

the hearing in writing. You can send your request for a Fair Hearing to SCDSS, Individual and Provider Rights, P.O. Box 1520, Columbia, SC 29205-1520.

### **What if I have more questions?**

You can get more answers to your questions about the program by calling the ABC Child Care program at 1-800-476-0199.

This brochure was produced by the South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center. This brochure is for information only. If you have problems with child care, you may want to contact your local legal services program by calling the Legal Aid Telephone Intake Service for a referral at (803) 744-9430 in Columbia or toll free at (888) 346-5592 from other places in the state.

South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center is dedicated to advocacy for low-income people in South Carolina to effect systemic change by acting in and through the courts, legislature, administrative agencies, community and the media, and helping others do the same through education, training and co-counseling.



Copyright retained by the South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center. For permission to reproduce this brochure, contact SCALJC at P.O. Box 7187, Columbia, SC 29202. June 2006

## **Facts about the ABC Child Care Program**

### **What is the ABC Child Care Program?**

The ABC Child Care program is run by the South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS). The ABC program is for people who need child care and cannot afford to pay for it on their own. You must be working, in school, in a training program for work, or a Family Independence (FI) participant to use the program.

### **How does the program work?**

The program pays all or a part of your child care costs for children up to 13 years old. The amount that is paid depends on the age of the child, the amount of child care time needed, and the person or group that you choose to care for your child. If all of your costs are not covered, you will have to pay a co-payment that is based on your monthly income and your family size.

### **Are there any other fees I will have to pay?**

You will have to pay any extra fees that your caregiver charges outside of the costs for caring for your child. For example, if your child takes part in extra activities while in care or if your caregiver charges a fee for late pick-up, you will have to pay those costs yourself.

**How can I apply for the program?**

You can apply by going to your local DSS office or by calling 1-800-476-0199. There are a limited number of openings for this program. This means that you may not get help right away. However, you may be able to get your name on a waiting list for the program.

If you have recently left the FI program due to work, you are eligible for child care help for up to two full years. Ask your caseworker to help you.

**Who can I pick to care for my child?**

Once you are in the program, DSS will send you a list of caregivers in your county. The caregivers on the list are ones that are regularly reviewed by DSS and meet DSS standards. You have the choice to use one of the caregivers on the list or to pick one that is not on the list. You can use any licensed child care center, a group day care home, a family day care home, or after school program in your county. You can also choose to have a friend or relative care for your child. You must pick a caregiver within fifteen (15) days from the time you get this information.

If you choose to have someone who is not registered by DSS care for your child, you must follow more steps before you can use the program. You must also view a videotape about child care, meet with the caregiver and have the caregiver fill out some paperwork, and inspect the place where your child will be staying while in care. You should choose the person or center carefully and make sure that they will give your child the care needed.

**What if I want to file a complaint about my child's caregiver?**

You can call 1-800-763-ABCD (or 1-800-763-2223) to make a complaint or to ask questions or give concerns about your provider.

**Can I change my child's caregiver later?**

You can only change your child's caregiver if you get written permission from the ABC program. If you make a change without this permission, you will have to pay all the costs for your child's new caregiver yourself. The number to call to get permission is 1-800-476-0199.

**What else will the program expect of me?**

Once you are approved for the program, you will be able to use the program for a certain amount of time. DSS will look at your family's information again to see if you can stay on the program after your time period ends. Remember that you must tell DSS about all changes in your family's income, size, address, and job within ten (10) days after the change occurs.

Also, you must make sure your child goes to child care on a regular basis. Your child can only be absent from care for a certain number of days without permission from the program. The number of days that your child can be absent depends on how many weeks the program has agreed to pay for your child care costs. If your child misses more days than allowed, you may no longer be able to use the program. When you are approved for the program, be sure to ask how many days your child is allowed to miss.

**I applied for the program, but I was turned down. What can I do?**

You have the right to ask for a Fair Hearing if you are turned down for the program. You must ask for the hearing within thirty (30) days from the day you are turned down. You can also ask for a hearing if you are removed from the program. You must ask for