

Better Beginnings

Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System



Provider RULE BOOK

Arkansas Department of Human Services
Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND HISTORY

In 1993 the legislature passed a bill enabling the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (the “Division” or “DCCECE”) to create a system by which licensed child care and early childhood education entities could be certified as “quality.” One goal of this system was to help the families of Arkansas understand that providers achieving this certification consistently provided a early care and education environment above minimum licensing requirements. The larger goal was to encourage and achieve better lifelong outcomes for children by helping to assure their time in child care and early childhood education is nurturing, enriching and meaningful.

In 2004 the state of Arkansas was awarded a State Maternal and Child Health Care grant which created the Arkansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative (AECCS). Over almost five years, committees, which involved more than two hundred child care and early childhood related professionals met, researched and created an improved approach to “quality.” The result was a tiered quality rating and improvement system for our state called “Better Beginnings,” implemented in 2010. ~~Since 1993 over 25% of our child care and early childhood education providers have participated in the system and provided feedback to the state.~~ Since this time, the state has dedicated much time and many resources to finding ways to meet the needs of the children, and to assist programs in overcoming obstacles to participation.

“Better Beginnings,” Arkansas’ revised tiered quality rating and improvement system is available to every licensed and registered child care provider in Arkansas. The system is designed to help programs improve their day-to-day environment for children, and to establish proven administrative practices. Tools and trainings are readily available for providers as they move along the path from Better Beginnings levels 1- 6.

Better Beginnings is available to every licensed and registered child care provider in Arkansas. Whether you are a family home, an out-of-school time program, or a child care center , your participation is imperative for the future of Arkansas. We are grateful to all who have worked to create Better Beginnings and make it what it is today. Every Child Deserves Our Best!

FOREWORD

This booklet provides:

- ~~— An overview of Better Beginnings~~
- ~~— The rule book containing the Better Beginnings Rules~~

~~Better Beginnings is administered by the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, Licensing and Accreditation Unit. Questions and or further information are available by contacting:~~

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Better Beginnings Overview

Better Beginnings is a tiered quality rating and improvement system (TQRIS) which is a systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs. Program types include center-based care, family child care, and out-of-school time programs. ~~(also called “stand alone” programs when they do not also serve children under age 5).~~

Better Beginnings, is a “building block” approach, which means that programs must meet all requirements at one level before moving to the next. Licensing, or Minimum Licensing Requirements (MLR), is the foundation on which Better Beginnings is built. The requirements at level 1 of Better Beginnings align with MLR and help the director or primary caregiver begin the journey towards quality improvement. At level 2 the staff becomes more involved in the process. Levels 3 and above sets even higher requirements for all components.

Resources are available and have been specifically designed to help providers understand and meet each requirement. The resources will help providers become more knowledgeable and effective for Better Beginnings in the lives of children.

1.0 RULES AND REGULATIONS

1.00 REGULATORY AUTHORITY

1.01 These regulations are enacted pursuant to Arkansas Code Ann. §20-78-201-226 as amended.

1.02 These regulations shall be known as the Arkansas Department of Human Services Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education regulations governing Better Beginnings, Arkansas's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

2.00 PURPOSE

2.01 It is the purpose of these regulations to set the general guidelines for the operation of Better Beginnings, ~~Arkansas' Quality Rating Improvement System.~~

2.02 ~~Participation in the Better Beginnings Quality Rating Improvement System is voluntary.~~ Providers who choose to receive Child Care Development Block Grant Funding (CCDBGF) must be a Better Beginnings participant at the level determined by the Division. This system is intended to certify quality status to child care facilities that meet Better Beginnings requirements as set forth in these regulations.

2.03 Designation of certified status for any child care facility will qualify taxpayers for the following:

- A. Under Act 820 of 1993, corporations that build and equip a certified child care center will be exempt from the state compensating tax levied by Ark. Code Ann. §26-53-101 et. seq (1987). Construction materials and furnishings purchased for use in the initial construction and equipping of a child care center for the exclusive purpose of providing child care to the corporation's employees will be subject to this exemption.
- B. Under Act 820 of 1993, a business that qualifies for the exemption from the Gross Receipts Tax under Ark. Code Ann. §26-52-401(29), shall be allowed an income tax credit of three and nine-tenths percent (3.9%) of the annual salary of employees employed exclusively in providing child care services.
- € Under Act 1268 of 1993, enhanced income tax credits in the amount of twenty percent (20%) of the federal child care credit as allowed under Section 21 of the

Internal Revenue Code will be available to qualified taxpayers who incur child care expenses at child care facilities certified at Better Beginnings level 2 or above. ~~Better Beginnings level 3.~~

3.00 ACRONYMS

3.01

ADE	Arkansas Department of Education
ABC	Arkansas Better Chance
AEDC	Arkansas Economic Development Commission
BAS	Business Administration Scale
CARF	Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities: Child and Youth Services Standards
CDA	Child Development Associate Credential
DCCECE	Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education
DHS	Department of Human Services
ECERS-R	Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale
ERS	Environment Rating Scale
FCCERS-R	Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale
ITERS-R	Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale
MLR	Minimum Licensing Requirements
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NAFCC	National Association for Family Child Care
PAS	Program Administration Scale
PDR	Professional Development Registry
SACERS	School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale
TQRIS	Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System
YPQA	Youth Program Quality Assessment

4.00 AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY

4.01 The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (the Division) will coordinate and administer Better Beginnings.

4.02 The Division is authorized to make temporary revisions to these rules as deemed necessary during a Governor declared public health emergency or natural disaster impacting Arkansas. These revisions will be posted on the Better Beginnings website.

4.03 The Better Beginnings Program Administrator or designee will have final approval of applications for certification as reviewed and recommended by the Better Beginnings staff.

4.04 By December 31st of each year, the Division will be responsible for providing verification to the Department of Finance & Administration of the child care facilities that were qualified for certification at level 2 and above in the current calendar year.

4.05 Each December the Division will be responsible for providing verification to the Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC) of the child care facilities that qualified for Better Beginnings certification in the current calendar year.

4.06 The Division will verify the license status of all applicants as well as status with other DHS programs.

4.07 The Division or Division consultants will provide technical assistance ~~through consultants~~ to any facilities desiring to achieve certification.

4.08 The Division will be responsible for the process of recertifying facilities (See Section 7.00 Application, 8.00 Application Review Process, and 9.00 Maintaining Certification).

4.09 Facilities will be notified of their certification status. The certification notice will denote the level of certification achieved.

5.00 ELIGIBILITY

5.01 All licensed, registered and church operated exempt child care facilities as defined under Ark. Code Ann. §20-78-202, exclusive of foster homes, group homes and custodial institutions, are eligible to apply for certified status.

5.02 All child care facilities, except those excluded in section 5.01 above, operating under a New Provisional or Regular license, registration or church operated exemption as issued by the Division are eligible to apply. Entities with multiple sites, each holding a separate license number must apply for certification for each site individually.

5.03 All facilities must be in good standing with the Department of Human Services. A facility in “good standing” is not currently debarred, defunded, excluded, or under adverse action with licensing or other DHS programs.

~~5.04 A certified facility which becomes the subject of an investigation may retain current certification until the investigation is concluded. The outcome of the investigation may be considered in determining continuation of certification.~~

5.04 Applicants and certified facilities must make their facility accessible at all times during the regular program hours for program reviews and environmental assessments. Such assessments may be unannounced.

5.05 Any of the following situations (including but not limited to) may result in an application being denied, a reduction in level, or removal of Better Beginnings status:

- A. Ineligibility to participate according to section 5.00 Eligibility.
- B. Application documentation which is incomplete or does not meet the intent of the requirements according to sections 6.00, 7.00, 8.00 or 9.00.
- C. Failure to continue to meet the requirements for the component areas for the level which the facility is assigned.
- D. Numerous or serious deficiencies cited by licensing.
- E. Substantiation of complaints received by the Division.
- F. Being placed on Corrective Action or Adverse Action by any program in DHS.
- G. Changes in the license status of the facility.
- H. Falsification of any document or submission of false information to any DHS Division.

5.06 Facilities that have been denied certification or have had certification removed by reason of ineligibility according to any rules of this section may be eligible to re-apply in twelve (12) months unless otherwise notified by the Division.

6.00 COMPONENT AREAS, REQUIREMENTS, AND LEVELS

6.01 There are four (4) component areas in Better Beginnings:

- Administration
- Staff Qualifications and Professional Development
- Learning Environment/ Environment Assessment
- Child Health and Development

There are requirements to be met in each component area in each of the levels. The components, requirements and levels are on the following pages.

ARKANSAS BETTER BEGINNINGS CENTER BASED REQUIREMENTS

All facilities must be in good standing with the Department of Human Services.

COMPONENTS	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2 Must meet all requirements for Level 1	LEVEL 3 Must meet all requirements for Level 1 and Level 2	LEVEL 4 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 3	LEVEL 5 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 4	LEVEL 6 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 5
A. Administration	<p>1.A.1 Administrator attends "PAS Basics" training.</p> <p>The facility has a license in New Provisional or Regular status.</p> <p>1.A.2 The facility may have a program review completed by a certified PAS assessor.</p> <p>School age programs using YPQA may have a PQA Form B review completed by a reliable assessor.</p>	<p>2.A.1 A program review shall be completed by a certified PAS assessor. PAS is not required for school age programs using YPQA. These programs shall have a PQA Form B review completed by a reliable assessor. Every three years.</p> <p>2.A.2 The director shall complete a Strengthening Families training listed on the PDR.</p>	<p>3.A.1 The facility shall score an average of 4.00 or higher on PAS items 1-21 (items 5 and 6 are scored, but are not included in the average). School age programs using YPQA shall have a PQA Form B score of 3.75 or higher.</p> <p>3.A.2 The director shall complete the Strengthening Families online self-assessment for 3 or more Strategies.</p> <p>3.A.3 The facility shall develop a Strengthening Families action plan and implement at least 1 action step.</p>	<p>4.A.1 The facility shall score an average of 4.00 or higher on PAS. School age programs using YPQA shall have a PQA Form B score of 4.00 or higher.</p> <p>4.A.2 The director shall implement at least one additional action step for a total of two.</p>	<p>5.A.1 The facility shall score an average of 5.00 or higher on PAS. School age programs using YPQA shall have a PQA Form B score of 4.25 or higher.</p>	<p>6.A.1 The facility shall score an average of 6.00 or higher on PAS. School age programs using YPQA shall have a PQA Form B score of 4.75 or higher.</p>
B. Staff Qualifications and Professional Development	<p>1.B.1 The facility has a license in New Provisional or Regular status.</p>	<p>2.B.1 The director shall have a minimum of 20 cumulative clock hours of training in the PDR in the areas of program planning, management or leadership.</p>	<p>3.B.1 The director shall have a minimum of 30 cumulative clock hours of training in the PDR in the areas of program planning, management or leadership.</p>			

			3.B.2			
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Arkansas Better Beginnings – Center – Based Requirements page 2

COMPONENTS	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2 Must meet all requirements for Level 1	LEVEL 3 Must meet all requirements for Level 1 and Level 2	LEVEL 4 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 3	LEVEL 5 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 4	LEVEL 6 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 5
		<p>2.B.2 All teaching staff shall participate in 20 clock hours of approved professional development annually.</p> <p>2.B.1 All directors and at least 50% of teaching staff shall complete “Early Learning Standards (ELS) Basics training”. The director and school age staff shall complete “Developmental Assets Training.”</p> <p>2.B.2 All directors and 50% of teaching staff shall complete an ERS training; if the facility is using YPQA school age staff shall complete YPQA training.</p> <p>2.B.3 The director and kitchen manager (if applicable) shall participate in at least 2 clock hours of training</p>	<p>2.B.2 All directors and teaching staff shall participate in 25 clock hours of approved professional development annually.</p>			

		on nutrition for children annually. 2.B.4 The director shall complete training on developmentally appropriate physical activities for children.				
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COMPONENTS	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2 Must meet all requirements for Level 1	LEVEL 3 Must meet all requirements for Level 1 and Level 2	LEVEL 4 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 3	LEVEL 5 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 4	LEVEL 6 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 5
<p>C. Learning Environment / Environment Assessment</p>	<p>1.C.1 The facility has a license in New Provisional or Regular status.</p> <p>1.C.1.A developmentally appropriate daily program schedule is posted in each classroom/program area.</p> <p>1.C.2 Staff develop and implement written daily plans for each group.</p> <p>1.C.2 The facility may have an ERS review.</p>	<p>2.C.1 All classrooms shall have a minimum of two (2) clearly defined interest centers.</p> <p>2.C.2 Written daily plans for each group shall include all areas of development as defined in the Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards: Birth through 60 Months.</p> <p>2.C.3 Staff shall plan and implement daily developmentally appropriate physical activities for all children.</p> <p>2.C.1 The facility shall score an average of 3.00 or higher on the ERS review. Program areas reviewed with YPQA shall score an average of 3.00 or higher.</p>	<p>3.C.1 All classrooms shall have a minimum of three (3) clearly defined interest centers.</p> <p>3.C.3 The staff shall develop a current written curriculum plan and daily plans that include learning goals for children.</p> <p>3.C.1 The facility shall score an average of 4.00 or higher on the ERS. Program areas reviewed with YPQA shall score an average of 3.75 or higher.</p> <p>3.C.2 The staff shall maintain a portfolio for each child.</p>	<p>4.C.1 Staff child ratios shall be maintained as follows: Birth–18 months 1:4 18-36 months 1:7 2 ½ - 3 years 1:11 4 years 1:12 5 years and up 1:18</p> <p>4.C.2 The facility shall score an average of 5.00 or higher on the ERS. Program areas reviewed with YPQA shall score an average of 4.00 or higher.</p>	<p>5.C.1 Staff child ratios shall be maintained as follows: Birth–18 months 1:4 18-36 months 1:6 2 ½ - 3 years 1:10 4 years 1:10 5 years and up 1:18</p> <p>5.C.2 The facility shall score an average of 5.50 or higher on the ERS. Program areas reviewed with YPQA shall score an average of 4.25 or higher</p>	<p>6.C.1 Staff child ratios shall be maintained as follows: Birth–18 months 1:4 18-36 months 1:6 2 ½ - 3 years 1:10 4 years 1:10 5 years and up 1:15</p> <p>6.C.2 The facility shall score an average of 6.00 or higher on the ERS. Program areas using YPQA shall score an average of 4.50 or higher.</p>
<p>D. Environmental Assessment</p>	<p>1.D.1 Facility completes a self-evaluation using</p>					

	applicable approved environment rating tools (ERS or YPQA).					
D. Child Health & Development	<p>1.D.1 The facility has a license in New Provisional or Regular status.</p> <p>1.E.1 Facility documents distribution of ARKids First information to families of uninsured children.</p> <p>1.E.2 Facility shares with families information on child development and on children's health.</p> <p>1.E.3 Any medical and educational care plans involving a child are written and on file, and implementation is documented while maintaining confidentiality.</p>	<p>2.E.1 facility shall share information regarding medical homes for children.</p> <p>2.E.2 Facility shares with families information regarding stages of development for children.</p> <p>2.D.1 The facility shall document distribution of ARKids First information to families of uninsured children.</p> <p>2.D.2 The facility shall share information on child development, stages of development and children's health with families.</p> <p>2.D.3 All children birth to kindergarten shall have an annual developmental screening.</p> <p>2.D.4 The facility shall use a Division-approved tool to complete a self-assessment and create and implement one action plan in the area of nutrition.</p> <p>2.D.5 The facility shall use a Division-approved tool to complete a self-assessment in the area of physical activity.</p>	<p>3.D.1 The facility shall share information on nutrition and physical activity for children with families.</p> <p>3.D.2 The facility shall use a Division-approved tool to identify and implement one physical activity goal from the completed action plan in level 2.</p>	<p>4.D.1 The facility shall use a Division-approved tool to identify and implement two additional action plan goals in physical activity or nutrition from the completed self-assessments.</p> <p>4.D.2 The facility shall take the physical activity and nutrition self-assessments again to reassess their current status.</p>	<p>5.D.1 The facility shall use a Division-approved tool to complete a self-assessment in breastfeeding & infant feeding, outdoor play and learning, OR screen time and implement two action plans in that module.</p>	<p>6.D.1 The facility shall use a Division-approved tool to complete a self-assessment in a fourth module, breastfeeding & infant feeding, outdoor play and learning OR screen time and implement two action plans in that module.</p> <p>6.D.2 The facility shall take the breastfeeding & infant feeding, outdoor play and learning OR screen time self-assessments from Level 4 and Level 5 again to reassess their current status.</p>

ARKANSAS BETTER BEGINNINGS – FAMILY CHILD CARE REQUIREMENTS

All facilities must be in good standing with the Department of Human Services.

COMPONENTS	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2 Must meet all requirements for Level 1	LEVEL 3 Must meet all requirements for Level 1 and Level 2	LEVEL 4 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 3	LEVEL 5 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 4	LEVEL 6 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 5
A. Administration	<p>1.A.1 The facility has a license in New Provisional or Regular status.</p> <p>1.A.1 Primary caregiver attends "BAS Basics" training.</p> <p>1.A.2 The facility may have a program review completed by a certified BAS assessor.</p>	<p>2.A.1 A program review shall be completed by a certified BAS assessor.</p> <p>2.A.2 The primary caregiver shall complete a Strengthening Families training listed on the PDR.</p>	<p>3.A.1 The facility shall score an average of 4.00 or higher on BAS items 2-10 (item 2 is scored, but is not included in the average).</p> <p>3.A.2 The primary caregiver shall complete the Strengthening Families online self-assessment for 3 or more strategies.</p> <p>3.A.3 The primary caregiver shall develop a Strengthening Families action plan and implement at least 1 action step.</p>	<p>4.A.1 The facility shall score an average of 4.00 or higher on BAS (item 2 is scored, but not included).</p> <p>4.A.2 The primary caregiver shall implement at least one additional action step for a total of two.</p>	<p>5.A.1 The facility shall score an average of 5.00 or higher on BAS (item 2 is scored, but not included).</p>	<p>6.A.1 The facility shall score an average of 6.00 or higher on BAS (item 2 is scored but not included).</p>
B. Staff Qualifications and Professional Development	<p>Qualifications (Education and Experience)</p> <p>1.B.1 Primary and secondary caregivers are members of the PDR Registry and/or ADE Registry</p> <p>1.B.2 Primary caregiver meets</p>	<p>Qualifications (Education and Experience)</p> <p>2.B.1 All Caregivers maintain membership in the PDR Registry and/or ADE Registry.</p> <p>2.B.2 Primary caregiver meets requirements</p>	<p>Qualifications (Education and Experience)</p> <p>3.B.1 Primary caregiver meets requirements for PDR Foundation 3 or higher and has an additional 15 clock hours.</p>			

	<p>requirements for PDR Foundation 2 or higher.</p> <p>1.B.1 The facility has a license in <u>New Provisional or Regular status.</u></p>	<p>for PDR Foundation 3 or higher.</p> <p>2.B.3 Within the first year of employment at least 50% of secondary caregivers meet requirements for PDR Foundation 1 or higher.</p>	<p>2.B.2 Within the first year of employment all secondary caregivers meet requirements for PDR Foundation 1 or higher and at least 50% of secondary caregivers are at PDR Foundation 2 or higher.</p>			
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COMPONENTS	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2 Must meet all requirements for Level 1	LEVEL 3 Must meet all requirements for Level 1 and Level 2	LEVEL 4 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 3	LEVEL 5 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 4	LEVEL 6 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 5
Staff Qualifications and Professional Development	<p><u>Professional Development</u> 1.B.3 Primary caregiver completes an ERS training. 1.B.4 Primary caregiver completes training on developmentally appropriate physical activities for children.</p>	<p><u>Professional Development</u> 2.B.2 The primary caregiver and all secondary caregivers shall participate in 20 clock hours of approved professional development annually. 2.B.1 The primary caregiver shall complete “Early Learning Standards Basics” training. 2.B.2 The primary caregiver shall complete an ERS training. 2.B.3 The primary caregiver shall participate in at least 2 clock hours of training on nutrition for children annually. 2.B.4 The primary caregiver shall complete training on developmentally</p>	<p><u>Professional Development</u> 3.B.3 The primary caregiver and all secondary caregivers shall participate annually in 25 clock hours of approved professional development.</p>			

		appropriate physical activities for children.				
C. Learning Environment / Environment Assessment	<p>1.C.1 A developmentally appropriate daily program schedule is posted in each program area.</p> <p>1.C.2 Caregivers develop and implement written daily plans for each group.</p> <p><u>1.C.1 The facility has a license in New Provisional or Regular status.</u></p> <p>1.C.2 The facility may have a FCCERS review.</p>	<p>2.C.1 All program spaces shall have a minimum of two (2) clearly defined interest centers.</p> <p>2.C.2 Written daily plans for each group shall include all areas of development as defined in the Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards: Birth through 60 months.</p> <p>2.C.3 The caregivers shall plan and implement daily developmentally appropriate physical activities for all children.</p> <p>2.C.1 The facility shall score an average of 3.00 or higher on the FCCERS.</p>	<p>3.C.1 All program spaces shall have a minimum of three (3) clearly defined interest centers.</p> <p>3.C.3 The primary caregiver shall develop a current written curriculum plan and daily plans that include learning goals for children.</p> <p>3.C.1 The facility shall score an average of 4.00 or higher on the FCCERS.</p> <p>3.C.2 Caregivers shall maintain a portfolio for each child.</p>	4.C.1 The facility shall score an average of 5.00 or higher on the FCCERS.	5.C.1 The facility shall score an average of 5.50 or higher on the FCCERS.	6.C.1 The facility shall score an average of 6.00 or higher on the FCCERS.

COMPONENTS	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2 Must meet all requirements for Level 1	LEVEL 3 Must meet all requirements for Level 1 and Level 2	LEVEL 4 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 – 3	LEVEL 5 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 – 4	LEVEL 6 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 – 5
D. Environmental Assessment	<p>1.D.1 Facility completes a self-evaluation using the FCCERS.</p> <p>1.</p>					
D. Child Health & Development	<p>1.E.1 Facility documents distribution of ARKids First information to families of uninsured children.</p> <p>1.E.2 Facility shares with families information on child development and on children’s health.</p> <p>1.E.3 Any medical and educational care plans involving a child are written and on file, and implementation is documented while</p>	<p>2.D.1 The primary caregiver shall document distribution of ARKids First information to families of uninsured children.</p> <p>2.E.2 The primary caregiver shall share information regarding medical homes for children with families.</p> <p>2.D.2 The primary caregiver shall share information regarding child development, stages of development and children’s health with families.</p> <p>2.D.3 All children birth to kindergarten shall have an annual developmental screening.</p> <p>2.D.4 The primary caregiver shall use a Division-approved tool to complete a self-assessment and create and implement one action plan in the area of nutrition.</p>	<p>3.D.1 The primary caregiver shall share information on nutrition and physical activity for children with families.</p> <p>3.D.2 The primary caregiver shall use a Division-approved tool to identify and implement one physical activity goal from the completed action plan in level 2.</p>	<p>4.D.1 The primary caregiver shall use a Division-approved tool to identify and implement two additional action plan goals in physical activity or nutrition from the completed self-assessments.</p> <p>4.D.2 The primary caregiver shall take the physical activity and nutrition self-assessments again to reassess their current status.</p>	<p>5.D.1 The primary caregiver shall use a Division-approved tool to complete a self-assessment in breastfeeding & infant feeding, outdoor play and learning, OR screen time and implement two action plans in that module.</p>	<p>6.D.1 The primary caregiver shall use a Division-approved tool to complete a self-assessment in a fourth module, breastfeeding & infant feeding, outdoor play and learning OR screen time and implement two action plans in that module.</p> <p>6.D.2 The primary caregiver shall take the breastfeeding & infant feeding, outdoor play and learning OR screen time self-assessments from Level 4 and Level 5 again to reassess their current status.</p>

	<p>maintaining confidentiality.</p> <p>1.D.1 The facility has a license in <u>New Provisional or Regular status.</u></p>	<p>2.D.5 The primary caregiver shall use a Division-approved tool to complete a self-assessment in the area of physical activity.</p>				
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ARKANSAS BETTER BEGINNINGS - SCHOOL-AGE REQUIREMENTS

All facilities must be in good standing with the Department of Human Services.

COMPONENTS	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2 Must meet all requirements for Level 1	LEVEL 3 Must meet all requirements for Level 1 and Level 2	LEVEL 4 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 3	LEVEL 5 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 4	LEVEL 6 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 5
A. Administration	<p>1.A.1 <u>The facility has a license in New Provisional or Regular status.</u></p> <p>1.A.2 <u>The facility may have a program review completed by a certified PAS assessor.</u></p> <p><u>If using YPQA the facility may have a PQA form B review completed by a reliable assessor.</u></p>	<p>2.A.1 A program review shall be completed by a certified PAS assessor. If using YPQA, PAS is not required but a PQA Form B review shall be completed by a reliable assessor.</p> <p>2.A.2 The director shall complete a Strengthening Families training listed on the PDR.</p>	<p>3.A.1 The facility shall score an average of 4.00 or higher on PAS items 1-21 (items 5 and 6 are scored, but are not included in the average; items 10 and 11 are not scored). If using YPQA, PAS is not required but a PQA Form B score of 3.75 or higher is required.</p> <p>3.1.2 The director shall complete the Strengthening Families online self-assessment for 3 or more Strategies.</p> <p>3.A.3 The facility shall develop a Strengthening Families action plan and implement at least 1 action step.</p>	<p>4.A.1 The facility shall score an average of 4.00 or higher on PAS. If using YPQA, PAS is not required but a PQA Form B score of 4.00 or higher is required.</p> <p>4.A.2 The director shall implement at least one additional action step for a total of two.</p>	<p>5.A.1 The facility shall score an average of 5.00 or higher on PAS. If using YPQA, PAS is not required but a PQA Form B score of 4.25 or higher is required.</p>	<p>6.A.1 The facility shall score an average of 6.00 or higher on PAS. If using YPQA, PAS is not required but a PQA Form B score of 4.75 or higher is required.</p>
B. Staff Qualifications and Professional Development	<p><u>Qualifications (Education and Experience)</u> 1.B.1 Administrator and teaching staff are members of the PDR</p>	<p><u>Qualifications (Education and Experience)</u> 2.B.1 Administrator and teaching staff maintain membership in the PDR</p>	<p><u>Qualifications (Education and Experience)</u> 3.B.1 Administrator meets requirements for PDR Intermediate 1 or higher, including 45</p>			

	<p>Registry and/or ADE Registry.</p> <p>1.B.2 Administrator meets requirements for PDR Foundation 3 or higher, including 21 clock hours of training in program planning/management and/or leadership.</p> <p>1.B.3 Within the first year of employment all staff meet requirements for PDR Foundation 1 or higher. 1.B.1 <u>The facility has a license in New Provisional or Regular status.</u></p>	<p>Registry and/or ADE Registry</p> <p>2.B.2 Administrator meets requirements for PDR Intermediate 1 or higher, including 30 clock hours of training in program planning/management and/or leadership.</p> <p>2.B.3 Within the first year of employment all staff meet requirements for PDR Foundation 1 or higher and at least 50% of teaching staff meet requirements for PDR Foundation 2 or higher.</p>	<p>clock hours of training in program planning/management and/or leadership.</p> <p>3.B.2 Within the first year of employment all staff meet requirements for PDR Foundation 1 or higher and at least 50% of teaching staff meet requirements for PDR Foundation 3 or higher.</p>			
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Arkansas Better Beginnings – School-Age Requirements page 2

COMPONENTS	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2 Must meet all requirements for Level 1	LEVEL 3 Must meet all requirements for Level 1 and Level 2	LEVEL 4 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 3	LEVEL 5 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 4	LEVEL 6 Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 5
Staff Qualifications and Professional Development	<p><u>Professional Development</u></p> <p>1.B.4 Administrator completes an ERS or YPQA Training.</p> <p>1.B.5 Administrator completes training on</p>	<p><u>Professional Development</u></p> <p>2.B.2 All directors and teaching staff shall participate in 20 clock hours of approved professional development annually.;</p>	<p><u>Professional Development</u></p> <p>3.B.3 All directors and teaching staff shall participate in 25 clock hours of approved professional..</p>			

	developmentally appropriate physical activities for children/youth.	<p>for administrators, at least 3 clock hours must be in program planning/management and/or leadership.</p> <p>2.B.1 All directors and at least 50% of teaching staff shall complete “Developmental Assets Basics” training.</p> <p>2.B.2 All directors, and 50% of the teaching staff shall complete an ERS or YPQA training.</p> <p>2.B.3 The director and kitchen manager (if applicable) shall participate in at least 2 clock hours of training on nutrition for school age children annually.</p> <p>2.B.4 The director shall complete training on developmentally appropriate physical activities for children.</p>				
<p>C. Learning Environment / Environment Assessment</p>	<p>1.C.1 A developmentally appropriate daily program schedule is posted in each classroom/program area.</p>	<p>2.C.1 All classrooms/program spaces have a minimum of two (2) clearly defined interest centers if not utilizing single use spaces. <i>Single use spaces are exempt from this requirement as long as</i></p>	<p>3.C.1 All classrooms/program spaces have a minimum of three (3) clearly defined interest centers if not utilizing single use spaces. <i>Single use spaces are exempt from this requirement as long as</i></p>	<p>4.C.1 The facility shall score an average of 5.00 or higher on the SACERS or an average of 4.00 or higher on the YPQA.</p>	<p>5.C.1 The facility shall score an average of 5.50 or higher on the SACERS or an average of 4.25 or higher on the YPQA.</p>	<p>6.C.1 The staff/participant ratio shall be 1:15.</p> <p>6.C.2 The facility shall score an average of 6.00 or higher on the SACERS or an average</p>

	<p>1.C.2 Staff develop and implement written daily plans for each group.</p> <p>1.C.1 The facility has a license in <u>New Provisional or Regular status.</u></p> <p>1.C.2 The facility may have an ERS or YPQA review.</p>	<p><i>other program spaces are available to allow for other interest center activities.</i></p>	<p><i>other program spaces are available to allow for other interest center activities.</i></p>			<p>of 4.50 or higher on the YPQA.</p>
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Arkansas Better Beginnings – School-Age Requirements page 3

COMPONENTS	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
<p>Learning Environment / Environment Assessment</p>		<p>Must meet all requirements for Level 1</p> <p>2.C.2 There shall be written daily plans for each group that include the Developmental Assets concepts.</p> <p>2.C.3 Staff shall plan and implement daily developmentally appropriate physical activities for all participants.</p> <p>2.D.1 The facility shall score an average of 3.00 or higher on the SACERS or an average of 3.00 or higher on the YPQA.</p>	<p>Must meet all requirements for Level 1 and Level 2</p> <p>3.C.3 The facility shall develop a current written curriculum plan and daily plans that are consistent with</p> <p>3.C.1 Facility shall score an average of 4.00 or higher on the SACERS or an average of 3.75 or higher on the YPQA. Developmental Assets.</p>	<p>Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 3</p>	<p>Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 4</p>	<p>Must meet all requirements for Levels 1 - 5</p>

			3.C.2 Staff shall maintain a portfolio for each participant.			
D. Environmental Assessment	1.D.1 Facility completes a self-evaluation using an applicable approved environment rating tool (SACERS or YPQA).					
D. Child/Youth Health & Development	<p>1.E.1 Facility documents distribution of ARKids First information to families of uninsured children/youth.</p> <p>1.E.2 Facility shares with families information on child/youth development and on children's/youth health.</p> <p>1.E.3 Any medical and educational care plans involving a child/youth are written and on file, and implementation is documented while maintaining confidentiality.</p>	<p>2.D.1 The facility shall document distribution of ARKids First information to families of uninsured participants.</p> <p>2.E.1 The facility shall share information regarding medical homes for children/youth with families.</p> <p>2.D.2 The facility shall share information regarding child/youth development, stages of development and children's health with families.</p> <p>2.D.3 The facility shall use a Division-approved tool to complete a self-assessment and create and implement one action plan in the area of nutrition.</p>	<p>3.D.1 The facility shall share information on nutrition and physical activity for school age children with families.</p> <p>3.D.2 The facility shall use a Division-approved tool to identify and implement one physical activity goal from the completed action plan in level 2.</p>	<p>4.D.1 The facility shall use a Division-approved tool to identify and implement two additional action plan goals in physical activity or nutrition from the completed self-assessments.</p> <p>4.D.2 The facility shall take the physical activity and nutrition self-assessments again to reassess their current status.</p>	<p>5.D.1 The facility shall use a Division-approved tool to complete a self-assessment in breastfeeding & infant feeding, outdoor play and learning, OR screen time and implement two action plans in that module.</p>	<p>6.D.1 The facility shall use a Division-approved tool to complete a self-assessment in a fourth module, breastfeeding & infant feeding, outdoor play and learning OR screen time and implement two action plans in that module.</p> <p>6.D.2 The facility shall take the breastfeeding & infant feeding, outdoor play and learning OR screen time self-assessments from Level 4 and Level 5 again to</p>

	<p>1.D.1 <u>The facility has a license in New Provisional or Regular status.</u></p>	<p>2.D.4 The facility shall use a Division-approved tool to complete a self-assessment in the area of physical activity.</p>				<p>reassess their current status.</p>
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ACRONYMS, TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

ADE: Arkansas Department of Education

ADE K 12 Frameworks: http://arkansased.org/parents/refrigerator_curriculum.html

Administrator: person on-site who is responsible for day-to-day operation of the program

ARKids First: Arkansas health insurance for eligible children up to 18 years old; <http://www.arkidsfirst.com>

BAS: Business Administration Scale

Better Beginnings: Arkansas' Quality Rating Improvement System

ERS: Environment Rating Scale(s)

FCCERS: Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale

Good standing: is not currently debarred, defunded, excluded, or under adverse licensing action

Medical home: primary source of comprehensive health care

PAS: Program Administration Scale

Primary caregiver: person in charge of the family child care program

SACERS: School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale

Secondary caregiver: an employee in a family child care program who is supervised by the primary caregiver

Staff: employees who work directly with children/youth, and those involved in the planning or implementing of services for children/youth

PDR: Arkansas' Professional Registry professional development system

PDR Foundation 1: Practitioner is registered in the PDR Registry. Practitioner has completed 15 clock hours of PDR registered early childhood education or after school education training which includes an orientation course.

PDR Foundation 2: Practitioner is registered in the PDR Registry. Practitioner has completed 30 clock hours of PDR registered early childhood education or after school education training.

PDR Foundation 3: Practitioner is registered in the PDR Registry. Practitioner has completed 45 clock hours of PDR registered early childhood education or after school education training or three semester hours of early childhood education or after school care education at an institution of higher education. An administrator's education and experience may be considered to meet the intent of this requirement.

PDR Intermediate 1: Practitioner has completed a CDA credential or 135 clock hours of PDR registered early childhood education or after school education at an institution of higher education or nine semester hours of early childhood education or after school education at an institution of higher education. An administrator's education and experience may be considered to meet the intent of this requirement.

PDR Intermediate 2: Practitioner has completed 18 semester hours of early childhood education or after school education at an institution of higher education. An administrator's education and experience may be considered to meet the intent of this requirement.

PDR Intermediate 3: Practitioner has completed an associate degree which includes 25 semester hours of early childhood education or after school education at an institution of higher education. An administrator's education and experience may be considered to meet the intent of this requirement.

Teaching staff: employees who are regularly scheduled to work directly with children/youth.

YPQA: *Youth Program Quality Assessment*; this tool has two options the YPQA (generally suited for 4th grade—12th grade children) or the Younger Youth Program Quality Assessment (generally suited for kindergarten—6th grade children).

7.00 APPLICATION

~~7.01~~—7.01 The application will consist of the following items:

- A. Application indicating the level of Better Beginnings applying for. This can be submitted electronically through email at BetterBeginnings@dhs.arkansas.gov or via the provider portal.
- B. Supporting documentation for all items listed in section 6 for the facility type and level for which the facility is applying.

~~B. Better Beginnings Application Checklist~~ This document allows the facility to self-select the requirements for which documentation is being provided. ~~C. Annual Staff Record Form and documentation as necessary to validate staff meeting qualifications and professional development requirements (See 6.0) including:~~

- ~~1. Verification that facility staff or caregivers are members in the Professional Development Registry (PDR) or the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) Registry; and~~
- ~~2. PDR and/or ADE Registry transcript verifying requirements for both qualifications and professional development are met. A director's education and experience may be considered to meet the intent of qualification requirements; and~~
- ~~3. College hours obtained in pursuit of a degree in Early Childhood or a related degree may count as approved professional development hours; and~~
- ~~4. CPR and First Aid training may count for up to four (4) hours of approved professional development once every two years; and~~
- ~~5. Any additional documentation for completion of required training that is not reflected on the transcripts.~~

- ~~A. Developmentally appropriate daily program schedule for each age group served.~~
- ~~B. Evidence that daily schedules are posted in each classroom/program space.~~
- ~~C. Sample of current written daily plans for each age group served. Plans must be for two consecutive weeks for each group.~~
- ~~D. Facility self-evaluation using an approved rating tool (ex. ITERS-R, ECERS-R, SACERS, FCCERS-R, YPQA) for each age group served. Self-evaluation documentation consists of completed score sheets from the approved tools, or other self-assessment checklists associated with and compiled from the approved tools.~~
- ~~E. Evidence that ARKIDS First information is distributed to families of uninsured children.~~
- ~~F. Evidence that child/youth development information has been shared with families.~~
- ~~G. Evidence that health information has been shared with families.~~
- ~~H. Program policy and procedures for obtaining and implementing children's medical and educational care plans.~~
- ~~I. J. Current ERS or YPQA scores, if applicable for the level which the facility is applying.~~
- ~~K. Current PAS/BAS scores, if applicable for the level which the facility is applying.~~

7.02 Eligible programs that are accredited through state or national accreditation systems are eligible for full or partial reciprocity and given certification at levels determined by the Division. The following are some examples of approved accreditation systems:

- Arkansas Better Chance (ABC)
- Association Montessori International
- The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities: Child and Youth Services Standards (CARF)
- Early Head Start
- Head Start
- National Afterschool Association (NAA)
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)

Other accreditation systems may be considered upon review and approval by the Better Beginnings Program Administrator.

Facilities with such accreditations shall apply to participate in Better Beginnings via email at BetterBeginnings@dhs.arkansas.gov or the provider portal and submit verification of the accreditation. Additional documentation of Better Beginnings requirements or reviews may be required to determine the level of Better Beginnings certification.

~~7.04 Electronic submission of the applicati-~~

8.00 APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

8.01 Applications without the required supporting documentation will be denied.

8.02 The Division will review supporting documentation ~~are reviewed~~ to determine if each item submitted meets the intent of the associated requirement.

8.03 When the documentation submitted does not meet the requirements, or evidence is not included, the facility may not be eligible for that level. Facilities will be considered for a lower level.

~~8.04 When submitted documentation meets the intent of each associated requirement for level 2 or 3, the facility is notified that Assessors will be assigned to conduct the Environmental Assessment (ex: ERS, YPQA) and the Program Review. The Program review consists of the PAS/BAS assessment and verification of compliance with the other requirements.~~

~~8.05 Facilities which meet all requirements of a level, except an assessment score (ex.:PAS/BAS or ERS/YPQA), may request a re-assessment. The request must include evidence of technical assistance or training. Re-assessments will be conducted no sooner than three (3) months after the first assessment.~~

8.04 Applicants will be certified at the highest level in which all requirements are met as determined by review of all documentation and assessments.

8.05 Applicants who purchase an existing facility that is certified at level two (2) or above and has active voucher participants enrolled may be given a temporary Better Beginnings level to enable them to temporarily bill for the voucher participants enrolled. The new owner will have 90 days to achieve their own Better Beginnings level. The new owner will be certified at the level for which they qualify. If they do not qualify within 90 days, they will be removed from participation.

9.00 MAINTAINING CERTIFICATON

9.01 Certification for level two (2) and above is valid for 36 months unless the facility becomes otherwise ineligible for certification according to section 5.00 Eligibility or 10.00 Adverse Action. Certification for level one (1) facilities will remain valid as long as the license is in new provisional or regular status.

9.02 Facilities certified as Better Beginnings level two (2) and above programs must re-submit all application documents, as outlined in section 7.00, thirty-five (35) months after the date of the last certification. Level one (1) facilities are not required to reapply. Failure to submit required documentation may result in loss of certification status. Certification will be granted according to achievement of requirements (see section 8.00).

9.03 A certified facility which becomes the subject of an investigation may retain current certification until the investigation is concluded. The outcome of the investigation may be considered in determining continuation of certification at any level.

9.04 Facilities requesting to be reviewed for a higher level of certification must submit a new application for the higher level. A full application must be submitted according to section 7.00 and will be processed according to section 8.00. Facilities meeting higher level requirements will be newly certified at the appropriate level. Facilities not meeting higher level requirements will be assigned the level of certification achieved.

9.05 Certified facilities that change location must submit a new application for Better Beginnings certification according to section 7.00 Application and will be processed according to section 8.00 Application Review Process. The facility may retain any current certification level until the application review process is completed. This process shall be completed within 90 days of the relocation. If the facility does not qualify within 90 days, they will be removed from participation.

~~9.05 Certified facilities that change ownership must submit a new application for Better Beginnings certification according to section 7.00 Application and will be processed according to 8.00 Application Review Process.~~

9.06 Unannounced visits, reviews, or random checks may be conducted at any time to verify continued compliance with certification requirements. An unfavorable review may result in a full-scale reassessment, which could change the Better Beginnings status.

9.07 It is recommended that each facility implements a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process with a self-assessment to assist them in maintaining quality practices during the growth years when ERS and PAS reviews are not done. Technical assistance is available upon request.

10.00 ADVERSE ACTION

10.01 Adverse actions include denial, suspension, reduction in level, or removal of certified status. Adverse actions may include but are not limited to:

- A. Ineligibility to participate according to section 5.00 Eligibility.
- B. Application documentation which is incomplete or does not meet the intent of requirements according to sections 6.00, 7.00, 8.00, 9.00.
- C. Failure to continue to meet the requirements for the component areas for the level which the facility is assigned.
- D. Numerous or serious deficiencies cited by licensing.
- E. Substantiation of complaints received by the Division.
- F. Being placed on Corrective Action or Adverse Action by any program in DCCECE.
- G. Changes in the license status of the facility.
- D. Falsification of any document or submission of false information to any DHS Division.

10.02 Facilities that have their Better Beginnings certification denied, suspended, or removed are eligible to re-apply after 12 months unless otherwise notified by the Division.

11.00 APPEAL PROCEDURE

11.01 Facilities that are denied certification status, are found to be ineligible for a particular level or have had their certification status reduced or removed; ~~or have a dispute concerning published requirements~~, may request an appeal. A written request for appeal shall be submitted to the Better Beginnings Program Administrator within ten (10) days of the notice of action, asking that certification status decision be reviewed.

11.02 Upon receipt of the request for appeal, the Better Beginnings Program Administrator will conduct an internal review to ensure that the appropriate processes were followed and to determine the validity of the decision. The Better Beginnings Program Administrator will review the findings with the Division Director and will transmit the findings of the internal review to the facility within 30 days of the receipt of the request to appeal.

11.03 If the outcome of the internal review is unsatisfactory to the facility, the facility has ten (10) days in which to ask for further review by the Better Beginnings Appeal Review Committee. The committee will schedule a hearing and notify the facility in writing of the date and time of the hearing. The committee members are appointed by the chair of the Early Childhood Commission. A decision of the Better Beginnings Appeal Review Committee is the final DHS administrative decision.

11.04 In the event that there are appeals made to multiple units in DCCECE regarding the action that resulted in the Better Beginnings action being appealed, the Better Beginnings appeal will not be heard until the outcome of the other appeals has been determined. If the action is overturned the Better Beginnings appeal will be scheduled. If the action is upheld, the decision is final and there will be no Better Beginnings appeal hearing.

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