

National Accreditation Organizations for Early Childhood Programs

Accreditation is a voluntary process designed to improve the quality of early and school-age care programs. Accreditation systems require programs to meet standards that exceed minimum State regulatory requirements. Achieving accreditation involves extensive self-study and validation by professionals outside the program to verify that quality standards are met. Research has demonstrated that accreditation positively impacts early and school-age care program quality, including benefits to children, families, and staff.

A number of organizations have developed accreditation systems to recognize programs that meet higher standards than those required by State regulations. The following is a sample of national accreditation systems for early and school-age care programs listed in alphabetical order.

The National Center on Child Care Quality Improvement does not endorse any non-Federal organization, publication, or resource.

National Accreditation Organizations

Organization	Setting and Age Level	Accreditation Components	Contact Information
Accredited Professional Preschool Learning Environment (APPLE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Preschool ■ School age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Application and fees ■ Self study ■ Portfolio ■ Onsite verification visit 	Florida Association for Child Care Management 850-222-9923 or 800-322-2603 http://www.faccm.org/apple/
American Montessori Society (AMS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Montessori programs for children birth–high school ■ Infant and toddler ■ Preschool ■ School age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Application and fees ■ Self study ■ Evidence report ■ Onsite peer review visit 	AMS 212-358-1250 http://www.amshq.org

Organization	Setting and Age Level	Accreditation Components	Contact Information
Association of Christian Schools International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Preschool ■ School age (elementary and secondary) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Application and fees ■ Self study ■ Candidacy status ■ Onsite verification visit 	Early Education Services 719-528-6906, ext. 228 http://www.acsi.org
Council on Accreditation (COA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Preschool ■ School age ■ Family and children’s agencies ■ Adult day care ■ Foster care ■ International adoptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Application and fees ■ Timeline ■ Self-study report ■ Onsite verification visit 	COA 212-797-3000 or 866-COA-8088 http://www.coanet.org/front3/index.cfm
National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs (NAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child care centers only ■ School-age programs (only those that are operated in conjunction with child care centers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Application and fees ■ Self study ■ Onsite verification visit 	National Association of Child Care Professionals 512-301-5557 or 800-537-1118 http://www.naccp.org
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Academy for Early Childhood Program Accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Infant and toddler ■ Preschool ■ School age (kindergarten) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Application and fees ■ Self study ■ Candidacy report ■ Portfolios ■ Onsite verification visit 	NAEYC Academy for Early Childhood Program Accreditation 202-232-8777 or 800-424-2460 http://www.naeyc.org/academy/
National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Infant and toddler ■ Preschool ■ School age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Application and fees ■ Self study ■ Evidence and documentation ■ Onsite verification visit 	NAFCC 800-359-3817 http://nafcc.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=70&Itemid=376

Organization	Setting and Age Level	Accreditation Components	Contact Information
National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Infant and toddler ■ Preschool ■ School age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Application and fees ■ Self assessment ■ Action plan ■ Portfolio ■ Onsite verification visit 	The NECPA Commission, Inc. 800-505-9878 http://www.necpa.net

Accreditation and QRIS

Accreditation systems require early and school-age care programs to meet standards that exceed minimum State regulatory requirements. However, the steps between State licensing and achieving national accreditation are often significant. Twenty-five States have developed a statewide quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) as a method to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early and school-age care settings. Twenty-one of these States include accreditation in their QRIS, although how it is included varies.