

2024-2025

Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) Program Guide



DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY
& SECONDARY EDUCATION

Arkansas Department of Education
Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) Program Guide

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SECTION 1 PURPOSE STATEMENT

The Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) program was created in 1991 to offer high quality early education services to children birth to five exhibiting developmental and socio-economic risk factors. In 2003, the Arkansas Legislature made a commitment to expand early childhood education to serve low-income three and four-year old children in areas at high risk for academic failure with high quality pre-kindergarten (Pre-K) services. This expansion, known as the Arkansas Better Chance for School Success (ABCSS), has become the state Pre-K program. The ABC program models are Center-Based programs, Home-Visiting programs, and Family Child Care Homes.

The purpose of ABC is to provide quality early education opportunities to children birth through 5 years old, with a variety of developmental and economic risk factors.

Rules Governing the Arkansas Better Chance Program can be found one the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Early Childhood [website](#).

1.1 CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

Federal and state laws, as well as OEC policy restrict the use or disclosure of information concerning applications or recipients of child care services to purposes directly connected with the administration of the program. Upon signing the application for Arkansas Better Chance, gives consent for OEC to secure information related to the applicant's eligibility from collateral sources. OEC shall cross-reference information provided to other governmental programs.

Prohibited Discriminatory Practices

OEC complies with Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

1.2 DEFINITIONS

ABC: Arkansas Better Chance

ABCSS (Arkansas Better Chance for School Success): Unless standards for ABC and ABCSS are listed separately, the term 'ABC' will be used to refer to all participating programs.

ADE: Arkansas Department of Education

Agency: For purposes of these rules, "Agency" refers to any entity funded under the Arkansas Better Chance or Arkansas Better Chance for School Success program.

Better Beginnings: Arkansas' Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System

CACFP: Child and Adult Care Food Program (Special Nutrition). A federally funded subsidy program administered by ADE designed to provide reimbursement to providers for meals and snacks served to children from low-income families.

CCFH: Child Care Family Home

CDA: Child Development Associate credential

Classroom: A physical space partitioned for the purpose of ABC instruction and activities. Each classroom must meet licensing requirements and state Quality Approval standards.

- **Single-Site Classroom:** One ABC classroom at a geographic location
- **Multi-classroom Site:** Multiple ABC classrooms located on the same premises

Classroom Quality Rating Tool: A nationally recognized rating scale to measure various elements of classroom quality for Pre-Kindergarten, Infant-Toddler, and Child Care Family Homes.

Compliance Plan: A document placing an ABC program on a probation period when the program is found to be out of compliance with any ABC rule or regulation. During the period, a program must make all necessary corrections or be subject to termination from the ABC program.

COPA: Child Outcome, Planning and Assessment. Current data system that is web-based used to capture and maintain data for all children and families enrolled in ABC.

Core Quality Components: The six key areas of ABC which include:

- *Low student to teacher ratio*
- *Well-qualified and compensated staff*
- *Professional development*
- *Developmental Screening and Child Assessment*
- *Proven curricula and learning processes*
- *Meaningful parent and community engagement activities*

DESE: Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

Developmental Screener: A tool used to identify possible developmental and behavioral delays.

FPL: Federal Poverty Level

Fraud: The willful violation of ABC program rules, regulations or procedures for the purpose of obtaining ABC services and/or funding.

HIPPY: Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters

Homeless: The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence." A homeless designation must be due to economic hardship. The act provides examples of children who would fall under this definition:

- Children and youth abandoned in hospitals
- Children and youth awaiting foster care placement
- Children and youth living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations
- Children and youth living in emergency or transitional shelters
- Children and youth living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or campgrounds due to lack of alternative accommodations
- Children and youth sharing housing due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason
- Children and youth whose primary nighttime residence is not ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation (e.g., park benches, etc.)
- Migratory children and youth living in any of the above situations

IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IEP: Individualized Education Plan

Immediate Family: A family unit is defined as individuals living in the same home as the child and includes: the child enrolled in the program; parent (s) / stepparent(s) / or guardian(s); and siblings related to the enrolled child by birth, marriage, or foster siblings.

In-kind services: Support services provided at either no cost or without monetary exchange. To use in-kind services as match, the services must be provided to the ABC program that the program could pay for.

Kindergarten Readiness: Kindergarten readiness will be measured by a state Department of Education approved assessment aligned with the Early Learning Standards in Arkansas. Kindergarten readiness includes the following domains: Physical health, well-being and motor skills; Social-emotional development including self-regulation and relationships with peers and adults; Language and literacy development including language understanding, emergent literacy and early writing; Cognition and general knowledge including math, science, and problem solving; Approaches to learning including initiative, attentiveness, persistence and play. Kindergarten ready children have the social, emotional, and academic knowledge, skills and behaviors for school success and lifelong learning. Kindergarten readiness occurs when families, schools and communities support the healthy foundation of children's growth, so they are successful in school and in life.

Local Education Agency (LEA): Public school district or open-enrollment public charter school

PAT: Parents as Teachers

Professional Development Registry: The statewide professional development system specifically designed for Early Childhood professionals. Formerly Traveling Arkansas' Professional Pathways (TAPP).

Shall: Mandatory standard

Should: Standard is recommended but not mandatory

SQP: Staff Qualifications Plan. A process by which the OEC can approve staff not meeting minimum qualifications to work in an ABC classroom under certain conditions.

Child Assessment: A web-based instrument used by ABC programs to assess a child's progress in various educational domains.

1.3 CONTACT INFORMATION

The Office of Early Childhood directory can also be found on our [website](#).

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SECTION 2 ARKANSAS BETTER CHANCE PROGRAM GRANT APPLICATION AND RENEWAL

If new or additional funding is available, information will be posted to the Office of Early Childhood, Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) [website](#). Prospective providers can visit our website to find ABC Rules and Regulations, eligibility information, program qualifications, and other important information.

2.1 NEW / EXPANSION GRANT APPLICATIONS

Opportunities for new providers or expansion of existing providers may become available through coordinated funding requests with local leads, or additional funding is appropriated.

- **Approval:** The Office of Early Childhood - ABC will annually present to the State Board of Education a list of grants recommended for funding for the next year. The State Board of Education must give approval before a program can be funded under the Arkansas Better Chance Program.
- **Withdrawal of Application:** The Board governing the ABC Agency must submit a written request to withdraw their grant application from consideration for funding.
- **Notification:** An Award Letter is sent from OEC – ABC Office to the applicant informing them of their funding recommendation.

2.2 PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

Any child care provider meeting these criteria is eligible to apply for funding:

- Located within the boundaries of the State of Arkansas;
- Licensed by OEC as a Child Care Center or Child Care Family Home with no history of formal corrective action or founded complaints which pose an immediate safety risk within twelve (12) months of application date;
- Has no outstanding debt to OEC (This requirement shall be suspended if an appeal is pending.);
- Has obtained State Quality Approval accreditation OR is eligible for such accreditation in the space to be used for the ABC program; and
- Participation with the Local Lead
- Can provide matching funds in accordance with local to state 40:60 funding ratio. The local-to-state match may be waived by OEC if program is in a school district that has been designated by the State Board of Education as being in Level 5 – Intensive Support or fiscal distress and OEC determines that the school is unable to provide the local- to-state match requirement. This determination may be made only after OEC has assisted the school in identifying potential funding sources to provide local-to-state match requirements.
- Entities that are on a Federal, State, or agency suspension or debarment list are not eligible to participate in the ABC program.

2.3 GRANT APPLICATION

Any provider wishing to be considered for funding may work with their local lead on a coordinated funding request. The following factors impact approval.

- Current status of childcare license and quality approval accreditation;
- The degree to which the program can provide a quality preschool program as outlined in the grant application;
- A strategy of collaboration with the local business, health, and education community;
- A fiscally responsible budget which correlates to core quality models; and
- A plan of action for parent involvement.

Upon availability of funding, OEC will open an application window. Questions and concerns regarding grant application processing should be referred to the OEC ABC Program Administrator.

2.4 BUDGET

All applications shall include a budget which corresponds to the ABC program quality components, details program costs and demonstrates fiscal responsibility. Allowable costs include:

- Staff salaries/ and/or fringe
- Administrative cost
- Instructional materials/curriculum
- Technology
- Staff development
- Screenings
- Parent/ and/or community engagement activities
- Transportation
- Nutrition
- And financial assistance for staff working towards a degree or credential, including, but not limited to:
 - books
 - tuition
 - travel

2.5 RENEWAL

The grant application renewal is completed by agencies/ programs that have an existing ABC grant. ABC grants are funded for a one-year period and grantees must submit a budget annually. Notification that the renewal grant is available will be posted, as well as reminder emails sent to ABC providers.

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- Approval: OEC - ABC will present a list of recommendations to the State Board of Education. The State Board of Education must give approval before a program can be funded under the Arkansas Better Chance Program.
- Notification: An Award Letter is sent from OEC-ABC Office to the applicant informing them of their funding recommendation.

2.6 CHANGE TO GRANT AGREEMENT

- New Location/New Address - When an agency moves to a new physical address, the ABC Coordinator/Director must send an email to the OEC ABC Administration and OEC ABC Data Management Team. The email should include pertinent information. A visit should be made to the new location prior to the move by OEC Licensing. If the program fails to notify the OEC prior to the move, a facility visit should be made as soon as possible after notification of move.
- New ownership – ABC slots are only transferred to new owners by OEC discretion. All requests should be made to the OEC ABC Administrator.
 - OEC may approve the transfer of slots to a current ABC program on an interim basis for the remainder of the school year.
- Any other changes, including agency coordinators or directors, should be sent to the ABC Administration and ABC Data Management Team. Request for support can be sent to copasupport.mailaccount@ade.arkansas.gov

2.7 CHANGE OF EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN) / TAXPAYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (TIN)

The ABC Data Management Support Coordinator should be notified of any changes in an agency's EIN/TIN. To change the agency's EIN/TIN information, the agency must provide a signed [IRS W-9 form](#). This can be submitted to copasupport.mailaccount@ade.arkansas.gov

SECTION 3 PROGRAM STANDARDS

Arkansas Better Chance programs are expected to maintain high quality programs. This section will outline the required program standards.

3.1 CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Each classroom shall be equipped with high quality instructional materials to take care of the needs of the total group and to provide each child with a variety of activities throughout the day. A variety of equipment shall be accessible from low shelves to children of all ages and shall be arranged in learning centers.

Programs shall demonstrate that the classroom environment provides:

- child development ;
- play-based learning;
- responsive teaching that builds positive relationships;
- individualized instruction;
- reflective teaching;
- inquiry-based learning; and
- collaboration with families.

3.2 CLASSROOM STAFF-TO-CHILD RATIO

The group size in any classroom with ABC children shall not exceed:

- Eight (8) children for ages birth- through eighteen (18) months;
- Fourteen (14) children for ages eighteen (18) months- through three (3) years;
- Twenty (20) children for ages three (3) – through five (5) years; or
- The classroom’s licensing capacity, whichever is less.
- For ratio information regarding children on a Foster Waiver, see Section 7.2.

Programs may integrate ABC classrooms with children funded through other sources. However, any integrated classroom that includes ABC children must maintain the maximum group sizes listed above.

The adult-to-child ratio in any classroom with ABC children shall not exceed:

- 1:4 for birth to eighteen (18) months;
- 1:7 for eighteen (18) months through three (3) years; and
- 1:10 for three (3) years through five (5) years.

A minimum of fifty percent (50%) of the staff must remain in the classroom during rest time for children three (3)- through five (5) years old only. Full staffing must occur for all other ages and at all other times, including meals. Pursuant to licensing regulations, a teacher or aide may escort a child or group of children to a bathroom or school nurse if another qualified staff person remains in the classroom. A classroom shall not be counted out of compliance for a teacher taking a brief bathroom break as long as the other staff member remains in the classroom.

3.3 CURRICULUM

Each curriculum model and the actual classroom practice will be assessed using the applicable state approved classroom assessment tool to ensure the model is cohesive to child development. The program shall have a written overall curriculum plan which is arranged in thematic units, projects, or topics of study and includes goals and objectives related to the following:

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- Social/ and/or emotional development,
- Creative/ and/or aesthetic learning,
- Cognitive/ and/or intellectual learning;
- Math, science, and problem solving;
- Physical development; and
- Language and literacy based on the science of reading.

All programs must utilize a curriculum approved by OEC that addresses child development. A list of approved curriculum models will be made available on the OEC [website](#). A program wishing to use a curriculum not on the list may request, by email, consideration of an additional curriculum. All requests can be submitted to OEC ABC Administration at copasupport.mailaccount@ade.arkansas.gov. Program coordinators shall ensure teachers have adequate training on curriculum.

Children shall participate in a daily schedule that reflects a balance among the following types of activities:

- Indoor and/or outdoor;
- Quiet and/or active;
- Individual, small group, and/or large group;
- Gross motor and/or fine motor;
- Child initiated and/or teacher initiated.

Routine and transition times throughout the day, such as preparing for mealtimes, shall be used as opportunities for incidental learning. Transition times shall be planned to avoid frequent disruption of children's activities and long waits between activities.

3.4 CHILD RECORDS

Programs shall maintain an individual child record on site. Files may be electronic but must be available to OEC staff if needed. At a minimum, the record shall contain copies of:

- Birth certificate, hospital birth record or other official verification of birth date;
If official documentation of date of birth is unavailable, the ABC program shall follow the guidelines of the local district in such instances.
- Documentation that the gross family income does not exceed 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, or other child eligibility documents
- Completed, signed, and dated application form;
- Parent signed statement verifying receipt of handbook
- Parental authorization for medical care, daily pick-up, and field trips
- Emergency information, including non-parental contact and medical information;
- Completed health/physical form(s)
- Immunization record (or proof of current immunizations)*;

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- Hearing and Vision screenings
- Developmental screening
- Referral to Special Education, if applicable
- Referral decision, including IEP/IFSP documentation, if applicable
- Samples of child's work
- Teacher and parent observations and summaries of parent-teacher conferences; and
- Child Assessment Developmental Checklists
- Child Waivers, if applicable

*Immunizations: On or before the first day of attendance, parents or guardians shall provide proof that their child is current on all required immunizations or is on an acceptable "catch up" schedule. A waiver from this requirement may be granted from the Arkansas Department of Health under Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-702.

Child records or any ABC file containing personal information on families and children shall be:

- Maintained on site in a locked file cabinet or electronic files on a secure computer system
- Organized and maintained in individual child files
- Granted access on a need-to-know basis only
- Available for inspection by ADE/OEC staff

If certain records must be stored off-site, copies shall be made and given to teachers to maintain a record on-site. In maintaining and updating child and family data, ABC programs shall utilize the state data system. Other than those documents required to be retained for licensing purposes, teachers shall give a copy of the child's record to the parent upon completion of or dis-enrollment from the program or forward the record to the child's kindergarten program.

3.5 TRANSITION PLANS

Provision should be made through program design and networking efforts to ease the transition of children moving from one program or age grouping to another or to kindergarten. This provision must include:

- Individual needs assessments on each child,
- Kindergarten readiness outcomes aligned to the state approved child assessment.
- At a minimum, the transition plan shall involve parents and appropriate school district personnel.

3.6 CHILD NUTRITION

ABC programs are required to provide free nutritious meals and snacks for all children enrolled in ABC/ and/or ABCSS. Information on the National School Lunch Program and other Child Nutrition may be found on the District Operations [website](#).

Mealtimes are an opportunity to engage children in conversation about the day and themselves. Therefore, ABC staff shall participate with the children during this time. Children shall be given an appropriate amount of time for meals and conversation.

3.7 BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

No child in ABC shall be dismissed or expelled from the program for behavior without approval from OEC. The Multi-Tiered System of Supports Framework assists programs and staff with supports to promote social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes of young children birth to five (5), promoting the use of positive behavioral interventions, promoting family engagement, using data for decision-making, integrating early childhood and infant mental health consultation.

If children demonstrate challenging behavior, the ABC program shall consult with [BehaviorHelp](#) and the Early Childhood Special Education program regarding classroom modifications and interventions. Please refer to Section 11 Technical Assistance for additional information.

Discipline shall:

- Reflect positive guidance,
- Be consistent;
- Be individualized for each child; and
- Appropriate to the child's level of understanding.

Programs shall specifically define their approach to handling inappropriate behavior in the parent handbook. When a child presents with challenging behavior, teaching staff shall follow use the following standards:

- Observe the children, then identify:
 - Events,
 - Activities,
 - Interactions; and
 - Other factors that predict and may contribute to challenging behavior.
 - Observation forms and templates can be found on the OEC [website](#).

Rather than focus only on eliminating the behavior, teaching staff shall focus on instructing the child in:

- Social,
- Communication, and
- Emotional regulation skills and using:
 - environmental modifications,
 - activity modifications, adult, or peer support; and
 - other teaching strategies to support the child's appropriate behavior.

Teaching staff shall respond to challenging behavior, including physical aggression, in a manner that:

- Provides safety of the child;
- Provides for the safety of others in the classroom;
- Is calm;
- Is respectful to the child; and
- Provides the child with information on acceptable behavior.

Teacher-parent discussions regarding a child's behavior shall be held in private and shall focus on working as a team to develop and implement an individualized plan that supports the child's inclusion and success. Teachers should request technical assistance from OEC on any discipline issues on which they have questions. For technical assistance, refer to section 11.

3.8 DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENINGS

Within forty-five (45) days of entering an ABC program, a child shall receive a routine annual developmental screening to determine individual needs. The program agency shall be responsible for completing the developmental screening. The purpose of screening is to identify developmental delays and/or educational deficiencies. Children so identified shall be referred to Special Education within seven (7) calendar days of the date of screening. Programs shall comply with state and federal laws for Special Needs students. All screening information must be submitted into the Data Management System within 60 days from the start of the program year.

The developmental screening must include, at a minimum, the following areas: vocabulary, visual-motor integration, language and speech development, fine and gross motor skills, social skills, and developmental milestones.

The approved list of all acceptable developmental screening instruments can be found in the Appendix, and on our [website](#).

3.9 HEALTH SCREENINGS

Within forty-five (45) days of the first day of attendance, every child shall receive an age- appropriate health screening, which includes a hearing and vision test, performed by a licensed physician or physician assistant. Programs should contact OEC for information on seeking a waiver under Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-701. Programs shall work in partnership with parents to obtain health screening information. All screening information must be submitted into the Data Management System within 60 days from the start of the program year. Additional forms can be found on the OEC [website](#).

3.10 SPECIAL EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Children with an identified developmental delay and/or educational deficiencies shall be referred to the legally responsible special education entity. Children may be referred to other mental health or service

providers. However, referrals to other agencies cannot replace the required referral to Special Education. Please visit the OEC [website](#) for resources on submitting referrals for Special Education services.

- [First Connections – Birth to 3](#)
- [School District/Educational Cooperative – Ages 3 – 5](#)

3.11 EXPULSION

A child shall not be dismissed from the ABC program, including due to a lack of toileting skills. Nor may a program refuse to admit a child because of toileting development issues if the child meets all other age and income eligibility requirements. ABC programs shall assist children not, yet toilet developed with cooperation and enthusiasm.

If a child in question has a disability and is in the process or has been identified under IDEA, the ABC program shall follow state special education rules and regulations governing suspension/ and/or expulsion.

3.12 KINDERGARTEN READINESS ASSESSMENTS

Providers and the OEC shall work cooperatively to ensure that the assessments which are required to align with the Arkansas Early Learning Standards, are conducted as required by Ark. Code Ann. § 6-45-101 et seq. Children in the ABC program shall be assessed annually by an OEC approved assessment tool to provide an indication of each child's progress towards kindergarten readiness. The assessment shall address a child's strengths, progress, and needs and shall serve as a central part of an effective early childhood program.

A comprehensive longitudinal study shall be implemented to evaluate the ABC program to ensure that the program goals are achieved. The study will be designed to use sound research-based evidence to determine whether the programs meet the expected standards. This research shall include children entering the program at ages three (3) and four (4) years and follow the children through completion of the fourth-grade state assessments. Research results will be provided annually to the Governor and the Senate Interim Committee on Education and the House Interim Committee on Education.

Every classroom shall be equipped with a computer with high-speed internet access (where available in the state). Each home-based educator shall also have such access to a computer. This equipment is necessary for the timely completion of enrollment data in the state data system and assessment data in the required Child Assessment System.

3.13 PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Each program shall have a plan for parent involvement which includes opportunities for parental input into program operation and design. Parent involvement plans shall include a mechanism for parental

advice and review of programmatic plans, parent conferences and a method to involve the parent in the child's educational experience.

The program shall have an "open door" policy for parents which encourages visiting and participation in classroom activities. Opportunities for at least two (2) parent-teacher conferences shall be given to parents.

The program shall publish and utilize a parent handbook specifically that includes ABC requirements for the ABC program.

Each program shall have a plan for community, school district, educational services cooperative, and agency involvement, which includes a description of how cooperation with other service providers who are concerned with the education, welfare, health, and safety needs of young children, will be established, and maintained. Programs should consider providing opportunities for community representatives to participate in the educational activities of the classroom.

3.14 TRANSPORTATION

ABC Programs shall be required to comply with all applicable state and federal laws and guidelines (including the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Guidelines for the Safe Transportation of Children in School Buses), as well as [Child Care Licensing Standards](#), regulating the transportation of children.

Offering transportation to and from an ABC program is strictly optional. OEC accepts no liability for the transportation of children participating in an ABC program. Program agencies shall be responsible for the actions of their drivers. Drivers are subject to all background checks and exclusionary violations applicable to school district employees having contact with children. An ABC child shall NOT be released from the vehicle unless an authorized adult meets the vehicle at a stop or in front of the child's home. Programs shall never release an ABC child from the vehicle alone. After exiting the vehicle, an ABC child shall not cross a street unless accompanied by the authorized adult.

3.15 PROGRAM CALENDAR

For each child enrolled, ABC programs shall provide a minimum of seven (7) hours, a day for up to 178 days per school calendar year.

- Extended hours do not count as additional days for funding.
- Funding is based on the number of days in operation.
- Any days less than the 178 days will be pro-rated based on the daily rate of the program established by the OEC.

Classroom-based programs shall follow public school regulations regarding the time requirements for teacher planning periods. However, planning periods for ABC teachers shall be scheduled at a time that does not violate minimum staff-child ratios or other ABC standards.

Program calendar examples can be found on the OEC [website](#).

3.16 ATTENDANCE

Programs shall provide families with the program's attendance and tardy policy. Regular and consistent attendance is expected. For children to receive the full benefit from the ABC instructional program children must have regular attendance. Attendance shall be reported monthly, encouraged weekly, in the data management system.

3.17 SLIDING FEE SCALE AND PROGRAM FEES

OEC may develop a fee schedule and establish eligibility based on family income for children who are not eligible under Section 6, but priority enrollment shall be provided to children eligible under Section 6. Families who are qualified for enrollment under a sliding fee scale should pay fees directly to the program. The amount of any parent co-pay as determined by OEC shall be deducted from the reimbursement to programs accepting children on a sliding fee scales.

Eligible children shall not be denied enrollment into an available ABC program or dismissed from an ABC program due to non-payment of any fees associated with another childcare program.

Parents or guardians of children qualified as eligible for ABC services shall not be required to pay any fees during ABC program hours.

SECTION 4 HOME VISITING PROGRAM MODELS

Alternate programs may include home visiting programs such as HIPPY and Parent as Teachers (PAT). These programs will comply, where applicable, with the regulations herein.

4.1 HIPPY REGULATIONS

HIPPY programs shall meet program criteria as outlined in the contractual agreement signed by each site with Arkansas Children's Hospital and HIPPY USA United States.

Each HIPPY program serving at least one hundred sixty (160) families must have one full-time coordinator, holding a minimum of a bachelor's degree in education, social work, sociology, psychology, or related field. Those coordinators without a related degree must obtain at least twelve (12) college course hours in early childhood.

Programs with more than two hundred fifty (250) children must also have at least one (1) part-time coordinator who holds a minimum of an Associate's Degree in early childhood education, social work,

psychology, or related field. Coordinators shall also meet additional job requirements as described in the HIPPY USA United States Coordinator job description. HIPPY Coordinators must attend National HIPPY Pre-service Training and receive certification. Regardless of the number of children served, HIPPY Agencies must make provision to ensure all home-based visitors are supervised appropriately by trained staff.

Home Based Educators working thirty-one through forty (31-40) hours per week may not serve more than twenty seven (27) families. Minimum requirements for home educators include a high school diploma/ and/or GED and a current CDA credential. All new HIPPY home-based educators are required to attend new Home- based Educators training provided by Arkansas State HIPPY.

Hiring of any HIPPY coordinator or home-based educator not meeting the above requirements must be approved by OEC through a Staff Qualifications Plan. OEC shall monitor such plans to ensure adequate progress is being made. HIPPY Coordinators working under a staff qualifications plan must obtain at least twelve (12) college hours per year.

HIPPY programs must follow the child eligibility requirements found in Section 7. However, the cut-off date for determining age eligibility for children served in HIPPY is December 31 of each year.

The Arkansas HIPPY Training and Technical Assistance (T and TA) Office will monitor and assist HIPPY programs throughout the state. Annual program site reviews and assessments will be forwarded to OEC for consideration of program compliance and funding renewal. The Arkansas HIPPY Office will assist OEC with determining program compliance at the local level. HIPPY programs shall meet requirements set by OEC. Group meetings should reflect the educational programming standards as set forth in Section 3 and guidelines set forth in the HIPPY model. Any enhancements designed to complement the HIPPY curriculum must be approved by the Arkansas HIPPY Office prior to implementation with families.

4.2 PARENTS AS TEACHERS REGULATIONS

Parents as Teachers (PAT) Programs shall meet program criteria as outlined in the PAT Program Implementation and Planning Guide.

All PAT Coordinators must attend the PAT Institute Training and obtain either a Parent Educator Certificate or an Administrator's Certificate.

Each program must have a certified Parent Educator, who may also serve as Coordinator.

PAT Parent Educators working on a part-time basis (twenty (20) hours per week) should serve thirty (30) and not more than forty (40) children and their families.

Programs shall operate on a twelve (12) month, year-round basis. Families must be offered twelve (12) personal visits and six (6) parent group meetings.

PAT Programs shall follow the child eligibility requirements found in Section 6 and may dually enroll children under the guidelines of Section 4.3. However, PAT Programs must coordinate services with HIPPY Programs where both exist in the same community to avoid duplication of services.

PAT Programs shall meet requirements as set forth in Sections 2-7 and 9-12.

4.3 DUALY ENROLLED CHILDREN

Children having certain risk factors may be eligible for home-visiting services, in addition to attending a center-based ABC program. See Section 6 for eligibility requirements.

To dually enroll a child in an ABC center and HIPPY, a child must meet the ABC income requirements (two hundred percent < (200%) FPL) plus possess at least one of the following:

- Parents without HS diploma or GED;
- Birth weight < five (5) pounds, nine (9) ounces;
- Parent is < eighteen (18) years of age at child's birth;
- Family has a history of substance abuse/ and, or, or addiction;
- Eligible for services under IDEA;
- Parent has a history of abuse or neglect or is a victim of abuse or neglect;
- Child exhibits a demonstrable developmental delay as identified through an appropriate screening;
- Child lives in a single parent household or has parents who are divorced;
- Child is a foster child;
- Child has incarcerated parent;
- Child has parents who cannot read;
- Child is homeless;
- Child or parent has limited English Proficiency; and or
- Child is in the custody of family member other than mother and father.

Whichever program enrolls the child at the later date shall be responsible for verifying eligibility for dual enrollment. Dual enrollment shall not exceed twenty-five percent (25%) of the program's total ABC enrollment. If the same Agency operates both a center-based and home- visiting program, dual enrollment shall not exceed twenty-five percent (25%) of the agency's total enrollment.

Center-based and home-visiting programs shall collaborate in providing services to any child qualifying for dual enrollment.

SECTION 5 CHILD CARE FAMILY HOMES

Licensed childcare family homes participating in ABC must meet the same requirements as an ABC center, except where listed in this section.

- Group size for an ABC classroom in a CCFH shall not exceed sixteen (16) children or maximum licensing capacity, whichever is less.
- The ABC family home teacher must possess a minimum of a CDA credential and file a Staff Qualifications Plan which outlines a plan to complete a four-year degree in early childhood or child development.
- For any ABC room with more than 10 children, an additional staff person with a minimum of a CDA credential must also be present.
- No SQP shall be approved for an ABC family home teacher to complete a CDA credential or associate degree. The only SQP that shall be approved for an ABC family home teacher is for a four-year degree in early childhood or child development.
- In evaluating the ABC program in a CCFH, the applicable program quality assessment tool for family homes shall be utilized. Family homes shall be subject to the same guidelines as listed in Section 9.

All ABC center-based or family-home based programs shall maintain a license in good standing. Any ABC program whose license is revoked shall be immediately terminated from the ABC program.

SECTION 6 CHILD ELIGIBILITY

The Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) Program serves educationally deprived eligible children, ages birth through five 5 years, excluding a kindergarten program.

The Arkansas Better Chance for School Success (ABCSS) Program serves children ages three (3) and through four (4) years from families with gross income not exceeding two hundred percent (200%) of the FPL. To be eligible, children shall reside within the boundaries of an Arkansas school district. Programs may accept children outside of their local area if they have exhausted local recruiting efforts and have unfilled ABC slots.

Eligible children for the ABC program shall have at least one of the following qualifications:

- Family with gross income not exceeding two hundred percent (200%) of FPL;
- Parents without a high school diploma or GED;
- Low birth weight (below 5 pounds, 9 ounces);
- Parent is under eighteen (18) years of age at child's birth;
- Immediate family member has a history of substance abuse and or addiction;

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- Has a demonstrable developmental delay as identified through screening;
- Eligible for services under IDEA;
- Income eligible for Title I programs;
- Limited English Proficiency; or
- Parent has history of abuse of neglect or is a victim of abuse or neglect.

Eligible children for the ABC for School Success (ABCSS) program must meet the following qualifications:

- Must be three (3) or four (4) years old by ADE cutoff date;
- Gross family income two hundred percent (200%) 200% of FPL; and
- A program is available in the area where the child resides and there is available space for the child to attend.

6.1 ELIGIBILITY DOCUMENTATION

To enroll an eligible child, the child's parent or guardian shall furnish documentation of eligibility and other required information, including household income and household member information.

A full list of required eligibility documentation can be found in the Appendix.

- In determining income eligibility, programs shall use a family's gross income from employment plus any unemployment compensation.
- If pay stubs are used to document eligibility, recent documents (dated within thirty (30) days) shall be used.
- If a three-year old child has been qualified for ABCSS, that child shall remain eligible for two (2) years.
- Families claiming no earned income (full-time students or unemployed) shall produce a signed and notarized statement to that effect, which shall be maintained in the child's record.

6.2 INCOME EXEMPTION

An age-eligible child who falls into one of the following categories shall be exempt from family income requirements. Each category lists the required documentation.

- Foster child (at time of enrollment)
 - Court record
 - Documentation from DHS
- Child has incarcerated parent (during child's lifetime)
 - Law enforcement
 - Court document

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- Documentation from Department of Corrections website
- Child is in the custody of or living with family member other than father or mother (at time of enrollment)
 - Court record
 - Documentation from DHS
 - A Notarized statement that the child is living with them and neither parent is residing in the home.
- Child has immediate family member arrested for or convicted of drug-related offenses (within the lifetime of the child)
 - Law enforcement
 - Court document
 - Documentation from Department of Corrections website
 - Newspaper article
- Child has parent activated for overseas military duty (at time of enrollment)
 - Deployment Orders
 - Letter from Department of Defense notifying parent of deployment date

SECTION 7 CHILD ELIGIBILITY WAIVERS

The Child Waiver process is an ABC Regulation intended to assess the request of a program to enroll a child not meeting the ABC eligibility criteria. In general, to qualify for a Child Waiver the child must have multiple documented delays, or the family must have an extenuating circumstance which results in multiple risk factors to the child's learning and development. Requests for such waivers must be submitted to OEC in writing and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Applications for child waivers are available on the ABC [website](#). A child waiver can be requested for the following reasons:

- The family is 250% over the income limit
- Child is kindergarten eligible
- Foster Care (Seeking enrollment with an agency that has filled all ABC slots)
- The family is homeless (Seeking enrollment with an agency that has filled all ABC slots)

The local ABC Program Coordinator is responsible for submitting the waiver request application and supporting documentation provided by the parents. The application must be submitted prior to enrolling the child. Waiver Request MUST be submitted electronically via email to copasupport.mailaccount@ade.arkansas.gov with the subject line of: "Agency Name Waiver Request."

Child Waiver Request – must include the following items:

- Copy of application listing family members living in the household
- Child's birth record
- Documentation of Income (regardless of reason for referral)
- Verification that all eligible children are being served (no waiting list)
- Supporting documentation

OEC will review the submitted Child Waiver Request and supporting documentation. OEC will contact the ABC Program Coordinator/Director requesting additional information including a deadline to submit the information. If the additional information is not received by the deadline, the request may be denied. OEC will send a Child Waiver Approval or Denial notification to the ABC Coordinator/Director. The notification of Approval or Denial shall be kept onsite in the child's file and a copy uploaded to COPA.

7.1 HOMELESS WAIVER

Programs applying for a homeless waiver will submit a waiver and documentation for review. The ABC Office will verify with the OEC Licensing Unit that the applicable classroom capacity can accommodate the additional child.

The following documentation is acceptable:

- Letter from Family Service Worker
- Residency form signed by the parent and the McKinney-Vento Liaison
- Notarized statement that family is living in emergency shelter or transitional living situations

Once a child withdraws from the classroom, then the classroom size will revert to 20 children according to the ABC Regulations. OEC Child Care Licensing Specialists and OEC Eligibility Specialist shall be notified.

7.2 FOSTER CARE WAIVER

Programs applying for a foster care waiver will submit a waiver and documentation for review. The ABC Office will verify with the OEC Licensing Unit that the applicable classroom capacity can accommodate the additional child.

The following documentation is acceptable:

- Court documents
- Foster Home Agreement Addendum
- Medi-Alert
- Letter from Family Service Worker

Once a child withdraws from the classroom, then the classroom size will revert to 20 children according to the ABC Regulations. If the departing child is an ABC/ABCSS participant, the foster child will fill that ABC/ABCSS slot. OEC Child Care Licensing Specialists and OEC Eligibility Specialist shall be notified.

7.3 KINDERGARTEN WAIVER

Programs wishing to enroll a kindergarten-eligible child must obtain a written waiver from OEC before enrolling the child in ABC. Parents must also complete a kindergarten waiver process through the local school district. Children who are eligible for kindergarten services (and parents elect to “waive” such services) are not eligible for the ABC/ABCSS Program. Kindergarten waivers will be considered on a case-by-case basis and may be approved only in situations where significant multiple at-risk factors exist that prevent the child from being able to be placed in a kindergarten classroom.

Due to limited resources and the large numbers of eligible children in need of preschool services, waivers may be granted only in instances of critical need and must be well documented.

ABC Agency will submit the current supporting documentation for the identified developmental delays and at-risk factors - including but not limited to:

- Pertinent medical information
- Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Child referral (if IEP has not been developed)
- Court documents
- Letters from physicians and/or therapists
- Letter from Family Service Worker
- Foster Home Agreement Addendum
- Medi-Alert
- Residency form signed by the parent and the McKinney-Vento Liaison
- Notarized statement that family is living in emergency shelter or transitional living situations

7.4 MULTIPLE RISK FACTORS WAIVER

Child waivers may be granted to children not meeting the age and/or income eligibility requirements but possessing multiple risk factors for learning. The waiver packet must include all documentation that supports statements made in the application. Documentation may include but not be limited to the following:

- Income
- Birth record
- Pertinent medical information
- Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Child referral (IEP has not been developed)

- Court documents
- Letters from physicians and/or counselors

SECTION 8 ABC STAFF REQUIREMENTS

Program Coordinator or Site Director

The ABC program coordinator or site director without teaching responsibilities shall meet the minimum licensing requirements for a center director AND complete Director's Orientation within a reasonable timeframe, subject to the availability of training.

Lead Teacher

The lead teacher shall hold an Arkansas Educator license in an area of Early Childhood Pre-K **or** have a bachelor's degree in child development education, or a related field with the requisite number of twelve (12) hours in early childhood and, or child development. OEC may consider alternative pathways or experience on a case-by-case basis.

Lead teachers must be able to demonstrate competency in the areas of:

- Child development programming
- Curriculum development
- Daily classroom management

Classroom Teacher

The classroom teacher shall hold, at a minimum, an associate degree in early childhood education or early childhood development. ABC programs with multiple classroom sites, shall classify the teachers assigned to the second and third and additional classrooms as applicable, as a classroom teacher.

Infant & Toddler Teacher

The infant/toddler teacher shall hold a minimum of a CDA credential in infant and, or toddler care.

Paraprofessional

The paraprofessional shall hold one of the following:

- minimum of Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential
- Certificate of Proficiency in Early Childhood
- Technical Certificate in Early Childhood
- Birth to Pre-K Credential
- Associate's degree in ECE or associate's degree with a minimum of 12 ECE coursework hours.

8.1 REQUIRED STAFFING PATTERNS

Agencies' program sites shall adhere to the staffing guidelines below:

- One classroom – Lead teacher
- Two classrooms – Lead teacher and 1 classroom teacher
- Three classrooms – Lead teacher and 2 classroom teachers
- Four or more classrooms – above pattern repeats
- Paraprofessionals are required for each preschool classroom that has between 11-20 children

For example:

# Classrooms	Lead Teacher	Classroom Teacher	Paraprofessional
1	1	0	1
2	1	1	2
3	1	2	3
4	2	2	4
5	2	3	5
6	2	4	6
7	3	4	7
8	3	5	8
9	3	6	9
10	4	6	10

Programs replacing a teacher or paraprofessional during the year—including those taking an indefinite leave of absence—shall consult with OEC on specific qualifications needed. Programs may request a [waiver](#) if the above staffing patterns cannot be met. OEC shall consider degree exemptions for non-public school/cooperative based providers on a case-by-case basis, contingent upon the teacher having a requisite number of hours in early childhood and/or child development.

For additional scenarios see Appendix F. If you have questions, need support with multi-classroom sites, or need to submit a waiver for staffing, please email us at copasupport.mailaccount@ade.arkansas.gov.

8.2 STAFF REQUIREMENTS IN THE STATE DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

This information should be uploaded by the program within 45 days from the beginning of the program year.

- Current credential or degree
- Staff Qualification Plan (SQP) and pertinent documents, if applicable.
- Current employment agreement or contract
- Individual Professional Development Plan

8.3 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS

Between June 1 and May 31 or July 1 and June 30 each year-

All ABC Coordinators/Directors and Assistant Coordinators shall follow the Child Care Minimum Licensing guidelines to obtain fifteen (15) clock hours in Early Childhood Education.

All ABC teachers shall participate in a minimum of thirty (30) hours of staff development on topics pertinent to early childhood education and approved by the OEC.

All ABC paraprofessionals shall participate in a minimum of fifteen (15) hours of staff development on topics pertinent to early childhood education and approved by OEC.

Annual Training Hours				
Director/Site Supervisor	Lead Teacher	Classroom Teacher	Paraprofessional	Infant/Toddler Teacher
15	30	30	15	30

Note: Persons who are obtaining an early childhood degree may count college course hours pertinent to early childhood education toward the required hours of staff development. Programs should multiply semester hours by five (5) to obtain the number of semester hours counted towards ABC professional development.

Teachers and paraprofessionals shall be required to engage in professional development focused on early childhood learnings and programs approved by the OEC. Topics may include:

- Academics
- Family and Community Engagement
- Program Quality
- Human Capital
- Program Management
- Child Development and Growth

Except for annual child development and early learning standards, curriculum, child assessment, and classroom quality refresher training and updates, timeframes for completing such requirements may vary with availability and access to the above training. OEC may mandate additional training subject to needs in various locations. A list of mandatory annual trainings can be found on the OEC [website](#).

Programs should use your own data to create a professional development plan that is consistent with the individual needs of each program and staff.

In addition to the Professional Development requirements, coordinators for each ABC program shall ensure that all appropriate staff members attend mandatory ABC training (budgets, reporting, assessments, information technology, etc. and others.) provided by OEC.

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The ABC program coordinator and all ABC staff shall register with the OEC approved Professional Development System. The Registry identification number for each member of staff shall be entered in the required state data system.

ABC programs shall establish an employment agreement in writing with all classroom staff. This agreement shall outline:

- Working conditions,
- Dates and hours of employment,;
- Compensation; and
- Fringe benefits.
- A copy of the public school teacher contract shall satisfy this requirement.

8.4 STAFF QUALIFICATIONS PLANS (SQP)

The Staff Qualification Plan (SQP) serves as a waiver to approve staff to teach in an ABC/ABCSS classroom while working toward meeting minimum staff qualifications. ABC staff (teachers, paraprofessionals, coordinators) that do not meet the minimum qualifications as outlined in the ABC Rules and Regulations (Section 8) may apply for a Staff Qualification Plan (SQP). Each SQP waiver request is reviewed by OEC, on a case-by-case basis, to determine approval.

SQP's must be submitted to the Program Eligibility Specialist within fifteen (15) days of the date of hire. The SQP waiver forms can be found on the ABC Website. Requests MUST be submitted electronically via email to copasupport.mailaccount@ade.arkansas.gov with the subject line of: "Agency SQP Staff Name"

The ABC Agency must complete the waiver request for Staff Qualification Plan according to the following instructions:

Program Information:

- Agency Information – must be same information that is on the Grant Agreement
- Site Information – specific site information at which the staff person is located

Staff Information:

- Name
- Desired Position
- Start date of employment in current position (may be different from the initial employment date with the program)
- PDR #: OEC/ABC staff will retrieve a listing of the Early Childhood Professional Development trainings attended and completed

Credential/Degree Sought:

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Check the appropriate box for the degree/credential sought. The degree/credential must be achievable within a two-year period.

- Associate degree
- Bachelor's degree
- CDA-Child Development Associate
- Early Childhood Credential/Certificate
- Completion of a minimum of (12) hours EC college credit hours in addition to college degree
- Education Institution that the credential/degree will be obtained

Required Documentation: Current Credentials/Degrees:

Check all credentials/degrees completed.

- If an associate, bachelor, or master's degree is checked, the major/concentration MUST be entered
- If no degree has been completed, then the number of college credited hours MUST be entered
- If the plan is requested to renew a CDA, the expiration date must be included
- If the applicant holds a degree in an area other than early childhood education (ECE) or child development (CD), then either 12 hours in ECE/CD or CDA must be checked

Transcript:

All applicable transcripts must be included:

- copies of current credentials earned
- copies of all transcripts of college courses completed
- enter the name of a higher educational institution(s)
- proof of enrollment with educational institutions must be included

Signatures:

- The staff member for whom the SQP is being requested MUST sign the document
- The Program Director/School District Official MUST sign the SQP Wavier Request

Copies of the SQP Wavier Request, SQP Approval Letter, SQP Agreement, and Progress Reports must be maintained in the following manner:

- Staff's file at the ABC Agency
- Upload in individual's COPA eDocs staff records

SQP Progress Report

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To verify progress on an SQP, the ABC Program Coordinator must submit the SQP progress reports on January 30 and July 30 of each year. The SQP progress report must include at a minimum:

- Documentation of progress (grades for college courses, transcripts, certificates earned, teaching license)
- Documents supporting justification for lack of progress if progress is not made
- Upload progress report and pertinent documents in the individual's COPA eDocs staff records and retain copy on-site in staff file.
- Failure to comply with the requirements specified in the SQP, or lack of progress made, may result in termination of SQP agreement.

SQP Extension

Staff unable to document progress due to extreme hardship may request an extension. SQP extensions will be considered on a case-by-case basis. If approved, an extension, not to exceed one year, may be granted. Examples of extreme hardship may be, but are not limited to, the following:

- Birth of a child
- Death of a family member
- Individual illness
- Unavailability of required course
- The SQP Applicant must submit justification of the extreme hardship and a request for an extension.
- SQP Applicant will provide a signed and dated statement detailing the extreme hardship to justify the request for an extension to the SQP.
- The ABC Coordinator/Director signs and dates the justification statement before sending the request to: copasupport.mailaccount@ade.arkansas.gov with the subject line of: "Agency Name SQP Extension Request."

8.5 DEGREE EQUIVALENT WAIVER

A degree equivalent may be granted when an ABC classroom staff meets the following conditions:

Holds a degree in a subject area other than early childhood, child development, or early childhood special education with documentation of 12 college credit hours of early childhood related coursework,

OR

has completed college credit hours equivalent to an associate's degree with documentation of 12 college credit hours of early childhood related coursework. If a degree equivalent is granted, a letter of notification will be sent to the ABC Program Coordinator.

The ABC Program shall upload the notification of approval letter in the individual's COPA eDocs staff record and retain a copy on-site in staff file. The degree equivalent waiver can be found on the OEC [website](#), or provided upon request to: copasupport.mailaccount@ade.arkansas.gov with the subject line of: "Agency Name Degree Equivalent Waiver request."

8.6 ALTERNATIVE LICENSING/DEGREE PROGRAMS

ADE and the Arkansas Early Childhood Association have created alternative pathways to enable staff to become qualified to teach. ABC staff may not qualify for all these programs at this time.

- T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Early Childhood ® Scholarship Program provides comprehensive scholarships to enable educators to take coursework leading to credentials and degrees.
- Arkansas Professional Educator Pathway (AR PEP- formerly APPEL) is an affordable two-year, work-based, alternative certification program that is administered by the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education. Enrollment in this program allows a candidate with a bachelor's degree or higher to be licensed and employed as a classroom teacher while completing the necessary requirements for a Standard Arkansas Teaching License.
- The Provisional Professional Teaching License (PPTL) is a three-year, provisional Educator license issued to an experienced professional for the purpose of teaching on a part-time or full-time basis as teacher-of-record in an Arkansas public school.
- In addition of a 3-4 Endorsement to an existing license. Licensed K-12 teachers can add a 3-4 endorsement to their teaching license through additional course work and testing.
- Master of Science in Education - Integrated Birth through Kindergarten/Special Education teacher license offered through accredited universities.
- Bachelors in integrated Birth through Kindergarten/Special Education teacher licensure offered through accredited universities.

SECTION 9 PROGRAM MONITORING

OEC is directly responsible for the inspection and evaluation of programs. Inspections and monitoring visits may occur without prior notice. This includes quality visits, program reviews or any other visit by a OEC or authorized representative. All ABC programs shall meet the criteria for academic approval set by the Arkansas State Board of Education. A state approved quality rating assessment tool will be utilized to determine a classroom and program quality rating under the Arkansas Child Early Care and Education Approval System Rules and Regulations, Ark. Code Ann. § 6-45- 103 and 106. Any agency which is not renewed pursuant to this policy shall be ineligible to reapply for an ABC grant for a period of twelve (12) months. At the discretion of OEC, the following may be considered as mitigating circumstances:

- Impact of deficiencies on child health,
- Safety and welfare,

- Willingness to improve upon factors within Agency control; and
- Likelihood of program passing next review and the time in which such improvements can be implemented.

9.1 AGENCY DOCUMENTATION

OEC will provide a list of required documentation to be uploaded into the data management system. The following information must be reviewed annually by the OEC. The following documents should be uploaded to “Agency eDocs” in the state data management system by **September 1st** of each program year.

- Parent Handbook (uploaded in “Agency” section of eDocs) including the following:
 - Attendance policy
 - Tardy policy
 - Behavior guidance policy that meets ABC requirements and is child development focused.

The following items are required of all ABC Programs, they may be completed as individual documents or included in the parent handbook, into one document, more efficient, easier to access and maintain one document.

- Program Calendar
- Kindergarten Transition Plan
- Parent Involvement Plan
- Memoranda of Understanding (MOU’s) for Community Partners – If Applicable
- Separation of church and state clause

9.2 CHILD AND FAMILY RECORDS

Programs shall upload the following documentation into the state data management system. However, additional documents may be requested by OEC during a monitor period.

- Completed child application
- Birth certificate, hospital birth record or other official verification of birth date
- Documentation of child eligibility
- Completed Health Form and Immunization record (or proof of current immunizations)
- Record of completed developmental screening
- Referral/IEP (if reflected on screening)
- Financial Records
- Emergency information, including non-parental contact and medical information
- Field Trip and Parental Authorization for medical care, and daily pick-ups

9.3 FINANCIAL RECORDS

The following documents should be uploaded to the state data management system according to their due dates.

- Final Disclosure Audit (120 days after fiscal year end)
- Mid (Jan 30) and Final Expenditure (July 30) reports
- Waivers (Once approved)
- Child Waivers (Once approved)

SECTION 10 COMPLIANCE

All ABC classroom programs shall satisfy the requirements specified in The Child Care Licensing Act, 9.01.1 Ark. Code Ann. § 20-78-201 through 224; and 9.01.1 Rules and regulations enacted by OEC pursuant to these sections. Entities that are on a Federal, State, or agency suspension or debarment list are not eligible to participate in the ABC program.

- Grant agreements for any existing or future programs excluded due to this section shall be terminated immediately.
- Programs placed on correction action by OEC are subject to ABC compliance action as outlined in this section.
- Electronic mail is a necessary means by which OEC communicates vital information to programs. All participating programs must maintain a working e-mail address which is checked daily. Applicable information shall be distributed to classroom staff by the program coordinator.

Issues for a Compliance Plan may include, but are not limited to:

- Founded licensing or maltreatment complaints;
- Violations of minimum licensing standards;
- Revocation of Quality Approval status or failing to meet Quality Approval standards;
- Financial mismanagement, including use of funds for programs other than ABC programs as set forth in these rules;
- Failure to operate the program in accordance with the approved budget or any part of an approved grant application
- Enrolling ineligible children or refusing to enroll an eligible child due to toilet-development issues or non-payment of other child care fees
- Consistently late reports or missing information
- Failure to report a change in program status within five (5) working days
- Program deficiencies documented by OEC or any authorized representative
- Erroneous or fraudulent billing of OEC vouchers or Special Nutrition programs
- Falsification of any document or information
- Hiring of unqualified staff without consultation with OEC on a Staff Qualifications Plan;

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- Staff members not meeting the requirements of a Staff Qualifications Plan;
- Dismissing or expelling a child from a program without approval from OEC;
- Contact for a support services specialist.

Any program who submits a falsified document will be subject to an immediate investigation for agency action. Agency actions may include: termination from the ABC program, repayment of funds and possible referral of program officials and/or and, or, or responsible employees for criminal prosecution.

An ABC program may appeal any adverse action taken by OEC. Such appeals must be in writing and be received within thirty (30) days of the notice of corrective action. A program wishing to appeal should send a written notice to Attention: OEC Assistant Commissioner or designee for Learning Services the Office of Early Childhood, Four Capitol Mall, Little Rock, AR 72201 at OEC.ABC@ade.Arkansas.gov. The OEC Assistant Commissioner or designee for Learning Services the Office of Early Childhood will make a recommendation to the State Board of Education, which will issue a final ruling

10.1 COMPLIANCE PLANS

The Arkansas Department of Education's Rules and Regulations Governing the Arkansas Better Chance for School Success Program, Section 22.2 specifies that any program found to be out of compliance with an ABC Rule or Regulation be placed on a 60-day compliance plan. However, the Division may impose shorter time frames in instances where a program is in violation of a critical element of the provisions of the Rules and Regulations. Compliance plans are completed during a desk audit. The entire plan must be completed in 60 days as specified in the regulations.

Compliance plan completion dates may vary depending on the noncompliance issue and extenuating circumstances. Items which must be corrected the same day and reported to Childcare Licensing and/or referred for additional Technical Assistance:

- Serious violations that impact the health and safety of children. These may include, but are not limited:
 - violations regarding inappropriate behavior guidance
 - leaving children unattended or unsupervised
 - staff/child ratio violations
 - violations relating to transportation
- Items which must be corrected within 5 calendar days:
 - Financial issue
 - Reporting issues
 - Program changes to the grant application/grant agreement
 - Referrals to the legally responsible special education entity
- Items which must be corrected within 10 calendar days:
 - Eligibility documentation

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- Input of missing or incomplete data in COPA
 - Staff credentials - missing or not up to date
 - Developmental screenings - incomplete/not conducted
- Items which must be corrected within 15 calendar days:
 - Staff Qualification Plan (SQP) for employees not meeting minimum qualifications.
- Items which must be corrected within 30 calendar days:
 - Birth record or documentation of application for birth record
 - Health, hearing, and vision screenings
- Items which must be corrected within 60 calendar days:
 - All other programmatic issues
 - Quality Rating System issues
 - Plan to obtain mandatory professional development hours/courses incomplete
 - Parent involvement issues
 - Community collaboration issues
 - Child Assessment issues

10.2 COMPLAINTS

Complaints are alleged violations of ABC Rules and Regulations, alleged violations of minimum licensing requirements or alleged child maltreatment in an ABC facility. When a complaint is received by any member of OEC staff, an email will be sent to the OEC ABC Program Administrator. When a complaint is received that also involves possible licensing violations, then the Program Eligibility Specialist will email the complaint information to the Licensing Specialist and OEC ABC Administrators.

Any person may make a formal complaint with the OEC if that person has reason to believe that an ABC provider failed to comply with the Rules and Regulations Governing the ABC Program or Ark Code Ann. 6-45-101 et seq.

The formal complaint shall include the following:

- The name, phone number and address of the complaining party;
- The name of the ABC program complained of;
- A brief description of the acts or omissions the complaining party has reason to believe constitute a violation of these rules or Ark Code Ann. §6-45-101 et seq;
- Documents, if any, that support the complaint; and
- The names and contact information, if known, of any witnesses who may possess information relevant to the complaint.
- Signed complaints shall be mailed submitted to OEC at the following email address:
copasupport@mailaccount@ade.arkansas.gov
- OEC staff shall investigate the complaint. The investigation shall afford an opportunity for the ABC provider to respond to the complaint.

10.3 PROBATION

An ABC program will be placed on probation at the end of the Compliance Plan period if there are still outstanding non-compliance issues. The probationary period will be in effect for the remainder of the current program year and the following program year. During the probationary period, an ABC program must correct all outstanding compliance issues and remain in compliance with all ABC Rules and Regulations. If compliance is not achieved and maintained, this may result in denial of future ABC funds, repayment of funds, termination of the ABC grant, and/or exclusion from participation on any OEC program.

10.4 ENROLLMENT

By signing the Arkansas Better Chance/Arkansas Better Chance for School Success (ABC) Grant Agreement, ABC/ABCSS agencies understand and agree that child enrollment and attendance will be monitored each month and child enrollment is expected to be maintained at 100% over the program year. If there is a consistent pattern of child enrollment below the 100% threshold, the ABC Office may reduce funded slots.

The ABC funding award is based upon projected child enrollment from the previous year's October enrollment.

- Programs will be paid monthly based on the enrollment and the number of full days offered.
- During the year, programs enrollment and attendance are monitored.
- Agencies shown to have enrolled ineligible children or children with no documentation of eligibility shall be required to repay the funds expended on behalf of the child to OEC.

10.5 BILLING

Billing is due on the 5th of every month for ABC programs. These submissions are required for programs to be paid in a timely manner. You cannot bill for a child, without attendance also being entered into the data management system.

OEC shall not be responsible for sending out additional or late payments due to failure of the Agency to enter attendance and submit billing in the required state data portal for monthly payments.

- OEC will assume any payments not disputed within thirty (30) days of receipt shall be correct.
- OEC cannot retroactively pay any Agency for previous years' services.
- Payment shall be withheld if a program does not comply with reporting requirements.
- ABC is intended to supplement, not supplant, existing early childhood funding sources.

SECTION 11 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (TA)

An agency may request a technical assistance virtual meeting at any time for assistance with any aspect of the ABC program. Training for program requirements and data management systems are available on-demand through the [ABC website](#).

Behavior Supports for Early Childhood Special Education can be found on the OEC [website](#).

Office of Early Childhood (OEC) has a system called BehaviorHelp to assist programs with behavioral challenges in young children. To submit a request for support, visit. <https://www.behaviorhelponline.org>. Please complete one request per child. Once the request is submitted, the OEC BehaviorHelp team will contact you as quickly as possible. If you have not been contacted within three business days, please email behaviorhelp@ade.arkansas.gov.

SECTION 12 PROGRAM CLOSURE

12.1 PERMANENT CLOSURE

In the event of a program or site closing, written notification from the agency's governing Board must be submitted to the OEC Office. A Final Budget Report should be submitted along with the letter detailing funds used by the program during the time of operation. Leftover funds should be pro-rated and returned to ADE in the form of a check made out to OEC.

Slots from the closing program may be temporarily awarded to another ABC agency through the end of the program year to maintain service for enrolled children.

12.2 TEMPORARY CLOSURE

Programs shall notify OEC if there is a temporary closure due to natural disaster, inclement weather, or any other reason for a temporary closure of the ABC program.

Programs should build in days to each calendar year to meet the 178-day requirement, offsetting any missed days due to unforeseen circumstances. For assistance on building a program calendar, please reach out to the OEC – ABC team. Examples of a program yearly calendar can be found on the [OEC website](#).

SECTION 13 ADDITIONAL REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE USE OF ARKANSAS BETTER CHANCE PROGRAM FUNDS

Purpose: To assure that public funds are spent in compliance with U.S. Const. Amend. I, which prohibits any state or federal “law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

Limitation: This section is not an exhaustive list of criteria to test constitutional sufficiency. The question in every case is whether state funds impermissibly aid a religiously based or affiliated entity in discharging its religious mission. The answer will be controlled by the particular facts of each case.

Definitions: As used in this section:

- “ABC day” means the seven (7) hours beginning with the first ABC activity of the day and includes all activities described in Section 3 of the ABC Program Standards.
- “ABC instructional materials” means any tangible thing, such as a book, paper, poster, picture, slide, object, or display; or image or sound that an ABC provider uses to impart knowledge during an ABC day.
- “Administrative costs” means:
 - Salaries (including fringe)-Director and Assistant Director;
 - Salaries-Housekeeping;
 - Group Health Insurance;
 - Child Care Center liability insurance;
 - Pensions;
 - Unemployment Taxes;
 - Worker’s Compensation;
 - Accounting Fees;
 - Housekeeping Supplies; and
 - Criminal Background Checks.
- “Professional services” means, without limitation, assessment, screening, instruction, and parent/ and, or, or community engagement activities.
- “Religious activities” means, without limitation, religious services, prayer, religious rituals, or religious instruction provided or carried out by or under the authority of the ABC program.
- “Secular” means not related to religion.

13.1 CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION AS AN ABC PROVIDER

ABC programs must admit eligible students without regard to race, gender, national origin, ancestry, color, disability, creed, political affiliation, or religion. ABC funds must be used exclusively for the following expenses incurred to provide ABC services:

- Professional services (compensation and fringe benefits);
- Assessment and screening tools;
- Instructional materials;
- Transportation to and from ABC programs;
- Staff development;
- Financial assistance for staff working towards a secular degree or credential relating to early childhood education, including but not limited to books, tuition and travel; and
- If ABC funds remain after paying the expenses described in subparagraphs (a)-(f), those funds may be used to:
 - Provide food for ABC students;
 - Pay that portion of administration costs, utilities, or both, attributable to day care operations multiplied by the following fraction: number of ABC students/ divided by the total number of day care students.

Each ABC provider must establish and maintain a separate bank account for the deposit, transfer and withdrawal of all ABC funds. No other funds of the ABC provider shall be commingled in the bank account with ABC funds and no ABC funds shall be placed in another bank account maintained by the ABC provider.

13.2 RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY

All ABC instruction and instruction materials must be secular and neutral with respect to religion. No religious activity may occur during any ABC day and no ABC funds may be used to support religious services, instruction or programming at any time.

- Each ABC provider must maintain documentation that it has provided parents and guardians with the following written notice:

“To assure that no religious activity is paid or subsidized by public funds or occurs in any manner suggesting governmental endorsement of any religion or message: ABC funds must be used exclusively to support allowable ABC program costs incurred to provide nonreligious instruction and activities during the ABC day; and No religious activity may occur during any ABC day regardless of the source of funds used to support the activity.”

Each ABC provider must annually certify compliance with each requirement of this rule and agree to such unannounced public inspection and investigation as may be necessary to ascertain and monitor the provider’s compliance.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A IMPORTANT LINKS

Office of Early Childhood – Arkansas Better Chance :

<https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/office-of-early-childhood/arkansas-better-chance-program-abc/abc-program-forms-and-documents>"HYPERLINK "https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/office-of-early-childhood/arkansas-better-chance-program-abc/abc-program-forms-and-documents

Federal Poverty Level Guide:

<https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/office-of-early-childhood/arkansas-better-chance-program-abc/abc-program-forms-and-documents>

OEC Curriculum:

<https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/office-of-early-childhood/arkansas-better-chance-program-abc/copa-curriculum--screening-tools>

COPA:

<https://arkansas.mycopa.com/index.epl>

Child Assessment Online Portal:

<https://www.worksamplingonline.com/wsoTeacherApp/teachApp/login/showLogin.html?product=work>

OEC – Local Leads:

<https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/office-of-early-childhood/local-leads>

OEC – Better Beginnings:

<https://arbetterbeginnings.com/>

Professional Development Resources:

<https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/office-of-early-childhood/professional-development>

ASU Childhood Services – Technical Assistance (TA):

<https://www.astate.edu/a/childhood-services/>

Professional Development Registry (PDR):

<https://pdr.ade.arkansas.gov/>

Arkansas Department of Education
Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) Program Guide

Early Childhood Special Education:

<https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/special-education/early-childhood-special-education1>

Behavior Supports for Early Childhood Special Education:

<https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/special-education/early-childhood-special-education/behavior-supports-for-early-childhood-special-education-ecse>

APPENDIX B DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING INSTRUMENTS

Approved Developmental Screening Tools

The following screening tools have been approved for use within the ABC Program:

- Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ-3), Third Edition
- Battelle
- Brigance
- Carolina
- Denver II
- Dial
- Early Screening Inventory (ESI)
- LAP-D

APPENDIX C (ABC) ELIGIBILITY DOCUMENTATION

Only programs operating an ABC program PRIOR to the 2004-2005 year have a portion of funds, which may be used to serve children under the original ABC guidelines. Qualifying programs may elect to use that specific portion of funding to serve children from birth through age 5 years. The following documentation shall be provided by the parent/guardian prior to enrollment:

- 1. Official documentation that the child meets the age requirement.**
 - A copy of birth certificate
 - Official hospital record with date of birth listed.
- 2. Official documentation that the child's immunizations are current or on a "catch up schedule".**
 - Pediatrician Record
 - Record from Immunization Registry through the Arkansas Department of Health approval from Arkansas
 - Department of Health of exemption
- 3. Documentation of one of the following eligibility criteria**
 - a. Family with gross income not exceeding 200% of Federal Poverty Level which is published annually (For income exemption, see Section 6.2).**
 - Paystubs documenting earned income or unemployment payments for the previous 30 days (full month of paystubs)
 - W-2 forms
 - Federal Income Tax Forms
 - Schedule C or Schedule F, for self-employed only
 - Letter from DHS caseworker showing family gross income is \leq 200% of FPL (TEA, food stamp approval, child care voucher approval, verification of ARKids A with current eligibility status)
 - Notarized letter, or letter on company letterhead, signed by employer showing annual, monthly, or hourly income (if hourly or weekly, number of hours worked daily or weekly).
 - Notarized zero income form.
 - Medicaid Card if accompanied by written verification by DHS of ARKids of current active status.
 - b. Parents without a high school diploma**
 - Letter from high school parent last attended stating parent did not graduate
 - High school transcript sent by high school
 - Letter from GED program that parent is in process of earning a GED
 - Notarized letter from parent stating that the parent did not graduate high school.

c. Low Birth Weight (< 5 lb, 9 oz)

- Birth certificates
- Letter from hospital or doctor verifying birth weight
- Hospital birth card or announcement sent home with baby from hospital (only if birth weight is on the announcement)

d. Teen parent at child's birth (Under 18 years of age)

- Birth certificate of child (if parent age is listed)
- Birth certificate of mother/father and birth certificate of the child
- Driver's license/picture ID card and birth certificate of the child

e. A family with history of substance abuse/addiction

- A letter from doctor or treatment center treating family member
- A letter from a social worker assisting family
- Law enforcement or Court Records

f. Be income eligible for Title I

- Letter from school stating child qualifies for free or reduced lunch in a public-school ABC program
- Letter from school stating Sibling in public school qualifies for free or reduced lunch

g. Be eligible for services under IDEA

- Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Letter of IEP conference decision
- Evaluation / Programming Conference Decision Form
- Letter from Educational Cooperative serving the child

h. A family with a history of abuse or neglect or be a victim of abuse or neglect

- Documentation from DHS
- Law enforcement or Court Records

i. Demonstrable developmental delay as identified through appropriate screening

- Screening Report from an Early Childhood Special Education Program
- Letter from DHS Developmental Disability Services
- Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Letter of IEP conference decision
- Evaluation / Programming Conference Decision Form
- Letter from Educational Cooperative serving the child

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- Psychological Evaluation
- j. Limited English Proficiency**
 - Letter from social worker
 - Letter from Bureau of Citizenship (INS)
 - Parent's Green Card
 - Letter from an adult education program that parent is enrolled in adult education class
 - Written documentation of Observation of child and/or parent during screening

APPENDIX D (ABCSS) ELIGIBILITY DOCUMENTATION

The below listed documentation shall be provided prior to enrollment:

- 1. Official documentation that the child's immunizations are current or on a "catch up schedule".**
 - Pediatrician Record
 - Record from Immunization Registry through the Arkansas Department of Health
 - Approval from Arkansas Department of Health of Exemption
- 2. A copy of the birth certificate or official hospital record with date of birth to verify the child meets one of the following requirements that is in alignment with the legislated Kindergarten enrollment date:**
 - the child is 3 years of age by August 1
 - the child is 4 years of age by August 1
- 3. Documentation that the gross family income does not exceed 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (For income exemption, see Section 6.2).**

Earned income is income resulting from working in a paid position or receiving unemployment benefits from having worked in a paid position. It does not include benefits received from other sources such as TEFRA, SSI, child support, etc. Earned income or lack of earned income must be documented for both parents if two parent household.

Acceptable documentation of income shall include a copy of one of the following:

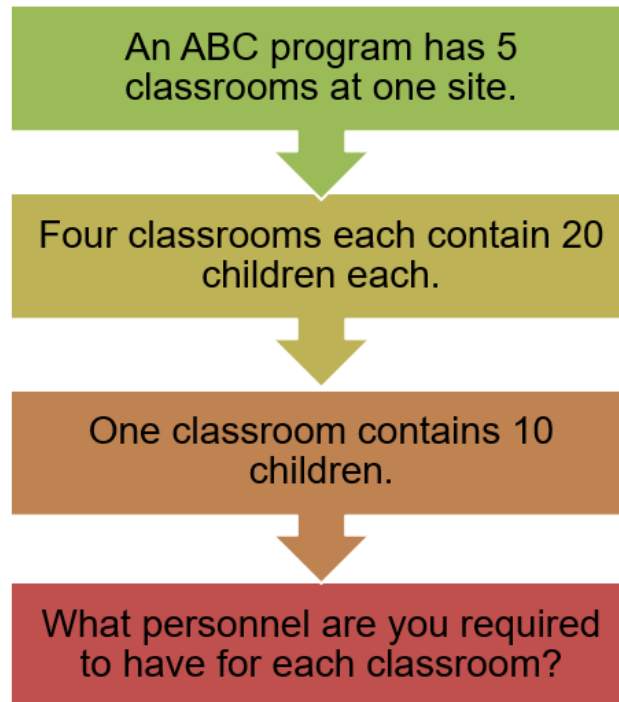
- Paystubs documenting earned income or unemployment payments for the past 30 days (full month of paystubs)
- W-2 forms
- Federal Income Tax Forms
- Schedule C or Schedule F, for self-employed only
- Letter from DHS caseworker showing family gross income is \leq 200% of FPL
- Notarized letter or letter on business letterhead, signed by employer showing income and hours worked daily or weekly.
- Notarized letter signed by each parent in the household verifying that parent(s) is not employed and has no earned income. This form can be found on the OEC [website](#).
- Medicaid Card if accompanied by written verification by DHS of ARKids with current active status.

APPENDIX E REPORTING DEADLINES

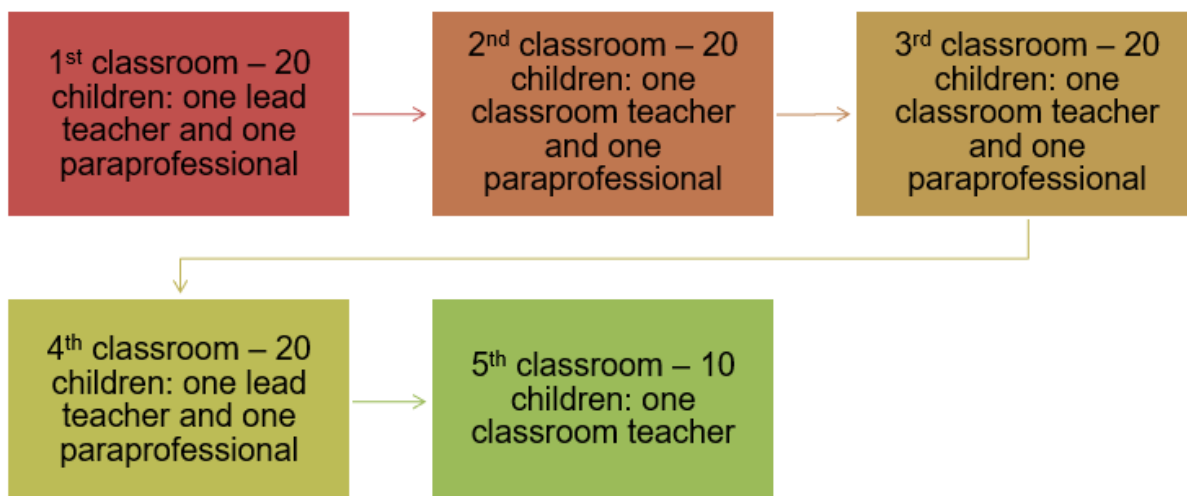
- **COPA BILLING DUE**
 - October 5th
 - November 5th
 - December 5th
 - January 5th
 - February 5th
 - March 5th
 - April 5th
- **BUDGET**
 - January 31 Mid-year expenditure Reports Due
 - July 30 Final expenditure Report Due
 - June 1 Budget Amendment Due
 - Disclosure Audit: Within 120 days of the program's fiscal year completion
- **STAFF INFORMATION**
 - Staff information shall be entered/uploaded into the data management system within 45 calendar days of the beginning of the program year.
 - Staff Qualification Plan (SQP) Application shall be submitted within 15 calendar days of the date of hire.
- **STAFF QUALIFICATION PLANS-PROGRESS REPORTS**
 - January 30th
 - July 30th
- **PROGRAM CHANGES**
 - Report changes to program (new location, new classroom, staff changes, etc.) within 5 days of change.
- **DEVELOPMENTAL & HEALTH SCREENINGS**
 - Completed screenings within 45 calendar days of first day of attendance
 - Screenings shall be entered in the data management system within 60 calendar days of first day of attendance
- **WAIVERS**
 - Child waiver application will be accepted for the upcoming year after July 1st

APPENDIX F STAFFING SCENARIO

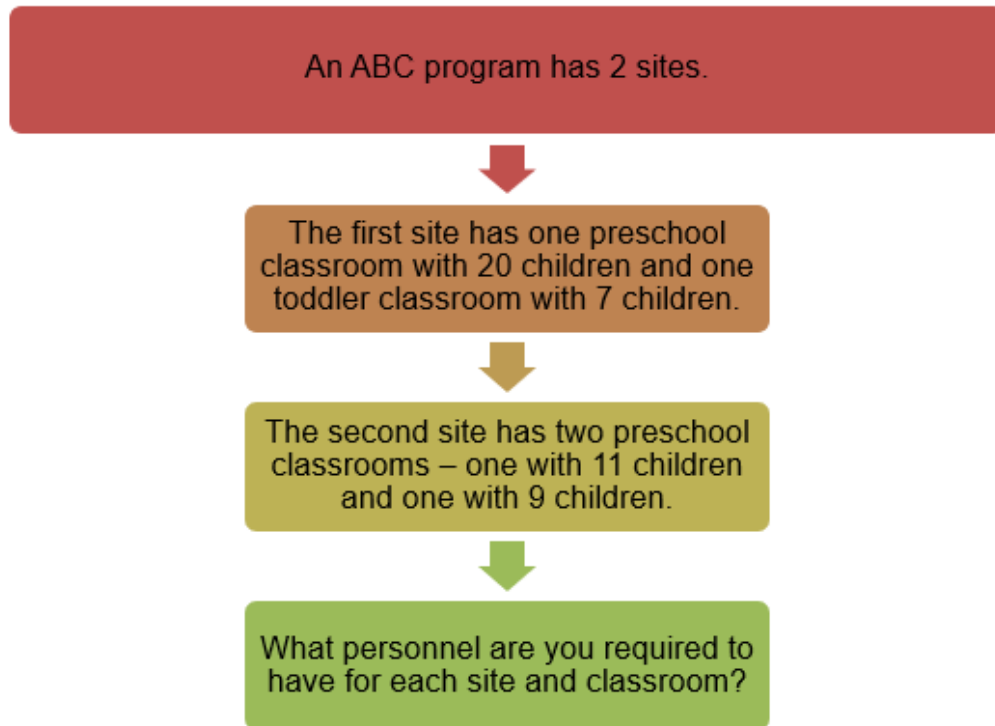
Scenario #1



Scenario #1 Solution



Scenario #2



Scenario #2 Solution

