Better Beginnings

Quality Rating Improvement System

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

Licensing and Accreditation Unit
Better Beginnings
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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 care environment above minimum licensing requirements. A more broad goal was to encourage and achieve better life long outcomes for children by helping to assure their time in child care and early childhood education is enriching and meaningful.

Since 1993 over 25% of our child care and early childhood education providers have participated in the system and provided feedback to the state. During this time, the state 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.

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 is a revised quality system for our state called "Better Beginnings."

Better Beginnings, Arkansas' revised quality rating improvement system, is available to every licensed and registered child care 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 minimum licensing to Better Beginnings levels 1, 2 and 3.

Thank you for your interest in Better Beginnings – whether you are a family home, a youth development program, or a part or full time center for children – your participation is imperative for the future of Arkansas. We are grateful to all those who have so ardently worked to create Better Beginnings: Every Child Deserves Our Best!

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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:

Better Beginnings Coordinator
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BETTER BEGINNINGS OVERVIEW

Better Beginnings is a quality rating improvement system (QRIS) 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 school age care programs (also called “stand alone” programs when they do not also serve children under age 5).

In Arkansas, the improvement system, 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, is the foundation on which Better Beginnings is built. The requirements at level 1 of Better Beginnings help the administrator or primary caregiver start the process for quality improvement. At level 2 the staff becomes more involved in the process. Level 3 sets even higher requirements for all components.

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

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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' Quality Rating 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 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.

(C) 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 Better Beginnings level 3.

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3.00 ACRONYMS

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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 (the Division)
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
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NAFCC	National Association for Family Child Care
PAS	Program Administration Scale
SACERS	School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale
TAPP	Traveling Arkansas' Professional Pathways
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 Better Beginnings Coordinator will have final approval of applications for certification as reviewed and recommended by the Better Beginnings staff.

4.03 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 level 3 in the current calendar year.

4.04 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 certification in the current calendar year.

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

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4.06 The Division will provide technical assistance through consultants to any facilities desiring to achieve certification.

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

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

5.00 ELIGIBILITY

5.01 All 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 regular child care license, new provisional license, or registration as issued by the Division are eligible. Entities with multiple sites, each holding a separate license number, must apply for certification for each site.

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 licensing action.

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.

5.05 Applicants and certified facilities must make their facility accessible for program reviews and environmental assessments. Such assessments may be unannounced.

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

6.00 COMPONENT AREAS, REQUIREMENTS, AND LEVELS

6.01 There are five (5) component areas in Better Beginnings: Administration, Administrator/Staff Qualifications **/**Professional Development, Learning Environment, Environmental Assessment, and Child Health and Development. There are requirements to be met in each component area in each of three (3) levels. The components, requirements and levels are on the following seven (7) pages.

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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
Administration	**1.A.1** Administrator attends "**PAS** Basics" training.	**2.A.1** A program review is completed by a certified **PAS** assessor. **2.A.2** Administrator completes the Strengthening Families Webinar.	**3.A.1** The facility scores an average of 4.00 or higher on **PAS** items 1-21 (items 5 and 6 scored, but not included in average). **3.A.2** Administrator completes Strengthening Families online self-assessment for 3 or more Strategies. **3.A.3** Facility develops a Strengthening Families action plan and implements at least 1 action step.
Administrator/ Staff Qualifications/ Professional Development	**Qualifications** **1.B.1** Administrator and teaching staff are members of the **TAPP** Registry and/or the **ADE** Registry. **1.B.2** Administrator meets requirements for **TAPP Foundation 3** or higher, including 21 clock hours of training in program planning/management and/or leadership. **1.B.3** All staff meet requirements for **TAPP Foundation 1** or higher. **Professional Development** **1.B.4** Administrator completes an **ERS** training. **1.B.5** Administrator completes training on developmentally appropriate physical activities for children.	**Qualifications** **2.B.1** Administrator and teaching staff maintain membership in the **TAPP** Registry and/or **ADE** Registry. **2.B.2** Administrator meets requirements for **TAPP Intermediate 1** or higher, including 30 clock hours of training in program planning/management and/or leadership. **2.B.3** All staff meet requirements for **TAPP Foundation 1** or higher and at least 50% of teaching staff meet requirements for **TAPP Foundation 2** or higher. **Professional Development** **2.B.4** All administrators and teaching staff participate annually in 20 clock hours of approved professional development; for administrators, at least 3 clock hours must be in program planning/management and/or leadership.	**Qualifications** **3.B.1** Administrator meets requirements for **TAPP Intermediate 1** or higher, including 45 clock hours of training in program planning/management and/or leadership. **3.B.2** All staff meet requirements for **TAPP Foundation 1** or higher and at least 50% of teaching staff meet requirements for **TAPP Foundation 3** or higher. **Professional Development** **3.B.3** All administrators and teaching staff participate annually in 25 clock hours of approved professional development; for administrators, at least 4 clock hours must be in program planning/management and/or leadership.

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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
		2.B.5 At least 50% of teaching staff complete "Framework Basics" training; school age staff should complete "Developmental Assets Training." **2.B.6** All administrative staff and 50% of teaching staff complete an **ERS** training; if facility is using **YPQA** school age staff should complete **YPQA** training. **2.B.7** Administrator and kitchen manager (if applicable) participate annually in at least 2 clock hours of training on nutrition for children.	
Learning Environment	**1.C.1** A developmentally appropriate daily program schedule is posted in each classroom/program area. **1.C.2** Staff develop and implement written daily plans for each group.	**2.C.1** All classrooms/program spaces have a minimum of two (2) clearly defined interest centers. **2.C.2** Written daily plans for each group include all areas of development. **2.C.3** Staff plan and implement daily developmentally appropriate physical activities for all children.	**3.C.1** All classrooms/program spaces have a minimum of three (3) clearly defined interest centers. **3.C.2** Staff maintain a portfolio for each child. **3.C.3** Facility develops a current written curriculum plan and daily plans that include learning goals for children
Environmental Assessment	**1.D.1** Facility completes a self-evaluation using applicable approved environment rating tools (**ERS** or **YPQA**).	**2.D.1** Facility scores an average of 3.00 or higher on the **ERS** for each classroom reviewed; classrooms reviewed with **YPQA** must score an average of 3.00 or higher.	**3.D.1** Facility scores an average of 4.00 or higher on the **ERS** for each classroom reviewed; classrooms reviewed with **YPQA** must score an average of 3.75 or higher.
Child Health & Development	**1.E.1** Facility documents distribution of **ARKids First** information to families of uninsured children. **1.E.2** Facility shares with families information on child development and on children's health. **1.E.3** Any medical and educational care plans involving a child are written and on file, and implementation is documented.	**2.E.1** Facility shares with families information regarding **medical homes** for children. **2.E.2** Facility shares with families information regarding stages of development for children.	**3.E.1** Facility shares with families information on nutrition and physical activity for children.

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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 *Registered facilities must meet licensing ratios*	LEVEL 3 Must meet all requirements for Level 1 Level 2 *Facility must be licensed*
Administration	**1.A.1** Primary caregiver attends "**BAS** Basics" training.	**2.A.1** A program review is completed by a certified **BAS** assessor. **2.A.2** Primary caregiver views Strengthening Families Webinar.	**3.A.1** Facility scores an average of 4.00 or higher on **BAS** items 2-10 (item 2 is scored, but not included in average). **3.A.2** Primary caregiver completes Strengthening Families online self-assessment for 3 or more strategies. **3.A.3** Primary caregiver develops a Strengthening Families action plan and implements at least 1 action step.
Provider / Staff Qualifications / Professional Development	**Qualifications** **1.B.1** Primary and secondary caregivers are members of the **TAPP** Registry and/or **ADE** Registry. **1.B.2** Primary caregiver meets requirements for **TAPP Foundation 2** or higher. **Professional Development** **1.B.3** Primary caregiver completes an ERS training. **1.B.4** Primary caregiver completes training on developmentally appropriate physical activities for children.	**Qualifications** **2.B.1** All caregivers maintain membership in the **TAPP** Registry and/or ADE Registry. **2.B.2** Primary caregiver meets requirements for **TAPP Foundation 3** or higher. **2.B.3** At least 50% of secondary caregivers meet requirements for **TAPP Foundation 1** or higher. **Professional Development** **2.B.4** Primary caregiver participates annually in 20 clock hours of approved professional development. **2.B.5** Primary caregiver completes "Framework Basics" training. **2.B.6** Primary caregiver participates annually in at least 2 clock hours of training on nutrition for children.	**Qualifications** **3.B.1** Primary caregiver meets requirements for **TAPP Foundation 3** or higher and has an additional 15 clock hours. **3.B.2** All secondary caregivers meet requirements for **TAPP Foundation 1** or higher and at least 50% of secondary caregivers are at **TAPP Foundation 2** or higher. **Professional Development** **3.B.3** Primary caregiver participates annually in 25 clock hours of approved professional development.

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Learning Environment	**1.C.1** A developmentally appropriate daily program schedule is posted in each program area. **1.C.2** Caregivers develop and implement written daily plans for each group.	**2.C.1** Program spaces have a minimum of two (2) clearly defined interest centers. **2.C.2** Written daily plans for each group include all areas of development. **2.C.3** Caregivers plan and implement daily developmentally appropriate physical activities for all children.	**3.C.1** Program spaces have a minimum of three (3) clearly defined interest centers. **3.C.2** Caregivers maintain a portfolio for each child. **3.C.3** Facility develops a current written curriculum plan and daily plans that include learning goals for children.
Environmental Assessment	**1.D.1** Facility completes a self-evaluation using the **FCCERS**.	**2.D.1** Facility scores an average of 3.00 or higher on the **FCCERS**.	**3.D.1** Facility scores an average of 4.00 or higher on the **FCCERS**.
Child Health & Development	**1.E.1** Facility documents distribution of **ARKids First** information to families of uninsured children. **1.E.2** Facility shares with families information on child development and on children's health. **1.E.3** Any medical and educational care plans involving a child are written and on file, and implementation is documented	**2.E.1** Facility shares with families information regarding medical homes for children. **2.E.2** Facility shares with families information regarding stages of development for children.	**3.E.1** Facility shares with families information on nutrition and physical activity for children.

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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
Administration	**1.A.1** Administrator attends "**PAS** Basics" training.	**2.A.1** A program review is completed by a certified **PAS** assessor. **2.A.2** Administrator completes Strengthening Families Webinar.	**3.A.1** Facility scores an average of 4.00 or higher on **PAS** items 1-21 (items 5 and 6 scored, but not included in average; items 10 and 11 not scored). **3.A.2** Administrator completes Strengthening Families online self-assessment for 3 or more Strategies. **3.A.3** Facility develops a Strengthening Families action plan and implements at least 1 action step.
Administrator/ Staff Qualifications/ Professional Development	**Qualifications** **1.B.1** Administrator and teaching staff are Members of the **TAPP** Registry and/or **ADE** Registry. **1.B.2** Administrator meets requirements for **TAPP Foundation 3** or higher, including 21 clock hours of training in program planning/management and/or leadership. **1.B.3** All staff meet requirements for **TAPP Foundation 1** or higher. **Professional Development** **1.B.4** Administrator completes an **ERS** or **YPQA** Training. **1.B.5** Administrator completes training on developmentally appropriate physical activities for children/youth.	**Qualifications** **2.B.1** Administrator and teaching staff maintain membership in the **TAPP** Registry and/or **ADE** Registry. **2.B.2** Administrator meets requirements for **TAPP Intermediate 1** or higher, including 30 clock hours of training in program planning/management and/or leadership. **2.B.3** All staff meet requirements for **TAPP Foundation 1** or higher and at least 50% of teaching staff meet requirements for **TAPP Foundation 2** or higher. **Professional Development** **2.B.4** All administrators and teaching staff participate annually in 20 clock hours of approved professional development; for administrators, at least 3 clock hours must be in program planning/management and/or leadership. **2.B.5** At least 50% of teaching staff complete "Developmental Assets Basics" training.	**Qualifications** **3.B.1** Administrator meets requirements for **TAPP Intermediate 1** or higher, including 45 clock hours of training in program planning/management and/or leadership. **3.B.2** All staff meet requirements for **TAPP Foundation 1** or higher and at least 50% of teaching staff meet requirements for **TAPP Foundation 3** or higher. **Professional Development** **3.B.3** All administrators and teaching staff participate annually in 25 clock hours of approved professional development; for administrators, at least 4 clock hours must be in program planning/management and/or leadership.

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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
		2.B.6 All administrative staff and 50% of teaching staff complete an **ERS** or **YPQA** training. **2.B.7** Administrator and kitchen manager (if applicable) participate annually in at least 2 clock hours of training on nutrition for children/youth.	
Learning Environment	**1.C.1** A developmentally appropriate daily program schedule is posted in each classroom/program area. **1.C.2** Staff develop and implement written daily plans for each group.	**2.C.1** All classrooms/program spaces have a minimum of two (2) clearly defined interest centers if not utilizing single-use spaces. *Single use spaces are exempt from this requirement as long as other program spaces are available to allow for other interest center activities* **2.C.2** Written daily plans for each group include the Developmental Assets concepts. **2.C.3** Staff plan and implement daily developmentally appropriate physical activities for all children/youth.	**3.C.1** All classrooms/program spaces have a minimum of three (3) clearly defined interest centers if not utilizing single-use spaces. *Single use spaces are exempt from this requirement as long as other program spaces are available to allow for other interest center activities* **3.C.2** Staff maintain a portfolio for each child/youth. **3.C.3** Facility develops a current written curriculum plan and daily plans that include links to **ADE K-12 frameworks.**
Environmental Assessment	**1.D.1** Facility completes a self-evaluation using an applicable approved environment rating tool (**SACERS** or **YPQA**).	**2.D.1** Facility scores an average of 3.00 or higher on the **SACERS** or scores 3.00 or higher on the **YPQA** for each classroom/program space reviewed.	**3.D.1** Facility scores an average of 4.00 or higher on the **SACERS** or scores 3.75 or higher on the **YPQA** for each classroom/program space reviewed.
Child/Youth Health & Development	**1.E.1** Facility documents distribution of **ARKids First** information to families of uninsured children/youth. **1.E.2** Facility shares with families information on child/youth development and on children's/youth health. **1.E.3** Any medical and educational care plans involving a child/youth are written and on file, and implementation is documented.	**2.E.1** Facility shares with families information regarding medical homes for children/youth. **2.E.2** Facility shares with families information regarding child/youth development.	**3.E.1** Facility shares with families information on nutrition and physical activity for children/youth.

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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: the doctor a child or adult goes to for check-ups or when they get sick. This doctor is called a "primary care physician," or PCP – the doctor that families visit on a regular basis.

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

TAPP: Traveling Arkansas' Professional Pathways professional development system

TAPP Foundation 1: Practitioner is registered in the TAPP Registry. Practitioner has completed 15 clock hours of TAPP registered early childhood education or after school education training which includes an orientation course.
TAPP Foundation 2: Practitioner is registered in the TAPP Registry. Practitioner has completed 30 clock hours of TAPP registered early childhood education or after school education training.
TAPP Foundation 3: Practitioner is registered in the TAPP Registry. Practitioner has completed 45 clock hours of TAPP registered early childhood education or after school care education training or three semester hours of early childhood education or after school care education at an institution of higher education.
TAPP Intermediate 1: Practitioner has completed a CDA credential or 135 clock hours of TAPP 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.
TAPP Intermediate 2: Practitioner has completed 18 semester hours of early childhood education or after school education at an institution of higher education.
TAPP 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.

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 To apply for Better Beginnings certification the following shall be submitted to the Division for review. Division approved forms will be provided.

7.02 The application will consist of the following items:

(A) Better Beginnings Application Form

(B) Better Beginnings Application Checklist. This document allows the facility to self-select the requirements for which documentation is being provided.

(C) Staff Record Form and documentation required as follows:

1) Facility staff or caregivers are members in the Traveling Arkansas Professional Pathways Registry (TAPP) or the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) Registry, and

2) TAPP and/or ADE Registry transcript verifying requirements for both Qualifications and Professional Development are met. An administrator's education and experience may be considered to meet the intent of Qualification requirements; and

3) Any additional documentation for trainings required but not reflected on the transcripts.

(D) Developmentally appropriate daily program schedule for each age group served.

(E) Evidence that daily schedules are posted in each classroom/program space.

(F) Sample of current written daily plans for each age group served. Plans must be for two consecutive weeks for each group.

(G) 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.

(H) Evidence that ARKIDS First information is distributed to families of uninsured children.

(I) Evidence that child/youth development information has been shared with families.

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(J) Evidence that health information has been shared with families.

(K) Program policy and procedures for obtaining and implementing children's medical and educational care plans.

7.03 Child Care centers that are accredited through National Association of Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the National Afterschool Association (NAA), or the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities: Child and Youth Services Standards (CARF), and Family Child Care homes that are accredited through the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) will be considered certified. Facilities with such accreditations will submit a Better Beginnings Application Form and verification of the national accreditation. Additional documentation of Better Beginnings requirements, or reviews may be required determine level of Better Beginnings certification.

7.04 Electronic submissions of application and documentation are acceptable and encouraged.

8.00 APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

8.01 The Better Beginnings Application Form is used to verify the program's eligibility.

8.02 The Application Checklist and submitted documentation are reviewed to determine if each item submitted meets the intent of the associated requirement.

8.03 When submitted documentation does not meet the requirement, 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 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.

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

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9.00 MAINTAINING CERTIFICATION

9.01 Certification is valid for 36 months unless facility becomes otherwise ineligible for certification according to section 5.00 Eligibility or 10.00 Adverse Action.

9.02 Facilities certified as Better Beginnings programs must re-submit all application documents, as outlined in 7.00 Application, thirty-three (33) months after date of last certificate. Failure to submit required documentation may jeopardize certification status. Certification will be granted according to achievement of requirements (see section 8.00 Application Review).

9.03 Facilities requesting to be reviewed for a higher level of certification must wait at least six (6) months after last certification date. A full application must be submitted according to section 7.00 Application and will be processed according to 8.00 Application Review Process. 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 according to section 8.00 Application Review Process.

9.04 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 8.00 Application Review Process. The facility may retain any current certification level until the application review process is completed.

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, review, 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 certified status.

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10.00 ADVERSE ACTION

10.01 Adverse actions include denial, suspension, reduction, or removal of certified status. Adverse actions may result from:

(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) Substantiation of complaints received by the Division office and/or failure to correct deficiencies within a reasonable period of time.

(D) Falsification of any document or submission of false information.

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

11.00 APPEAL PROCEDURE

11.01 Facilities that are denied certification status; are found to be ineligible for a particular level; 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 Coordinator within thirty (30) days of the notice of action asking that the certification status decision be reviewed.

11.02 Upon receipt of the request for appeal, the Better Beginnings Coordinator will conduct an internal review to insure that the appropriate processes were followed and to determine the validity of the decision. The Better Beginnings Coordinator 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.

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