



A B C Quality

**ABC Quality
Family and Group Child Care 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 schildcare.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.

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 Family and Group Child Care Homes and Benefits of Participating in ABC Quality

2.1 Definition of a Family Child Care Home

A facility within a residence occupied by the operator that cares for no more than 6 children. The number includes those living in the residence and children who are related to the operator. Family Child Care Homes must be registered but may choose to be licensed.

2.2 Definition of a Group Child Care Home

A facility within a residence occupied by the operator that cares for 7 to 12 children. The number includes those living in the residence and children who are related to the operator. Must be licensed.

2.3 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

2.4 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 their first five years of life for school achievement and high school graduation

2.5 Benefits for the Community

- ABC Quality can demonstrate to policymakers that a quality early care and education system can increase children’s readiness for success in kindergarten and 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

b. Apply to Participate

Contact the ABC Quality Office that serves the county your program is located. You will be connected with the ABC Quality Assessor for your county. You will be emailed the application along with other documents needed to apply:

- Submit your application

c. Meet Eligibility

Submit your eligibility documents to the Quality Assessor

d. Receive your Quality Level

Receive the Process Quality Review (On-site observations). **NOTE: This is only for Group Child Care Homes and Family Child Care Homes pursuing a Level B. Family child Care Homes pursuing a Level C do not receive an on-site observation**

Receive Quality Performance Report and Quality Level

Market your program

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.

Special Note: Please review Chapters 4 and 5 before submitting an application to ensure you are able/willing to meet the eligibility criteria.

- Contact the ABC Quality Office that handles the county your program is located [See 1.3].
- You will be connected to the ABC Quality Assessor assigned to your county. The Quality Assessor will discuss the criteria for a Level B and a Level C, as the provider chooses the Level that they wish to apply for.

- c. The Assessor will email the enrollment documents (below) to you with instructions to complete and return to them. They will also request you to submit certain financial documents in order to set up an account in the SC Scholarship Program, so payments can be made to you.
 - Application
 - Enrollment Form
 - Provider Agreement
 - W-9 Tax Form
 - ABC Quality Staff List
- d. When you submit your application, you will return the following:
 - The above documents (#b) sent to you by the Quality Assessor
 - Eligibility documentation (Program and Staff)
 - Any financial documentation requested by the Assessor. e.g. copy of IRS Letter verifying your Tax ID number, or a copy of your Driver’s License, and Social Security Card, if you do not have a Tax ID
 - A copy of your published rates that you charge for child care
- e. Create A Professional Profile: The owner/operator will create/register an individual Professional Profile account in [SC Endeavors](#).
- f. Create Your Organization Profile: The owner/operator will create an Organization Profile account in [SC Endeavors](#) for their program.
- g. Staff Create Their Professional Profile: Any person employed by the Owner/Operator to care for the children such as a second caregiver will also create/register an individual Professional Profile account.
- h. Invite Staff To Join The Organization Profile: Once all staff have created their accounts, the owner/operator will invite employees to join the Organization Profile.
- i. On-Site Assessment/Evaluation: The Quality Assessor will contact you to schedule a date to conduct the on-site observation assessment for Level B programs or the on-site evaluation for Level C programs.

Important Note: New programs who have not completed the above within three months of submitting the application 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 Family or Group Child Care 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.
- 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 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.
- 4.1.4 The Operator/Owner must be employed in the facility during the hours of operation.
- 4.1.5 Must have at least one unrelated fee-paying child enrolled (cannot be the owner’s own child).

See also, “Enrollment/Re-enrollment Exceptions” Chapter 17

4.2 Program Eligibility Criteria:

4.2.1 Enrollment in SC Endeavors

[SC Endeavors](https://scendeavors.org) (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.

- a. The person responsible for the program (e.g., the Owner/Operator) must:
 - 1) Register the Organization Profile account in SC Endeavors for the program. This is done within the Owner/Operator's Professional Profile (See 4.3.2). [Click here](#) to see the How-to-Guide. Contact SC Endeavors at 864-250-8581 for assistance.
 - 2) The Organization Profile account must be fully completed with all ages of children served.
 - 3) The Owner/Director of the program's Organization Profile account must "invite" any employed staff to join the Organization Profile. This is done once the staff have created/registered their Professional Profile account. The link to the How-to-Guide in # 1 also explains how to do this.

4.2.2 Additional Program Eligibility Requirements:

ABC Quality will verify the following:

- a. The program has a current, regular Registration or License. Exception: Family, Friend & Neighbor (FFN) providers who become registered or licensed can have a Provisional.
- b. The program has a clear history of compliance with child care licensing regulations for the six months prior to the application for enrollment. **Note:** 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.
- c. The program/owner is not currently on a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) with Child Care Licensing.
- d. The program has no history of having operated illegally pursuant to SC Child Care Licensing Laws.
- e. The program does not have an active Out of Home Abuse and Neglect (OHAN) investigation.
- f. 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, 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.

4.2.3 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:

4.2.3.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 you do 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.

4.2.3.b Emergency Medical Care Policy

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 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 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.

4.2.3.c Emergency Preparedness Policy

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 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.

4.2.3.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.
- 4.2.3.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. 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 program or used by the program should conform to the regulations of DHEC for construction, use, and maintenance.
 2. The program must follow the policy as written.
- 4.2.3.f. Transportation Policy (if applicable)
The program must comply with Jacob’s Law.
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. Children must be properly restrained while being transported according to their age per the [S.C. Department of Public Safety](#).
- h. A plan 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
- i. 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.
- j. 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.

4.2.3.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.

4.2.3.h Child Maltreatment Policy

SC Scholarship and ABC Quality serve a very vulnerable population of children. In addition to corporal punishment, when 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.

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.*

1. The program must follow the policy as written.

4.2.3.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 changing diapers or assisting a child with toileting; 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 children who are homeschooled unless the parent provides a statement of religious exemption.
Note: In SC, under the authority of the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), school districts are responsible for ensuring verification of immunization records for children age 5 and up.
- 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 follow its written policy.

4.2.3.j Handling, Storage, and Disposal of Hazardous Materials and Biological Contaminants Policy

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.
 - d. Toxic substances/hazards must be stored away from food and medication.
 - e. Poisonous plants must not be allowed in the family/group child care home.
 - f. Chemicals used to control odors must not be allowed, e.g., moth balls, air fresheners, essential oils, toilet/urinal deodorizer blocks.
 - g. 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.

4.2.3.k 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.

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.

No.	Applies To:	Eligibility Requirements for Staff	Complete prior to working with children	Complete within 90 days of hire
4.3.1.1.a	Group	Group Operator/Caregiver must be at least 21 years of age and meet the staff qualification requirement.	X	
4.3.1.1.b	Group	Group Assistant Caregiver must be at least 18 years of age	X	
4.3.1.2.a	Family	Family Operator/Caregiver must be at least 18 years of age and meet the staff qualification requirement.	X	
4.3.1.2.b	Family	Family Assistant caregiver must be at least 18 years of age	X	

4.3.2.a	Both	Enrollment in SC Endeavors		X
4.3.2.b	Both	Apply for Career Ladder Placement		X
4.3.3.a	Both	TB Test	X	
4.3.3.b	Both	Health Assessment	X	
4.3.5	Both	Pediatric First Aid		X
4.3.6	Both	Infant/Child CPR		X
4.3.7	Both	Maltreatment Statement	X	
4.3.8	Both	SC Health & Safety Pre-Service Certificate		X
4.3.9	Both	ABC Quality Code of Ethics	X	

4.3.1 Staff

All staff who are responsible for the care of children must meet at least the minimum staff education/qualifications:

1. Level C Family and Group Child Care Home Minimum Staff Qualifications

- a. Group: Operator/caregiver must be at least 21 years of age and have a valid High School Diploma or GED or Certificate of Attendance (with accompanying documentation) and six months verifiable experience working with children in a licensed, approved or registered child care setting
- b. Family: Operator/caregiver must be at least 18 years of age and have a valid High School Diploma or GED or Certificate of Attendance (with accompanying documentation) and six months verifiable experience working with children in a licensed, approved or registered child care setting.
- c. Caregivers: who work as assistants to the person in charge of a group of children must be at least 18 years of age and have a valid high school diploma or GED or Certificate of Attendance (with accompanying documentation).

2. Level B Family and Group Child Care Home Staff Qualifications

Operator must meet the minimum requirement in # 1 above and meet one of the following:

- a. Advanced Degree, Bachelor's Degree, Associate Degree or Diploma in child development or early childhood education
- b. Advanced Degree or Bachelor's Degree in a non-related field
- c. Child Development Associate Credential (CDA)
- d. Early Childhood Development (ECD) 101) from a local SC Technical College
Degrees/Diplomas must be from an accredited college or institution

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](http://www.scendeavors.org) (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 are 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. Additionally, completing the Professional Profile includes adding employment information, which is verified by the program's Organization Profile account.

- b. Career Ladder Placement: Each staff will apply for a Career Ladder Placement within the Professional Profile account in SC Endeavors Registry which includes verification of their education, e.g. high school diploma/GED (See Glossary 21.28) by SC Endeavors staff. The [How to Guide](#) to apply for a Professional Profile and earn Career Ladder Placement.

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 (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 Pediatric First Aid

Any person responsible (including emergency persons) for the care and supervision of children must have and maintain current Pediatric First Aid (in-person and hands-on training by a nationally recognized training provider).

4.3.5 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).

4.3.6 Maltreatment Policy Statement

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

4.3.7 SC Health and Safety Pre-Service Certificate

All staff responsible for the care or supervision of children must complete the SC Health and Safety Pre-Service Certificate through Pro Solutions 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/>



4.3.8 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:

5.1 Annual Training Hours

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.

Training must be on the staff’s learning record with SC Endeavors to count towards meeting the annual requirement.

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.

Group Child Care Home

- Operator must obtain at least twenty (20) clock hours in child development/early childhood each calendar year to include 5 clock hours in growth and development. (CPR/First Aid are excluded)
- All staff must obtain at least ten (10) clock hours of training each calendar year in child development/early childhood. (CPR/First Aid are excluded)

Family Child Care Home

- Operator and any staff must obtain at least ten (10) clock hours each calendar year in child development/early childhood. (CPR/First Aid are excluded)

5.2 Meals

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.

5.3 Staff – Parent Interaction

The program must regularly inform the parents about the facility’s program.

5.4 Daily Information for Infants/Toddlers

For programs serving infants and toddlers, caregivers must share daily information with parents regarding feeding times, food eaten, bowel movements and sleeping patterns.

5.5 Immunizations

Registered programs must maintain copies of children’s immunization records to include any child who is homeschooled. The only exceptions are if the parent provides a statement of medical or religious exemption. See DHEC’s website for further information on exemptions: <https://scdhec.gov/exemptions-school-vaccine-requirements>

5.6 Parental Access

Parents shall have unlimited access to their children and to the providers caring for their children during the normal hours of operation and whenever children are in the care of the providers.

5.7 Handwashing

- a. Staff shall wash hands before preparing or serving food, after assisting with toileting or changing diapers, after handling bodily fluids, and after applying medication/ointment when there is a break in the skin.
- b. Children shall wash hands before eating and after using the restroom.
- c. Liquid soap and disposable paper towels must be provided at each sink.

Chapter 6 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.

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.

6.1 Definition:

- a. No violations for the six months prior to submitting an application for enrollment or before being enrolled.
- b. No frequent or multiple deficiencies or a significant event *posing substantial threat to the health or safety of the children that involve supervision, compliance with ratios, or health and safety violations.*
 - Frequent is defined as having 3 or more violations that pose a substantial threat to children's health and safety within a six- month period of time
 - Multiple is defined as having 3 or more different violations that pose a substantial threat to children's health and safety within a six- month period of time
 - Any significant event which poses substantial threat is defined as, but not limited to: any environment, situation, or occurrence that poses a substantial threat to the health and **safety of children**
 - **Substantial threat to the health and safety of children is any action, condition, or event that results in children being placed in impending danger or harm**
- c. Conditions that could pose a substantial threat can include, but are not limited to:
 - Children left alone in the facility
 - Sewer backed up in facility with children present
 - No water in the facility exceeding 4 hours with children present with children present
 - No heat or air conditioning in the 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
 - Smoking in the facility by staff
 - Substantially exceeding the facility capacity
 - Withholding food from a child(ren)
 - Maltreatment of a child(ren)

6.2 Group Size

- a. Family Child Care Homes may not exceed the number of children on their Registration/License at any one time.
- b. Group Child Care Homes cannot exceed 12 children at any one time.

6.3 Indoor Environment

The program must meet the following requirements related to the indoor environment:

- a. Is free of excessive dirt and clutter.
- b. Is clean and sanitary.

- c. Is free of hazards (no excessive peeling or chipping paint, exposed wires, sharp objects; cleaning products/medicines properly stored).
- d. Has sufficient exits.
- e. Has running water, toilet and handwashing facilities.
- f. Has smoke detector(s).
- g. Has fire extinguisher(s).
- h. Has safe vented heating. (Example: If open-flame heater or fire place present, fire/safety protection is provided, or flame is inaccessible to a child).
- i. Has a working telephone.
- j. Has a refrigerator or method to keep food adequately to prevent spoilage.
- k. Smoking is prohibited both inside and outside during the hours of operation. This applies to all caregivers, and any family member present in the home during the time the program is in operation. After hours, the owner and any family member residing in the home may smoke only in designated areas which are not used by the children.
- l. Allows smoking only in designated areas not used by the children.
- m. Consumption of alcohol or illegal substances is prohibited.
- n. Is free of insects, bugs and pests.
- o. Liquid soap and disposable paper towels are accessible where children wash their hands.
- p. Staff bags and personal belongings are kept out of the reach of children.
- q. Hazardous materials and chemicals must be kept locked and out of the reach of children (e.g., sharp objects, cleaning supplies, or poisons such as bug spray, or medications).

6.4 Outdoor Environment

The program must meet the requirements related to the 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. Playground equipment must be safe, firmly anchored, meet the US Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC).
- d. 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.
- e. The use of hot tubs, spas, and saunas are prohibited.
- f. The use of trampolines is prohibited.
- g. The use of inflatable houses, or inflatable water slides, etc., are prohibited.
- h. 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.

Chapter 7 Provider Agreement

7.1 Issuance of Provider Agreement

- a. Provider Agreements are signed Agreements between the provider and SCDSS.
- b. The Provider Agreement must be signed before the program will be assigned their Quality Level.
- c. The Provider Agreement is effective for a period of one year from the date signed by the provider.
- d. 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 the SC Scholarship Program for authorization. Children will appear on the SVL for the location in which they have been connected

7.2 Expiration of the Provider Agreement

The provider's enrollment in ABC Quality expires on the end date of the Provider Agreement.

7.3 When an Agreement Becomes Null and Void

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)
- If SC Scholarship clients are connected, a two-week notice will be given
- ***This is not appealable.***

7.4 Non-Renewal of The Provider Agreement

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

- The program does not meet History of Compliance at the time of the renewal
- The program is on a Corrective Action Plan with Child Care Licensing
- The program has an open Out of Home Abuse and Neglect (OHAN) investigation
- 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***

7.5 Criteria for Renewal of Provider Agreement

All programs must:

- a. Have a clear History of Compliance to include:
 - A current regular License or Registration
 - 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 Child Care Licensing

- b. Submit and meet all eligibility criteria (Program and Staff) every year.
- c. Receive a score of 80 percent or higher if a Level B program.

Chapter 8 ABC Quality Framework

8.1 Annual Review

- a. A minimum of one unannounced visit per year will be conducted.
- b. During the visit:
 - Level B Programs: Quality Assessor will complete an on-site observation and evaluation using the Family/Group Child Care Standards and review eligibility criteria.
 - Level C Programs: Quality Assessor will complete an on-site evaluation and review eligibility criteria.
- c. Eligibility criteria will be reviewed for any new staff hired since the last visit and updated for all other staff.

8.2 Determining the Quality Level

To determine the Level:

Level B+

Programs receive a score of 99% – 100% for the on-site observation AND meet all eligibility criteria at the time of the review.

Level B

- 1) Programs receive a score of 99% - 100% for the on-site observation, but do not meet all eligibility criteria at the time of the review. OR
- 2) Programs receive a score of 80% to 99% for the on-site observation regardless of whether all eligibility requirements are met.

Level C

To become a Level C, there is no on-site observation; and may or may not meet all the eligibility criteria at the time of the review.

8.3 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.

On-site Observation for Level B only:

Annual Review: Provider does not meet the minimum score of 80% during any annual review for a Level B provider.

Corrective Action Process:

- ABC Quality will ensure technical assistance is provided by one of it's partner agencies
- ABC Quality will conduct a 2nd observation within 3 months of the first one after the provider has received technical assistance

- ❑ ABC Quality will conduct a 3rd observation within 3 months of the 2nd observation if the provider still does not meet the minimum score upon the 2nd observation. However, if the score still does not meet the minimum, then ABC Quality will staff the program for termination

Eligibility Criteria:

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

Corrective Action Process:

- ❑ **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 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, then the program's file is sent for staffing for termination or non-renewal of the Provider Agreement

8.4 Assessor Reliability

ABC Quality is committed to scoring each observed program accurately and reliably. 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 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.

8.5 Reclassification

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

- If the program moves up a Level (from a Level C to a Level B, etc.) in the QRIS, then a rate change request for an increase in payment rates will be processed
- If the program moves down a Level, then a rate change request for a decrease in payment rates will be processed
- If at anytime a provider wishes to move up a Level, they must wait until their next annual program review
- **Reclassification is not appealable**

8.6 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-crr.org

sccrr@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

8.7 Other Resources

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

Chapter 9 Provider Business Procedures

9.1 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. It is 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 Scholarships, 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 this document in its entirety. Any questions should be referred to ABC Quality.

9.2 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 a SC Scholarship 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 the SC Scholarship Program 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 payment rate for the level assigned.
- e. Providers agree that parents shall have unlimited access to their children and to the providers caring for their children during the normal hours of program operation and whenever children are in the care of the provider.
- f. 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.
- g. 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.
- 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.

9.3 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: (see 1.3, ABC Quality Contact Information to see where you need to report this)

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 Director
- 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

SC Scholarship Program:

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 10 SC Scholarship Clients and Services

ABC Quality and the SC Scholarship Program (SC Scholarship) are advocates for parental choice and clients are responsible for selecting the provider of their choice.

10.1 When a client authorized for services through SC Scholarship selects your program

A new client or a client already receiving services at another provider may want to select/transfer to your facility. When a client chooses you to care for their child(ren), you should:

- a. Refer to 9.4 Client Transfer, for more detailed information.
- b. Request a valid form of identification to verify the identity of the client.
- c. Assist the client in completing the client connection form and fax it to SC Scholarship at 1 (800) 310-5417 or email it to connectionforms@dss.sc.gov. This will connect the client to your program and initiate the payment process for that client. Parents are given a connection form in their approval packet, but if they do not have one, you can request these by contacting SC Scholarship.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- **DO NOT SERVE THE CLIENT BEFORE YOU ARE ENROLLED AND RECEIVE WRITTEN APPROVAL FROM SC SCHOLARSHIP! IF YOU DO, SC SCHOLARSHIP WILL NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR PAYMENT**
 - Providers cannot accept/serve a child for a care type [age group, full-time or half-time]] for which they have not been enrolled. For example, a provider may be enrolled for full-time care type, but not half-time, etc. If providers are unsure as to the care types for which they are enrolled, they should refer to their enrollment information provided or call ABC Quality. Care types may be added at the provider's request and upon approval by ABC Quality
- d. Upon receipt of the connection form, SC Scholarship will verify that the client is eligible to receive services, and that the provider is enrolled to serve the care type requested. SC Scholarship will then authorize the provider to serve the client (if the client has complied with transfer procedures) and make the necessary “connection” in the system with an established start date.
 - e. SC Scholarship will send the provider an “Authorization/Connection Letter” confirming the connection. The letter will include information such as the authorization date, provider billing rate, client fee, care type authorized and number of weeks of care.
THIS IS THE PROVIDER’S AUTHORIZATION LETTER. THE PROVIDER MUST NOT SERVE THE CLIENT BEFORE RECEIVING THE AUTHORIZATION LETTER WITH THE APPROVED DATE.
 - f. If a client fails to attend the child care program for ten consecutive days after authorization is given, you must notify SC Scholarship if child does not return to the program in the third week.
 - g. If the provider’s rates are higher than what SC Scholarship will pay for each child, the provider should notify the client (preferably in writing) prior to the start date that they are required to pay the difference, in addition to the co-pay, if applicable. This is also noted in the parent’s handbook given to them by SC Scholarship and you should refer them to the handbook.
 - h. Service Voucher Logs (SVL) are the documents used by SC Scholarship for programs to request payment. Once a client has been connected to the program, the SVL will automatically be generated and sent to the provider. If an SVL is not received, the provider must contact SC Scholarship. Providers have the option to complete a paper version of the SVL or access the online SVL payment system. SC Scholarship provides support in setting up the on-line SVL.

10.2 Maximum Care Allowed

Clients can receive up to a maximum of 52 weeks of care during any one-year period of eligibility. This may be full-time care, part-time or a combination of the two. Note: Less than half-time care may be

in conjunction with full or half-time care and may be used alone. It cannot be used to pay the same child care provider.

10.3 Client Fee

SC Scholarship determines if the client has a fee (or co-pay) by evaluating the client's family size and income. **The provider is responsible for the collection of client fees from the parent in advance of service delivery.** Neither ABC Quality nor SC Scholarship assumes any responsibility for collection or payment of client fees.

Foster parents and clients participating in the SCDSS Family Independence Program are exempt from paying client fees. However, they are responsible for the difference between the provider's rate and the maximum rate paid by SC Scholarship, if the provider's rate exceeds the maximum rate.

- a. The client fee should be collected weekly in advance of service delivery. ****Providers should not let clients get behind on their weekly fees. [Refer to the Special Note under 9.4 Client Transfer].**
- b. The provider may discontinue services to the client when client fees are not paid; however, the provider must seek authorization from SC Scholarship before doing so.
- c. The amount of the client fee and any second child discount are deducted from the SC Scholarship payment to the provider.

10.4 Client Transfer

Clients may transfer from one provider to another.

- a. Clients must notify SC Scholarship either by telephone or in writing and receive approval prior to transferring.
- b. Some providers have established policy requirements regarding client transfers; the client may be required to adhere to these.
- c. The effective date of the transfer will be the 1st Monday following the 7th working day after SC Scholarship receives the phone call or written notice from the client requesting the transfer.
 - To determine the effective date of transfer:
The date SC Scholarship receives the phone call or written notice is considered day one of the notice. Then begin counting seven working days from that date. In counting the 7 days, do not include state observed Holidays or weekends, as they are not considered working days. Whatever date the 7th working day falls on the transfer date will be the next Monday after that
 - EXCEPTION: If notification is received on a Thursday, then Friday is counted as day one. If notice is received any other day of the week (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Friday), that same day is always counted as day one
 - EXAMPLE: Request is made on Wednesday. Counting seven [7] working days beginning with Wednesday, the 7th working day would fall on Thursday of the next week. The transfer date would be the next Monday following this Thursday
- d. Notice requirements can be waived under unusual circumstances if sought by the client. SC Scholarship will notify the provider if the request for a waiver is approved.
- e. The previous provider will not be paid after the start date is established for the new provider. **SC SCHOLARSHIP DOES NOT AUTHORIZE PAYMENT FOR TWO PROVIDERS FOR THE SAME TIME PERIOD.**

- f. The previous provider will be notified by telephone of the client’s last authorized day of service. A “Transfer Letter” will also be sent.
****SPECIAL NOTE: Clients with unpaid fees at the time of the transfer will still be allowed to transfer. It is the responsibility of the provider to ensure client fees are paid in a timely manner.**

10.5 Discontinuing Services to Clients

1. When the Provider Discontinues Services To The Client

Providers have a right to stop serving a client or child if either is disruptive to the program or does not comply with the provider's established policies.

- a. Providers must notify clients and SC Scholarship by calling the provider line at **[800-262-4416]** before discontinuing services to the client.
- b. The reason for discontinuing services must be included, e.g., failure to pay fees, parent does not pick child up on time, or child displays disruptive behavior, etc.
- c. If you serve any children with differing abilities and needs and require assistance to help you serve the child in your program, you may contact the SC Inclusion Collaborative who will gladly provide technical assistance at no cost. Their number is 803-777-2861.
- d. The ending date will be the last day of the service week (always a Sunday), in which the provider asked the client to leave.
- e. Clients should be notified by the provider [preferably in writing] a minimum of three working days in advance of the effective date.
- f. Clients should be allowed to finish any week in which the provider has billed SC Scholarship for the client. Failure to allow the child to finish out a week may result in an early release, which would require the provider to forfeit any notice and/or payment for that week.

2. When SC Scholarship Terminates Client’s Eligibility

SC Scholarship may terminate a client's or child's eligibility:

- a. If termination is initiated by SC Scholarship, the provider and client will be notified by mail that the client’s services are being terminated and all payments for services rendered after the termination date will become the client’s responsibility.
- b. The provider will be mailed a Denial/Termination Letter that reflects the effective date of termination and the reason for the termination. A minimum advance notice of 10 calendar days will be given from the date the determination to end services is made, unless extenuating circumstances exist, and a waiver is given to the client.

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.

11.1.1 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 your 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.

11.1.2 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
- 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

11.4 Change in Name of the Program

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

Note: For Family and Group programs, the only way a name change would be processed, is if the provider obtained a Federal ID Tax number indicating the name 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 Provider Agreement becomes null and void
- If the provider needs to temporarily relocate due to unforeseen circumstances (even for one day), 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
- If the provider meets the following, then the enrollment will be processed at the new location:
 - Must have a License or Registration for the new address
 - Program demonstrates a history of compliance
 - Eligibility requirements are met

11.6 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

11.7 Change in Telephone Number

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

Chapter 12 Records

The following records **are required to be kept on-site, as required by federal regulations**. If the 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](#)" which is on our website (schildcare.org).

12.2 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.

12.3 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.

12.4 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, Lead Teacher, or Assistant Teacher, etc.).
- b. Documentation of CPR Certification.
- c. Documentation of First Aid Certification.
- d. Copy of ABC Quality Code of Ethics signed and dated.
- e. Maltreatment Policy statement prohibiting the use maltreatment signed and dated yearly.

12.5 Client 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 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. 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. 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.
- c. Any correspondence from SC Scholarship related to the client.

12.6 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 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 13 Complaints

13.1 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 program that is regulatory in nature, the complaint will be forwarded to the appropriate Child Care Licensing Region
- Complaints 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)
- Complaints received by ABC Quality related to a violation of the policies of ABC Quality or about payment or fraud, will be investigated within 3 business days following the complaint. A visit may be made or the complaint may be handled by contacting the provider by phone and obtaining documents
- Any findings by ABC Quality will be documented in a letter sent to the program
- 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 14 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.

Voluntary termination of a provider's enrollment agreement is not appealable. If the provider requests to voluntarily end 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.

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. Termination is not immediate, as the provider has the right to appeal the termination.

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).

- 15.1.1 Failure to Maintain History of Compliance to Regulations: The program is not in compliance with History of Compliance.
- 15.1.2 Failure to Meet the Program and Staff Eligibility Criteria: The program is not in compliance with meeting Program and Staff Eligibility Criteria.
- 15.1.3 Failure to Maintain Required Program Assessment Scores: The program does not meet the minimum total score required to maintain enrollment.
- 15.1.4 Use of Corporal Punishment or Maltreatment of Children:
 - (1) The use of corporal punishment or maltreatment of a child(ren) by the owner of the facility or,
 - (2) 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.
 - (3) If further instances of corporal punishment or maltreatment occur at the facility within any 12- month period, termination of enrollment will occur.
- 15.1.5 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.
- 15.1.6 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.**
- 15.1.7 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.
- 15.1.8 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.
- 15.1.9 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.
- 15.1.10 Fraud: The provider has committed fraud. Funds may be recouped for the period of time the provider did not qualify for the funds.
- 15.1.11 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.
- 15.1.12 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.

- 15.1.13 Refusal to Allow SCDSS Representatives Access to the Facility: The provider refused to allow any representative 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.
- 15.1.14 Refusal to Cooperate With Any Investigation by any SCDSS staff: The provider refused to cooperate with an investigation to include allowing access to video footage or refusal to allow the interview of employees/parents
- 15.1.15 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.
- 15.1.16 Owner is Cited for Operating Illegally at Another Location: 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.
- 15.1.17 Failure to Comply with the Provider Business Procedures: The program has failed to comply with the requirements of 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:

- 15.2.1 Provider 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.
- 15.2.2 Child Care Licensing has closed the provider's file:
If Child Care Licensing closes the provider's file, then ABC Quality will also close the provider's file with ABC Quality/SC Scholarship.
- 15.2.3 Facility/Home 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.
- 15.2.4 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.

15.2.5 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.

15.2.6 Provider Moves:

When the provider 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 provider at the new location.

15.2.7 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.

15.2.8 Provider 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.

15.3 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, Corrective Action Plans (CAP) or 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 licensing status, e.g. does the program have a Regular License or Registration or a Provisional. If Provisional, then the length of time operating under a Provisional License/Registration and the reason;
 - 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**:
- Child Care Licensing will place the program on a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) or
 - 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 CAP or 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 CAP or 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**

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.**

16.1 **Waiting Period for Re-Applying**

Providers must wait one calendar year from the actual termination or closure date before they can re-apply to ABC Quality. 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.

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 reapply 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.**

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.
- d. Administrative or Judicial Determination of Abuse and/or Neglect: 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.
- e. 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.
- f. 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.
- g. 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.
- 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. Provider who does 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.
- j. Providers whose name is on the License/Registration and they have an outside job. The name of the primary operator on the License/Registration must be the one caring for the children.
- 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.
- l. The owner previously had a licensed center 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. **These are not appealable:**

- 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 Terminated for the use of Corporal Punishment or Maltreatment of Children:
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.
- e. 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.

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 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.

19.1 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.

21.1 ABC Quality Rating & Improvement System (ABC Quality)

A Quality Rating & Improvement System, the South Carolina statewide child care assistance program along with SC 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 SC Scholarship. There are two offices of ABC Quality geographically.

21.2 Absenteeism

When the child is **not** present (absent all day) at the provider's facility during the service unit (week) either due to illness, vacation, court ordered non-custodial visitation, or for other known or unknown reasons.

21.3 **Activity Fees**

Activity fees are considered other fees charged by the provider to parents such as transportation fees, or special activity fees, etc. These fees are the responsibility of the parent.

21.4 **Authorized Service Period**

The specific time frame that child care services are authorized for a client and a specific provider.

21.5 **Billing Rate**

The provider's weekly service rate minus any applicable client fee, and any discount for a second child.

21.6 **Care Type**

The age groups (both full-time and half-time) 0-2 years, 3-5 years, 6-12, and 13-18 years in which the provider has enrolled with ABC Quality. Providers cannot offer services to ABC clients or receive payment for service in a care type in which they have not been enrolled.

21.7 **Child**

The recipient of child care services.

21.8 **Child Name**

The first name of the child.

21.9 **Child Number**

This is the client's Social Security number plus the two-digit code 01, 02, etc. assigned to the child. It identifies the child for the purpose of payment and system activities. **Providers should never change the assigned child number.**

21.10 **Client**

An individual who has met the eligibility criteria and is funded for child care.

21.11 **Client Fee**

That portion of the provider's weekly service rate (cost) which is based on the client's family size and income and paid by the client directly to the provider. The fee amount is established by SCDSS on the basis of family size and gross family income. The client fee portion of the child care cost is paid by the client directly to the provider.

21.12 **Client Number**

The client's Social Security number. This number identifies all client activity in the system.

21.13 **Client Termination of Eligibility**

Action taken when the client is no longer eligible for services. Once notified that the client's eligibility is terminated, the provider is not eligible for payment for services.

21.14 **Connected**

A start and stop date for when a client can receive services (linked to a specific provider) through SC Scholarship.

21.15 **Denial**

When an applicant is denied child care assistance due to inability to meet eligibility criteria or failure to comply with application requirements.

21.16 **Eligibility Criteria**

Criteria all providers must meet in order to enroll and maintain enrollment in ABC Quality. The eligibility criteria are found in the document "*ABC Quality License-Exempt School-Age Manual.*"

21.17 **Eligibility Period**

The amount of time authorized for the individual child to receive child care services.

- 21.18 End Date**
The last date of service authorization.
- 21.19 Facility Cost**
The cost a provider charges all parents for a week of child care. Note: Parents are responsible for the difference between the facility cost and the amount paid by SC Scholarship, plus any applicable client fee.
- 21.20 Family Independence Act of 1995**
An Act passed by the South Carolina General Assembly to require the DSS to emphasize employment and training with only a minor welfare component. The Act specifies action required by DSS to implement “Welfare Reform”. It also specifies requirements for applicants and recipients in order to receive financial assistance.
- 21.21 Family Independence: (FI)**
Child care assistance provided to current FI stipend clients to encourage participation in approved employment, education, or training activities. These requirements are met through the Family Independence Program in South Carolina in an effort to emphasize parental responsibility and self-sufficiency.
- 21.22 Family Independence Stipend**
A monthly payment made to a family who meets the required eligibility standards; previously referred to as Welfare or AFDC.
- 21.23 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.
- 21.24 Foster Care**
Children who are in the custody of DSS and placed out of their home by and/or under the supervision of DSS.
- 21.25 Full-Time Care**
Thirty or more hours of child care service provided during a one week period of time.
- 21.26 Funded**
Any child for whom dollars have been allocated in their name.
- 21.27 Half-Time Care**
Less than thirty (30) hours, but more than fifteen (15) hours of child care service provided during one week.
- 21.28 High School Diploma**
A prescribed secondary course of study that:
- a. Includes subjects such as: Reading Skills, English, and Mathematics, American and World History, Biology, Social Science, and Physical Science; career-oriented electives like Auto Repair Technician, Personal Computer Specialist, etc.; traditional electives like Chemistry, foreign language, and Music;
 - b. Has minimum compulsory attendance requirements;

- c. Is accepted by institutions of higher education (4-year accredited institutions)
- d. May include home school diplomas, as recognized by each individual state;
- e. Is recognized by the SC Department of Education or is accredited by one of the six regional accrediting bodies recognized by the US Department of Education.

21.29 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.

21.30 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).

21.31 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.

21.32 Level B

Programs meeting intermediate elements of quality as defined through Standards and Indicators.

21.33 Level C

Programs meeting basic elements of quality as defined through Standards and Indicators.

21.34 Maximum Rate

Maximum weekly rates established by SCDSS on the basis of a market rate survey of urban and rural counties, type of facility, and care types.

21.35 Payable Adjustment

The process of paying the provider for additional monies due them.

21.36 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.

21.37 Receivable Adjustment

The process of recouping monies that were paid to the provider that were not due them.

21.38 Registration Fee

A fee charged by a provider to clients participating in a child care program. Registration fees are set amounts established by the provider to cover costs not included in the weekly rate. Providers may not charge ABC clients a fee that exceeds the amount charged to private-paying clients in the child care program. A provider is not eligible for a registration fee for clients receiving less than half-time care. SC Scholarship will pay the registration fee to providers up to an established program maximum. **The provider may require the client to pay the fee if the client has used up their ABC allocation for registration fees.**

21.39 Remittance Advice

A document/information provided to the provider that indicates what the payment given to the provider is for. For those using the on-line SVL system, it will be provided electronically. There are three different types:

- a. Paid Remittance Advice: indicates what clients and weeks were paid;

- b. Rejected Remittance Advice: indicates which clients and weeks were not paid and the reason;
- c. Adjusted Remittance Advice: indicates if funds were deducted from the provider's check, the amount, and the reason.

21.40 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.

21.41 SC 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.

21.42 Service Codes

Those codes assigned to identify the type of payment being made to the provider (e.g., CS for client services, GR for grant request, and RF for registration fees).

21.43 Service Cost

The provider rate as reflected in the SC Scholarship.

21.44 Service Unit

One week of child care [Monday - Sunday]. A service unit may be for half-time, full-time, or less than half-time child care.

21.45 Service Voucher Log [SVL]

A pre-printed payment request form used to process payments to providers for eligible clients. Note: SVL's can also be electronic and completed on-line.

21.46 South Carolina Department of Social Services [SCDSS]

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

21.47 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.

21.48 Start Date

The date services are authorized to begin by DSS/SC Scholarship.

21.49 Stop Date

The last date of service authorization.

22.50 Weather Permitting

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

21.51 Week

Monday through Sunday.