Better Beginnings

Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System



Provider RULE BOOK

Arkansas Department of Human Services

Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education
 https://arbetterbeginnings.com/
 Better Beginnings
 P.O. Box 1437, Slot S-150
 Little Rock, AR 72203-1437
 501-682-8590

BetterBeginnings@dhs.arkansas.gov

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND HISTORY

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

In 2004, the state of Arkansas was awarded a State Maternal and Child Health Care grant which created the Arkansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative (AECCS). Over almost five (5) years, committees, which involved more than two hundred (200) childcare and early childhood related professionals met, researched, and created an improved approach to "quality." The result was a tiered quality rating and improvement system for our state called "Better Beginnings," implemented in 2010. Since this time, the state has dedicated much time and many resources to finding ways to meet the needs of the children, and to assist programs in overcoming obstacles to participation.

"Better Beginnings," Arkansas' revised tiered quality rating and improvement system is available to every licensed and registered childcare provider in Arkansas. The system is designed to help programs improve their day to-day environment for children, and to establish proven administrative practices. Tools and trainings are readily available for providers as they move along the path from Better Beginnings levels one through six (1-6).

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

Better Beginnings Overview

Better Beginnings is a tiered quality rating and improvement system (TQRIS) which is a systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs. Program types include center based care, family child care, and out of school time programs.

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

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

1.0 RULES AND REGULATIONS

1.0 REGULATORY AUTHORITY

- 1.1 These regulations are enacted pursuant to Arkansas Code Ann. §20-78-201-226 as amended.
- 1.2 These regulations shall be known as the Arkansas Department of Human Services-Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education regulations governing Better Beginnings, Arkansas's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

2.0 PURPOSE

- 2.1 It is the purpose of these regulations to set the general guidelines for the operation of Better Beginnings.
- 2.2 Providers who choose to receive Child Care Development Block Grant Funding (CCDBGF) must be a Better Beginnings participant at the level determined by the Division. This system is intended to certify quality status to childcare facilities that meet Better Beginnings requirements as set forth in these regulations.
- 2.3 Designation of certified status for any childcare facility will qualify taxpayers for the following:
 - A. Under Act 820 of 1993, corporations that build and equip a certified childcare center will be exempt from the state compensating tax levied by Ark. Code Ann. §26-53-101 et. seq (1987). Construction materials and furnishings purchased for use in the initial construction and equipping of a childcare center, for the exclusive purpose of providing childcare to the corporation's employees, will be subject to this exemption.
 - B. Under Act 820 of 1993, a business that qualifies for the exemption from the Gross-Receipts Tax under Ark. Code Ann. §26-52-401(29), shall be allowed an income tax credit of three and nine-tenths percent (3.9%) of the annual salary of employees employed exclusively in providing child care services.
 - C. Under Act 1268 of 1993, enhanced income tax credits in the amount of twenty percent (20%) of the federal childcare credit as allowed under Section 21 of the Internal Revenue Code will be available to qualified taxpayers who incur child care expenses at childcare facilities that are certified at Better Beginnings level two (2) or above.

3.00 ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

3.01

0.00	
ADE	Arkansas Department of Education
ABC	Arkansas Better Chance
AEDC	Arkansas Economic Development Commission
BAS	Business Administration Scale
CARF	Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities: Child and Youth Services
	Standards
CDA	Child Development Associate Credential
DCCECE	Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education
DHS	Department of Human Services
Director	The person who meets MLR as director and is on site a minimum of 50% of the
	operational day.
ECERS	Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale
ERS	Environment Rating Scale
FCCERS	Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale
ITERS	Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale
MLR	Minimum Licensing Requirements
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NAFCC	National Association for Family Child Care
PAS	Program Administration Scale
PDR	Professional Development Registry
PQA	Program Quality Assessment
SACERS	School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale
TQRIS	Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System
YPQI	Youth Program Quality Intervention

4.0 AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY

- **4.1** The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE) will coordinate and administer Better Beginnings.
- 4.2 The Division is authorized to make temporary revisions to these rules as deemed necessary during a Governor declared public health emergency or natural disaster impacting the State of Arkansas. These revisions will be posted on the Better Beginnings website.

- 4.3 The Better Beginnings Program Administrator or designee will have final approval of applications for certification as reviewed and recommended by the Better Beginnings staff.
- 4.4 By December 31 of each year, the Division will be responsible for providing verification to the Department of Finance & Administration of the childcare facilities that were qualified for certification at level two (2) and above, in the current calendar year.
- 4.5 Each December, the Division will be responsible for providing verification to the Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC) of the childcare facilities that qualified for Better Beginnings certification in the current calendar year.
- **4.6** The Division or Division consultants will provide technical assistance to any facilities desiring to achieve certification.
- 4.7 The Division will be responsible for the process of recertifying facilities (See Section 7.00 Application, 8.00 Application Review Process, and 9.00 Maintaining Certification).
- **4.8** Facilities will be notified of their certification status. The certification notice will denote the level of certification achieved.

5.0 ELIGIBILITY

- All licensed, registered, and church operated exempt childcare facilities, as defined under Ark. Code Ann. §20-78-202, exclusive of foster homes, group homes, and custodial institutions, are eligible to apply for certified status.
- All childcare facilities, except those excluded in section 5.01 above, operating under a New Provisional or Regular license, registration, or church operated exemption as issued by the Division are eligible to apply. Entities with multiple sites, each holding a separate license number must apply for certification for each site individually.
- All facilities must be in good standing with the Department of Human Services. A facility in "good standing" is not currently debarred, defunded, excluded, or under adverse action with licensing or other DHS programs.
- 5.4 Applicants and certified facilities must make their facility accessible at all times during the regular program hours for program reviews and environmental assessments. Such assessments may be unannounced.

- Any of the following situations (including but not limited to conditions below) may result in an application being denied, a reduction in level, or removal of Better Beginnings status:
 - A. Ineligibility to participate according to section 5.00 Eligibility;
 - B. Application documentation which is incomplete or does not meet the intent of the requirements according to sections 6.00, 7.00, 8.00, or 9.00;
 - C. Failure to continue to meet the requirements for the component areas for the level which the facility is assigned:
 - D. Numerous or serious deficiencies cited by licensing;
 - E. Substantiation of complaints received by the Division;
 - F. Being placed on Adverse Action by any program in DHS;
 - G. Changes in the license status of the facility; or
 - H. Falsification of any document or submission of false information to any DHS Division.
- 5.6 Facilities that have been denied certification or have had certification removed by reason of ineligibility, according to any rules of this section, may be eligible to re-apply in twelve (12) months unless otherwise notified by the Division Director.

6.0 COMPONENT AREAS, REQUIREMENTS, AND LEVELS

- **6.1** There are four (4) component areas in Better Beginnings:
 - Administration
 - Staff Qualifications and Professional Development
 - Learning Environment/Environment Assessment
 - Child Health and Development

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

ARKANSAS BETTER BEGINNINGS CHILD CARE CENTER REQUIREMENTS

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

COMPONENTS	LEVEL 1	FEVEL-2	E-TEAET-3	LEVEL 4	FAEL 5	9-TBABT
		Must meet all	Must meet all	Must meet all	Must meet all	Must meet all
		requirements for	requirements for	requirements for	requirements for	requirements for
		Level 1	Level 1 and Level 2	Levels 1 - 3	Levels 1 4	Levels 1 5
A. Administration	1.A.1 The facility has a	2.A.1 The facility shall	3.A.1 The facility shall	4.A.1. The facility shall	5.A.1. The facility	6.A.1 The facility shall
	license in New	have a PAS review	score an average of	score an average of	shall score an	score an average of
	Provisional or Regular	completed by a	4.00 or higher on PAS	4.00 or higher on PAS.	average of 5.00 or	6.00 or higher on PAS.
	status.	certified PAS assessor.	items 1 21 (items 5	School age programs	higher on PAS.	School age programs
		School age programs	and 6 are scored but	using YPQI shall have a	School age	using YPQI shall have a
	1.A.2 The facility may	using YPQI shall have a	are not included in the	PQA Form B score of	programs using	PQA Form B score of
	have a program review	PQA Form B review	average).	4.00 or higher.	YPQI shall have a	4.75 or higher.
	completed by a	completed by a reliable	School-age programs		PQA Form B score	
	certified PAS assessor.	assessor.	using YPQI shall have a	4.A.2 The director shall	of 4.25 or higher.	
	School age programs		PQA Form B score of	implement at least one		
	using YPQI may have a	2.A.2 The director shall	3.75 or higher.	(1) additional		
	PQA Form B review	complete a		Strengthening Families		
	completed by a reliable	Strengthening Families	3.A.2 The director	action step for a total		
	assessor.	training listed on the	shall complete the	of two (2).		
		PDR.	Strengthening			
			Families online self-			
			assessment for three			
			(3) or more Strategies.			
			3.A.3 The facility shall			
			develop a			
			Strengthening			
			Families action plan			
			and implement at			
			least one (1) action			
			step.			
аķі	1.B.1 The facility has a	2.B.1. All directors and				
Staff Qualifications	license in New	at least fifty percent				
and Professional	Provisional or Regular	(50%) of teaching staff				
Development	status.	shall complete "Early				

				-	-	
		Learning Standards (ELS) Basics Training The director and school age staff shall complete "Developmental Assets Training 2.B.2 All directors and fifty percent (50%) of teaching staff shall complete an ERS-training. if the facility is using YPQI, all directors and school age staff shall complete an ERS-training. if the facility is using YPQI, all directors and school age staff shall complete YPQL training. 2.B.3 The director and kitchen manager (if applicable) shall participate in at least two (2) clock hours of training on nutrition for children annually. 2.B.4 The director shall complete training on developmentally appropriate physical				
٦	1 C 1 The facility has a	2 C 1 The facility chall	3 C 1 The facility chall	4 C 1 Staff to child	5 C 1 Staff to child	6 C 1 Staff to child
Learning Environment		scorp an average of	score an average of	ratios chall bo	ratios shall be	ratios chall bo
/Environment		3.00 or higher on the	4.00 or higher on the	maintained as follows:	maintained as-	maintained as follows:
Assessment	status.	ERS review. School age	ERS. School age-	Birth-18 months 1:4	follows:	Birth-18 months 1:4
	1.C.2 The facility may	programs using PQA	programs using PQA-shall score 3.75 or	18-36 months 1:7	Birth-18 months 1:4	18-36 months 1:6
	have an ERS review.	higher on the PQA.	higher on the PQA.	4 years 1:12	2 1 - 3 years 1:10	4 years 1:10

	Chool ago programs		The ctaffed	1.10 Jun 2.10	1:10	1.1 and 110 1.1E
	2011001 dec pi 061 di 113		יייי אומון	0 7 Cal 3 al 1 a 4 b 1 b 1 b 1 b 1 b 1 b 1 b 1 b 1 b 1 b	7 Cal 3 1:12	ט לכמוט מוומ מא דידט
	using YPQI may have a		maintain a portfolio		5 years and up 1:18	
	PQA review.		for each child.	4.C.2 The facility shall		6.C.2 The facility shall
				score an average of	5.C.2 The facility	score an average of
				5.00 or higher on the	shall score an	6.00 or higher on the
				ERS. School age	average of 5.50 or	ERS. School age
				programs using PQA	higher on the ERS.	programs using the
				shall score 4.00 or	School age	PQA shall score 4.50
				higher on the PQA.	programs using the	or higher on the PQA.
					PQA shall score 4.25	
					or higher on the	
					PQA.	
ф	.1 The facility has a	2.D.1 The facility shall	3.D.1 The facility shall	4.D.1 The facility shall	5.D.1 The facility	6.D.1 The facility shall
Child Health and	cense in New	document distribution	share information on	use a Division	shall use a Division-	use a Division-
Development	rovisional or Regular	of ARKids First	nutrition and physical	approved tool to	approved tool to	approved tool to
	tatus.	information to families	activity for children	complete a self-	complete a self-	complete a self-
		of uninsured children.	with families.	assessment in child	assessment in child	assessment in child
				nutrition, physical	nutrition, physical	nutrition, physical
		2.D.2 The facility shall	3.D.2 The facility shall	activity, farm to ECE,	activity, farm to	activity, farm to ECE,
		share information on	use a Division-	oral health,	ECE, oral health,	oral health,
		child development,	approved tool to	breastfeeding & infant	breastfeeding and	breastfeeding and
		stages of development,	complete a (1)	feeding, outdoor play &	infant feeding,	infant feeding,
		and children's health	physical activity self-	learning, or screen time	outdoor play and	outdoor play and
		with families.	assessment and create	and create and	learning, OR screen	learning, OR screen
			and implement one	implement two action	time and create and	time and create and
		2.D.3 All children, birth	action plan in the	plans in that module	implement two (2)	implement two (2)
		to kindergarten, shall	physical activity		action plans in that	action plans in that
		have an annual	module.	4.D.2 The facility shall	module.	module.
		developmental		use the Division –		
		screening.	3.D.3 The facility shall	approved tool to	5.D.2 The facility	6.D.2 The facility shall
			use the Division-	complete a second self-	shall use the	use the Division –
		2.D.4 The facility shall	approved tool to	assessment in child	Division – approved	approved tool to
		use a Division-	complete a second	nutrition, physical	tool to complete a	complete a second
		approved tool to	self-assessment in the	activity, farm to ECE,	second self-	self-assessment in
		complete a child	physical activity	oral health,	assessment in child	child nutrition,
		nutrition self-	module to assess	breastfeeding & infant	nutrition, physical	physical activity, farm
		assessment and create	progress.	feeding, outdoor play &	activity, farm to	to ECE, oral health,
		and implement one (1)			ECE, oral health,	breastfeeding & infant

	Lido 04+ 2: 20 2 20:+00	200 CO 200 CO	0 22:000	
	action plan in the child	Healthing, OK Screen	alcasticcaning &	tecanile, outdoor play
	nutrition module.	time to assess progress.	infant feeding,	& learning, OR screen
			outdoor play &	time to assess
	2.D.5 The facility shall		learning, OR screen	progress.
	use a Division-		time to assess	
	approved tool to		progress.	
	complete a second self-			
	assessment in the child			
	nutrition model to			
	assess progress.			

ARKANSAS BETTER BEGINNINGS — LICENSED AND REGISTERED HOME REQUIREMENTS

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

COMPONENTS	LEVEL 1	FNEL-2	E-TE/NET-3	LEVEL 4	FREFE 2	9 TENET 0
		Must meet all	Must meet all	Must meet all	Must meet all	Must meet all
		requirements for	requirements for	requirements for	requirements for	requirements for
		Level 1	Level 1 and Level 2	Levels 1 3	Levels 1 4	Levels 1 5
₹	1.A.1 The facility has a		3.A.1. The facility shall	4.A.1 The facility shall	5.A.1 The facility	6.A.1 The facility
Administration	license in New	shall be completed by a	score an average of	score an average of	shall score an	shall score an
	Provisional or Regular	certified BAS assessor.	4.00 or higher on BAS	4.00 or higher on BAS.	average of 5.00 or	average of 6.00 or
	status.		items 2-10 (item 2 is	Ò	higher on BAS.	higher on BAS.
		2.A.2 The primary	scored but is not	A A 2 The primary		
	1.A.2 The facility may	caregiver shall-	included in the	carogiyor shall		
	have a program	complete a	average).	implement at least one		
	review completed by a	Strengthening Families-		(1) additional		
	certified BAS assessor.	training listed on the	3.A.2 The primary	(+) additional		
		PDR.	caregiver shall-	action plan for a total of		
			complete the	two (2)		
			Strengthening	.(7)		
			Families online self-			
			assessment for three			
			(3) or more strategies.			
			3.A.3 The primary			
			caregiver shall			
			develop a			
			Strengthening			

			Families action plan and implement at least one (1) actionstep.			
B. Staff Qualifications and Professional Development	Hense in New Provisional or Regular status.	2.B.1 The primary caregiver shall complete "Early Learning Standards Basies" training. 2.B.2 The primary caregiver shall complete an ERS training. 2.B.3 The primary caregiver shall participate in at least two (2) clock hours of training on nutrition for children, annually. 2.B.4 The primary caregiver shall caregiver shall complete training on developmentally appropriate physical activities for children.				
"	1.C.1 The facility has a	2.C.1 The facility shall	3.C.1 The facility shall	4.C.1 The facility shall	5.C.1 The facility	6.C.1 The facility shall
Learning Environment	license in New	score an average of	score an average of	score an average of 5.00	shall score an	score an average of
/ Environment Assessment	Provisional or Regular status.	3.00 or nigher on the FCCERS.	4.00 or higher on the FCCERS.	or nigher on the FCCERS.	average of 5.50 or higher on the FCCERS.	6.00 or nigher on the FCCERS.
	1.C.2 The facility may have a FCCERS review.		3.C.2. Caregivers shall maintain a portfolio for each child.			
ď	1.D.1 The facility has a license in New	2.D.1. The primary caregiver shall	3.D.1. The primary- caregiver shall share	4.D.1 The primary caregiver shall use a	5.D.1 The primary-caregiver shall use a	6.D.1 The primary caregiver shall use a

Child Health and	Provisional or Regular	document distribution	information on	Division approved tool	Division approved	Division approved tool
Development	status.	of ARKids First	nutrition and physical	to complete a self-	tool to complete a	to complete a self-
		information to families	activity for children	assessment in child	self assessment in	assessment in child
		of uninsured children.	with families.	nutrition, physical	child nutrition,	nutrition, physical
				activity, farm to ECE,	physical activity,	activity, farm to ECE,
		2.D.2 The primary	3.D.2 The primary	oral health,	farm to ECE, oral	oral health,
		caregiver shall share	caregiver shall use a	breastfeeding and infant	health,	breastfeeding and
		information regarding	Division approved tool	feeding, outdoor play	breastfeeding and	infant feeding,
		child development,	to complete a physical	and learning, OR screen	infant feeding,	outdoor play and
		stages of development,	activity self-	time and create and	outdoor play and	learning, OR screen
		and children's health	assessment and create	implement two action	learning, OR screen	time and create and
		with families.	and implement one	plans in that module.	time and create and	implement two (2)
			action plan in the		implement two (2)	action plans in that
		2.D.3. All children birth	physical activity	4.D.2 The primary	action plans in that	module.
		to kindergarten shall	module.	caregiver shall use the	module.	
		have an annual		Division approved tool		6.D.2 The primary
		developmental	3.D.3 The primary	to complete a second	5.D.2 The primary	caregiver shall use the
		screening.	caregiver shall use the	self assessment in child	caregiver shall use	Division-approved tool
			Division approved	nutrition, physical	the Division-	to complete a second
		2.D.4 The primary	tool to complete a	activity, farm to ECE,	approved tool to	self-assessment in
		caregiver shall use a	second self-	oral health,	complete a second	child nutrition,
		Division approved tool	assessment in the	breastfeeding and infant	self-assessment in	physical activity, farm
		to complete a child	physical activity	feeding, outdoor play	child nutrition,	to ECE, oral health,
		nutrition self-	module to assess	and learning, OR screen	physical activity,	breastfeeding and
		assessment and create	progress.	time to assess progress.	farm to ECE, oral	infant feeding,
		and implement one (1)			health,	outdoor play and
		action plan in the child			breastfeeding and	learning, OR screen
		nutrition module.			infant feeding,	time to assess
					outdoor play and	progress.
		2.D.5 The primary			learning, OR screen	
		caregiver shall use a			time to assess	
		Division approved tool			progress.	
		to complete a second				
		self assessment in the				
		child nutrition module				
		to assess progress.				

ARKANSAS BETTER BEGINNINGS - OUT OF SCHOOL TIME REQUIREMENTS

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

COMPONENTS	LEVEL 1	FEVEL 2	FNET 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	FVEL 6
		Must meet all	Must meet all	Must meet all	Must meet all	Must meet all
		requirements for	requirements for	requirements for	requirements for	requirements for
		Level 1	Level 1 and Level 2	Levels 1 - 3	Levels 1 4	Levels 1 - 5
đ	1.A.1 The facility	2.A.1 The facility shall	3.A.1 The facility shall	4.A.1 The facility shall	5.A.1 The facility	6.A.1 The facility
Administration	has a license in	have a PAS review	score an average of	score an average of	shall score an	shall score an average
	New Provisional or	completed by a	4.00 or higher on PAS	4.00 or higher on PAS.	average of 5.00 or	of 6.00 or higher on
	Regular status.	eertified assessor. If	items 1 21 (items 5	If using YPQI, PAS is not	higher on PAS.	PAS.
		using YPQI, PAS is not	and 6 are scored but	required; however, a	If using YPQI, PAS is	If using YPQI, PAS is
	1.A.2 The facility	required; however, a	are not included in the	PQA Form B score of	not required;	not required PAS is
	may have a PAS	PQA Form B review	average.).	4.00 or higher is	however, a PQA	not required;
	review completed	shall be completed by	If using YPQI, PAS is	required.	Form B score of 4.25	however, a PQA Form
	by a certified	a reliable assessor.	not required;		or higher is required.	B score of 4.75 or
	assessor or a PQA		however, a PQA Form	4.A.2 The director shall		higher is required.
	form B review	2.A.2 The director	B score of 3.75 or	implement at least one		
	completed by a	shall complete a	higher is required.	(1) additional		
	reliable assessor.	Strengthening		Strengthening Families		
		Families training,	3.A.2 The director	action plan for a total		
		listed on the PDR.	shall complete the	of two (2).		
			Strongthoning	.(-)		
			Sacribation of Families on families			
			Tallings of the second			
			assessment tor three			
			(3) or more Strategies.			
			2 A 2 The facility chall			
			acverop a			
			Strengthening			
			Families action plan			
			and implement at			
			least one (1) action			
di	1.B.1 The facility	2.8.1 All directors and				
Ctaff Oualifications and	has a license in	at loast fifty porcont				
Professional Develorment	New Provisional or	(50%) of teaching staff				
- Lorespondi - Perciobilicus	Pogular ctatus	chall complete "latro				
	regular states:	andir complete man				

		to the 40 Developmental Assets" training. 2.8.2 All directors and, and fifty percent (50%) of the teaching-staff shall complete an ERS or YPQI training. 2.8.3 The director and kitchen manager (if applicable) shall participate in training on nutrition for school age children/youth, annually. 2.8.4 The director shall complete training on developmentally appropriate physical activities for children/youth, appropriate physical activities for children/youth.				
6. Learning Environment / Environment Assessment	4.C.1 The facility has a license in New Provisional or Regular status. 1.C.2 The facility may have a SACERS or a PQA review completed by a reliable assessor.	2.C.1 The facility shall score an average of 3.00 or higher on the SACERS or 3.00 or higher on the PQA.	3.C.1 Facility shall score an average of 4.00 or higher on the SACERS or 3.75 or higher on the PQA. 3.C.2 Staff shall maintain a portfolio for each participant.	4.C.1 The facility shall score an average of 5.00 or higher on the SACERS or 4.00 or higher on the PQA.	s.c.1 The facility shall score an average of 5.50 or higher on the SACERS or 4.25 or higher on the PQA.	6.6.1 The staff/participant ratio shall be 1::15. 6.6.2 The facility shall score an average of 6.00 or higher on the SACERS or 4:50 or higher on the higher on the PQA.
ф	1.D.1 The facility has a license in	2.D.1 The facility shall document the	3.D.1 The facility shall share information on			

Child/Youth Health and	New Provisional or	distribution of ARKids	nutrition and physical		
Development	Regular status.	First information to	activity for school age		
		families of uninsured	children with families.		
		participants.			
		2.D.2 The facility shall			
		share with families			
		information regarding			
		child or youth			
		development, stages			
		of development, and			
		childron's hoalth			

7.0 APPLICATION

7.1 The application will consist of the following items:

A. An application indicating the level of Better Beginnings that the individual is applying for. This can be submitted via the provider portal. If the provider portal is not operable, applications may be submitted electronically through email at BetterBeginnings@dhs.arkansas.gov.

B. Supporting documentation for all items listed in Section 6, regarding the facility type and level for which the facility is applying.

- **7.2** Eligible programs that are accredited through state or national accreditation systems are eligible for full or partial reciprocation and given certification at levels that are determined by the Division. The following are some examples of approved accreditation systems:
 - Arkansas Better Chance (ABC)
 - Association Montessori International
 - The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities: Child and Youth Services Standards (CARF)
 - Early Head Start
 - Head Start
 - National Afterschool Association (NAA)
 - National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
 - National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)

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

Facilities with such accreditations shall apply for participation in Better Beginnings via the provider portal and submit verification of the accreditation. If the provider portal is not operable, applications may be submitted electronically through email at BetterBeginnings@dhs.arkansas.gov. Additional documentation of Better Beginnings requirements or reviews may be required to determine the level of Better Beginnings certification.

8.0 APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

- 8.1 Applications will be denied if they lack the required supporting documentation.
- **8.2** The Division will review the supporting documentation to determine if each item submitted meets the intent of the associated requirement.
- 8.3 When the documentation submitted does not meet the requirements, or evidence is not included, the facility may not be eligible for that level. Facilities will be considered for a lower level.

- 8.4 Applicants will be certified at the highest level for which all requirements are met as determined by review of all documentation and assessments.
- Applicants who purchase an existing facility that is certified at level two (2) or above, and has active voucher participants enrolled, may be given a temporary Better Beginnings level to enable them to temporarily bill for the voucher participants that are enrolled. The new owner will have ninety (90) days to achieve their own Better Beginnings level. The new owner will be certified at the level for which they qualify. If they do not qualify within ninety (90) days, they will be removed from participation.

9.0 MAINTAINING CERTIFICATION

- 9.1 Certification for level two (2) and above is valid for thirty-six (36) months unless the facility becomes otherwise ineligible for certification according to section 5.00 Eligibility or 10.00 Adverse Action. Certification for level one (1) facilities will remain valid, as long as the license is in new provisional or regular status.
- 9.2 Facilities, certified as Better Beginnings level two (2) and above programs, must re-submit all-application documents, as outlined in section 7.00, thirty-five (35) months after the date of the last certification. Level one (1) facilities are not required to reapply. Failure to submit required documentation may result in loss of certification status. Certification will be granted upon completion of all requirements (see section 8.00).
- 9.3 Facilities who do not meet requirements for their current level or higher at recertification will be given the option of accepting the highest level for which they qualify or being placed on a 90-day corrective action agreement. All requirements must be met for the current or higher level by the end of the corrective action agreement. If the requirements are not met, the facility will be certified at the highest level for which they qualify.
- 9.4 A certified facility which becomes the subject of an investigation may retain current certification until the investigation is concluded. The outcome of the investigation may be considered in determining continuation of certification or a corrective action agreement at any level.
- 9.5 Facilities requesting to be reviewed for a higher level of certification must submit a new application for the higher level. A full application must be submitted according to section 7.00 and will be processed according to section 8.00. Facilities meeting higher level requirements will be newly certified at the appropriate level. Facilities not meeting higher level requirements will be assigned the level of certification achieved.
- 9.6 Certified facilities that change location must submit a new application for Better Beginnings certification according to section 7.00 and will be processed according to section 8.00. The facility may

retain the current certification level, until the application review process is completed. This process shall be completed within ninety (90) days of the relocation. If the facility does not qualify within ninety (90) days, they will be removed from participation.

- 9.7 Unannounced visits, reviews, or random checks may be conducted at any time to verify continued compliance with certification requirements. An unfavorable review may result in a full scale reassessment, which could change the Better Beginnings status.
- 9.8 It is recommended that each facility implements a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process with a self-assessment to assist them in maintaining quality practices during the growth years when ERS and PAS reviews are not done. Technical assistance is available upon request.

10.0 ADVERSE ACTION

- **10.1** Adverse actions include denial, suspension, reduction in level, or removal of certified status. Adverse actions may include but are not limited to:
 - A. Ineligibility to participate according to section 5.00 Eligibility;
 - B. Application documentation which is incomplete or does not meet the intent of requirements according to sections 6.00, 7.00, 8.00, and 9.00;
 - C. Failure to continue to meet the requirements for the component areas for the level which the facility is assigned;
 - D. Numerous or serious deficiencies cited by licensing;
 - E. Substantiation of complaints received by the Division;
 - F. Being placed on Adverse Action by any program in DCCECE;
 - G. Changes in the license status of the facility; or
 - H. Falsification of any document or submission of false information to any DHS Division.
- **10.2** Facilities that have their Better Beginnings certification denied, suspended, or removed are eligible to re-apply after twelve (12) months unless otherwise authorized by the Division Director.

11.0 APPEAL PROCEDURE

- 11.1 Facilities that are denied certification status, are found to be ineligible for a particular level or have had their certification status reduced or removed; may request an appeal. A written request for appeal shall be submitted to the Better Beginnings Program Administrator within ten (10) days of the notice of action, asking that certification status decision be reviewed.
- 11.2 Upon receipt of the request for appeal, the Better Beginnings Program Administrator will conduct an internal review to ensure that the appropriate processes were followed and to determine the validity of the decision. The Better Beginnings Program Administrator will review the findings with the Division Director and will transmit the findings of the internal review to the facility within thirty (30) days of the receipt of the request to appeal.

- 11.3 If the outcome of the internal review is unsatisfactory to the facility, the facility has ten (10) days in which to ask for further review by the Better Beginnings Appeal Review Committee. The committee will schedule a hearing and notify the facility in writing of the date and time of the hearing. The committee members are appointed by the chair of the Early Childhood Commission. A decision of the Better Beginnings Appeal Review Committee is the final DHS administrative decision.
- 11.4 In the event that there are appeals made to multiple units in DCCECE, regarding the action that resulted in the Better Beginnings action being appealed, the Better Beginnings appeal will not be heard until the outcome of the other appeals has been determined. If the action is overturned, then the Better Beginnings appeal will be scheduled. If the action is upheld, the decision is final and there will be no Better Beginnings appeal hearing.

Better Beginnings Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System



Provider RULE BOOK

Arkansas Department of Education

Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

Office of Early Childhood

https://arbetterbeginnings.com/
OEC.BetterBeginnings@ade.arkansas.gov

Title 20. Public Health and Welfare

<u>Chapter XLV. Office of Early Childhood, Department of Education</u> Subchapter A. Generally

Part 1001. Better Beginnings Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System

<u>Codification Notes.</u> This part as promulgated prior to codification into the Code of Arkansas Rules of 2024 provided as follows:

"Better Beginnings Overview

Better Beginnings is a tiered quality rating and improvement system (TQRIS) which is a systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs. Program types include center-based care, family childcare, and out-of-school time programs.

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

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

"1.00 REGULATORY AUTHORITY

- 1.01 These rules are enacted pursuant to Arkansas Code Ann. § 20-78-201 et seq. as amended.
- 1.02 These rules shall be known as the Arkansas Department of Education, Office of Early Childhood rules governing Better Beginnings, Arkansas's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System."

20 CAR § 1001-101. Purpose.

- (a) It is the purpose of this part to set the general guidelines for the operation of Better Beginnings.
- (b)(1) Providers who choose to receive funding from the Child Care and Development Fund Block Grant must be a Better Beginnings participant at the level determined by the Office of Early Childhood.
- (2) This system is intended to certify quality status to childcare facilities that meet Better Beginnings requirements as set forth in this part.
- (c) Designation of certified status for any childcare facility will qualify taxpayers for the following:
- (1)(A) Under Acts 1993, No. 820, corporations that build and equip a certified childcare center will be exempt from the state compensating tax levied by the Arkansas Compensating Tax Act of 1949, Arkansas Code § 26-53-101 et seq.

- (B) Construction materials and furnishings purchased for use in the initial construction and equipping of a childcare center for the exclusive purpose of providing childcare to the corporation's employees will be subject to this exemption;
- (2) Under Acts 1993, No. 820, a business that qualifies for the exemption from the gross receipts tax under Arkansas Code § 26-52-401(29) shall be allowed an income tax credit of three and nine-tenths percent (3.9%) of the annual salary of employees employed exclusively in providing childcare services; and
- (3) Under Acts 1993, No. 1268, enhanced income tax credits in the amount of twenty percent (20%) of the federal childcare credit as allowed under Section 21 of the Internal Revenue Code will be available to qualified taxpayers who incur childcare expenses at childcare facilities that are certified at Better Beginnings level two (2) or above.

Authority. Arkansas Code § 20-78-206.

Codification Notes. Section 21 of the Internal Revenue Code is codified at 26 U.S.C. § 21.

20 CAR § 1001-102. Definitions.

As used in this part:

- (a) The Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care (BAS) is the first valid and reliable instrument for measuring and improving the overall quality of business and professional practices in family child care settings in 10 areas: Qualifications and Professional Development, Income and Benefits, Work Environment, Fiscal Management, Recordkeeping, Risk Management, Provider-Family Communication, Family Support and Engagement, marketing and Community Relations, and Provider as Employer.
- (b)Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) means a plan of action that not only outlines goals and action steps but includes time frames and persons responsible for specific actions.
- (c) Director means the person who meets MLR as director and is on-site a minimum of fifty percent (50%) of the operational day.
- (d) Environment Rating Scale (ERS) The term used to describe the tools used to measure elements of classroom quality. These include the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale, Infant-Toddler Rating Scale, Family Child Care Rating Scale and School-Age Care Rating Scale.
- (e) Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale (FCCERS) means a rating scale designed to assess family child care programs conducted in a provider's home.
- (f) Minimum Licensing Requirements (MLR) means the minimum health and safety requirements to legally operate.
- (g) Office of Early Childhood (OEC) means the state agency responsible to ensure children and families have access to high-quality child care through licensing, training, and funding
- (h) Program Administration Scale (PAS) means a program used to gather information that measures the quality of administrative, management, and leadership practices of an early childhood program. The PAS helps a program dig deeper into the following aspects of program administration:
 - (1) Human Resources Development;
 - (2) Personnel Cost and Allocation;
 - (3) Center Operations;
 - (4) Child Assessment;

- (5) Fiscal Management;
- (6) Program Planning and Evaluation;
- (7) Family Partnerships;
- (8) Marketing and Public Relations;
- (9) Technology; and
- (10) Staff Qualifications.
- (i) Professional Development Registry (PDR) means an online registry where early childhood educators can register for professional development opportunities and obtain resources to enhance their knowledge and skills.
- (j) Program Quality Assessment (PQA) means a system to evaluate the quality children's programs and identify staff training needs.
- (k) School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS) means a rating scale designed to assess before and after school groups.
- (1) Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) means a systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early and school-age care and education programs.
- (m) Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI) means a shared learning experience with peers moving together through a cycle of continuous quality improvement throughout the year.

Authority. Arkansas Code § 20-78-206.

20 CAR § 1001-103. Agency responsibility. (a) The Office of Early Childhood will coordinate and administer Better Beginnings. (b)(1) The office is authorized to make temporary revisions to this part as deemed necessary during a Governor-declared public health emergency or natural disaster impacting the State of Arkansas. (2) These revisions will be posted on the Better Beginnings website. (c) The Better Beginnings Program Administrator or designee will have final approval of applications for certification as reviewed and recommended by the Better Beginnings staff. (d) By December 31 of each year, the office will be responsible for providing verification to the Department of Finance and Administration of the childcare facilities that were qualified for certification at level two (2) and above in the current calendar year. (e) Each December, the office will be responsible for providing verification to the Arkansas Economic Development Commission of the childcare facilities that qualified for Better Beginnings certification in the current calendar year. (f) The office or office consultants will provide technical assistance to any facilities desiring to achieve certification. (g)(1) The office will be responsible for the process of recertifying facilities. (2) See: (A) 20 CAR § 1001-106, application; (B) 20 CAR § 1001-107, application review process; and (C) 20 CAR § 1001-108, maintaining certification.

(2) The certification notice will denote the level of certification achieved.

(h)(1) Facilities will be notified of their certification status.

20 CAR § 1001-104. Eligibility.
(a) All licensed, registered, and church-operated exempt childcare facilities, as defined
under Arkansas Code § 20-78-202, exclusive of foster homes, group homes, and custodial
institutions, are eligible to apply for certified status.
(b)(1) All childcare facilities, except those excluded in subsection (a) of this section,
operating under a new provisional or regular license, registration, or church-operated exemption
as issued by the Office of Early Childhood, are eligible to apply.
(2) Entities with multiple sites, each holding a separate license number, must
apply for certification for each site individually.
(c)(1) All facilities must be in good standing with the Department of Education.
(2) A facility in good standing is not currently debarred, defunded, excluded, or
under adverse action with licensing or other department programs.
(d)(1) Applicants and certified facilities must make their facilities accessible at all times
during the regular program hours for program reviews and environmental assessments.
(2) Such assessments may be unannounced.
(e) Any of the following situations, including but not limited to conditions below, may
result in an application being denied, a reduction in level, or removal of Better Beginnings status:
(1) Ineligibility to participate according to this section;
(2) Application documentation that is incomplete or does not meet the intent of
the requirements according to 20 CAR §§ 1001-105 – 1001-108;
(3) Failure to continue to meet the requirements for the component areas for the
level that the facility is assigned;
(4) Numerous or serious deficiencies cited by licensing;
(5) Substantiation of complaints received by the office;

(6) Being placed in Adverse Action;

(7) Changes in the license status of the facility; or

(8) Falsification of any document or submission of false information to any department division.

(f) Facilities that have been denied certification or have had certification removed by reason of ineligibility according to any provisions of this section may be eligible to reapply in twelve (12) months unless otherwise notified by the Office of Early Childhood Director.

Authority. Arkansas Code § 20-78-206.

20 CAR § 1001-105. Component areas, requirements, and levels.
(a) There are four (4) component areas in Better Beginnings:
(1) Administration;
(2) Staff Qualifications and Professional Development;
(3) Learning Environment/Environment Assessment; and
(4) Child Health and Development.
(b)(1) There are requirements to be met in each component area in each of the levels.
(2) The components, requirements, and levels are on the following pages.

<u>ARKANSAS BETTER BEGINNINGS CHILDCARE CENTER REQUIREMENTS</u>

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

COMPONENTS	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
		Must meet all	Must meet all	Must meet all	Must meet all	Must meet all
		requirements for	requirements for	requirements for	requirements for	requirements for
		<u>Level 1</u>	<u>Level 1 and</u>	Levels $1-3$	Levels $1-4$	<u>Levels 1 - 5</u>
			Level 2			
¥	1.A.1 The	2.A.1 The	3.A.1 The	4.A.1 The	5.A.1 The	6.A.1 The
Administration	facility has a	facility shall	facility shall	facility shall	facility shall	facility shall
	license in New	have a PAS	score an average	score an average	score an average	score an average
	Provisional or	review	of 4.00 or higher	of 4.00 or higher	of 5.00 or higher	of 6.00 or higher
	Regular status.	completed by a	on PAS items 1-	on PAS. School-	on PAS. School-	on PAS. School-
		certified PAS	21 (items 5 and	age programs	age programs	age programs
	1.A.2 The	assessor.	6 are scored but	using YPQI	using YPQI	using YPQI
	facility may	School-age	are not included	<u>shall have a</u>	shall have a	shall have a
	have a program	programs using	in the average).	PQA Form B	PQA Form B	PQA Form B
	review	YPQI shall have	School-age	score of 4.00 or	score of 4.25 or	score of 4.75 or
	completed by a	a PQA Form B	programs using	higher.	higher.	higher.
	certified PAS	review	YPQI shall have			
	assessor. School	completed by a	a PQA Form B	4.A.2 The		
	age programs	reliable assessor.	score of 3.75 or	director shall		
	using YPQI		higher.	implement at		
	may have a	2.A.2 The		least one (1)		
	PQA Form B	director shall	3.A.2 The	<u>additional</u>		
	review	complete a	director shall	Strengthening		
	completed by a	Strengthening	complete the	Families action		
	<u>reliable</u>	<u>Families</u>		step for a total		
	assessor.	training listed on	Families online	of two (2) .		
		the PDR.				
			$\frac{\text{for three }(3) \text{ or}}{\text{more Strateoies}}$			
			IIIOIV Duangivs.			

9%	
3.A.3 The facility shall develop a Strengthening Families action plan and implement at least one (1) action step.	
	directors and at least fifty percent (50%) of teaching staff shall complete "Early Learning Standards (ELS) Basics Training." The director and school-age staff shall complete 'Developmental Assets Training." 2.B.2 All directors and fifty percent (50%) of teaching staff shall complete shall complete shall complete directors and directors and fifty percent (50%) of teaching staff shall complete
	facility has a license in New Provisional or Regular status.
	B. Staff Oualifications and Professional Development

C. Learning Facility has a license in New license in New
--

Environment	Provisional or	on the ERS	on the ERS.	Birth-18 months	Birth-18 months	Birth-18 months
Assessment	<u>Regular status.</u>	review. School	School age	1.4	18.26	18.2611.
	1.C.2 The	age programs using POA shall	programs using POA shall score	18-30 months 1:7	1.6	18-30 months 1:6
	facility may	score a 3.00 or	3.75 or higher	$\frac{2^{1/2}}{2}$ - 3 years	$\frac{2^{1/2}}{2}$ - 3 years	$\frac{2^{1/2}}{2}$ - 3 years
	have an ERS	higher on the	on the PQA.	<u>1:11</u>	<u>1:10</u>	<u>1:10</u>
	<u>review. School</u>	<u>PQA.</u>		$\frac{4 \text{ years } 1:12}{}$	4 years 1:10	4 years $1:10$
	age programs		3.C.2 The staff	5 years and up	5 years and up	5 years and up
	using YPQI		shall maintain a	<u>1:20</u>	<u>1:20</u>	<u>1:20</u>
	$\frac{\text{III}ay}{\text{POA}} \frac{\text{II}ave}{\text{review}}$		portrollo lor	103 The	SC 2 The	6C2The
	I QUI CAICW.		Cacil Cillia.	facility shall	facility shall	facility shall
				score an average	score an average	score an average
				of 5.00 or higher	of 5.50 or higher	of 6.00 or higher
				on ERS.	on the ERS.	on ERS.
				School age	School age	School age
				programs using	programs using	programs using
				PQA shall score	the PQA shall	the PQA shall
			7	4.00 or higher	score 4.25 or	score 4.50 or
				on the PQA.	higher on the	higher on the
					PQA.	PQA.
D. Child Health	1.D.1 The	2.D.1 The	3.D.1 The	4.D.1 The	5.D.1 The	6.D.1 The
<u>and</u>	<u>facility has a</u>	facility shall	facility shall	facility shall use	facility shall use	facility shall use
<u>Development</u>	license in New	document	<u>share</u>	an OEC-	an OEC-	an OEC-
	Provisional or	distribution of	information on	approved tool to	approved tool to	approved tool to
	Regular status.	ARKids First	nutrition and	complete a self-	complete a self-	complete a self-
		information to	physical activity	assessment in	assessment in	assessment in
		families of	for children with	child nutrition,	child nutrition,	child nutrition,
		uninsured	families.	<u>physical</u>	<u>physical</u>	<u>physical</u>
		<u>children.</u>		activity, farm to	activity, farm to	activity, farm to
			3.D.2 The	ECE, oral	ECE, oral	ECE, oral
		2.D.2 The	facility shall use	health,	health,	<u>health,</u>
		facility shall	an OEC-	breastfeeding &	breastfeeding	breastfeeding

and infant	feeding, outdoor	<u>play and</u>	learning, OR	screen time and	create and	<u>implement two</u>	(2) action plans	in that module.		6.D.2 The	facility shall use	the OEC-	approved tool to	complete a	second self-	assessment in	child nutrition,	<u>physical</u>	activity, farm to	ECE, oral	<u>health,</u>	breastfeeding $\&$	infant feeding,	outdoor play &	learning, OR	screen time to	assess progress.				
and infant	feeding, outdoor	play and	learning, OR	screen time and	create and	implement two	(2) action plans	in that module.		5.D.2 The	facility shall use	the OEC-	approved tool to	complete a	second self-	assessment in	child nutrition,	<u>physical</u>	activity, farm to	ECE, oral	<u>health,</u>	breastfeeding &	infant feeding,	outdoor play &	learning, OR	screen time to	assess progress.				
infant feeding,	outdoor play &	learning, or	screen time and	create and	implement two	action plans in	that module.		4.D.2 The	facility shall use	the OEC-	approved tool to	complete a	second self-	assessment in	child nutrition,	<u>physical</u>	activity, farm to	ECE, oral	<u>health,</u>	breastfeeding &	infant feeding,	outdoor play &	<u>learning, OR</u>	screen time to	assess progress.					
approved tool to	complete a (1)	physical activity	self-assessment	and create and	implement one	action plan in	the physical	activity module.		3.D.3 The	facility shall use		approved tool to		second self-	assessment in	the physical	activity module	to assess	progress.											
<u>share</u>	<u>information on</u>	<u>child</u>	development,	stages of	development,	stages of	development,	and children's	health with	families.		2.D.3 AII	children, birth to	kindergarten,	shall have an	<u>annual</u>	<u>developmental</u>	screening.		2.D.4 The	facility shall use	an OEC-	approved tool to	complete a child	nutrition self-	assessment and	create and	implement one	(1) action plan	nutrition	module.

2.D.5 The facility shall use an OEC- approved tool to complete a second self- assessment in the child nutrition model to assess	

<u>ARKANSAS BETTER BEGINNINGS – LICENSED AND REGISTERED HOME REQUIREMENTS</u>

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

COMPONENTS	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
		Must meet all	Must meet all	Must meet all	Must meet all	Must meet all
		requirements for	requirements for	requirements for	requirements for	requirements for
		<u>Level 1</u>	Level 1 and	Levels $1-3$	<u>Levels 1 – 4</u>	<u>Levels 1 - 5</u>
			Level 2			
ď	1.A.1 The	2.A.1 A	3.A.1 The	4.A.1 The	5.A.1 The	6.A.1 The
<u>Administration</u>	facility has a	program review	facility shall	facility shall	facility shall	facility shall
	license in New	shall be	score an average	score an average	score an average	score an average
	Provisional or	completed by a	of 4.00 or higher	of 4.00 or higher	of 5.00 or higher	of 6.00 or higher
	Regular status.	certified BAS	on BAS items 2-	on BAS.	on BAS.	on BAS.
		assessor.	10 (item 2 is			
	1.A.2 The		scored but is not	4.A.2 The		
	facility may	2.A.2 The	included in the	primary		
	have a program	primarv	average).	caregiver shall		
	review	caregiver shall		implement at		
	completed by a	complete a	3.A.2 The	least one (1)		
	certified BAS	Strengthening		additional		
	assessor.	Families	caregiver shall	Strengthening		
		training listed on		Families action		
		the PDR.		plan for a total		
			Families online	of two (2).		
		<u></u>	self-assessment			
			for three (3) or			
			more strategies.			
			3.A.3 The			
			primary			
			caregiver shall			
			develop a			

9	
Strengthening Families action plan and implement at least one (1) action step.	
	2.B.1 The primary caregiver shall complete "Early Learning Standards Basics" training. 2.B.2 The primary caregiver shall complete an ERS training. 2.B.3 The primary caregiver shall participate in at least two (2) clock hours of training on nutrition for children, annually.
	facility has a license in New Provisional or Regular status.
	B. Staff Oualifications and Professional Development

		caregiver shall complete training on developmentally appropriate physical activities for			9/	
C. Learning Environment/ Environment Assessment	1.C.1 The facility has a license in New Provisional or Regular status.	children. 2.C.1 The facility shall score an average of 3.00 or higher on the FCCERS.	3.C.1 The facility shall score an average of 4.00 or higher on the FCCERS.	4.C.1 The facility shall score an average of 5.00 or higher on the FCCERS.	5.C.1 The facility shall score an average of 5.50 or higher on the FCCERS.	facility shall score an average of 6.00 or higher on the FCCERS.
	1.C.2 The facility may have a FCCERS review.		3.C.2 Caregivers shall maintain a portfolio for each child.			
D. Child Health and Development	1.D.1 The facility has a license in New Provisional or	2.D.1 The primary caregiver shall document	3.D.1 The primary caregiver shall share	4.D.1 The primary caregiver shall use an OEC-	5.D.1 The primary caregiver shall use an OEC-	6.D.1 The primary caregiver shall use an OEC-
	Regular status.	distribution of ARKids First information to families of uninsured	information on nutrition and physical activity for children with families.	approved tool to complete a self-assessment in child nutrition, physical	approved tool to complete a self-assessment in child nutrition, physical	approved tool to complete a self-assessment in child nutrition, physical
		children. 2.D.2 The primary caregiver shall	3.D.2 The primary caregiver shall use an OEC-	activity, farm to ECE, oral health, breastfeeding and infant	activity, farm to ECE, oral health, breastfeeding and infant	activity, farm to ECE, oral health, breastfeeding and infant

feeding, outdoor play and learning, OR screen time and create and implement two (2) action plans in that module.	caregiver shall use the OEC- approved tool to complete a second self- assessment in child nutrition, physical activity, farm to ECE, oral health, breastfeeding and infant feeding, outdoor play and learning, OR screen time to assess progress.	
feeding, outdoor play and learning, OR screen time and create and implement two (2) action plans in that module.	caregiver shall use the OEC- approved tool to complete a second self- assessment in child nutrition, physical activity, farm to ECE, oral health, breastfeeding and infant feeding, outdoor play and learning, OR screen time to assess progress.	
feeding, outdoor play and learning, OR screen time and create and implement two (2) action plans in that module.	caregiver shall use the OEC- approved tool to complete a second self- assessment in child nutrition, physical activity, farm to ECE, oral health, breastfeeding and infant feeding, outdoor play and learning, OR screen time to assess progress.	
approved tool to complete a physical activity self-assessment and create and implement one action plan in the physical activity module.	3.D.3 The primary caregiver shall use the OEC-approved tool to complete a second self-assessment in the physical activity module to assess progress.	
share information regarding child development, stages of development, and children's health with families.	children birth to kindergarten shall have an annual developmental screening. 2.D.4 The primary caregiver shall use an OEC-approved tool to complete a child nutrition selfassessment and create and implement one implement one implement one (1) action plan in the child nutrition mutrition	

2.D.5 The primary caregiver shall use an OEC- approved tool to complete a second self- assessment in the child nutrition module to assess	

<u>ARKANSAS BETTER BEGINNINGS – OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME REQUIREMENTS</u>

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

	F TGT/ NGT T	C 101/101 1	C IELINE I	/ ICI/NCL 1	Z IGIVAG I) ISLANT
COMPONENTS	LEVELI	77777			C TA A A T	<u>LEVEL 0</u>
		Must meet all	Must meet all	Must meet all	Must meet all	Must meet all
		requirements for	requirements for	requirements for	requirements for	requirements for
		Level 1	Level 1 and	Levels $1-3$	Levels $1-4$	<u>Levels 1 - 5</u>
			Level 2			
¥	1.A.1 The	2.A.1 The	3.A.1 The	4.A.1 The	5.A.1 The	6.A.1 The
<u>Administration</u>	facility has a	facility shall	facility shall	facility shall	facility shall	facility shall
	license in New	have a PAS	score an average	score an average	score an average	score an average
	Provisional or	<u>review</u>	of 4.00 or higher	of 4.00 or higher	of 5.00 or higher	of 6.00 or higher
	Regular status.	completed by a	on PAS items 1-	on PAS. If using	on PAS. If using	on PAS. If using
		certified	21 (items 5 and	YPQI, PAS is	YPQI, PAS is	YPQI, PAS is
	1.A.2 The	assessor. If	6 are scored but	not required;	not required;	not required;
	facility may	using YPQI,	are not included	however, a PQA	however, a PQA	however, a PQA
	have a PAS	PAS is not	in the average.).	Form B score of	Form B score of	Form B score of
	<u>review</u>	required;	If using YPQI,	4.00 or higher is	4.25 or higher is	4.75 or higher is
	completed by a	however, a PQA	PAS is not	required.	required.	required.
	<u>certified</u>	Form B review	required;			
	assessor or a	shall be	however, a PQA	4.A.2 The		
	PQA form B	completed by a	Form B score of	director shall		
	review	<u>reliable assessor.</u>	3.75 or higher is	implement at		
	completed by a		required.	least one (1)		
	<u>reliable</u>	2.A.2 The		additional		
	assessor.	director shall	3.A.2 The	Strengthening		
		complete a	director shall	Families action		
		Strengthening	complete the	plan for a total		
		<u>Families</u>	Strengthening	of two (2) .		
		training, listed	Families online			
		on the PDR.	self-assessment			

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for three (3) or more Strategies. 3.A.3 The facility shall develop a Strengthening Families action plan and implement at least one (1) action step.	
	directors and at least fifty percent (50%) of teaching staff shall complete "intro to the 40 Developmental Assets" training. 2.B.2 All directors and, and fifty percent (50%) of the teaching staff shall complete an ERS or YPQI training. 2.B.3 The director and
	facility has a license in New Provisional or Regular status.
	B. Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

	e.C.1 The staff/participant ratio shall be 1:20. 6.C.2 The facility shall score an average of 6.00 or higher on the SACERS or 4.50 or higher on the PQA.
	facility shall score an average of 5.50 or higher on the SACERS or 4.25 or higher on the PQA.
	4.C.1 The facility shall score an average of 5.00 or higher on the SACERS or 4.00 or higher on the PQA.
	3.C.1 Facility shall score an average of 4.00 or higher on the SACERS or 3.75 or higher on the PQA. 3.C.2 Staff shall maintain a portfolio for each participant.
kitchen manager (if applicable) shall participate in training on nutrition for school age children/youth, annually. 2.B.4 The director shall complete training on developmentally appropriate physical activities for children/youth.	2.C.1 The facility shall score an average of 3.00 or higher on the SACERS or 3.00 or higher on the PQA.
	1.C.1 The facility has a license in New Provisional or Regular status. 1.C.2 The facility may have a SACERS or a PQA review completed by a reliable assessor.
	C. Learning Environment / Assessment

3.D.1 The facility shall share	information on nutrition and physical activity for school age children with families.	
	distribution of ARKids First information to families of uninsured participants. 2.D.2 The facility shall share families	regarding child or youth development, stages of development, stages of development, stages of development, stages of development, and children's health.
D. Child/Youth 1.D.1 The Health facility has a license in New	Development	

Authority. Arkansas Code § 20-78-206.

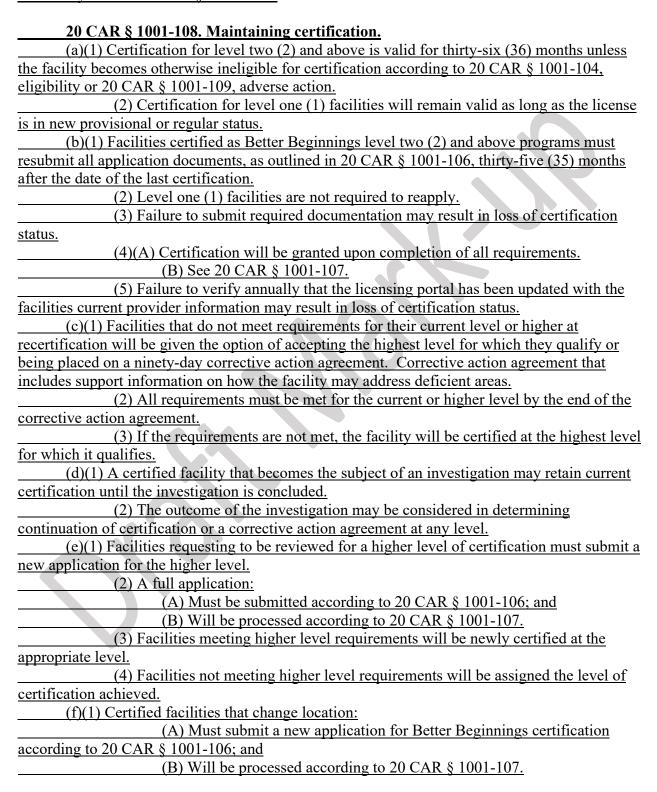
20 CAR § 1001-106. Application.
(a) The application will consist of the following items:
(1)(A) An application indicating the level of Better Beginnings that the individual
is applying for.
(B) This can be submitted via the provider portal.
(C) If the provider portal is not operable, applications may be submitted
electronically through email at OEC.BetterBeginnings@ade.arkansas.gov; and
(2) Supporting documentation for all items listed in 20 CAR § 1001-105
regarding the facility type and level for which the facility is applying.
(b)(1) Eligible programs that are accredited through state or national accreditation
systems are:
(A) Eligible for full or partial reciprocation; and
(B) Given certification at levels that are determined by the Office of Early
Childhood.
(3)(A) Facilities with such accreditations shall:
(i) Apply for participation in Better Beginnings via the provider
portal; and
(ii) Submit verification of the accreditation.
(B) If the provider portal is not operable, applications may be submitted
electronically through email at OEC.BetterBeginnings@ade.arkansas.gov.
(C) Additional documentation of Better Beginnings requirements or
reviews may be required to determine the level of Better Beginnings certification.
Authority. Arkansas Code § 20-78-206.
20 CAR § 1001-107. Application review process.
(a) Applications will be denied if they lack the required supporting documentation.
(b) The Office of Early Childhood will review the supporting documentation to determine
whether each item submitted meets the intent of the associated requirement.
(c)(1) When the documentation submitted does not meet the requirements or evidence is
not included, the facility may not be eligible for that level.
(2) Facilities will be considered for a lower level.
(d) Applicants will be certified at the highest level for which all requirements are met as
determined by review of all documentation and assessments.
(e)(1) Applicants who purchase an existing facility that is certified at level two (2) or
above and has active voucher participants enrolled may be given a temporary Better Beginnings
level to enable them to temporarily bill for the voucher participants that are enrolled.
(2) The new owner will have ninety (90) days to achieve their own Better
Beginnings level.
(3) The new owner will be certified at the level for which they qualify.
(4) If they do not qualify within ninety (90) days, they will be removed from
participation.

(f)New facilities that are opting into accepting childcare assistance must qualify for at least a provisional level II eligibility which consist of:

(A) Completed and Approved Provisional Eligibility Application; and

(B) Meet Better Beginnings Level 2 within (90 days).

Authority. Arkansas Code § 20-78-206.



(2) The facility may retain the current certification level until the application review process is completed. (3) This process shall be completed within ninety (90) days of the relocation. (4) If the facility does not qualify within ninety (90) days, it will be removed from participation. (g)(1) Unannounced visits, reviews, or random checks may be conducted at any time to verify continued compliance with certification requirements. (2) An unfavorable review may result in a full-scale reassessment, which could change the Better Beginnings status. (h)(1) It is recommended that each facility implement a continuous quality improvement process with a self-assessment to assist it in maintaining quality practices during the nonassessment years when ERS and PAS reviews are not done. (2) Technical assistance is available upon request. **Authority.** Arkansas Code § 20-78-206. **20 CAR § 1001-109. Adverse action.** (a)(1) Adverse actions include denial, suspension, reduction in level, or removal of certified status. (2) Adverse actions may include but are not limited to: (A) Ineligibility to participate according to 20 CAR § 1001-104, eligibility; (B) Application documentation that is incomplete or does not meet the intent of requirements according to 20 CAR §§ 1001-105 – 1001-108; (C) Failure to continue to meet the requirements for the component areas for the level that the facility is assigned; (D) Numerous or serious deficiencies cited by licensing; (E) Substantiation of complaints received by the Office of Early Childhood; (F) Being placed on Adverse Action; (G) Changes in the license status of the facility; or (H) Falsification of any document or submission of false information to any Department of Education division. (b) Facilities that have their Better Beginnings certification denied, suspended, or removed are eligible to reapply after twelve (12) months unless otherwise authorized by the Office of Early Childhood Director. **Authority.** Arkansas Code § 20-78-206. 20 CAR § 1001-110. Appeal procedure. (a)(1) Facilities that are denied certification status, are found to be ineligible for a particular level, or have had their certification status reduced or removed may request an appeal. (2) A written request for appeal shall be submitted to the Better Beginnings Program Administrator within ten (10) days of the notice of action asking that the certification status decision be reviewed.

(b)(1) Upon receipt of the request for appeal, the Better Beginnings Program Administrator will conduct an internal review to: (A) Ensure that the appropriate processes were followed; and (B) Determine the validity of the decision. (2) The Better Beginnings Program Administrator will review the findings with the Commissioner of Education or designee and will transmit the findings of the internal review to the facility within thirty (30) days of the receipt of the request to appeal. (c)(1) If the outcome of the internal review is unsatisfactory to the facility, the facility has ten (10) days in which to ask for further review by the Better Beginnings Appeal Review Committee. (2) The Better Beginnings Appeal Review Committee will schedule a hearing and notify the facility in writing of the date and time of the hearing. (3) The Better Beginnings Appeal Review Committee members are appointed by the Chair of the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission. (4) A decision of the Better Beginnings Appeal Review Committee is the final Department of Education administrative decision. (d)(1) In the event that there are appeals made to multiple units in the Office of Early Childhood regarding the action that resulted in the Better Beginnings action being appealed, the Better Beginnings appeal will not be heard until the outcome of the other appeals has been determined. (2) If the action is overturned, then the Better Beginnings appeal will be scheduled. (3) If the action is upheld, the decision is final and there will be no Better Beginnings appeal hearing.

Authority. Arkansas Code § 20-78-206.