

Overview

The ABC Child Care Program provides child care subsidies for eligible low-income children so their parent(s) can attend work or training. ABC subsidies support their choice of care in child care centers and homes that meet the requirements of the child care regulations of the SC Department of Social Services.

Child care centers may apply to the ABC Child Care Program for enrollment at one of three levels of performance, described below. This summary of the ABC Child Care Program outlines the standards at each of the three levels. Level A Standards were effective January 2007. ABC Level A, B and C Standards provide a guide for measuring the performance of centers in the three-tier ABC system.

Level C – Programs must meet the SC Department of Social Services (DSS) regulatory requirements for child care centers.

Level B – (Enhanced) Standards represent a step higher than South Carolina regulatory requirements. Programs seeking recognition at this level agree to regular unannounced reviews by ABC staff to determine if the program is meeting the ABC Level B Standards in Part I and the ABC Environment Assessment in Part II, below.

Level A - Standards represent the highest ABC level. Programs seeking recognition at this level agree to: in-depth unannounced reviews by ABC staff; smaller child-staff ratios and group size; parent orientation and annual parent-teacher conferences; higher educational requirements for director and caregivers; and high classroom standards.

On the next pages, the ABC levels are compared by summarizing Part I standards they must meet, and by identifying the environment assessment used for each level in Part II.

Part I: Standard I: Regulatory Requirements
Standard II: Supervision of Children
Standard III: Staff Qualifications and Development
Standard IV: Health and Safety
Standard V Nutrition and Food Service
Standard VI: Parent/Guardian Involvement
Standard VII: Administration

Part II: Program Environment Assessment

NOTES: This summary does not include all ABC requirements. These are the minimum requirements. Centers must meet all standards for each ABC level. For definitions of abbreviated words, see 'Definitions' page at the end. For more complete information, contact the ABC Program at 1-800-763-ABCD.

ABC Child Care Program Standards
Summary of Standards at ABC Levels

All standards are required as outlined for each ABC level.

PART I

I. REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS			
	ABC Level C (Participating)	ABC Level B (Enhanced)	ABC Level A
	State licensed/federally regulated and in good standing with regulatory agency	State licensed/federally regulated and in good standing with regulatory agency	DSS licensed/approved or Department of Defense certificate and in good standing with regulatory agency

II. SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN – Children must be directly supervised (See Attachment A for definition of supervision). Ratios in Levels B and C are in accordance with SC Child Care Licensing regulations. Level B programs earn additional points by classroom if their child: staff ratios meet Level A. *Ratios reflect child care licensing ratios effective 6/24/07. Ratios will change further in June 2008 and June 2009 based on 2005 legislation.

	Age	Ratio*	Group Size	Age	Ratio*	Group Size	Age	Ratio	Group Size
	0-1	5:1	Not required	0-1	5:1	Not required, but receive extra points if meet.	0-1	5:1	10
	1-2	6:1		1-2	6:1		1-2	5:1	10
	2-3	9:1		2-3	9:1		2-3	7:1	14
	3-4	13:1	3-4	13:1	3-4		11:1	22	
	4-5	18:1	4-5	18:1	4-5		13:1	26	
	5-6	21:1	5-6	21:1	5-6		15:1	30	
	6-12	23:1	6-12	23:1	6-9		18:1	36	
					9-12	20:1	40		

III. STAFF QUALIFICATIONS & DEVELOPMENT – All formal education credentials must be relevant to early childhood education/child development (ECE/CD) and from a regionally accredited college or institution. However, requirements for years of experience may vary depending on educational level. All training must be registered or certified by the SC CCCCD Registry. Certified training is recommended at all levels.

Director – Minimum age at all levels is 21.

Formal Education	Meet regulatory requirements.	Meet regulatory requirements plus: High school diploma/GED with signed plan to complete ECD Certificate or a DSS-approved credential/certificate/diploma/degree within 3 years.	ECD Certificate, ECD Management Certificate, or 27 credit hours in ECE or Center Management with signed plan to complete associate's degree in ECE within 3 years of ABC enrollment date or date of hire, whichever is later. Phase in: --By 1/2013, must have an associate's degree in ECE or higher.
Experience Requirements	Meet regulatory requirements.	Meet regulatory requirements plus: 3 years as caregiver in licensed/approved child care facility with 1 year supervising other child care staff.	2 years in regulated facility including: --1 year of center management or administration --1 year as caregiver
Other Requirements	Medical statements, child abuse and criminal history checks	Medical statements, child abuse and criminal history checks	Same as Level B
Continuing Education and Training	20 clock hrs per calendar year	20 clock hrs per calendar year Annual training includes 5 hours related to program administration; at least 5 hours ECD, ECE and/or health and safety; and training related to children with different abilities and needs	20 clock hours per calendar year Annual training includes 10 hours related to program administration; 5 hours in ECD, ECE and/or health and safety; and training related to children with different abilities and needs. *One 3 credit hour course every 6 years in management/administration or ECE. *Complete training on SC Early Learning Standards by 1/1/10. New hires after 1/1/10 must complete within 2 years of ABC enrollment date or date of hire.

School-Age Person in charge of program (If dual role, also Center Director – See Director Requirements) - Age Requirement is 21.

Formal Education	Meet regulatory requirements.	Meet regulatory requirements plus: High school diploma or GED with signed plan to complete 45 clock hours in school age care/related area or School-age Credential or ECD Credential in 3 years.	High school diploma or GED & SC School-age Credential (SAC 101) and plan to complete School-age Certificate within 3 years of enrollment date or date of hire, whichever is later.
Experience Requirements	6 months in regulated facility	6 months in regulated facility plus 3 years work experience related to care and development of children.	3 years in regulated facility including: --1 year supervising staff

Other Requirements	Medical statements, child abuse and criminal checks	Medical statements, child abuse and criminal checks	Same as Level B
Continuing Education and Training	15 clock hours per calendar year	15 clock hours per calendar year Annual training includes 5 hours in child development and 5 hours in curriculum activities for children.	20 clock hours per calendar year. Annual training must comply with regulatory topics and include training related to children with different abilities and needs.
Teachers – (birth-5) – Minimum age is 18.			
Formal Education	Meet regulatory requirements.	High school diploma/GED with a plan to complete SC Early Childhood Credential (ECD Credential) in 3 years.	High school diploma/GED plus: To enroll, 25% of teachers employed 1 year must have ECD Credential and 25% of teachers must have ECD Certificate or current CDA. Phase in: -- By 1/2010, 100% of teachers employed 1 year must have ECD Credential. --By 1/2012, 50% of teachers must have ECD Certificate or current CDA.
Experience Requirements	6 months in regulated facility or must be supervised for 6 months	6 months in licensed/approved facility	Same as Level B
Other Requirements	Medical statements, child abuse and criminal checks	Medical statements, child abuse and criminal checks	Same as Level B
Continuing Education and Training	15 clock hours per calendar year	15 clock hours per calendar year Annual training includes 5 hours in ECD and 5 hours in curriculum activities for children.	20 clock hours per calendar year Annual training includes 5 hours in ECD, 5 hours in curriculum activities, 2 hours on SC Early Learning Standards, and training related to children with different abilities and needs. At least 10 clock hours of total 20 clock hours provided by certified trainer.
Teachers (6-12) – Minimum age requirement at Levels A-B is 18. If supervising other staff, must be 21.			
Formal Education	Meet regulatory requirements.	Meet regulatory requirements.	Meet Level B plus: --100% have high school diploma/GED. Phase in: -- By 1/2010, 1 teacher has SC School-age Credential.
Experience Requirements	6 months in regulated facility or must be supervised for 6 months	6 months in regulated facility	Same as Level B
Other Requirements	Medical statements, child abuse and criminal checks	Medical statements, child abuse and criminal checks	Same as Level B

Continuing Education and Training	15 clock hours per calendar year	15 clock hours per calendar year Annual training includes 5 hours in child development and 5 hours in curriculum activities for children.	20 clock hours per calendar year. Annual training must comply with regulatory topics and include training related to children with different abilities and needs.
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Teaching Assistants (all age groups) – Minimum age requirement at Levels A-B is 18 for 0-5 age group.			
Formal Education	Meet regulatory requirements.	Meet regulatory requirements plus: Displays positive interactions with children by engaging them in age-appropriate communications and activities	<u>For 0-5 years: Meet Level B plus:</u> --High school diploma/GED Phase in: -- By 1/2010, 25% must have ECD Credential. <u>For 6-12 years: Meet Level B plus:</u> --High school diploma/GED
Experience Requirements	Meet regulatory requirements.	Meet regulatory requirements.	Same as Level B
Other Requirements	Medical statements, child abuse and criminal checks	Medical statements, child abuse and criminal checks	Same as Level B
Continuing Education and Training	15 clock hours per calendar year	15 clock hours per calendar year Annual training includes 5 hours in ECD and 5 hours in curriculum activities for children.	Meet Level B plus: Annual training regarding children with different abilities and needs
IV. HEALTH AND SAFETY			
	Meet regulatory requirements.	Meet regulatory requirements plus: --Discipline statement on file stating corporal punishment is not allowed. It is signed annually by staff and parents. --Staff and children wash hands before preparing and eating meal, and after toileting, assisting with toileting and changing diapers. -- Exempt programs meet physician statement and TB test; CPR/first aid/ blood borne pathogens training; immunization; environmental standards	Same as Level B
V. NUTRITION AND FOOD SAFETY			
	Meet regulatory requirements.	Meet regulatory requirements.	Meet regulatory requirements plus caregivers are present with children at meals encouraging table manners, talking about their food and activities, and modeling social conversations.

VI. PARENT/GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT –Parents/guardians are provided free/full access to their child at all levels. All policies and plans must be in writing.

	Meet regulatory requirements.	Meet regulatory requirements plus: -- Corporal punishment: Parents/guardians annually sign statement center does not use corporal punishment. -- Communication: Parents/guardians informed regularly about program and, for infants and toddlers, given daily information about feeding times, food eaten, bowel movements, and sleeping patterns.	Meet Level B plus: --Center policies: Parents/guardians given copy of center policies and information about resources for children with different abilities and needs. -- Parent-teacher conference: Held once annually. -- Parent/guardian orientation plan: Orientation plan for new parents/guardians with documentation that parents/guardians oriented.
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VII. ADMINISTRATION – All policies and plans must be in writing.

Policies	Meet regulatory requirements which include staff oriented to: 1) specific job duties and responsibilities, 2) center regulations as they relate to job, and 3) policies and procedures of the center that affect health and safety of children.	Meet regulatory requirements.	Meet Level B plus: -- Staff orientation plan: Written plan includes information regarding agencies/referral procedures for children with different abilities/needs. -- Center policies: Staff sign annual statement they understand center policies. -- Personnel policies: Policies include statement about non-discriminatory hiring practices and grievance procedures. --Staff professional development plan: Developed and implemented annually. --Staff evaluation plan: Evaluation carried out annually.
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PART II

I. PROGRAM OBSERVATION SCORE - State assessors will maintain inter-rater reliability on assessment tools for Levels A & B.

	Meet regulatory requirements.	Meet regulatory requirements plus: Comply with Part I of the ABC Level B Standards. Score 80% or higher on Part II of ABC Level B Standards.	Meet regulatory requirements plus: Comply with Part I of ABC Level A Standards. Score 4.5 (of 7.0) or higher on ECERS, ITERS, SACERS with minimum score of 4.0 on Interaction Subscale.
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DEFINITIONS

1. **Associate's degree** – Degree awarded by SC Technical Colleges or other regionally-accredited colleges for completion of approximately 63 academic credit hours.
2. **Associate's degree in Early Care and Education (ECE)** –Degree awarded by SC Technical Colleges or other regionally-accredited colleges for completion of approximately 63 academic credit hours with a major in ECE. The name of the degree may vary by college.
3. **Certified Training** – Training offered by a person who meets the criteria of the Center for Child Care Career Development (CCCCD) recognizing the trainer has the education and background to offer high quality training. Additionally, CCCCCD staff carefully review the training to ensure quality content, prior to it being offered.
4. **Child Development Associate National Credential (CDA)** – Awarded by the Council for Professional Recognition for completion of 120 clock hours of training in child care/child development.
5. **DSS regulatory requirements** – The SC Legislature passes laws governing child care services. These laws are translated into regulations which all child care programs must follow unless they are exempt.
6. **ECD** – early childhood development
7. **Early Childhood Development Certificate (ECD Certificate)** – Awarded by SC Technical Colleges for completion of 27 – 35 academic credit hours in early childhood courses. Number of academic credit hours determined by college.
8. **Early Childhood Development Diploma** - Awarded by SC Technical Colleges for completion of 42 - 52 academic credit hours in early childhood courses. Number of academic credit hours determined by college.
9. **Early Childhood Development Management Certificate** – Awarded by some SC Technical Colleges for completion of approximately 27 academic credit hours.
10. **ECE** – early childhood education
11. **Formal parent conference** – Planned, scheduled parent/teacher conference held for the specific purpose of discussing the child's care and education.
12. **Regulatory** – state or federal agency requirements including SCDSS license or approval, SC Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (DDSN) license, or US military license.
13. **SAC** – School-Age Care
14. **SC CCCCCD** – South Carolina Center For Child Care Career Development
15. **School-Age Care 101 (SAC 101)** – A 3 hour academic credit course offered by SC Technical Colleges.
16. **South Carolina Early Childhood Credential (ECD Credential)** – Awarded by SC CCCCCD based on successful completion of Introduction to Early Childhood Development 101 (ECD 101), a 3 hour academic credit course offered by SC Technical Colleges.

17. South Carolina Early Learning Standards – Early Learning Standards specify developmental expectations for preschool children, ages 3 and 4, and are aligned with public school k – 12 standards. They include performance-based standards and examples or indicators which help teachers see what is meant by each standard. The federal government mandated that these standards be developed by each state and used by Head Start and public school programs. Their use in child care is encouraged by the state but voluntary.

18. Supervision of Children

Licensing Regulations - *for infants and toddlers:* staff persons shall be in the same room or area as the children and children shall be within staff's sight at all times; *for preschool and school-age children:* staff persons are physically near, readily accessible, aware and responsible for the ongoing activity of each child and able to intervene when needed. (SC DSS Regulations for Private and Public Child Care Centers June 2005, 114-504)

ABC Standards - Staffing patterns shall provide for adult supervision of children at all times and the availability of an additional adult to assume responsibility if one adult must respond to an emergency. Staff are with children, not distracted by other duties (such as cleaning or cooking). Every attempt shall be made for continuity of adults who work with children. Staff-child ratios shall be maintained by provision of substitutes when regular staff members are absent.

19. Teacher/caregiver – Individual who is in charge of the class.

20. Teacher/caregiver assistant – Individual who is continuously supervised by a qualified teacher/caregiver who is in the room at all times.