

# ABC Quality



**ABC Quality Center-based Manual**

# Table of Contents

- TABLE OF CONTENTS..... 2
- CHAPTER 1 ABOUT ABC QUALITY ..... 3
- CHAPTER 2 DEFINITION OF CENTER-BASED AND BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING IN ABC QUALITY ..... 4
- CHAPTER 3 OVERVIEW OF THE ABC QUALITY ENROLLMENT AND APPLICATION PROCESS ..... 5
- CHAPTER 4 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA TO PARTICIPATE ..... 7
- CHAPTER 5 HISTORY OF COMPLIANCE:..... 16
- CHAPTER 6 PROVIDER AGREEMENT ..... 17
- CHAPTER 7 ABC QUALITY FRAMEWORK..... 19
- CHAPTER 8 PROVIDER BUSINESS PROCEDURES ..... 24
- CHAPTER 9 SC VOUCHER SCHOLARSHIP CLIENTS AND SERVICES ..... 25
- CHAPTER 10 AMENDMENT OF PROVIDER’S ENROLLMENT ..... 28
- CHAPTER 11 RECORDS ..... 31
- CHAPTER 12 COMPLAINTS ..... 32
- CHAPTER 13 VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL FROM ABC QUALITY..... 33
- CHAPTER 14 ADVERSE ACTIONS BY ABC QUALITY ..... 33
- CHAPTER 15 WAITING PERIOD FOR RE-APPLYING ..... 36
- CHAPTER 16 ENROLLMENT/RE-ENROLLMENT EXCEPTIONS..... 37
- CHAPTER 17 APPEALS PROCESS..... 39
- CHAPTER 18 FRAUD ..... 40
- CHAPTER 19 GRANTS..... 41
- CHAPTER 20 GLOSSARY ..... 41

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

### 1.3 ABC Quality Contact information:

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

ABC QUALITY COLUMBIA							
SC Department of Social Services 3150 Harden Street Extension Columbia, SC 29203			Program Manager: Cathy A. Kovacs		Phone: 803-898-2772		Fax: 803-898-4510
Counties Served:							
Aiken	Beaufort	Chesterfield	Dillon	Georgetown	Kershaw	Marlboro	Sumter
Allendale	Berkeley	Clarendon	Dorchester	Hampton	Lee	Newberry	Williamsburg
Bamberg	Calhoun	Colleton	Fairfield	Horry	Lexington	Orangeburg	
Barnwell	Charleston	Darlington	Florence	Jasper	Marion	Richland	

ABC QUALITY GREENVILLE							
Greenville Technical College P. O. Box 5616, Station B MS 6001 Greenville, SC 29606-1947			Program Manager: Beverly B. Hunter		Phone: 864-250-8468		Fax: 864-516-1947
Counties Served:							
Abbeville	Chester	Greenwood	McCormick	Saluda	York		
Anderson	Edgefield	Lancaster	Oconee	Spartanburg			
Cherokee	Greenville	Laurens	Pickens	Union			

## Chapter 2 Definition of Center-based and Benefits of Participating in ABC Quality

### 2.1 Definition of Center-based

A center-based program that is licensed for 13 or more children. It can be commercial, faith-based, or school-based. The program operates more than 4 hours per day and serves children from birth up to school age. Faith-based must be licensed to participate in ABC Quality.

### 2.2 Benefits for Programs

ABC Quality is a tool parents use to identify high quality child care programs. The benefits for child care programs include:

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

### 2.3 Benefits for Families

ABC Quality is a tool to support families as they make important educational and care choices for their children. The benefits for families include:

- Supportive and developmentally appropriate environments for children that support their overall growth and development
- Clear letter ratings to help families find quality child care for their children
- Reliable quality child care that allows parents to work, have fewer absences, and be more productive
- Inclusion of families in discussions about their children’s development and ways to support healthy development
- Assistance for families in advocating for their children, increasing the likelihood of families to stay involved during the primary grades
- A quality education that supports children in their first five years of life for school achievement and high school graduation

### 2.4 Benefits for the Community

- ABC Quality can demonstrate to policymakers that a quality early care and education system can increase children’s readiness for success in kindergarten and school. This will build support at both the policy and appropriations levels

## Chapter 3 Overview of the ABC Quality Enrollment and Application Process

### 3.1 Overview of Enrollment Process

#### a. Learn about ABC Quality

Visit our website at [www.scchildcare.org](http://www.scchildcare.org)

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

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

Take the “ABC Quality April 2018 Webinar” (under General Documents) to get an overview of the review process implemented in 2018

Take the [FREE online orientation](#), “Understanding ABC Quality” and receive training credit from SC Endeavors

#### b. Apply to Participate

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

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

#### c. Receive Professional Development and Technical Assistance

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



- d. Meet Eligibility  
Submit your eligibility documents
- e. Receive your Quality Level  
Receive the Process Quality Review (On-site classroom observations) and Health & Safety Inspection  
Submit your program's Structural Quality Review (portfolio) on-line by uploading documents and policies into your account in SC Endeavors  
Receive Quality Performance Report and Quality Level  
Market your program
- f. Reconnect with your Quality Coach  
Engage in Ongoing Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) which helps your program systematically and intentionally improve services and increase outcomes for the children and families you serve

### 3.2 How to Apply for ABC Quality

**ABC Quality is a voluntary program.** The following outlines the process of what must be done to submit an application for enrollment in ABC Quality. Applications are done on-line through each child care program's Organization Profile account in SC Endeavors. Acceptance of an application does not guarantee enrollment. There will be "How-to-Guides" to help you navigate the application process.

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

- a. Create the Professional Profile: The Owner/Director will create/register an individual Professional Profile account for themselves in SC Endeavors [See 4.2.2].
- b. Create The Organization Profile: The Owner/Director will create/register the program's Organization Profile account in [SC Endeavors](#).
- c. Staff Create Their Professional Profile: Each staff member caring for children will create an individual Professional Profile account in [SC Endeavors](#).
- d. Invite The Staff to Join The Organization Profile: The Owner/Director will Invite each staff member to join the program's Organization Profile account.
- e. Submit Application: Once steps "a through c" above are done, then you may complete and submit the on-line application to the ABC Quality Rating and Improvement System. To access the application in the Organization Profile, look on the left-hand side of the window. There will be a vertical menu bar. Place the cursor on the menu and it should open and you will see "ABC Quality". Click on this and you will be directed to complete the application for enrollment in ABC Quality.
- f. Contact the assigned ABC Quality Assessor if you do not see the link or have any questions.
- g. When you are completing the application, the status will show "in application".
- h. Upon submittal of the application, the status will show "applied".
- i. The application will be accepted or denied. If accepted, the status will change to "application accepted". If the application is not accepted for any reason, the status will change to "denied". You will receive an email with details of the denied application.
- j. Upon acceptance of your application, then the following will occur:
  - ABC Quality Assessor will contact you to discuss financial documents that will be needed to set up your account in SC Voucher, so payments can be made
  - Submit Eligibility documentation (Program and Staff) to the ABC Quality Assessor
  - Sign the Provider Agreement electronically

- Complete the Structural Quality Portfolio by uploading documents and policies (7.3.1)
- k. The Quality Assessor will contact you to schedule a date to conduct the on-site observation assessment.
- Important Note:** New programs who have not completed everything above within six months of submitting the application will have their application cancelled. The program must wait six months to reapply.

## Chapter 4 Eligibility Criteria to Participate

Eligibility criteria for participation in ABC Quality includes meeting all program and staff eligibility criteria.

### 4.1 Program Operations:

- 4.1.1 Has been in operation for at least six months at the time application is made for enrollment. Exceptions: 1) a provider who purchases an existing program enrolled in ABC Quality AND who has ABC Scholarship clients connected. This does not apply to programs who do not have clients connected.
- 4.1.2 Operates during the school year or year-round. Summer-only programs are not eligible to enroll, as they would not be able meet all eligibility criteria and be assigned a Quality Level before the program ended.
- 4.1.3 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 Must have at least one unrelated fee-paying child enrolled.

**See also, “Enrollment/Re-enrollment Exceptions” 16**

### 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. It is also the “gateway” to apply for ABC Quality.

- a. The person responsible for the program (e.g., the Owner or the Director) must:
  - 1) Create/register an Organization Profile account in SC Endeavors for the program. This is done within the Owner’s/Director’s Professional Profile account (See 4.3.1). [Click here](#) to see the How-To-Guide. If the program has not previously created an Organization Profile account, then they may search for their program name by using the License # given to the program from Child Care Licensing. Since the account has already been created, (pulled from the Child Care Licensing system) the program would then select the account and “register” it. SC Endeavors will verify information and you will be notified via email when it is approved. Contact SC Endeavors at 864-250-8581 if you need assistance.
  - 2) The Organization Profile account must be fully completed with all classrooms, ages of children served, and staff assigned to each classroom.
  - 3) The Owner/Director of the program’s Organization Profile account must “invite” employed staff to join the Organization Profile. This is done once the staff have created/registered their Professional 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 License. Exceptions: 1) Providers who purchase an existing program enrolled in ABC Quality AND who have current ABC Scholarship clients connected will be allowed to enroll with a Provisional License. If no ABC Scholarship clients connected, then the program must meet requirements, 2) License Exempt programs who become licensed.
- 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 is not currently on a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) with Child Care Licensing.
- d. The program/owner 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 provides child care services with a variety of activities. If the primary purpose of the program is something other than child care, e.g., gymnastics, karate, tutoring, dance, etc., then ABC Quality reserves the right to deny enrollment because Federal Regulations stipulate our funds are for child care services. An ABC Quality Assessor may make a visit to your program to determine if the services you provide would meet our requirement.
- g. The program has an outside play area on-site that is protected from traffic and other hazards. Existing programs who utilize on-site play areas, particularly those in strip malls, and who do not have barriers or other methods to protect children from traffic or hazards must provide those items to ensure the safety of children.
- h. The program has private restroom facilities inside the program, which are not accessible to outside entities. Programs that share restroom facilities with another business or are open to the public are not permitted. Exception: public schools where the program is housed.

#### 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

1. If the program administers medication, the policy must address:
  - ✓ The administration of any prescriptions or over the counter medication to children
  - ✓ All medicine should be kept in the original container and labeled with the child's name
  - ✓ All medication must be locked and kept out of the reach of children
  - ✓ Medication must only be used for the child in which the medicine is labeled and authorized
  - ✓ Medication should only be given in the dosage specified on the label



- ✓ Written parental consent on file to administer the medication with the name of the medication, dosage, and times to be administered
  - ✓ A medication log which shows the child's name, name of medication, dosage, date, time, and name of person administering the medication
  - ✓ Medication errors should be recorded, and parent/guardian informed immediately
  - ✓ Procedure for emergency medications for allergic reactions
  - ✓ Return any unused/expired medications to the parent/guardian
  - ✓ Staff must wash hands before giving medication and after applying a medical ointment or cream in which a break in the skin (e.g. sores, cuts, or scrapes) may be encountered
2. Note: your policy could be that your program does not administer medication and/or the parent would have to come to the program to administer the medication.
  3. The program must follow the policy as written.
- 4.2.3.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 to the class of any particular foods to be avoided
    - ✓ Steps to be followed in a medical emergency
    - ✓ The hospital or source of health care to be utilized
    - ✓ The method of transportation to be used
    - ✓ An emergency staffing plan
  2. The program must follow the policy as written.
- 4.2.3.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 for infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children with chronic medical conditions
  - ✓ The procedure to contact ABC Quality at 1-800-876-2223 if the facility must evacuate or needs to relocate during an emergency (when safe to do so)
  - ✓ Emergency preparedness training/drills for staff, volunteers, and children  
To include: 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 center or used by the center should conform to the regulations of DHEC for construction, use, and maintenance.

2. The program must follow the policy as written.

4.2.3.f. Transportation Policy (if applicable)

**Note: Personal vehicles are not allowed for transportation as 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. A plan (if applicable) when children are picked up and dropped off from home. The plan should include, but is not limited to:
  - The driver/staff responsible for the child will have access to

- parental consent information with contact numbers
    - The driver/staff will have access to a cell phone
    - A designated place at the home where the parent/adult will meet staff to pick-up/drop-off child
    - The child will not be left at home unless a parent/authorized adult is there to receive the child
    - If the adult at the home is not familiar to the staff, they should request the adult's identification and verify it against the authorized list provided by the parent to receive the child
    - Procedure to follow if no one is at the child's home to receive the child, or the adult is not authorized
  - h. Tracking procedures to ensure that no child is left in the vehicle at the end of the trip or left unsupervised outside or inside the vehicle during loading and unloading.
  - i. Written transportation plans for routine travel must be on file outlining the route to be followed.
- 2. The program must follow the policy as written.

4.2.3.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 Voucher 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.

1. The program must develop a policy/statement which indicates:

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

2. The program must follow the policy as written.

#### 4.2.3.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 after applying medication/ointments where there is a break in the skin; after handling animals; after cleaning or handling the garbage.
  - f. A procedure to notify parents when children have been exposed to an infectious disease.
  - g. The program requires copies of immunization records for 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 center.
  - 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. Special Note: For providers who have multiple sites enrolled and transfer staff within locations: If a staff is hired for location “A”, but prior to their 90-day deadline to complete all eligibility, is transferred to location “B”, the 90-day time frame still applies from the date hired at location A.

	Eligibility Requirements for Staff	Complete prior to working with children	Complete within 90 days of hire
4.3.1	Enrollment in SC Endeavors		<b>X</b>
4.3.2	Pediatric First Aid		<b>X</b>
4.3.3	Infant/Child CPR		<b>X</b>
4.3.4	Maltreatment Statement	<b>X</b>	
4.3.5	SC Health & Safety Pre-Service Certificate		<b>X</b>
4.3.6	ABC Quality Code of Ethics	<b>X</b>	

#### 4.3.1 Staff Enrollment in SC Endeavors

- a. Professional Profile Account: Each staff must create/register an individual 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. It is important that each staff person's employment is verified by the program's Organization Profile account.

- b. Career Ladder Placement: Each staff must apply for a Career Ladder Placement within their Professional Profile account in the [SC Endeavors Registry \(www.scendeavors.org\)](http://www.scendeavors.org), which includes verification of their education, e.g. high school diploma/GED (See Glossary 19.28), by SC Endeavors staff. Review the [How To Guide](#) to apply for a Professional Profile and earn Career Ladder Placement. The Career Ladder Placement will allow the program to earn points on the Structural Review for staff education.

#### 4.3.2 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).

#### 4.3.3 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).

#### 4.3.4 Maltreatment Policy Statement

All staff 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

#### 4.3.5 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, Bloodborne Pathogens and Bio-Contaminants: Kick Those Germs to the Curb! (1 Hour)
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) (1 Hour)
- Prevention of Shaken Baby Syndrome, Abusive Head Trauma and Child Maltreatment (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/>



#### 4.3.6 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 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, 4<sup>th</sup> 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.

### 5.1 Definition:

- a. No violations for the six months prior to submitting an application for enrollment.
- 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)

## 5.2 Group Size

Programs must comply with the following group sizes.

### a. **Group Size**

This means that according to the age of the children, the group size cannot exceed this number of children, either in a classroom or in a “grouping” of children. If the room capacity as determined by Child Care Licensing, is less than the group size, then the program must go by the room capacity. Group size is determined by doubling the licensing ratio.

<i>Child's Age</i>	<i>Group Size</i>
0 - 12 months	10
12 – 24 months	12
2 – 3 years	16
3 – 4 years	24
4 – 5 years	34
5 to 6 years	40
6 to 12 years	46

## Chapter 6 **Provider Agreement**

### 6.1 **Issuance of Provider Agreement**

- Provider Agreements are signed Agreements between the provider and SCDSS.
- Provider Agreements are electronic and made available to the provider to sign once ABC Quality has accepted the provider’s application and the application status has changed to “application accepted”.
- The Provider Agreement must be signed before the program will be assigned their Quality Level.
- The Provider Agreement is effective for a period of one year from the date the Quality Level is assigned by ABC Quality, regardless of when it is signed by the provider. The Quality Level assignment date is considered the end date of the Provider Agreement.
- 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 Voucher and they must be served where they are

connected. Serving children at an unapproved location potentially places children in harm and is grounds for termination

- If the provider has two or more locations enrolled, they may not switch or transport children between locations without notifying SC Voucher for authorization. Children will appear on the SVL for the location in which they have been connected

## 6.2 Expiration of the Provider Agreement

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

## 6.3 When an Agreement Becomes Null and Avoid

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

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

## 6.4 Non-Renewal of The Provider Agreement

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

- The program does not reapply for enrollment prior to the expiration of the Provider Agreement (this date coincides with the Quality Level expiration date). **Important Note:** Non-application indicates consent that the provider no longer wishes to participate in ABC Quality
- The program does not reapply and submit all eligibility documentation and the Structural Quality Portfolio (if it is the 3<sup>rd</sup> year) at least 30 days prior to the expiration of the Provider Agreement. When this occurs, ABC Quality cannot guarantee that the on-site assessment can be completed timely to ensure the program receives a Quality Level before the Provider Agreement expires
- The program does not meet History of Compliance at the time of the application for enrollment
- The program is on a Corrective Action Plan with Child Care Licensing
- The program has an open Out of Home Abuse and Neglect (OHAN) investigation
- The program received two consecutive on-site assessments with a score of less than 50 points
- 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 Voucher
- ***Non-Renewal of the Provider Agreement is not appealable***

## 6.5 Criteria for Renewal of Provider Agreement and Quality Level

All programs must:

- a. Have a clear History of Compliance to include:
  - A current regular License
  - No open investigation with the Office of Out of Home Abuse and Neglect (OHAN). See **Glossary** for definition
  - Not on a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) with ABC Quality
- b. Renewal of the Provider Agreement and Quality Level by logging into the SC Endeavors organization profile and submitting a new application every year.

- c. Submit and meet all eligibility criteria (Program and Staff) every year.
- d. Submit the Structural Portfolio as required every third year.
- e. Receive a score of at least 50 points total on the comprehensive review.
  - Programs that score below 50 points total on their comprehensive review will be allowed to reapply and sign another Provider Agreement; however, will be required to participate in a Quality Improvement Plan and receive technical assistance from the SC Child Care Resource & Referral Network

## Chapter 7 ABC Quality Framework

### 7.1 Enrollment and Renewal

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

- For existing providers, reminder notices will be sent via the email address on file at various intervals prior to the expiration of the Provider Agreement/Quality Level
- The program will log-in to their Organization Profile in SC Endeavors and re-apply for renewal in ABC Quality

### 7.2 Standards and Indicators:

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

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

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

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

Structural Elements		Process Element	
I.	Program Administration and Structure	V.	Intentional Teaching Practices
II.	Staff Education and Professional Development	VI.	Ratios and Group Size
III.	Child Well-being		
IV.	Family Communication, Engagement and Cultural Competency		

Documented via submission on-line	Documented via observed criteria defined by the Process Quality Guide -Infant Toddler, Process Quality Guide – Preschool, and Process Quality Guide – School-Age
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**7.3 Quality Assessment Review and Scores**

**7.3.1 Structural Quality Portfolio Online Assessment**

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

- a. Every three years beginning from the date of enrollment, the program is required to resubmit their Structural Quality Portfolio online assessment. If programs would like to attempt to improve their Structural Quality Score, they may choose to resubmit their Structural Quality Portfolio every year upon the annual review and do not have to wait until the third year.
- b. Each staff member employed (including leadership) since the last review is required to register with SC Endeavors and establish a professional profile. If staff choose not to apply for a Career Ladder Placement, then ABC Quality will not be able to score *Element II Staff Education and Professional Development* in its entirety, and thus the program may not receive all points for this section of the Structural Quality Assessment.
- c. Head Start programs and programs who have current accreditation from NAEYC (National Association For The Education of Young Children) do not have to submit a structural portfolio. Programs would choose the Accelerated Pathway when completing their application. See How-To-Guide on this.

**7.3.2 On-Site Assessment**

- a. A minimum of one unannounced visit per year will be conducted.
- b. During the visit, a Quality Assessor will complete an on-site evaluation using the *Process Quality Guides*. Additionally, each classroom will be assessed for ratios and group size. These are considered the “Process Elements of Quality”, which are the observable experiences children have in child care and includes the social, emotional, physical and instructional aspects of early care and education.
- c. Eligibility criteria will be reviewed for any new staff hired since the last visit and updated for all other staff.

**7.3.3 Scores**

**Where do the points come from?**

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

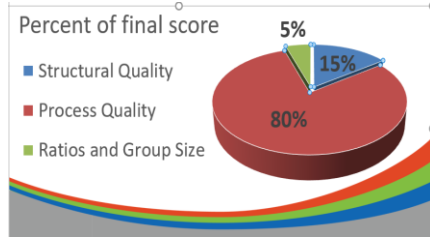
- a. Structural Quality Scoring – 100 points possible for each program
- b. Process Quality Scoring – 100 points possible per classroom observed



- c. Ratios and Group Size – 10 points possible per classroom (5 points earned for meeting ratios and 5 points earned for meeting group size).
- d. Bonus points- 3 points added to the final score

7.3.4 Percent of Final Score:

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



7.3.5 Threshold Scores:

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

7.3.6 How the final score is calculated

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

Happy Days Child Development

Type of Assessment	# of Classrooms	Possible Points (that could have been earned)	Actual Points Earned	Take the points earned and divide by the possible points	Then multiply this number received by the percentage from the pie chart in 9.3.2(Percent of Final Score) that corresponds to the type of Assessment (e.g. Structural, Process, etc.)
Structural	-----	100 per program = <b>100</b>	<b>85</b> out of 100	$85 \div 100 = 85$	$85 \times .15 = 12.97$
Process	5 observed	100 per class (5 x 100 = <b>500</b> )	<b>467</b> out of 500	$467 \div 500 = 93$	$93 \times .80 = 74.4$
Ratio/Group	5	10 per class (10 x 5 = <b>50</b> )	<b>35</b> out of 50	$35 \div 50 = 70$	$70 \times .05 = 3.5$
Bonus Points		<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>		$90.68 + 3 = 93.68$
					<b>Total 93.68 Level A</b>

7.3.7 Determining the Quality Level

Based upon the “Total” score received, look at the Threshold Chart above in 7.3.5, to determine the Level. The final score for the example Happy Days Child Development falls within the Level A threshold and thus the program earned a Level A Rating.

## 7.4 Corrective Action Process

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

### **Structural and Process Quality Review:**

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

- Programs that score below 50 points total on their comprehensive review will be allowed to reapply and sign one more Provider Agreement; however, will be required to participate in a Quality Improvement Plan and receive technical assistance from the SC Child Care Resource & Referral Network
- Programs must score at least a total of 50 points on their next review to continue to participate in ABC Quality
- A total score below 50 points for two consecutive reviews will be staffed for termination or non-renewal of the Provider Agreement

### **Eligibility Criteria:**

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

- 1<sup>st</sup> Notice of Corrective Action Needed:** The provider will be provided with a Site Report outlining deficiencies found. The provider will sign the Site Report acknowledging receipt of items requiring correction. If the provider refuses to sign, the Site Report is still valid. 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
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Notice of Corrective Action Needed:** If the provider does not submit any corrective action from the 1<sup>st</sup> 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
- 3<sup>rd</sup> 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

## 7.5 Assessor Reliability

ABC Quality is committed to scoring each observed classroom using the *Process Quality Guides* accurately and reliably, as well as the ABC Quality Structural Portfolio. All ABC Quality Assessors have extensive education, training, and experience with classroom practice, observation, and assessment. They have been trained to remain objective and unbiased when observing a program. There are 4 State Quality Anchors reliable to each other who then provide a rigorous orientation process for the state team of Quality Assessors. Testing for reliability requires a minimum of three assessments conducted jointly by the Assessor and Anchor. Reliability is measured by reaching consensus on 85% of the tool's indicators. Once the Assessor is determined reliable, she/he will conduct observations independently. Each Assessor and Anchor undergo periodic rechecks to assure objectivity and reliability in scoring.

## 7.6 Reclassification

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

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

## 7.7 ABC Quality Partner Agencies

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



### **SC Child Care Resource & Referral Network**

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

[www.sc-ccrr.org](http://www.sc-ccrr.org)

[sccrr@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto: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](http://www.scpitc.org)

[info@scpitc.org](mailto: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](http://www.scinclusion.org)

803-777-8483

[scic@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:scic@mailbox.sc.edu)

## 7.8 Other Resources

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

# Chapter 8 Provider Business Procedures

## 8.1 Introduction

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

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

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

## 8.2 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 scholarships 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 Voucher Payment. Provider payment rates in SC Voucher 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 Voucher maximum 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 Voucher 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 Voucher 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](http://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.

### 8.3 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 VOUCHER:**

**CONTACT US AT:**

SC Voucher	Phone: (800) 262-4416
ATTN: Provider Team	Fax: (800) 310-5417
S. C. Department of Social Services	
P. O. Box 100160	
Columbia, South Carolina 29202-3160	

**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 Voucher
- 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 9 SC Voucher Scholarship Clients and Services**

ABC Quality and SC Voucher are advocates for parental choice and clients are responsible for selecting the provider of their choice.

## 9.1 When a client authorized for services through SC Voucher 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 Voucher at 1 (800) 310-5417 or email it to [connectionforms@dss.sc.gov](mailto: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 Voucher.

### **IMPORTANT NOTES:**

- **DO NOT SERVE THE CLIENT BEFORE YOU ARE ENROLLED AND RECEIVE WRITTEN APPROVAL FROM SC VOUCHER! IF YOU DO, SC VOUCHER 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 Voucher will verify that the client is eligible to receive services, and that the provider is enrolled to serve the care type requested. SC Voucher 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 Voucher 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 Voucher if child does not return to the program in the third week.
  - g. If the provider's rates are higher than what SC Voucher 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 Voucher and you should refer them to the handbook.
  - h. Service Voucher Logs (SVL) are the documents used by SC Voucher 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 Voucher. Providers have the option to complete a paper version of the SVL or access the online SVL payment system. SC Voucher provides support in setting up the on-line SVL.

## 9.2 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.

### 9.3 Client Fee

SC Voucher 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 Voucher 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 Voucher, 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 Voucher before doing so.
- c. The amount of the client fee and any second child discount are deducted from the SC Voucher payment to the provider.

### 9.4 Client Transfer

Clients may transfer from one provider to another.

- a. Clients must notify SC Voucher 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 Voucher receives the phone call or written notice from the client requesting the transfer.
  - To determine the effective date of transfer:  
The date SC Voucher 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 7<sup>th</sup> 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 7<sup>th</sup> 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 Voucher 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 VOUCHER 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.**

## 9.5 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 Voucher 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 Voucher 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 Voucher Terminates Client’s Eligibility

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

- a. If termination is initiated by SC Voucher, 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 10 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:

### 10.1 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.

#### 10.1.1 Rate Increases

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

- a. The provider may call ABC Quality or SC Voucher 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 Voucher at [ProviderRateForms@dss.sc.gov](mailto: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 Voucher clients.
- e. Providers will receive written confirmation that the rate increase has been approved and processed; however, at times SC Voucher may contact the provider and give verbal confirmation first. Providers should contact SC Voucher 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 Voucher. 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 Voucher, 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 Voucher. 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.

#### 10.1.2 Rate Decreases

Providers who decrease their rates **must** notify SC Voucher 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 Voucher 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 Voucher.

### **10.2 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
- An on-site visit is required for child care centers to add age groups
- Providers can request to add half-time or full-time for an age group already enrolled
- Providers should request to delete an age group if they are no longer serving an age group or do not want to be enrolled for that age group

### **10.3 Change in Name of Child Care Facility**

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

### **10.4 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, 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:
  - Program demonstrates a history of compliance
  - Director remains the same
  - Eligibility requirements are met
  - At least 75% of the caregiver staff remains with the program

### **10.5 Change in the Director of Child Care Facility**

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

### **10.6 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

### **10.7 Change in Telephone Number**

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

## Chapter 11 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.

### 11.1 Attendance

Daily attendance records must be maintained for each child served through SC Voucher. 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](#)".**

### 11.2 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.

### 11.3 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.

#### **11.4 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.

#### **11.5 Client Records**

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

- a. 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.
- b. Any correspondence from SC Voucher related to the client.

#### **11.6 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 field trips. 4(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 12 Complaints**

### **12.1 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 Licensed Center 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 conducted 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 13 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 Voucher clients are connected, we request at least a two-week notice so clients may find another provider. Providers who have received a grant must stay in the program for the period required by the grant, or the grant funds will be recouped.

If the provider requests to voluntarily end 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 Voucher.

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

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

## Chapter 14 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.

### 14.1 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).

#### 14.1.1 Failure to Maintain History of Compliance to Regulations

The program is not in compliance with History of Compliance.

- 14.1.2 Failure to Meet the Program and Staff Eligibility Criteria: The program is not in compliance with meeting Program and Staff Eligibility Criteria.
- 14.1.3 Failure to Maintain Required Program Assessment Scores: The program does not meet the minimum total score required to maintain enrollment.
- 14.1.4 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.
- 14.1.5 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.
- 14.1.6 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.**
- 14.1.7 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.
- 14.1.8 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.
- 14.1.9 Failure to Maintain Phone Service: The program does not 1) have phone service (after 30 days to obtain), 2) has a non-published number, or 3) did not have phone service 2 times within any 12- month period of time, as verified by ABC Quality, or SC Voucher.
- 14.1.10 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.
- 14.1.11 Fraud: The provider has committed fraud. Funds may be recouped for the period of time the provider did not qualify for the funds.
- 14.1.12 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.
- 14.1.13 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.
- 14.1.14 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.



- 14.1.15 Refusal to Cooperate With Any Investigation by ABC Quality/OHAN: The provider refused to cooperate with an investigation to include allowing access to video footage or refusal to allow the interview of employees/parents
- 14.1.16 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.
- 14.1.17 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.
- 14.1.18 Failure to comply with the Provider Business Procedures: The program has failed to comply with the requirements in the Provider Business Procedures.

## 14.2 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 Voucher terminates the provider’s enrollment in the SC Voucher System and sends the provider a termination letter. The following are reasons a provider would be terminated:

- 14.2.1 Program has closed:  
If the provider notifies ABC Quality they are no longer operating, then ABC Quality will close the provider’s file. If ABC Quality is notified by parents that the program is/has closed, then ABC Quality will attempt to contact the provider to verify and the file will be closed.
- 14.2.2 Child Care Licensing has closed the program’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 Voucher.
- 14.2.3 Facility is vacant:  
The facility where the enrolled program is housed is vacant and no one is there. This can be verified either by an on-site visit or by another method. The ABC Quality Assessor will attempt to contact the provider to determine the status of the program. This renders the Provider Agreement for this location null and void and the file will be closed. If SC Voucher clients are connected, SC Voucher 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.
- 14.2.4 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 Voucher clients are connected, SC Voucher will contact the parents immediately.
- 14.2.5 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 Voucher clients are connected, SC Voucher will contact the parents immediately.

14.2.6 Facility Changes Ownership:

A change in ownership renders the Provider Enrollment Agreement null and void, as it is not transferrable. It also invalidates the exemption verification. The provider's file will be closed. The new owner may apply for enrollment by completing the application process and meeting the enrollment requirements. There is no wait period for the new owner. If SC Voucher clients are connected, ABC Quality will try to ensure a smooth transition; however, this is dependent upon notification prior to the sale.

14.2.7 Facility Moves:

When the program moves to another location, this renders the Provider Agreement null and void as it is address specific. The provider's file will be closed. The provider may request to enroll the new location as long as all eligibility requirements are met; however, ABC Quality is under no obligation to enroll the new location.

14.2.8 Provider Has No Children Enrolled (private-pay or SC Voucher):

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 Voucher) for at least one year will be closed.

14.2.9 Provider does not offer consistent hours or days of operation:

SC Voucher 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 Voucher does not pay for drop-in care or weekend care. The provider's file will be closed.

## Chapter 15      **Waiting Period for Re-Applying**

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

### 15.1 **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. Re-applying is not a guarantee of enrollment. This applies to the following:

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

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

### 15.2 **Exemption of Waiting Period**

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

## Chapter 16 Enrollment/Re-Enrollment Exceptions

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

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

### 16.1 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 Voucher.
- 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. Two Programs Within The Same Physical Structure Or Address: When an existing provider wants to enroll a second program, and the program is housed either within the same structure or property then the second program cannot be enrolled. For example, if two programs are operated within a community center or a church.

- i. 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.
- j. Programs who do not have bathrooms located inside the facility and share the bathroom with other entities.
- k. Programs who do not have a Designated Safe On-Site Play Area Outside for children: To enroll, the program must provide a designated safe play area away from vehicular traffic or other possible hazards. If cars are present, the program must provide secure barriers for protection against bodily injury.
- l. Summer Only Programs: Programs who are only in operation 2-3 months are not able to complete the Enrollment Process and receive a Level before they close for the Summer.

## 16.2 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 Who Change Ownership when negative actions have been taken by DSS: Providers who want to change ownership (usually to a family member) in order to keep the program enrolled.
- e. Programs Terminated for the use of Corporal Punishment or Maltreatment of 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.
- f. Programs not meeting History of Compliance or found to have a violation during on-site enrollment visit: If the program is found to not meet History of Compliance they are not eligible to enroll. If during the on-site enrollment visit a violation is found (e.g., is out of ratio, unqualified staff, etc.), then the enrollment cannot continue. The program must wait six months to reapply in both cases and cannot have any more violations.
- g. Programs with extremely small playgrounds: If the playground can only accommodate 3 – 4 children comfortably, but the program serves a large number of children, the program may not be able to provide outdoor play for all children twice daily.
- h. Multi-site providers with many programs enrolled who continuously does not meet eligibility or history of compliance and wants to enroll a new location: The new location will not be enrolled until the programs demonstrate compliance.

## Chapter 17 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 notifying the provider of the negative action. 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.

The request for appeal must be directed to:

Director, Division of Appeals and Hearings  
South Carolina Department of Social Services  
Post Office Box 1520  
Columbia, South Carolina 29202-1520  
1-803-898-8080

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 VOUCHER CLIENTS DURING AN APPEAL:**

Once a provider has requested an appeal, they enter the "appeals status" and no new connections for SC Voucher 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.

**NOTE:** In the event ABC Quality terminates a provider’s enrollment during the enrollment period, and the Office of Appeals upholds the provider, any outstanding corrective action not affected by the appeal must be submitted before the program is allowed to resume client connections.

## Chapter 18      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.

### 18.1 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 Voucher, 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 Voucher for the service (other than the client co-pay or difference between what SC Voucher pays and the provider rate), serving SC Voucher 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 19 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 Voucher 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 20 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.

- 20.1 **ABC Quality Rating & Improvement System (ABC Quality)**  
A Quality Rating & Improvement System, the South Carolina statewide child care assistance program along with SC Voucher 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 Voucher. There are two offices of ABC Quality geographically.
- 20.2 **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.
- 20.3 **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.
- 20.4 **Authorized Service Period**  
The specific time frame that child care services are authorized for a client and a specific provider.
- 20.5 **Billing Rate**  
The provider's weekly service rate minus any applicable client fee, and any discount for a second child.
- 20.6 **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.

- 20.7 **Child**  
The recipient of child care services.
- 20.8 **Child Name**  
The first name of the child.
- 20.9 **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.**
- 20.10 **Client**  
An individual who has met the eligibility criteria and is funded for child care.
- 20.11 **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.
- 20.12 **Client Number**  
The client's Social Security number. This number identifies all client activity in the system.
- 20.13 **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.
- 20.14 **Connected**  
A start and stop date for when a client can receive services (linked to a specific provider) through SC Voucher.
- 20.15 **Denial**  
When an applicant is denied child care assistance due to inability to meet eligibility criteria or failure to comply with application requirements.
- 20.16 **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.*"
- 20.17 **Eligibility Period**  
The amount of time authorized for the individual child to receive child care services.
- 20.18 **End Date**  
The last date of service authorization.
- 20.19 **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 Voucher, plus any applicable client fee.
- 20.20 **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.
- 20.21 **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.

**20.22 Family Independence Stipend**

A monthly payment made to a family who meets the required eligibility standards; previously referred to as Welfare or AFDC.

**20.23 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.

**20.24 Foster Care**

Children who are in the custody of DSS and placed out of their home by and/or under the supervision of DSS.

**20.25 Full-Time Care**

Thirty or more hours of child care service provided during a one week period of time.

**20.26 Funded**

Any child for whom dollars have been allocated in their name.

**20.27 Half-Time Care**

Less than thirty (30) hours, but more than fifteen (15) hours of child care service provided during one week.

**20.28 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.

**20.29 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.

**20.30 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)

**20.31 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.

**20.32 Level A**

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

**20.33 Level B**

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

**20.34 Level C**

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

**20.35 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.

**20.36 Payable Adjustment**

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

**20.37 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.

**20.38 Receivable Adjustment**

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

**20.39 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 Voucher 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.**

**20.40 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.

**20.41 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.

**20.42 SC Voucher (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.

**20.43 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).

**20.44 Service Cost**

The provider rate as reflected in the SC Voucher.

**20.45 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.

**20.46 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.

**20.47 South Carolina Department of Social Services [SCDSS]**

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

**20.48 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.

**20.49 Start Date**

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

**20.50 Stop Date**

The last date of service authorization.

**20.51 Weather Permitting**

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

**20.52 Week**

Monday through Sunday.