



Southern Regional Action Plan to Improve the Quality of Early Care and Education

Survey on the Status of Implementation Efforts

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Goal 1: All children and families will have the benefit of a quality, comprehensive and coordinated early care and education system.

1.1 Public policy at the federal, state and local level will require planning and coordination across major systems to improve quality, including Head Start, state pre-kindergarten, subsidized child care and licensing.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

In November 2003, Governor Mark Sanford signed Executive Order 2003-26, transferring all functions of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) and Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) from the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) to the South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS). As the lead agency for child care, SCDSS assumed the responsibility for coordinating all current state child care expenditures and programs to increase the efficiency and impact of these resources consistent with the state's child care priorities. Initiatives completed through the Strategic Plan, developed in conjunction with the Child Care Coordinating Council, were:

- The USC/Gateway Child Development and Research Center opened in September 2003. (See section 3.1)
- Planning and preparation for a universal early care and education quality rating system (Palmetto STARS) were initiated.
- Regulations for Child Care Centers were submitted to the General Assembly in June 2004 for approval.
- SCDSS collaborated with First Steps to fund quality 4K in the private sector.
- Draft regulations for Group Child Care Homes and Child Care Facilities operated by Churches or Other Religious Entities were completed.
- The transition of the ABC Child Care Program from SCDHHS to SCDSS was completed during the first six months of 2004.
- DSS Child Care Licensing was incorporated into the Family Assistance Division along with the ABC Program, thereby resulting in the location of all child care services in one Division.
- The stakeholders of the Good Start, Grow Smart Task Force continue to analyze the early learning standards for South Carolina. This coordination involves several state entities, SC Department of Education, SC Department of Social Services, Head Start, Office of First Steps, Catawba Indian Nation and private providers. Current early learning standards are being modified and expanded, and the current assessments of 5-year-olds are being extended to include 3- and 4-year-olds. Once the standards have been developed and expanded and approval is obtained, implementation strategies will be developed.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Governor Jim Hodges signed an Executive Order on September 23, 2001, to create a coordinated child care system by establishing linkages that maximize resources and promote more effective planning to assist families in accessing affordable quality child care when they need it. The Governor designated the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services as the lead agency for child care to:

1. Coordinate all current state child care expenditures and programs to increase the efficiency and impact of these resources consistent with the state's child care priorities.

2. Administer all new funding sources of child care funds and programs to leverage the state's financial and programmatic resources for maximum efficiency and impact.
3. Establish and administer the South Carolina Child Care Coordinating Council. The purpose of the Council is to use statewide child care expertise and interest groups to share information, exchange ideas, provide input on state plans and develop and coordinate strategies to improve the child care system. Membership on the Council includes the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, South Carolina Department of Education, South Carolina Department of Social Services, South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, South Carolina Head Start, South Carolina Office of First Steps, South Carolina Office of the Governor, a representative from Success by 6, a member from The Alliance for South Carolina's Children, a member from the faith-based community service organizations, and at least one member representing child care providers, and remaining members selected by the Council.
4. Develop a statewide system for monitoring and providing technical assistance to child care providers that makes optimal use of the state's resources to improve the quality of child care.
5. Develop a state child care strategic plan that delineates goals, objectives, strategies, timelines, principal partners, and resources to support and expand accessible quality child care. The first plan was implemented July 1, 2002, and is revised annually.

Completed initiatives from the July 1, 2002 plan include:

- Opening of a Center of Excellence at the University of South Carolina to provide a model program for infant/toddler care, preschool, and after-school care housed with a Research Center equipped with distance education capabilities. This initiative is a public-private partnership that includes three state agencies, higher education, a private for-profit provider, Head Start, and two foundations.
- Implementation of a public-private four year old kindergarten pilot to utilize the existing resources of private child care providers to meet the needs of working parents of four year-old-children.
- Completion of the Financing Universal Early Care and Education for America's Children Project, a national study undertaken to analyze the costs and impacts of alternative policy options and financing mechanisms for a quality early care and education system for South Carolina children birth to age five.
- Successful partnership with the United Way of South Carolina and the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services to encourage employers to strategize to expand the affordability and availability of quality child care for working families.
- Draft of revised Child Day Care Licensing Regulations completed and in public review process.
- Increased coordination of federal and state agency funding, services, and resources to promote efficiency and better utilization of limited funds.
- Expansion of the existing three-level child care rating system to become a universal statewide voluntary rating system to measure the quality of early care and education programs in process.

In early 2002, the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services established a state level task force to address the national Good Start, Grow Smart initiative. The Task Force includes members representing all major funding streams as well as provider representatives.

Within the State Department of Education, Even Start programs have grown to 24 districts in the state. SC READS, a statewide grant program funded through Reading Excellence Act Funds, provides for the improvement of the quality of four-year-old and five-year-old kindergarten programs in 32 schools through the use of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), a focus on early literacy and the implementation of family literacy programs. Some of these are coordinated with private child care programs and others are coordinated with Head Start programs.

The Office of Early Childhood Education in the State Department of Education was established to ensure that young children are better prepared for school throughout the state; this Office is also charged in developing strong collaborative programs with Head Start, the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, the South Carolina Department of Social Services, and the South Carolina Office of First Steps. The Office of Early Childhood Education is beginning use of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale throughout the state for four-year-old kindergarten programs to raise the quality of existing programs. Readiness Standards have been reviewed and revised for five-year-olds in math, science, social studies, pre-reading (literacy development), health, and visual and performing arts. Readiness standards have been developed for four-year-olds in math and language arts. Readiness standards for both ages in social and emotional will be adopted from Head Start social and emotional standards.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

The ABC Child Care Program historically has coordinated with the South Carolina Department of Social Services to provide subsidized child care services. The Head Start Collaboration Office has been housed at the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services as well as the ABC Child Care Program. In 1999, the South Carolina legislature enacted First Steps, a comprehensive early childhood initiative to support school readiness for children birth to age 5. The law directed the state to accomplish the goal by improving the efficiency and coordination of existing services and providing new services where gaps are identified. The Healthy Child Care South Carolina Committee developed the *Who Cares?* report, a compilation of recommendations for improving child care in South Carolina. The report was distributed to each legislator during the 2001 legislative session.

Four-year-old kindergarten programs for children most in need began in 1986. For four-year-old kindergarten programs, districts were charged to serve children most likely to experience school failure. The 1986 legislation stated that programs should be coordinated with Head Start and private child care. Many school districts have collaborated with private child care and Head Start in providing child care for children during the times that parents are involved in Even Start programs for adult literacy and parenting sessions. The State Department of Education continues to work toward compliance with this section of the law. All day kindergarten for 5-year-olds began in 1996 with a three-year phase-in for all districts – statewide training on developmentally appropriate practices was held.

1.2 *Public policy at the federal, state and local level will support families by linking early care and education programs to health coverage, physical and mental health care, nutrition, economic support, transportation and parenting education services.*

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

No response.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

ACT 135 legislation continues. Even Start programs have increased each year by one or two local programs in school districts. The SC READS grant allowed 32 additional family literacy programs to be established in the state.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services linked the state's Comprehensive Health Insurance Program to the ABC Child Care Program through coordinated activities targeted at increased awareness by providers as well as families.

The Early Childhood Development and Academic Assistance Act of 1993 (ACT 135) requires all school districts to design and implement a parenting or family literacy program to support parents of children ages birth through five years in their role as principal teachers of their preschool children. Intensive and special efforts must be made to recruit parents whose children are at risk for school failure. Regulations have been revised to state that families of children served in four-year-old kindergarten programs would be targeted to receive parenting programs or family literacy programs (modeled after Even Start programs but using state or local funding) in every school district. Even Start programs involve parents in raising their own level of education, serving families with parenting education, involving children of families in quality four-year-old kindergarten or child care programs, and "parent and child together" where the parent is coached in providing literacy development for their young child(ren).

1.3 *Federal, state and local policies and systems will ensure coordinated, seamless transitions for children moving among early care and education programs and into kindergarten.*

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

The stakeholders of the Good Start, Grow Smart Task Force continue to modify and expand current early learning standards. After appropriate standards for children ages 3 to 5 are developed, a plan of implementation of these standards will be developed to ensure coordinated, seamless transitions for children moving among early care and education programs and into kindergarten.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Training has been delivered to various school district sites all over the state to assist local districts in providing transition from one type care to another in a seamless fashion. To comply with the President's Good Start, Grow Smart initiative, the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services established a task force to better coordinate

among the early childhood community in terms of learning standards. South Carolina's Good Start, Grow Smart Task Force developed a plan for the Child Care and Development Fund State Plan submitted in July 2003. The Task Force is developing voluntary State guidelines on literacy, language, pre-reading, and numeracy for children under the age of five that will align with the State's K-12 learning standards. (These standards will extend and expand South Carolina's existing 4-year-old kindergarten standards for public school programs.) The Task Force is working on the plan for professional development and training of caregivers and administrators related to the learning standards as well as a plan for coordination on this initiative across early childhood programs and funding streams. The South Carolina Department of Education's Office of Early Childhood Education is providing the leadership for this initiative.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

ACT 135 ensures that transition programs are in place for children moving from Head Start, child care, and home situations as they progress into school based four-year-old or five-year-old kindergarten programs. The four-year-old kindergarten legislation of 1986 itself also required that transition be in place as children move from one type care to another.

Goal 2: Rigorous licensing requirements and/or regulatory processes will be enacted to ensure that children are adequately protected in all early care and education settings.

2.1 States will establish staff:child ratios and maximum group sizes for centers and homes that meet NAEYC¹, NAFCC², APHA³ or AAP⁴ national standards.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

In June 2004, Regulations for Child Care Centers were submitted to the General Assembly for approval. If approved, these regulations will implement maximum group size requirements for the first time in SC, and include improved staff:child ratios. Draft regulations for Child Care Centers Operated by Churches or Other Religious Entities will be submitted with the same ratios and group sizes to the General Assembly in January 2005.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

New regulations were proposed by the State Advisory Committee on the Regulation of Child Day Care Facilities in September 2003 and are now in the state's formal review process. The proposed regulations reduce staff:child ratios and implement group size requirements but not to the levels recommended by national standards.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

Staff:child ratios did not meet these staff:child requirements. There was no group size requirement. The current South Carolina Child Care Licensing Regulations have been under review since the late 1990's.

2.2 States will develop and enforce health, fire and safety requirements for all early care and education settings that reflect standards set forth by the APHA and the AAP.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

Regulations for Child Care Centers submitted to the General Assembly in June 2004 update health, sanitation and safety requirements to ensure consistency with the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) and/or USDA requirements. These regulations were revised to establish standards that protect the health, safety and well-being of children receiving care in child care facilities.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

APHA standards have been considered in revising regulations for all types of child care settings.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

APHA and AAP standards were not adopted.

2.3 State law will require strict enforcement of licensing requirements. States will use a range of sanctions that will include license revocation when a provider is unable or unwilling to meet requirements.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

Legislation to give SCDSS the authority to levy fines against providers for non-compliance is currently pending final approval.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

In addition to the deficiency citations and revocation, the South Carolina Department of Social Services has implemented procedures to place providers on corrective action plans and provided more technical assistance. Plans are underway to obtain legislative approval to levy fines against providers for non-compliance.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

Sanctions included written deficiency citations for non-compliance and revocation for serious and chronic violations.

2.4 States will conduct at least three unannounced monitoring visits per year to verify compliance with requirements.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

Under present procedures, Child Care Licensing and Regulatory Services conducts two unannounced monitoring visits per year to each licensed, approved and registered facility. Complaints and the resulting follow-up visits often result in more than three unannounced visits for many facilities.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

With enhanced funding from the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, the South Carolina Department of Social Services was able to hire additional licensing staff and began monitoring all licensed facilities twice a year. With the passage of Bill 199, registered churches began receiving two unannounced inspections per year.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

In 2000, the South Carolina Department of Social Services implemented a plan to conduct unannounced visits to 10% of licensed facilities.

- 2.5 States will require that child care providers, early childhood teachers and others who have regular access to children in early childhood settings have federal and state background checks using fingerprinting and screening against the state child abuse registry.**

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

The current Child Care Licensing Law 20-7-2725 (D) requires state and federal background checks for each person employed by a child care facility. New and renewal applications require a check of the SC Sexual Offender Registry and the Central Registry for Child Abuse and Neglect. Results are recorded on the Central Registry forms.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

A collaborative agreement was entered into with the State Law Enforcement Division to reduce the waiting time for state criminal background results. Child care providers can receive state criminal background results immediately over the Internet, in person at the State Law Enforcement Division office, or by mail within 5 business days.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

Legislation passed in 1995 made it mandatory for all employees in child care settings to have criminal background checks. A check of the Child Abuse Central Registry was also a mandatory requirement.

- 2.6 States will ensure that all licensing and early care and education staff are educated in recognizing signs of child abuse and are trained in the state's child abuse reporting laws.**

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

Child Care Licensing and Regulatory Services has hired no new staff since January 2003. It is a part of basic training to inform new workers of methods of recognizing signs of abuse and of their responsibilities as mandated reporters of suspected abuse.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Licensing staff have received a training update in 2003. Legislation has been introduced to make this type of training mandatory for child care providers.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

Licensing staff received training on the mandated reporter law.

2.7 States will have a well-trained regulatory workforce with average caseloads between 50 and 75 per staff person⁵ and a system capable of providing technical assistance.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

During this reporting period, the SC Task Force on Quality Early Care and Education recommended that caseloads of regulatory staff be within the above-stated range as a 5-year goal. Task Force recommendations were endorsed by 27 public and private organizations in SC; however, no action has been taken on this specific recommendation as funding is not currently available.

Due to staff turnover and previous budget reductions, the average caseload for a licensing worker is approximately 112. Efforts are underway to increase staffing levels. Individual specialists, regional supervisors, and state office staff provide technical assistance to child care providers during initial applications, renewals, monitoring visits, and in training presentations.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Additional licensing staff was hired to reduce the average caseload size; however, the average caseload remains above 75. A training coordinator was hired in 2002. All licensing staff completed basic licensing training in January 2003. Staff will continue to receive training on other aspects of the job.

The South Carolina Task Force on the Cost of Quality Early Care and Education has prepared recommendations on licensing caseload size which will be released in early 2004.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

Staff received limited training and caseloads exceeded 100.

2.8 States will ensure parental right of access to their child's early care and education facilities.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

Proposed child care regulations require that parents have access to his/her child at all times while the child is in care.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Proposed regulations require that parents have access to his/her child while in care.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

A regulatory visit was made to a facility if a parent complained of not being allowed access to his/her child.

Goal 3: States will support development of quality early care and education programs for all children.

- 3.1 States will provide all early care and education providers with resources to help them improve the quality of care and education they deliver, such as technical assistance and training, accreditation support, grants to meet health and safety requirements and grants to support family child care home networks.**

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness: Approximately 41% of First Steps funds (state, federal, local and in-kind) were used to improve the quality of child care. Funds were primarily used for quality enhancement grants, training, technical assistance, and professional development of caregivers. Through a partnership with the ABC Child Care Program, funds were used to increase the availability of subsidized child care to low-income eligible families. Approximately 42 out of 46 First Steps County Partnerships have child care quality enhancement initiatives.

In addition to quality enhancement initiatives, South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness continues to collaborate with SCDSS, ABC Child Care Program to pilot a public-private child care four-year-old kindergarten program in 9 sites across the state.

SCDHHS/SCDSS: The infant and toddler grant initiative to providers continued during this period as well as the partnership among the WestEd Program for Infant/Toddler Caregivers, the University of South Carolina, and the SCDHHS/SCDSS. The coursework for Modules I and II were repeated, expanding further the cadre of faculty, agency staff, and others representing the geographic regions of the state to provide training and technical assistance to child care providers. Training sessions continued to providers receiving grants from the SCDHHS.

The SCDHHS/SCDSS received a grant from ZERO TO THREE to design an infant/toddler credential. This credential includes five new courses for college credit at the two-year degree level developed by teams of faculty from both two-year institutions and four-year institutions under the leadership of the grantee.

The USC/Gateway Child Development and Research Center opened in September 2003. The child care center, which is a public/private partnership with model indoor and outdoor environment design, is available to the early childhood community as an observation site. The mediated studio classroom and other meeting space on the second floor are available to the early childhood community for distance education as well as on-site meeting and training purposes.

Planning and preparation for a universal early care and education quality rating system (Palmetto STARS) were initiated. Long range plans for this system will include technical assistance and training as well as accreditation support. Initial grants, which allow new providers to make improvements to meet health and safety requirements continued.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

State Department of Education: Training has been provided by the Office of Early Childhood Education to over 3,500 four-year-old and five-year-old kindergarten teachers through local school training, regional training and statewide training on the following topics: National Association for the Education of Young Children accreditation, developmentally appropriate instruction, use of Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, health and safety, family literacy, Even Start, early literacy, early math, appropriate instruction in science, use of art in the classrooms, music and movement, appropriate instruction in social studies, classroom management, state readiness standards, use of learning centers, classroom and outside environment, parent involvement, classroom design, playground design, and multicultural-diversity issues. Federal grants have been awarded to 32 school districts for establishing literacy coaches in the classroom to assist 4-year-old and 5-year-old kindergarten teachers. Through the SC READS grants (State award of \$26 million), each district received over \$600,000 to create appropriate learning classrooms for 4-year-old and 5-year-old kindergarten. Even Start grants for the state amount to \$3+million and have been awarded to 24 school districts as described in Goal 1. Training is provided to home visitors and family literacy coordinators in each district. Monitoring visits are also made to all districts receiving Even Start funds as well as schools receiving SC READS funds.

South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services: In addition to the continuing infant and toddler grant initiative to providers, the need to upgrade the state's expertise in infant and toddler care was recognized and addressed through a project that created a partnership among the WestEd Program for Infant/Toddler Caregivers, the University of South Carolina, and the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. A plan was developed to create a training/educational infrastructure to support infant and toddler providers receiving quality grants and others providing services to infants and toddlers by building expertise within the state's higher education institutions and key state agencies. The Program for Infant/Toddler Caregivers certified training for Modules I, II, III, and IV was chosen as the core philosophy and curriculum to build a cadre of expertise statewide. The training was provided through two 3-hour 800 graduate level classes for the summer of 2001 and 2002. The 45 scholarship recipients were required to develop and implement an action plan to show how they had provided training or technical assistance to a specified provider population of their choice. Early childhood college faculty had to commit to revise a current course or to develop a new course using the newly acquired knowledge about infants and toddlers. This training has resulted in a wide variety of training sessions, conference presentations, college coursework, technical assistance and mentors who are now available to caregivers and directors statewide. The cadre of 45 faculty, agency staff, and others represents the geographic regions of the state and cuts across agency lines to meet the state's long-term professional development needs for infant and toddler staff. The second phase of the Certification training began in the summer of 2003, combining the faculty of South Carolina institutions who are certified Program for Infant/Toddler Caregivers trainers and faculty from WestEd. Providers who apply for infant and toddler grants from the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services are required to attend free training provided by agency staff certified as Program for Infant/Toddler Caregivers trainers. Agency staff have created three manuals: *Setting Up a Room for Infants (0-12 months)*, *Setting Up a Room for Young Toddlers (12-24 months)* and *Setting Up a Room for Older Toddlers (24-36 months)* and a fourth manual to specifically address the needs of

family and group providers (*Setting Up a Family/Group Home for 0-36 Months*) has been added. The training, coupled with grants and the manuals on setting up appropriate environments for infants and toddlers have created a comprehensive, coherent strategy for quality improvement in infant and toddler child care programs. This approach is recognized by the State Department of Education.

The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services has partnered with the University of South Carolina, the University of South Carolina Foundations, the Schuyler and Yvonne Moore Family Foundation, Gateway Academy, Head Start, South Carolina Educational Television, and the State Department of Education to create the USC/Gateway Child Development and Research Center. This "Center of Excellence" is designed to be a model program with classrooms implementing the WestEd infant and toddler approach, High Scope model, Head Start classroom in a private child care environment that is mandated to become accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The Center, which opened in September 2003, will be used for on-site observation by other child care programs and will interface with the Research Center located on the second floor of the facility for research and training. A state-of-the-art mediated studio classroom in the Research Center will be used to meet the education and training needs of the South Carolina early care and education community to improve the quality of child care statewide. This mediated classroom will be linked to South Carolina Educational Television for down linking capability to their 1,800 sites. With the large private sector presence in the ABC Child Care Program in South Carolina, this program will provide an example of high quality child care in the private sector and an example of a public-private partnership that maximizes resources.

South Carolina Department of Social Services: The South Carolina Department of Social Services has partnered with the South Carolina Center for Child Care Career Development to enhance its training registry and tracking of required professional development hours for caregivers and directors.

South Carolina Office of First Steps: County initiatives have continued to expand and include areas addressed above as well as family support and involvement, comprehensive early childhood services such as health care and nutrition, accreditation support, technical assistance for quality enhancement, and community mobilization to support school and learning readiness. A private four-year-old kindergarten pilot has been implemented to utilize the existing resources of private child care providers to meet the needs of working parents of four-year-old children. This pilot enables private providers to meet the public four-year-old kindergarten standards and provides technical assistance to them.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

State agencies with responsibility for various early childhood programs prior to 2001 included: State Department of Education, the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, the South Carolina Department of Social Services, and the newly created South Carolina Office of First Steps (1999).

State Department of Education: After the implementation of four-year-old kindergarten programs in South Carolina in 1986, statewide training was offered to all four-year-old

kindergarten teachers in how to provide developmentally appropriate classrooms. After the implementation of all day kindergarten programs in 1996, statewide training was provided to all kindergarten teachers in the state in how to provide developmentally appropriate and instructionally sound kindergarten classrooms.

South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services: As part of the ABC Child Care Program (funded by Child Care and Development Fund, Social Services Block Grant, and state matching funds), child care providers (including centers, family and group day care homes) enrolling in the subsidy program as “enhanced” (Level 2) were eligible for initial grants that could be used to satisfy health and safety requirements or to enhance the quality of the environment for children. In 1999, quality improvement grant funds were made available to all enrolled Level 2 providers in the system for the purpose of purchasing supplies and/or equipment for children’s indoor and/or outdoor use. The grants were designed to enable providers to purchase durable materials for children’s use to replenish and expand existing materials. On a continuing basis, ABC program monitors were available to provide training and technical assistance to child care providers in the ABC system. The tiered reimbursement system implemented at the inception of the ABC system in 1992 promoted support for higher quality through higher maximum reimbursement rates for higher quality programs as well as a weekly quality incentive bonus per subsidy child for child care programs at Level 2 or Level 3 (accredited). Through the South Carolina Center for Child Care Career Development, a monetary bonus was available for caregivers who completed the ABC Child Care Credential (60 contact hours). With the infant and toddler quality funds from the Child Care and Development Fund in 1999, the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services began providing quality, expansion, and implementation grants to ABC child care providers serving infants and toddlers to allow for minor renovations, purchase of materials and equipment and funding to lower staff:child ratios.

South Carolina Department of Social Services: The Child Day Care Licensing and Regulatory Services staff members were available to child care providers for technical assistance relating to regulatory matters and periodically conducted training sessions for child care providers relating to licensing.

South Carolina Office of First Steps to School Readiness: The Office of First Steps begun in 1999 is a county-implemented program with statewide oversight and administration. Each county was required to develop a collaborative effort, a needs assessment and a strategic plan. At least 44 of 46 counties have used First Steps funds for child care quality improvements through quality enhancement grants as well as staff training and professional development.

3.2 States will have Child Care Resource and Referral networks to deliver quality early care and education enhancement support services to providers, such as outreach, training and technical assistance.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

There continue to be four Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies in South Carolina that make up the South Carolina Child Care Resource and Referral Network. This voluntary network is in the process of becoming Quality Assured through

the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, which is the equivalent to accreditation. Trident United Way has successfully completed the requirements for Quality Assurance and received national recognition. Two other CCR&R's, Interfaith Community Services and United Way of Greenville (formerly Greenville's Child), are in the process of becoming individually Quality Assured. The Network has successfully accomplished creating a statewide uniform data collection system and has the ability to report data on a statewide level. Each CCR&R continues to offer services to providers such as training and Family Child Care and Directors' Forums as outlined in previous years. These services provided by the CCR&R Network will be continued and expanded statewide for the upcoming federal fiscal year.

In addition to the services already provided by the CCR&R's, plans for the upcoming federal fiscal year include focusing on training for and collecting data on family child care homes and self arranged care providers, and completing implementation of a single statewide CCR&R entity.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

There are now four Child Care Resource and Referral agencies in South Carolina providing the services as outlined above. All but one provides a toy and resource lending library. Their voluntary network is recognized by the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. The Network is working toward 501(c)3 status. This Network provides training to local Resource and Referral agencies, collaborates with state agencies and organizations, and is currently working on data reports on the supply and demand of child care in South Carolina. The Network is working toward a statewide uniform data collection system housed on the South Carolina national server with the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies.

In the Charleston area where the Resource and Referral agency began with a grant from the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services in 2001, the Trident United Way Success by 6 program has received funds to work on National Association for the Education of Young Children accreditation, National Association for Family Child Care accreditation, a lending library, and Family Child Care Support Network.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

Although there is no funding for a Child Care Resource and Referral Network in South Carolina, there is a voluntary network. The two oldest Resource and Referral agencies are the Interfaith program and Greenville's Child that provided coverage on a limited basis statewide until the creation of the newer agencies. These programs historically have provided services such as training for all child care professionals, child care directors' forums, and training and support services for family child care. Interfaith supports a family child care network in the Midlands area of the state and provides CPR/First Aid classes and other workshops on health and safety and also works with the local technical college and school districts to provide training for them.

Additionally, Clemson University has operated an information and referral system since the early 1990's and conducts the annual statewide market rate survey for child care providers.

3.3 States will implement a rating system to recognize providers for incremental levels of quality.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

Following the completion of recommendations from the South Carolina Quality of Early Care and Education Task Force (which identified key components for a systems approach to quality care and education for children ages birth to five as well as associated costs and funding approaches to support the system), planning for an expanded five star rating system began. With the endorsement of 27 state organizations from the Task Force, the SCDSS and the South Carolina Department of Education (SDE) undertook a partnership to administer the new system. The system will incorporate the state licensing standards, ABC Program Standards, Head Start standards, standards of the SDE, and national accreditation standards into a unified rating system for all early care and education programs. Common assessment tools were chosen, and a core state assessment team representing both agencies began training in January 2004. Planning for a new interagency Management Information System to support the rating system began in the spring of 2004. This system, to be known as Palmetto STARS, is scheduled for implementation in the fall of 2005 for center-based providers. Future expansion will include family and group child care homes.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

South Carolina is currently revising the three tiered system to expand it to a universal voluntary rating system for all child care providers and to expand the number of levels recognized. Recommendations from the South Carolina Task Force on the Cost of Quality Early Care and Education (discussed in response to 6.8) as well as other planning entities are being considered for the new system.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

South Carolina was the first state to create a strategy of tiered reimbursement as a financial incentive for the subsidy program to recognize quality through higher payments to child care providers in 1992. Initially the rating system consisted of two levels – programs meeting voluntary standards higher than state licensing standards and accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. In the mid-1990's the system was expanded to the three level system that is currently in place. The voluntary standards, known as the ABC Child Care Program Standards, were designed to move child care providers toward the direction of National Association for the Education of Young Children accreditation standards. The ABC Standards address: regulatory requirements, staff qualifications and development, health and safety, nutrition and food service, staff-parent interaction, staff:child ratios, staff:child interactions, activities, and physical environment. Providers are rated through regular unannounced on-site reviews and observations and must maintain a passing score to remain a provider in the state's subsidy program. There are standards designed for centers, family child care homes, and group child care homes and specific standards for age groups 0-2, 3-5, and 6-12 years of age. Payment of subsidy to providers is based on the age of the child, level of program quality, and urban vs. rural location. The ABC standards were recognized in the legislation creating the South Carolina First Steps program as a criteria to be addressed in receiving state grants to promote quality.

3.4 States will implement tax and other incentives to develop and expand early care and education programs that demonstrate a higher level of quality.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

Actions detailed in the 2003 Report have continued without major changes during this reporting period.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No action taken.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

First Steps legislation requires programs receiving grant funds to first become licensed and then to meet standards equivalent to ABC Enhanced Standards.

3.5 States will use a formal mechanism to seek parental input in program evaluations and will use that information in making policy decisions related to early care and education programs.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

The Governor's Advisory Committee on Child Care Regulatory, which is charged with promulgating regulations for child care centers, church-operated centers, and group child care homes, includes 6 parents of children in child care settings.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

School districts receiving Even Start funds and SC READS funds are required by their evaluation process to have parents surveyed or interviewed concerning their opinion of the services they have received. This process is done randomly.

South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services contracted for a survey of South Carolina households with children 12 and under related to their child care choices which was conducted in 2002.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

Each school district that received ACT 135 funds requires an annual survey of parents in the district programs.

Head Start requires parental input in program evaluations and the use of that information in making policy decisions.

3.6 States will identify and support the use of effective research based curricula.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

The SCDHHS/SCDSS received a grant from ZERO TO THREE to design an infant/toddler credential. This credential includes five new courses for college credit at the two-year degree level developed by teams of faculty from both two-year institutions and four-year institutions under the leadership of the grantee.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

When the Office of Early Childhood Education, South Carolina Department of Education was created, the professional staff reviewed the definition and research behind the meaning of “developmentally appropriate” and added the term, “instructionally sound.” After research, Creative Curriculum, High Scope, Montessori, and Project Approach (Reggio) were identified as the training approaches most likely to lead to high performance by young children through quality programs in the state. Districts were asked to review the approved training approaches and select the one they preferred and then be trained in that model. Districts are encouraged to continue regular, long term professional development that supports implementation of that chosen particular model.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

The enabling legislation for state funded five-year-old kindergarten and four-year-old kindergarten programs required that developmentally appropriate instruction be provided for children.

Goal 4: Staff in early care and education settings will be appropriately credentialed and adequately compensated.

- 4.1 States will maintain a professional development system that ensures, at a minimum, providers in early care and education settings meet standards set forth by NAEYC, NAFCC, APHA or AAP.**

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

The system discussed in the 2003 Report has continued without major changes during the reporting period.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

The South Carolina Center for Child Care Career Development (Center) expanded its professional development program from the ABC subsidy program to the statewide child care training registry in partnership with the South Carolina Department of Social Services. The Center now administers the South Carolina Early Childhood Credential that is awarded after successful completion of the introductory course for credit offered through the early childhood departments at the 16 technical colleges as well as the 30-hour ABC Child Care Credential for family/group providers. The Center administers the salary bonus for completion of the South Carolina Early Childhood Credential and the 30-hour ABC Child Care Credential. The Center maintains the central personnel registry (computerized database) of training records for the South Carolina Department of Social Service and the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. The database includes all students as well as trainers in the system.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

South Carolina has created a career lattice for child care professional development but licensing standards and ABC Child Care Program Standards (enhanced level) do not have requirements that meet NAEYC standards for staff qualifications. The South

Carolina Center for Child Care Career Development has administered a state professional development system for the ABC Child Care Program since 1993. This included the statewide child care credentialing program (ABC Child Care Credential) through the technical college system in South Carolina as well as a training registry for ABC approved training hours.

As minimal qualifications, licensing requires directors to have a high school degree or GED with 3 years of experience in a licensed child care facility (with one year of supervision of child care staff). ABC Child Care Program Standards requires compliance to licensing requirements as well as a plan to complete an approved certificate within 3 years. As minimal qualifications for caregivers, licensing requires a high school diploma or GED unless the applicant has a disability. If otherwise qualified, the caregiver must have a high school Certificate of Completion. The caregiver must have 6 months experience in a licensed facility. ABC requires a high school diploma or GED and a plan to complete an approved credential or 60 approved contact hours of training for credentialing. Staff qualifications are monitored by licensing staff at initial licensure and licensure renewal. For programs participating in the ABC Child Care system, staff qualifications are monitored against the ABC Child Care Program Standards at initial enrollment and at regular unannounced review dates.

The State Department of Education exceeds the standards set forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. All four-year-old and five-year-old kindergarten teachers are required to have a minimum of a bachelor's degree with a minimum of 12 hours in early childhood education.

4.2 *States will require approved ongoing annual professional development for staff, appropriate to their education levels and job requirements, as specified in APHA and AAP. States will provide and implement a professional development system that verifies trainers, approves training and tracks the training of participants.*

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

There have been no major changes to the system described in the 2003 Report. However, working with First Steps, T.E.A.C.H. is developing a system to credential technical assistance providers for the proposed Palmetto STARS rating system.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

The Center expanded to maintain a personnel registry of training records for all programs regulated by the South Carolina Department of Social Services and those enrolled in the ABC Child Care Program of the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. The system maintains a central personnel registry (computerized database). Attendance for each training session is documented by an attendance roster and transcripts of each individual are made available to each participant on a regular schedule. Data relating to educational background, years of experience, and employer information are maintained. The database records data on each trainer in the system. The center maintains a registry of all trainers and a voluntary Certified Trainer approval process. At a minimum, Certified Trainers are required to have a degree in early childhood education or a degree in a related field in order to conduct certified training.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

South Carolina licensing regulations require 20 contact hours of continuing education per year for directors and 15 contact hours for caregivers.

For public school early childhood programs, teacher re-certification requires 6 hours of credit every 5 years and 30 clock hours of professional development each year.

The Center for Child Care Career Development (Center) has maintained a personnel registry for the ABC Child Care Program since 1993. The system approved trainers and training and tracked the training of participants.

- 4.3 *The federal government and states will provide universally available, comprehensive scholarships to early care and education providers who are pursuing a CDA or two- or four-year degree in child development, early childhood education, early childhood special education or child care administration. Scholarships will address the costs of tuition, fees and books and will support components such as travel costs, paid release time and child care.***

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

The scholarship program described in the 2003 Report continued. Progress toward articulation agreements required for the scholarship program to apply to four-year degrees was still underway during this reporting period. (See response to 4.8 for further discussion.)

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services provided funding beginning January 1, 2001 to the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees as the licensed entity to administer the South Carolina T.E.A.C.H. project. Head Start has provided funding for Head Start staff in the T.E.A.C.H. program. The South Carolina Department of Social Services has supported T.E.A.C.H. through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funding. South Carolina T.E.A.C.H. provides scholarships for teachers working in child care to complete coursework in early childhood education and to increase their compensation. Teachers, directors, or family child care providers working in a South Carolina Department of Social Services regulated child care setting are eligible to apply for a scholarship. Scholarship funds can be used for college tuition, books, travel, and paid release time from their job. South Carolina T.E.A.C.H. provides scholarships for: South Carolina Early Childhood Credential, State technical college Certificate in Early Childhood Development, State technical college diploma in Early Childhood Development, and an Associate degree in

Early Childhood. South Carolina must achieve articulation between the technical college level and the four- year institution level before T.E.A.C.H. scholarship funds may be used for a four-year degree. The state is currently working toward articulation through a series of Early Childhood Summits.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

No response.

4.4 States will work with educational institutions to ensure that coursework is accessible in order to meet the early care and education workforce training needs, such as courses offered at night, on weekends, in accelerated formats, on-line and in various languages. Courses will address the varying educational levels of the workforce.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

The Center for Child Care Career Development (CCCCD) continued to interface with the state educational institutions to assure accessibility for students receiving T.E.A.C.H. scholarships and other needs. The CCCCCD continued to maintain a registry of all training and track needs statewide.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

The Center for Child Care Career Development continues to interface with the state educational institutions to assure accessibility for students receiving T.E.A.C.H. scholarships and other needs.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

The Center for Child Care Career Development has worked with the State's technical college system since 1993 to ensure that coursework is accessible to meet workforce training needs. The technical college system in South Carolina is known for their responsiveness to workforce needs and has worked collaboratively to meet those needs in early childhood. The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services provided assurance of financial assistance if needed to assure that training would be available in all parts of the state if the class size did not meet the college's enrollment minimum. Training was designed to be hands-on and relevant to caregivers working in the field. As an example of this responsiveness, the early childhood peer group representing all 16 technical colleges completely redesigned its introductory credit course in early childhood to better meet the needs of the early childhood workforce for the South Carolina Early Childhood Credential.

4.5 The federal government and states will provide financial incentives that reward completion of approved levels of professional development.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

The CCCCCD continued to administer the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program, which provides financial incentives that reward completion of approved levels of professional development.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

The South Carolina Early Childhood Credential has replaced the 60-hour ABC Credential and now the \$200 is available for those who successfully complete the new credential. The \$100 bonus is still available for the 30-hour ABC Credential for family and group home providers.

All participants completing a T.E.A.C.H. agreement/contract receive a salary bonus or raise as designated in the model after completing a certain amount of coursework following the agreement/contract period.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

The Smart Money Bonus was available to ABC Child Care Program caregivers who completed either the 60-hour ABC Credential (\$200) or the 30-hour ABC Credential (\$100) that was required for caregivers employed at enhanced ABC child care programs.

4.6 *The federal government and states will provide college loan forgiveness programs for persons earning an approved degree who work for a specified period of time in early care and education programs.*

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

There is no loan forgiveness program. The T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program requires that participants commit to remaining employed at the sponsoring child care program or in the field for at least the period of time specified in the T.E.A.C.H. Model.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No loan forgiveness program. The T.E.A.C.H. scholarship requires that participants commit to remaining employed at the sponsoring child care program or in the field for at least the period of time specified in the T.E.A.C.H. Model.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

No action taken.

4.7 *States will work toward a system whereby staff with approved degrees or credentials will receive employment benefits and compensation at comparable levels to the state's public education system.*

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

The South Carolina Task Force on Quality Early Care and Education included a recommendation that states: "In order to attract and retain appropriately educated staff, compensation should be higher than the current level, commensurate with other human services positions requiring specific education levels. The starting salary should be: Bachelor's Degree \$15.50/hour; Associate's Degree \$13.49/hour. Benefits should be 27 percent of salary (current South Carolina public service practice)." The Task Force benchmarked the salary level to human services positions rather than public education teachers for cost reasons. During this reporting period, 27 state organizations endorsed this recommendation; however, this will have to be a long term strategy based on available funding.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

The South Carolina Task Force on the Cost of Quality Early Care and Education will address this goal in its report to be released in early 2004. (See discussion for 6.8)

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

No action taken.

4.8 States will ensure meaningful agreements and processes to enable the transfer of credits between and among approved two- and four-year degree programs.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

Progress toward articulation between two- and four-year institutions continued with the following two initiatives designed to remove obstacles to articulation. South Carolina was chosen as one of the pilot states for the accreditation of two-year institutions project of the National Association for the Education of Young Children in June 2004. South Carolina's technical college system is leading that initiative at the state level. The SCDHHS/SCDSS received a grant from ZERO TO THREE to design an infant/toddler credential. This credential includes five new courses for college credit at the two-year degree level developed by teams of faculty from both two-year institutions as well as four-year institutions under the leadership of the grantee.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

A series of Summits and smaller work groups have been held. Participants have included all of the 16 state technical colleges, faculty from senior institutions offering degrees in early childhood education, state agencies (including the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, South Carolina Department of Social Services, State Department of Education, State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education, Commission on Higher Education), state professional organizations, and other workforce representatives. Work groups presented proposed course syllabi for 4-5 courses for the group's consideration at the Fall 2003 Summit. The goal is adoption of a statewide articulation agreement.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services and the South Carolina Head Start Collaboration Office recognized that articulation issues were an obstacle to implementation of the bachelor degree model of the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program as well as the anticipated growing needs for more staff with bachelor's degrees in Head Start. They approached the South Carolina Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators to host an Early Childhood Education Summit for the higher education institutions who offer early childhood education coursework in South Carolina to discuss the needs of the early childhood workforce and address articulation issues. The initial Summit was held in October 2000.

Goal 5: Families will have the information to make well-informed decisions about the quality of their child's care and education and to be actively involved in their child's care and education.

5.1 States will support Child Care Resource and Referral networks that are easily accessible to parents and that provide information on child development, quality indicators, provider choices, vacancies and linkages to additional information.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

SCDSS has contracts with the individual Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)

agencies in the state. The individual R&R agencies provide parent services, provider services, community services, and national connections. Each maintains a database of registered, licensed, approved, ABC Enhanced, and nationally accredited child care centers, family child care homes, group homes, and out-of-school time programs. They provide:

- face-to-face and telephone information and referrals for families for child care;
- written material and counseling to families on selecting quality child care;
- resources and connections to other agencies and organizations to families as needed;
- information to families on child care subsidies and sliding fee scales;
- information on Earned Income Tax Credit and other tax credits for child care; and
- referral of complaints from families about child care programs to the appropriate regulatory or monitoring agency; and
- follow-up on a sample of parents using the service.

The CCR&R Network, comprised of the four individual CCR&R agencies, is working on a website that will allow parents to access information about child care by age of child and zip code. Plans for the network include public awareness in collaboration with the SCDSS to provide information and resources to parents and child care providers about quality child care and the Palmetto STARS rating system when implemented.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services has contracts with the individual Child Care Resource and Referral agencies in the state. The individual resource and referral agencies provide parent services, provider services, community services, and national connections. Each maintains a database of registered, licensed, approved, ABC Enhanced, and nationally accredited child care centers, family child care and group homes, and out of school time programs. They provide face to face and telephone information and referrals for families for child care, provide written material and counseling to families on selecting quality child care, provide families with resources and connections to other agencies and organizations as needed, provide information to families on child care subsidies and sliding fee scales, provide information on Earned Income Tax Credit and other tax credits for child care, pass on complaints from families about child care programs to the appropriate regulatory or monitoring agency and conduct follow-up on a sample of parents using the service.

One of the agencies is in the process of becoming "Quality Assured" by the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. The Child Care Resource and Referral agencies have a voluntary network that is recognized by the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. The Network is working on a website that will allow parents to access information about child care by age of child and zip code. Plans for the network include public awareness in collaboration with the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services to provide information and resources to parents and child care providers about quality child care and the new rating system when completed.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

No response.

5.2 States will support early care and education providers in promoting parental involvement and in seeking parental input into the development and improvement of their programs.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

Actions from the 2003 Report will continue. In addition, the proposed Palmetto STARS rating system will include a strong parent education component.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

South Carolina Department of Education: The Office of Early Childhood Education has consistently provided training and workshops that enable local providers to continue the required legislative actions of involving parents in meaningful ways in the educational processes for young children. Parent involvement is a part of the school report card that is required by the State Education Oversight Committee.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services: ABC Child Care Program Standards require that parents are informed about and welcomed as observers and contributors to the program. Parents are to be informed regularly about the program. Programs serving infants and toddlers are required to share daily information with parents regarding feeding times, food eaten, bowel movements, and sleeping patterns. Parents must have unlimited access to their children and to the providers caring for their children during normal hours of program operation and whenever children are in the care of the providers.

South Carolina Department of Education: ACT 135 required that each district provide parenting and/or family literacy programs in schools for parents of young learners. Parents were encouraged to be a part of the programs for their 4 year old and 5 year old children. Each school developed a Parent Advisory Council and parents were elected to serve on that council and develop policy to guide the school programs. The enabling legislation for all day kindergarten programs for four year old kindergarten programs require that parents shall be involved in the classroom activities of the young children.

Goal 6: Quality early care and education programs will be financially accessible to all children.

6.1 Federal and state governments will adjust the child care tax credit expense limits to accurately reflect the cost of quality care.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

The 2003 federal Child and Dependent Care tax credit was increased to \$1,050 for expenses paid for the care of one qualifying person and to \$2,100 for two or more qualifying persons. The 2003 South Carolina tax credit for Child and Dependent Care expense remained 7% of the federal expense. The maximum SC tax credit allowed increased to \$210 for one child and to \$420 for two or more children.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No action taken. Additional consideration is needed to determine the most beneficial strategies for helping make child care more affordable for families. The benefit of a tax credit would be delayed until after a tax return for the year was filed and the refund received, which may not help lower income families afford child care when they most need it – as they are making child care payments.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

The South Carolina credit for Child and Dependent Care expense is 7% of the federal expense. The maximum credit allowed for one child is \$168 and for two or more children is \$336.

6.2 States with income taxes will establish refundable child and dependent care tax credits.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

No change for this reporting period.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No action taken. Note comment in response to 6.1.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

The South Carolina Credit for Child and Dependent Care expense is 7% of the federal expense. The maximum credit allowed for one child is \$168 and for two or more children is \$336.

6.3 State and federal child and dependent care tax credit income-eligibility and expense limits will be indexed for inflation.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

No change for this reporting period.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

None known. Note comment in response to 6.1.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

None known.

6.4 Federal, state, local and private funds will be sufficient to meet 100% of the need for direct early care and education financial aid, based on initial eligibility levels at 85% of the state median income. Federal law will allow and states will implement redetermination policies that allow families to retain early care and education financial aid until they reach 100% of state median income.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

Due to funding constraints, no change in SC for this reporting period.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

For FFY 2003, South Carolina received a decrease in Child Care and Development Fund funding which hampers efforts to increase child care assistance up to 85% of the state median income. State budget reductions could have further impact on current numbers of children who can be served at or below 150% of poverty. Existing funding in South Carolina from federal, state, local, and private funds are currently insufficient to meet 100% of the need for child care assistance at 150% of the federal poverty level which is significantly less than that at 85% of the state median income. In light of severe state budget reductions over the past several years, increasing child care assistance is not an achievable goal for South Carolina at this time.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

According to the US Department of Health and Human Services 1999 estimates, SC was serving about 21,000 of the potentially eligible 115,000 children ages birth to 5 (state eligibility guideline is 150% of the federal poverty level). There is a significant gap between the numbers served and the numbers needing financial aid.

6.5 Federal and state governments should develop policies and systems to assure families receiving financial aid pay no more than 10% of their gross income for early care and education.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

The South Carolina Task Force on Quality Early Care and Education recommended: "Assistance should be available, with low-income families paying 0%-3% of their income and no family paying over 10% of its income for care of a child." Twenty-seven state organizations endorsed this recommendation during the reporting period; however, no action was taken during the reporting period. This will be a long term goal dependent on availability of funding.

The ABC Child Care Program continued to assure that families pay no more than 10% of their gross income for child care. The fee scale containing the weekly co-payments to be paid by parents reflected \$3, \$5, \$7, \$9 or \$11 co-payments per child. Even when the fee scale was revised in February 2004 in order to minimize budget shortfalls, the co-payments were increased to only \$4, \$7, \$9, \$11 and \$13 per week per child. These low co-payment amounts are well below the 10% of gross income for the families served by the ABC Program

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No change.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

The ABC Child Care Voucher System established co-payments assure that families receiving financial aid pay no more than 10% of their gross income for early care and education. The client fee per child ranges from \$3 – 11 per week.

6.6 States will set payment rates at no less than the 75th percentile based on a market rate survey conducted every two years for each level and type of care. Annual inflation adjustments to payment rates will be made between market surveys.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

There have been no changes in payment rates for this reporting period. Payment rates will be examined in conjunction with the Market Rate Survey completed in the Summer of 2004.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Based on the 2002 market rate survey, all maximum payment rates for regulated providers are above the 75th percentile. In the tiered reimbursement system, accredited provider rates are around the 95th percentile, enhanced centers are between the 85th-90th percentiles, enhanced group homes are at the 90th percentile, and enhanced family homes are at the 95th percentile. Licensed center rates are around the 92nd percentile, licensed group homes are at the 80th percentile, and licensed/registered family homes are between the 80th-85th percentiles.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

Annual market rate surveys are conducted and payment rates are adjusted as indicated by the survey. South Carolina has used the 75th percentile as the benchmark for establishing rates for regulated providers.

6.7 States will implement payments to providers commensurate with the quality-rating level achieved by the early care and education programs.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

Planning for the expanded five level quality rating system, to be known as Palmetto STARS, continued during this rating period. The current three level rating system with tiered reimbursement was in place during this reporting period.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No change to date. South Carolina is in the process of expanding the rating system to include additional levels of quality that will impact the tiered reimbursement system.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

The ABC Child Care Program has had a tiered reimbursement strategy tied to quality rating levels since 1992.

6.8 States will examine the financing of quality early care and education in their state and work toward providing payment rates that recognize the cost commensurate with the standards set forth in this action plan.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

South Carolina's ABC subsidy program recognizes the cost commensurate with the current three level quality system in South Carolina. South Carolina examined the

financing of quality early care and education through the South Carolina Task Force on Quality Early Care and Education and finalized its recommendations in May 2003. During this reporting period, 27 state organizations endorsed those recommendations. These recommendations will be incorporated into the new Palmetto STARS quality early care and education rating system as funding becomes available.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

South Carolina, under the leadership of the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, was one of three states chosen to participate in the *Universal Financing of Early Care and Education for America's Children* Project co-directed by Dr. Richard Brandon and Dr. Sharon Lynn Kagan from February 2002 through May 2003. The South Carolina Task Force examined specific policy domains that impact child care quality including financing, tax policy, professional development, compensation, regulation, and governance and then developed recommendations which Dr. Brandon incorporated into the project's early care and education financing simulation model. The model produced detailed estimates of the cost and impact of different financing mechanisms, incorporating alternative policy specifications, and reflecting how financing changes affect parents' choices about type and amount of child care and employment. A public policy report and recommendations will be released in early 2004. As a part of this initiative, a statewide study of 1200 parents was conducted to understand parental decisions about types and amount of child care used and the employment of parents under the supervision of Clemson University.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

No response.

6.9 States will design and aggressively implement outreach initiatives to provide families with easy-to-understand early care and education financial aid information and application assistance.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

No activity during this reporting period due to subsidy funding limitations.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No change.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

Limited subsidy funding available statewide in comparison with the need precludes an aggressive outreach initiative.

Goal 7: States will ensure that accountability is built into all systems, programs and activities undertaken to achieve the goals of this action plan.

7.1 States will convene appropriate stakeholders to develop written strategic plans for improving the quality of early care and education programs in the state. These plans will include key goals, quantifiable measures of progress and program outcomes for all quality enhancement activities.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

The South Carolina Child Care Coordinating Council, under the leadership of the SCDHHS/SCDSS, developed its second annual plan for the period July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004. Members of the Council include a representative from: SC Department of Education, SC DSS, SC Department of Health and Environmental Control, SC Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, SC Head Start Collaboration, First Steps to School Readiness, the SC Office of the Governor, Success By 6, Voices for SC's Children, faith-based community service organizations, and child care providers from local communities. This plan includes key goals, quantifiable measures of progress and program outcomes for all quality enhancement activities.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Stakeholders included in the most recent State Plan for Child Care and Development Fund Services included: members and associations representing the child care service provider industry, United Way/Success by 6, the Catawba Indian Nation, Head Start, South Carolina Afterschool Alliance, South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, the Work Force Investment Administration of the South Carolina Employment Security Commission, South Carolina Department of Education, South Carolina Department of Social Services, South Carolina Office of First Steps to School Readiness, South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, and the Alliance for South Carolina's Children.

The South Carolina Child Care Coordinating Council, under the leadership of the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, prepared its first statewide strategic plan in July 2002 and the second plan in July 2003. Members of the Council include a representative from: South Carolina Department of Education, South Carolina Department of Social Services, South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, South Carolina Head Start Collaboration Office, First Steps, the South Carolina Office of the Governor, Success by 6, the Alliance for South Carolina's Children, faith-based community service organizations, and child care providers from local communities.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

The bi-annual State Plan for Child Care and Development Fund Services includes appropriate stakeholders in the plan process.

The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services prepares in-house strategic plans that include collaboration with appropriate stakeholders.

7.2 States will collect and analyze data and produce written annual reports on progress toward identified goals. Reports will be made readily available to the public.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

The First Steps enabling legislation requires all county partnerships to submit an annual report that includes a description of progress towards program goals, implementation/service delivery, program/service quality, efficiency/effectiveness, recommendations for program changes, client satisfaction, and estimation of cost savings where available. South Carolina First Steps publishes an annual report that is submitted to the SC General Assembly.

Additionally, the legislation requires South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness to have a statewide program evaluation every three years by an independent external evaluator.

The annual Strategic Plan developed in conjunction with the Child Care Coordinating Council includes progress toward identified goals. The new inter-agency Management Information System under development during this reporting period will enhance South Carolina's ability to collect and analyze data related to identified goals.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services: In addition to the State Plan for Child Care and Development Fund Services, *The South Carolina ABC Child Care Program* report was updated and republished 4/01. A special report *South Carolina Child Care: Survey of the Workforce 2000* was published 4/01.

South Carolina Department of Education: In addition to the reports above, the "Penny Report" (developed in 2002) shows the tracking of four-year-old kindergarten children in public school programs to 3rd grade where they take the state assessment (Palmetto Academic Challenge Test). Children who were served in the state four-year-old kindergarten programs outperformed their peers on the assessment. This is extraordinary because those programs are targeted to children "most likely to experience school failure." In 2002, 4-year-old kindergarten and 5-year-old kindergarten data were also first collected by the state school data collection instrument. In December of 2003, a new state web based data collection tool will be used for the first time to document progress of all family based programs.

South Carolina Office of First Steps to School Readiness: The 1999-2002 Program Evaluation Report was prepared by Child Trends.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

South Carolina Department of Health and Human Service: A report on *The South Carolina ABC Child Care Program* was first published during Governor Hodges' administration. Two special reports were published: *Child Care in South Carolina: Quality, Affordability, and Availability* (12/99), *South Carolina Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan* (2/2000).

The State Plan for Child Care and Development Fund Services includes data on progress toward identified goals.

South Carolina Department of Education: ACT 135 requires annual reports to be provided to the Education Oversight Committee concerning the activities and progress of local parenting and/or family literacy programs. Annual data are also collected from four-year-old and five-year-old kindergarten programs and included in state education reports.

7.3 States will use data and annual reports to make continuous policy improvements and evaluate quality enhancement activities.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness: The Child Trends 1999-2002 Report indicated that data collection within First Steps parallels the components of a logic model: tracking inputs, activities, outputs, and in the future outcomes. Through First Steps County Partnerships, documentation is available that indicates the resources, types of programs, and the number of children and/or families receiving First Steps-funded programs. County partnerships, as well as the First Steps state office, have used this information to help determine program modification and/or expansion, determine service needs and fill gaps. Collaborative efforts have increased to identify methods that may be used to determine the impact of First Steps-funded services.

The new inter-agency Management Information System under development during this reporting period, as well as improvements to the licensing and subsidy information systems, will allow for better reporting of data for licensing and the new Palmetto STARS rating system.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Collected state data led to the development of the state First Steps legislation. First Steps is based on the model of Smart Start (North Carolina) where grants are given to counties to provide readiness needs to children and families. Data on family needs in the state have led to the 32 additional family literacy programs as funded through the SC READS grant. Annual compilation of teacher surveys and training evaluations leads to strategic planning in the Office of Early Childhood of the State Department of Education as next year activities are based on the needs as indicated by the evaluations and surveys. ECERS monitoring visits to local districts will provide information concerning the quality of early childhood sites throughout the state. This information will be listed on state report cards for primary schools. Data from ABC Program Monitoring reports have led to child care provider grant initiatives. Data collected by the South Carolina Center for Child Care Career Development will lead to identification of training gaps geographically as well as training type and accessibility of training.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

Data on school readiness led to the beginning of the four-year-old kindergarten programs and all day five-year-old kindergarten programs.

¹ NAEYC – National Association for the Education of Young Children

² NAFCC – National Association of Family Child Care

³ APHA – American Public Health Association

⁴ AAP – American Academy of Pediatrics

⁵ American Public Health Association & American Academy of Pediatrics. 2002. *Caring for our children: National health and safety performance –Guidelines for out-of-home child care programs*. Washington, DC: American Public Health Association.