

10A NCAC 09 .3207 ACCREDITATION AND HEAD START PATHWAY FOR CHILD CARE FACILITIES

(a) This Rule shall apply to child care facilities that choose to earn a two through five-star rated license using the accreditation and Head Start licensure pathway.

(b) As used the Rule, "educators" shall mean teachers, group leaders, and administrative staff, including directors, assistant directors, program coordinators, education coordinators, curriculum specialists, and other staff that have responsibility for planning, caregiving, mentoring or training on-site in a child care center. Educators shall meet the education standards of a position as set forth in Rules .3211, .3213, .3214, .3215, .3216 and .3218 of this Section and work full-time. If a program operates less than forty hours per week, full-time shall mean the hours the program is in operation.

(c) When a child care facility is accredited by one of the following organizations, a three-star license may be issued based on programmatic standards:

- (1) National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)
- (2) National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA)
- (3) American Montessori Society (AMS)
- (4) International Montessori Council (IMC)

(d) A child care facility accredited by one of the organizations listed in Paragraph (c) of this Rule may increase its star rating to a four- star rated license, by requesting an evaluation of its education standards and be issued a four-star rated license if the following applicable standard is met:

- (1) For child care centers, at least fifty percent of lead teachers and at least fifty percent of educators shall meet the individual education standards at the four-star level, as set forth in Rules .3211, .3212, .3213, .3214, .3215, .3216 and .3218 of this Section or higher.
- (2) For a family child care home, the operator shall meet education standards at the four-star level, as set forth in Rule .3217 of this Section or higher.

(e) A child care facility accredited by one of the organizations listed in Paragraph (c) of this Rule may increase its star rating to a five-star rated license, by requesting an evaluation of its education standards and be issued a five-star rated license if the following applicable standard is met:

- (1) For child care centers, at least fifty percent of all lead teachers and at least fifty percent of all other educators shall meet individual education standards at the five-star level, as set forth in Rules .3211, .3212, .3213, .3214, .3215, .3216 and .3218 of this Section or higher.
- (2) The operator of a family child care home shall meet education standards at the five-star level, as set forth in Rule .3217 of this Section or higher.

(f) When a child care facility is accredited by one of the following organizations, a five-star rated license may be issued based on educational and programmatic standards:

- (1) National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- (2) National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs (NAC)
- (3) Cognia, that includes early learning standards
- (4) Cognia, that includes extended learning standards for school age care only programs

(g) When a child care facility is designated as Head Start or Early Head Start, a five-star rated license may be issued based on educational and programmatic standards,

(h) Verification of accreditation status, Head Start designation or Early Head Start designation shall be maintained at the child care facility at all times and be provided to the Division on request.

(i) Accredited, Head Start and Early Head Start facilities shall meet the staff/child ratio requirements of the organization when required to obtain and maintain the accreditation or designation. If a facility may receive an accreditation award or Head Start designation without adhering to the accreditation standards or Head Start performance standards, the facility shall meet the organization's staff/child ratio standard or enhanced staff/child ratio requirements specified in Rule .3208 of this Section.

(j) Accredited facilities, Head Start facilities and Early Head Start facilities are not required to meet additional programmatic requirements described in this Section when in good standing with accreditation or performance standards. Programmatic requirement topics include curriculum, continuous quality improvement, and family and community engagement.

(k) For any child care center serving pre-school age children, the following shall also apply:

- (1) Each child care center shall comply with the requirements set forth in Rule .0508 of this Chapter for written activity schedules and plans and Rule .0509 of this Chapter for general activity requirements;

- (2) Each child care center shall comply with the requirements for activity areas for preschool-age children as set forth in Rule .0510 of this Chapter, except that all five of the activity areas listed in G.S. 110-91(12) shall be available each day and the activities listed in Rule .0510(c) of this Chapter shall be offered for each group of children at least once per week; and
 - (3) The requirements for activities for infants and toddlers set forth in Rule .0511 of this Chapter shall apply for children under three years of age.
- (l) For centers with a licensed capacity of 200 or more, there shall be a second administrator on-site for a minimum of 20 hours per week who shall have the Level I North Carolina Early Childhood Administration Credential or its approved equivalent.
- (m) For centers providing school-age care with two hundred or more school-age children enrolled, there shall be two program coordinators on-site, one of whom shall not have concurrent group leader responsibilities. The additional program coordinator shall have completed all the applicable staff requirements in Rule .2510(b) of this Chapter.

History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85(3); 110-88(7); 110-90(4); 143B-168.3; S.L. 2011-145, s.10.7(b) and (d); S.L. 2024-34; 42 USCS 9858e; 45 CFR 98.45;
Eff. July 1, 2025.