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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Setting and Age Level</th>
<th>Accreditation Components</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accredited Professional Preschool Learning Environment (APPLE)</td>
<td>Preschool, School age</td>
<td>Application and fees, Self study, Portfolio, Onsite verification visit</td>
<td>Florida Association for Child Care Management 850-222-9923 or 800-322-2603 <a href="http://www.faccm.org/apple/">http://www.faccm.org/apple/</a></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Association of Christian Schools International | Preschool  
School age (elementary and secondary) | 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) | Preschool  
School age  
Family and children’s agencies  
Adult day care  
Foster care  
International adoptions | 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) | Child care centers only  
School-age programs (only those that are operated in conjunction with child care centers) | 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 | Infant and toddler  
Preschool  
School age (kindergarten) | 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) | Infant and toddler  
Preschool  
School age | 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 |
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<tr>
<td>National Early Childhood Program</td>
<td>Infant and toddler</td>
<td>Application and fees</td>
<td>The NECPA Commission, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation (NECPA)</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>Self assessment</td>
<td>800-505-9878</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School age</td>
<td>Action plan</td>
<td><a href="http://www.necpa.net">http://www.necpa.net</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Portfolio</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Onsite verification visit</td>
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</tbody>
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**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.