips.
- Newsletters describing the program hosting family workshops, social gatherings, and/or targeted outreach events (targeted outreach is when the program and families go out into the community).
- List of families/positions that serve as board members on Policy Boards.
- Notes home to families requesting donated items to support curriculum.
- Planning committee notes that discusses upcoming celebrations that families participate in or organize.
- Calendar with monthly classroom storytelling/sharing from grandparents or other family.
- Photo of food sharing at a program potluck with description of the event.
- Invitation for family and programs attend events together.
- Program adapts curriculum to be representative of the enrolled families.

Glossary of Terms

Child Well-Being – Attention to each child's overall health and wellness (including their nutritional, physical, and mental well-being).

Communication Strategies – Multiple methods that programs use to determine the unique needs of children in order for them to fully participate in the program.

Confidentiality – Programs keep personal, identifying, and medical information pertaining to children and families private. The program must establish a written policy statement to ensure confidentiality.

Developmental Screening– Questionnaire or checklist that has been validated based on research. They ask questions about a child's development including language, movement, thinking, behavior, and emotions.
Screening is not meant to establish a diagnosis for a child; however, these tools can be used to determine if a child might need a more formal evaluation to reveal the presence of a developmental delay in any area.

Discipline Policy - Positive guidance strategies that are used to prevent challenging behaviors and appropriately respond to challenging behaviors. These strategies must be developmentally appropriate and promote the social-emotional and behavioral well-being of children.

Elements – Essential aspects that support quality early care and education.

External Transition – When new children arrive to a program or when a child permanently leaves the current program to attend another program or school environment.

Family Engagement – Family engagement occurs when programs and families work together in partnership to build relationships to support children's learning, healthy development, and family well–being.

Half-day Only Program – Operate 6 hours or less per day. (Programs that operate more than 4 hours per day are required to receive licensure per SC Child Care Licensing Law, https://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t63c013.php.

Inclement Weather – Defined by the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, and National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education (2010) as a wind chill factor at or below 20 degrees Fahrenheit or at or above a heat index of 90 degrees Fahrenheit. In addition, falling precipitation or weather advisories may prevent children from going outside.

Indicators – Statements that describe a specific, measurable, and observable policy or practice related to the standard.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) – (Applies to children with special needs over the age of three) The IEP is developed through a team process and it includes information about the child's current development levels and annual goals that can be academic and functional. With parent permission, the child's teacher can participate in the development of these plans.

Individualized Family Communication and Engagement – Refers to the range of practices that promote family engagement and individualized practices.

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) – (Applies to children with special needs under the age of three) The IFSP is developed by a team and includes information about the child's current development, and family identified outcomes for themselves and their child. With parent permission, the child's teacher can participate in the development of these plans.

Internal Transition – When a child is assigned to a new classroom within the program. The written transition policy describes criteria for determining when a child may transition and how often children are transitioned to other classrooms. It also describes the practices that the program has put in place to support successful transitions within the program.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) – Supports children in moving freely in the learning environment to play and explore.

Menus – Written meal plans used for developing nutritious meals and/or snacks for a specified period (generally weekly or monthly) for all age groups served in the program. Menus are current and dated and helps a program to know what foods are served during that time period.

Modifications and Accommodations – Changes that programs make to their facility, policies, and/or practices that enable children to fully participate.

Nutrition Policy – A set of written expectations related to different aspects of nutrition (the process of takin in food and using it for growth and health) for all children involved in the program. It will outline a clear and consistent plan to guide the program in providing an environment that supports development of healthy eating habits in children.

Physical Activity Policy – A set of written expectations related to different aspects of children's movement and/or physical activity (movement of the body that requires energy) for all children involved in the program. It will outline a clear and consistent plan to guide the program in providing an environment that supports development of regular physical activity habits in children.

Physical Health – A general state of health and well-being usually achieved through proper nutrition, moderate to vigorous physical activity, and sufficient rest. Physical activity and movement are an essential part of the development, learning, and growth of young children.

Primary Care- A system in which each child is assigned a teacher responsible for their care. The primary teacher carries out most routine caregiving interactions with the child (diaper changes, feeding, and communication with families at drop off and pick up, completion of developmental assessments, documentation of daily activities, etc.). Primary care does not mean exclusive care. It means that all parties know who has primary responsibility for each child. Each child may be assigned up to 2 primary teachers (due to staffing changes during the day).

Program Leadership/Administrator – Early Care and Education Professionals who supervise staff and support curriculum planning and daily program operations, includes positions such as directors, assistant directors, supervisors, and curriculum coordinators.

SC Early Learning Standards (ELS) – SC ELS define the following developmental domains: Approaches to Play and Learning, Emotional and Social Development, Health and Physical Development, Language Development and Communication, Mathematical Thinking and Expression, and Cognitive Development. This document can be found at https://www.scchildcare.org/media/55097/SC_ELS-second-edit.pdf

Screen Time – Refers to use of television, computers, tablets, phones, and smart boards, etc. In the first 2 years of life, children's brains and bodies are going through critical periods of growth and development. It is important for infants and young children to have positive interactions with people and not sit in front of a screen that takes time away from social interactions with parents, peers and teachers.

Specialized Services – Recommended or prescribed interventions and/ or services that are provided to children with special needs to support their development, learning, and/or participation (e.g. Physical Therapy, Early Intervention, Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy).

Staff Evaluations - Performance evaluations provide information on how and what a staff member is doing compared to their job responsibilities as outlined in their job description. Evaluations should outline skill sets, knowledge, initiative, and participation in carrying out the program's vision as well as opportunities for ongoing professional development and support.

Standards – Specific aspects of quality within an element.

Suspension and Expulsion – Exclusionary practices preventing children from being included in classroom activities. This includes instances when a program dismisses a child, restricts their attendance, and limits activities.

Teacher – Early Care and Education Professional who supervises, plans, and implements developmentally appropriate activities and experiences to promote optimal growth and development of children. Teachers are defined as any position that works directly with children, such as lead, counselor, assistant, floater, substitute, and emergency person.