



# Manual

## Policies and Procedures



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### Policies and Procedures Manual

#### Corporate Address

2255 Dunn Avenue Bldg. 200 Suite 201

Jacksonville, Florida 32218

Phone: 904-293-1357

Fax: 904-328-3770

Email: [info@gaacs.org](mailto:info@gaacs.org)

Website: [www.gaacs.org](http://www.gaacs.org)

Green Apple  
Accreditation  
of Children's  
Services

# GREEN APPLE ACCREDITATION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

## Policies and Procedures Manual

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# GREEN APPLE ACCREDITATION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

## Policies and Procedures Manual

### Policies and Procedures

The policies and procedures contained in this manual shall govern Green Apple member organizations. From time to time, this manual may be revised to better serve membership.

**Note:** The accreditation standards manuals are available through the [My GAACS Account](#).

### Mission and Goals

#### Mission

Green Apple provides quality assurance, accreditation, certification, and training for schools and behavioral programs to enhance the quality of services and outcomes for children.

#### Green Apple Goals

- Goal #1: Increase the quality of child care and early learning programs.
- Goal #2: Improve behavioral health services for children, youth, and adults.
- Goal #3: Establish a quality rating system for nonpublic schools based on proven best practices that rewards high quality nonpublic schools and school systems.
- Goal #4: Help parents exercise their rights and responsibility for their children education.
- Goal #5: Provide advocacy, support, and resources for member organizations, parents, and public policy makers.

### Membership and Eligibility

#### Membership Eligibility

- A. Individual Member-any industry professional who owns or works for a member organization.
- B. Organization Membership-is open to any educational or behavioral healthcare organization.
- C. Associate Membership-is open to policymaker, industry specific organization, professional, or parent advocacy group.
- D. Affiliate Membership-is open to any corporation that is concerned with providing services and resources to member organizations.

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### Member Benefits

- 1) Discounts on products
- 2) Professional Development
- 3) Coaching/Consulting
- 4) E-Newsletter
- 5) Annual Conference
- 6) Member's Only Web Access
- 7) Athletic League
- 8) Quality Review

### Membership Categories

Interested organizations-a public or private organization exploring the accreditation process.

Member in good standing-a member that is not delinquent on membership dues, in violation of accreditation standards, health and safety standards, policies and procedures, suspended, revoked, or under investigation for violations.

Candidate member-a public or private organization that is a member in good standing and has applied for accreditation specific to its industry.

Accredited member-a public or private organization that has successfully demonstrated compliance with industry specific accreditation standards as evidenced by an onsite visiting team.

Each member category must:

- a. Not openly oppose **GAACS** beliefs and statement of faith;
- b. Adhere to a nondiscrimination policy;
- c. Pay an annual fee; and
- d. Is a pre-requisite to application for accreditation or participation in **GAACS** services.

### Refund Policy, Fees, and Term Limits

#### Refund policy

**ALL FEES ARE NONREFUNDABLE AND NONTRANSFERABLE.**

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### **Fees**

Fees are subject to change.

### **Late fee policy**

Current programs that fail to renew an application, submit a program annual report, or renew exemption by the expiration date will be considered late and assessed a late fee.

The current late fee is 15 % of the applicable membership, PAR, exemption, or accreditation fee.

### **Notice of Term limits**

Term limits are established for the beginning (start) through expiration (end) of all GAACS Services including: 1) Membership term, 2) Religious Exempt Approval term, 3) Certification term, and 4) Accreditation term. Each term requires a new/renewal application, applicable nonrefundable fee, and submission of supporting documents. GAACS program must adhere to the term limits for continual compliance with the specific program of service.

### **Self-Study Guide Term Limits**

Each GAACS Application is valid for a specific period as listed on the application form.

The Self Study Guide process is extended for a specific period. To determine the specific timeframe of an Application or Self Study Guide please review the application instructions, self-study guide instructions, accreditation standards manual, exempt health and safety manual, GAACS policies and procedures, or contact GAACS office.

## **Accreditation Categories**

### **Traditional Program Accreditation –**

Single Site or Multi-Site Locations that do NOT operate as a Franchise should apply for Traditional or Program Accreditation.

### **Corporate System Accreditation –**

Corporations that operate like a Franchise may apply for Corporate System Accreditation. Corporate System Accreditation helps streamline the Self Study Process. Additional benefits include Cost Savings for franchises and corporations that operate like franchises.

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### Accreditation Step by Step Process

#### Section 1. Traditional Program Accreditation -

1) **Application:**

- Interested Organization (IO) contacts **GAACS** to inquire about the industry specific accreditation standards and procedures applicable.
- The IO submits initial Application and Nonrefundable fee.
- Upon receipt of application, nonrefundable fee, and supporting documentation, **GAACS** will review and approve the application package. A notice of Candidate Member Status and access to the **My GAACS Account** is issued.

2) **Self-Study:**

- Candidate Member participates in Accreditation Orientation.
- Candidate member designates staff member to put together the Accreditation File and communicate with assigned **GAACS** Consultant.
- Candidate Member reviews the Accreditation Standards Manual, completes the Self Study Evaluation, and gathers supporting documentation for submission to the **My GAACS Account**.
- Upon receipt of the Self Study Evidence, **GAACS** will within 14 days send written notification of approval to proceed to the Request Site Visit Inspection.

3) **On-site Visit:**

- Within 10 days, from receipt of IO's On-site Visit Request Form and nonrefundable fee, **GAACS** schedules the onsite visit.
- An onsite visit is conducted at the IO site(s).
- The visiting committee makes a written report and recommendation to **GAACS** whether to 1) approve, 2) deny, or 3) defer accreditation pending further review.
- The site visit is conducted in accordance with the What to Expect During the On-site Validation Inspection

4) **Final Determination:**

**GAACS** reviews the Visiting Committee's recommendations, response(s) from the candidate member organization (if any), and Self Study Evidence and makes the final decision to grant, defer, or deny accreditation.

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Approval-

GAACS will forward the applicable certificate of accreditation, Notice of Accreditation Letter, and related certifications to Candidate Member. The Candidate Member may advertise as a GAACS Accredited Program upon receipt of written notification of accredited status.

Deferral-

A provider's accreditation decision may be deferred for several reasons including: a.) allow clarification of its program to demonstrate compliance, or b.) allow time for the program to complete a corrective action to meet accreditation standards. A remedial inspection may be required to demonstrate compliance.

Denied-

If GAACS decision is not favorable or a recommendation is made to deny accreditation, then the IO/Candidate Member has 30 days to appeal the decision. Failure to appeal an adverse decision within 30 days shall constitute forfeiture of the right to appeal. If the Candidate Member timely appeals, then a hearing will be scheduled within 45 days from receipt of the formal appeal.

### 5) **Continual Accreditation:**

Continual accreditation-To maintain accreditation, the Accredited Program must submit an annual report and applicable nonrefundable fee no later than June 30th every year with exception to the year of initial accreditation/re-accreditation. See Program Annual Report.

### 6) **Re-accreditation:**

Re-accreditation-Within six months before expiration date of the current accreditation, GAACS accredited programs must re-apply for accreditation in accordance with the most recent Accreditation Process. See New/Renewal Application Forms.

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### Section 2. Corporate System Accreditation –

#### APPLICATION PHASE

As with traditional or program accreditation, corporate system accreditation requires a Step by Step Process.

The first step is for the corporate system to submit the Corporate Application, a Letter, and pay the nonrefundable fees.

#### SELF STUDY PHASE

Upon application acceptance, the Corporate System participates in Accreditation Orientation, submits Self Study Evidence through the My GAACS Account, and requests corporate visit.

#### SITE VISIT PHASE

GAACS shall conduct on-site initial review of the Corporate Office. The corporate system site locations will be scheduled for on-site visits after the Self Study is submitted.

#### FINAL DETERMINATION

GAACS reviews the Visiting Committee's recommendations, response(s) from the candidate member organization (if any), and Self Study Evidence and makes the final decision to grant, defer, or deny accreditation.

See **Traditional Program Accreditation** for details on Approval, Deferral, and Denial.

**CONTNUAL ACCREDITATION**-To maintain accreditation, the Accredited Program must submit an annual report and applicable nonrefundable fee no later than June 30th every year with exception to the year of initial accreditation/re-accreditation.

#### RE-ACCREDITATION

Re-accreditation-Within six months before expiration date of the current accreditation, GAACS accredited programs must re-apply for accreditation in accordance with the most recent Accreditation Process.



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### Religious or License Exemption

Green Apple is one of the recognized religious exempt accrediting agencies in several states.

Green Apple's License Exemption Process-

- Step One: Complete the Membership Application.
- Step Two: Complete License Exempt Application.
- Step Three: Download the Health and Safety Standards and Submit Forms.
- Step Four: Obtain liability insurance showing Green Apple Accreditation of Children's Services as an additional insured.
- Step Five: Complete the Health and Safety Check Request, if applicable.

State by State Eligibility-

Each state may have a somewhat different process or eligibility to obtain license exemption. CHECK YOUR STATE OR LOCAL LICENSING AUTHORITY TO VERIFY THAT YOU ARE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE.

General eligibility-

The program must be an integral part of a church or parochial school.

Once exemption is approved by Green Apple –

Depending on the state where your program is located you may be required to submit an additional Annual Report to the state or local licensing agency to verify compliance.

Provisional status -

Provisional exemption may be granted in lieu of denial for up to thirty (30) days on a case by case basis. The provisional exemption may be extended **ONE TIME**, for up to an additional thirty (30) days, if the extension is requested prior to June 30<sup>th</sup> of the year.

**Note: The terms religious exemption and license exemption are used interchangeably.**

**Religious Exemption is renewed annually.**

**It is important to note each step in the process must be completed before exempt approval may be granted.**

**The application is valid for six months.**

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### Conflict of Interest

Green Apple validators are selected based on their experience, educational background, and willingness to serve on a validation committee. Each validator must complete a background screening, interview, submit, an application, and undergo annual training to participate on a validation committee. To eliminate the possibility or appearance of conflict of interest, validators are not permitted to evaluate their own program or a program within their organization/church/school network. A validator must inform the GAACS office of a conflict in interest which could interfere with or give the appearance of interfering with the objectivity of the validator. Validators must recuse themselves from conducting visits that may put them in a conflict of interest situation.

1. At no time will a validator be assigned to a program whose director or owner, also a validator for GAACS has visited for the purpose of validation of the program/school. No two validators will inspect each other's program/school.
2. Onsite validation/inspection visits are to be conducted during regular business hours and on the normal days the business is open. At no point shall a validator cause the program/school to remain after business hours.
3. Validators are to be self-sufficient when they visit a school. It is quite alright to accept a glass of water or juice. It is not permitted to allow or ask the staff, the director or the owner to purchase gifts regardless of the size or dollar amount. It is not permitted to accept or request money/food/anything from the program beyond the travel expenses, as approved by the GAACS office prior to the onsite validation visit.

### Nondiscrimination Policy

GAACS does not discriminate on, the basis of race, gender, creed, disability, or national origin in the administration of its programs.

### Additional Insured Policy

Liability Insurance: All providers must maintain liability insurance meeting applicable state requirements and show Amen Always Ministries International, Inc. dba Green Apple Accreditation of Children's Services, Inc. as an additional insured. Providers are to include the current address and telephone number on the insurance policy. Additional Insured: The term additional insured means a person or entity that is covered under another party's insurance policy. Additional insureds are often included under general liability, commercial property, or commercial auto policies. For questions about the Additional Insured Insurance Policy, email [info@gaacs.org](mailto:info@gaacs.org).

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### Accreditation Decision

Once the visiting committee completes the on-site validation, health and safety, or complaint/investigation inspection, the lead validator submits a copy of the inspection report and recommendation to **Green Apple**.

**GAACS** reviews all supporting documentation and makes the final decision to grant or deny accreditation within 10 days from receipt of the Visiting Committee's recommendations, response(s) from the candidate member organization (if any), and Self Study Evidence in accordance with the Determination Checklist.

#### Approval-

Within 14 days of the decision to approve accreditation, **GAACS** will forward the applicable certificate of accreditation, Notice of Accreditation Letter, and related certifications to Candidate Member. The Candidate Member may advertise as a **GAACS** Accredited Program upon receipt of written notification of accredited status.

#### Deferral-

A provider's accreditation decision may be deferred for several reasons including:

a.) allow clarification of its program to demonstrate compliance, or b.) allow time for the program to complete a corrective action plan to meet accreditation standards.

A remedial inspection may be required to demonstrate compliance.

#### a. Deferral to allow clarification

**Green Apple** has the discretion to defer reaching an accreditation decision in order to allow the organization to clarify its implementation of or continuing performance with any standards about which the Accreditation Commission has questions.

#### b. Deferral to allow Corrective Action

If an accredited organization does not meet the requirements of **Green Apple** Accreditation, the Accreditation Commission has the discretion to defer reaching a decision on accreditation in order to allow the organization to remedy the deficiencies and demonstrate corrective action.

The organization shall have the opportunity to demonstrate corrective action with the standards that are the subject of the remediation within the time set by the Accreditation Commission, subject to paragraph c below. An organization's accredited status is maintained during the deferral period (if already accredited).

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c. Time to clarify and demonstrate compliance with accreditation standards

An accredited organization will be notified that Green Apple is deferring to reach a reaccreditation decision, whether the deferral is to allow the organization to submit clarifying information, correct deficiencies, and/or implement other corrective/ improvement action. The organization must demonstrate, enough re- implementation of the standards within one (1) year of its site visit. An organization's failure to demonstrate sufficient corrective/improvement action within this one-year period results in the revocation of its accreditation and/or denial of its reaccreditation, unless the Accreditation Commission votes by a two- thirds majority to extend the time within which the organization is allowed to demonstrate sufficient corrective/improvement action and Green Apple's President/CEO agrees with the Accreditation Commission's decision to extend the time.

d. Follow-up Site Visit Inspection

The Accreditation Commission has the discretion to require a remedial site visit as part of the deferral process. In such case, the organization must pay a remedial on-site inspection fee.

The Accreditation Commission reviews an accredited organization at the conclusion of the deferral process to determine whether the organization has demonstrated enough implementation of/continuing performance with Green Apple's standards.

Denied-

If GAACS decision is not favorable or a recommendation is made to deny accreditation, then the IO/Candidate Member has 30 days to appeal the decision. Failure to appeal an adverse decision within 30 days shall constitute forfeiture of the right to appeal. If the Candidate Member timely appeals, then a hearing will be scheduled within 45 days from receipt of the formal appeal.

### Termination of Services

GAACS reserves the right to deny or withdraw services such as (Accreditation, License Exempt Approval, Membership, A+ Platinum School Program designation/participation, and/or other services) from any program/organization at will.

GAACS shall provide written notification of this action and the reasons for withdrawal of services.

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### Loss of Accreditation

There are three types of Loss of Accreditation:

- 1) Suspension,
- 2) Revocation, and
- 3) Non-renewal.

Suspension occurs when it is determined a program is in violation of the Health and Safety Standards, Accreditation Standards, and/or Policies and Procedures of **GAACS**.

Revocation occurs when it is determined a program has violated the policies and procedures, Health and Safety Standards, and/or Accreditation Standards, at the discretion of **GAACS**, or by two thirds of the voting board.

Non-renewal occurs when a school by notification does not elect to renew its membership with **GAACS** or the program's fees due to **GAACS** remain unpaid for ten (10) days.

### Immediate or Emergency Loss of Accreditation

A. The following conditions will lead to **immediate** loss or denial of accreditation:

1. Suspension or revocation of a child care license or religious exempt certificate,
2. One or more violations of the Health and Safety Standards, Accreditation Standards, and/or Policies and Procedures as set forth by **GAACS**,
3. Failure to meet requirements outlined in the Site Visit Inspection Report,
4. Submitting fraudulent information on/or in connection with application,
5. Expiration of current accreditation, license exempt approval, or membership,
6. One or more "credible" complaints of Child Abuse or Neglect,
7. If program/organization annual membership dues to **GAACS** remain unpaid for a period of ten (10) or more days from renewal date,
8. Unprofessional Conduct & Communication, or
9. Violation of local, state, and federal regulations.

(Immediate Loss of Accreditation is an automatic suspension of accreditation, exemption, or membership with a recommendation for revocation.)

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### Loss of Religious (License) Exemption

License Exempt approval may be revoked for cause. Cause for revocation of license exempt approval may include but is not limited to:

- a. Failure to comply with health and safety standards as set forth by Green Apple, the local licensing agency, and/or the Department of Children and Families,
- b. Failure to comply with the local, state, and federal regulations,
- c. Threat to the health, safety, and welfare of children in care,
- d. One or more credible child abuse and neglect complaints, or
- e. Lapse in membership, exemption, annual report, accreditation, or other fees for more than ten (10) days.

Effective March 15, 2016, certain child care centers are ineligible to apply for exemption or accreditation unless the determination is reversed on appeal.

Ineligible Programs–

The following programs shall be ineligible to apply for exemption and/or accreditation:

- 1.) A program that had its license exemption revoked by Green Apple for violations that pose a threat to the health, safety, and welfare of children in care is permanently ineligible to reapply for license exemption. *This includes programs owned by the same person or a family member who operated a child care program that lost exemption.*
- 2.) If a program's religious exemption is suspended or revoked for violations that pose a threat to the health, safety, and welfare of children in care then the program is ineligible to reapply for accreditation except under the following circumstances:
  - The program must obtain a child care license issued by the state or local licensing agency.
  - The program must remain in compliance with health and safety standards as evidenced by two or more licensing inspections showing no Class 1 [or the equivalent thereof] violations, for 12 consecutive months.
- 3.) If a program has its accreditation suspended or revoked for a.) one or more credible complaints of Child Abuse and Neglect, b) one or more violations of health and safety standards, accreditation standards, or policies and procedures, or 3.) submitting false documentation in connection with accreditation, registration, exemption, or licensing then it is ineligible to reapply for accreditation except under the following circumstances:
  - The program must wait a period of two consecutive years before it is eligible to reapply for accreditation.

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### B. Reinstatement

Upon remedy of the violations identified by GAACS staff, a program/organization may be reinstated **within** ninety (90) days. The specific requirements for reinstatement may vary between programs/organizations based on the violations identified, severity of the violations, and length of noncompliance with GAACS standards.

Programs/organizations will be notified in writing, if the services are restored.

### C. Notification

When accreditation/exemption is granted, suspended, terminated, or revoked, GAACS will immediately notify the applicable state agencies including but not limited to: State Department of Education, Department Children and Families, Department of Human Services, licensing officials, Family Central, the Early Learning Coalition, and/or other applicable agencies.

The specifics of the decision to terminate, revoke, or suspend services will immediately be disclosed to the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Human Services, Family Central, the Early Learning Coalition, and/or other applicable agencies.

Green Apple publishes a copy, updated annually, of its directory of member programs.

### D. Self-Reporting Complaint(s)/Incidents

Program/organization staff must self-report incidents, complaints, and/or disputes alleging violation of accreditation standards to GAACS within 24 - 48 hours of each occurrence. The self-report must be made in writing by the administrator, director, assistant director, teacher involved, or other, designated official/representative.

### E. Probation Status

At the discretion of the board, a program/organization may be placed on ninety-day probation in lieu of suspension or revocation of accreditation. A program/organization representative may request probation in lieu of suspension/revocation. The request must be made in writing and state reasons the program's accreditation should not be revoked but probation is a better option. The entire program history will be considered when determining whether to grant or deny probation. During the probation period the program shall be subject to unannounced visits from GAACS inspectors.

Failure to comply with the Accreditation Standards, Recommendations, or Corrective Action Plan will result in immediate revocation of accreditation status.

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A fine up to \$500.00 will be assessed and due in ten days. GAACS will provide written notification when a program is removed from probation status. Probation is handled on a case by case basis.

### Due Process

Green Apple's procedures provide reasonable due process to program/organizations undergoing the evaluation and investigative process.

Member organizations that have received an adverse determination may exercise their rights to appeal the determination.

The appeal is to reinstate accreditation to full or provisional status. It must be in writing and state why it should be reinstated.

- A. Pay a nonrefundable fee of \$500.00 for the appeal process.
- B. The appeal must be in writing and explain the basis for the appeal. For example, where did we overlook our policies and procedures, misinterpret data, how the provider complied at the time of inspections, etc.
- C. Must be received at GAACS office within thirty (30) days from the date of Final Determination
- D. May request an in-person hearing at the next board meeting or a response without a hearing.

GAACS will respond within 45 days from receipt of the notice of appeal. Failure to file a written Appeal in accordance with Member Appeal Options shall constitute loss of the right to appeal the final determination.



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### Site Visit

Effective February 16, 2015, child care centers do not have to undergo an inspection by Green Apple validators to receive exempt approval, if the program participates in School Readiness.

#### Section 1. Health and Safety Inspection.

- 1) A license exempt child care program shall receive an initial health and safety inspection prior to approval to operate as a license exempt child care program.
- 2) On an annual basis **Green Apple** shall conduct an on-site inspection to validate that health and safety standards are continually met.
- 3) A license exempt child care program *may* be notified of the inspection at least seven (7) days before the scheduled inspection date.
- 4) **Green Apple** reserves the right to inspect the child care program unannounced at its discretion.
- 5) The assigned validator/inspector shall conduct health and safety inspections in accordance with the provisions contained in What to Expect During the On-site Inspection.

Exempt child care programs that plan to/currently participate in School Readiness are required to submit a copy of the department issued inspection or health and safety checklist within thirty (30) days of application. Failure to comply may prompt an inspection by Green Apple validators. Green Apple reserves the right to conduct an inspection to verify compliance with its health and safety standards.

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### Section 2. Accreditation Validation Inspection.

- 1) A program/organization shall receive an on-site validation inspection prior to approval to operate or advertise as a **Green Apple** accredited organization.
- 2) On an annual basis at least 1/3 and no more than 50 % of accredited organizations shall be selected randomly for an accreditation validation inspection to ensure continual compliance.
- 3) An accredited organization *may* be notified of the inspection at least seven (7) days before the scheduled inspection date.
- 4) **Green Apple** reserves the right to inspect the program unannounced at its discretion.
- 5) The assigned validator/inspector shall conduct validation inspections in accordance with the provisions contained in What to Expect During the On-site Inspection.
- 6) A member in good standing may request an expedited review of the program.

### Section 3. Complaint Investigation Inspection.

- 1) If **Green Apple** receives a complaint or becomes aware from another state agency or through the media that an approved or accredited organization may not follow a state licensure or accreditation standard, then it shall investigate of the alleged noncompliance.
- 2) Complaint investigations shall be unannounced and conducted in accordance with the procedures in Section 4 of this policy and procedures manual.

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### Section 4. Procedures for Conducting Validation and Complaint Investigations.

- 1) If **Green Apple** determines, as a result of an on-site validation or compliant investigation inspection that an organization is not in compliance with a standard:
  - a) At the conclusion of the on-site inspection, the visiting committee shall conduct an exit conference to discuss preliminary findings with the program administrator or designee;
  - b) **Green Apple** shall inform the program in writing of the violation of the standards within ten (10) days of the inspection; and
  - c) The program shall submit to **Green Apple**, within ten (10) days of receipt of the written notice, a written plan for the correction of the violation;
    1. The plan shall specify:
      - a. The date by which the violation shall be corrected;
      - b. The specific measures utilized to correct the violation; and
      - c. The specific measures that will be utilized to ensure the violation will not reoccur.
    2. Following a review of the plan, **Green Apple** shall notify the program in writing of the acceptability of the plan.
    3. If a portion or all the plan is unacceptable:
      - a. **Green Apple** shall specify the reasons for the unacceptability; and
      - b. The program shall modify or amend the plan and resubmit it to **Green Apple** within ten (10) days.
    4. Upon receipt of an acceptable plan of correction, **Green Apple** may conduct a follow-up on-site inspection to ensure that the violation has been corrected.

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- 2) The program shall lose its status as an accredited organization if, as a result of the onsite validation or complaint investigation inspection, Green Apple determines that a program has:
- a. A single violation of a state licensure standard of, severity that the violation poses a substantial risk to health, welfare, safety; or
  - b. A substantial number of violations of state licensure and accreditation standards.
- 3) In some cases, it may not be necessary to conduct an onsite inspection to investigate a complaint or take-action depending on the nature of the violation.

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### Level of Program Participation

#### Levels of Accreditation

There are two levels of accreditation.

a. Provisional Accreditation

Provisional Accreditation may be awarded to providers for up to one year. Provisional Accreditation may be extended for up to 12 months, on a case by case basis.

b. Full Accreditation

Full Accreditation may be awarded to providers for the maximum term permitted for the program type. After School/Enrichment Program Accreditation is valid five years. Child Care/ Early Education Center Accreditation is valid five years. Private School accreditation is valid five years. Behavioral Health Accreditation is valid five years.

#### Levels of Review (Inspections)

There are five levels of program review or inspections.

a. Initial Review

The first time a program is reviewed or inspected to validate that it is, in compliance with health and safety standards, accreditation standards, and policies and procedures.

b. Follow-up Review

The follow-up to the initial or renewal review/inspection to validate that a program is, in compliance with health and safety standards, accreditation standards, and/or policies and procedures. The program may or may not have been previously cited for violation(s) or noncompliance with standards in the past. The follow-up review may be conducted to validate continual compliance or noncompliance with standards.

c. Renewal Review

The program is reviewed or inspected during the year of accreditation renewal to validate continual compliance with health and safety standards, accreditation standards, and policies and procedures.

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### d. Complaint Review

The program is reviewed or inspected in response to a complaint. In some cases, it may not be necessary to conduct an onsite inspection to conduct the investigation or take-action depending on the nature of the violation(s).

### e. Expedited Review

A member in good standing may request an expedited review of the program in writing. The program must be ready to demonstrate compliance with the policies, procedures, and accreditation standards when the on-site visit is conducted. There is an additional fee, to expedite the process.

## Complaint Procedure

Complaint against a Program:

From time to time, **Green Apple** receives a complaint about a member, approved, or accredited program. Usually these are concerned with allegations of unfair disciplinary procedures regarding a student dismissed or suspended, or a dispute over the financial obligations. **Green Apple** has adopted a Complaint Procedure which is as stated below:

How to File a Complaint:

To file a complaint against an accredited or member organization write a letter or send an email containing the following information:

1. First and Last Name of Person making the Complaint
2. Complainant address
3. Phone number
4. Email address
5. Name of member organization
6. Location of the member organization
7. Dates of incident
8. A full description of the problem and any other documentation that will support your claim such as high school diploma, transcript, completed class assignments, etc.
9. If your complaint is regarding a college not accepting your high school diploma from an accredited school, then please include the name of the college that you are applying to and a copy of the denial letter or correspondence.

# GREEN APPLE ACCREDITATION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

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Complaint Issues **GAACS** does not investigate:

1. Anonymous
2. Billing disputes
3. Matters in litigation
4. Complaints previously investigated and dismissed

### **Possible Outcomes of Complaint**

If it is determined that a complaint alleges violation of accreditation standards, health and safety standards, or policies and procedures then an investigation will take place.

The program will have an opportunity to respond to the allegations in writing. A complaint/investigation inspection will be conducted. Depending on the fact findings a determination may be made to: dismiss the complaint, change the program's exemption/accreditation status to probation, suspension, or revocation; or refer the complaint to local, state, or federal authorities. A copy of the final action will be provided the complainant.

### **Confidentiality**

**Green Apple** considers Health and Safety inspection reports public record. **Green Apple** reserves the right to publish copies of the Health and Safety inspection reports on its website and/or share with state agencies upon written request.

Fact findings from investigation/complaint inspection reports are considered public record. Accreditation determinations are publicly noticed when: granted, suspended, or revoked.

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### Standards Development and Revisions

**Green Apple** Accreditation Standards are developed by industry specific professionals based on research and meet or exceed State Regulations. The **GAACS** Accreditation Standards are reviewed periodically to keep pace with industry changes and expectations for high quality programs. **GAACS** standards are comparable to other national and regional accrediting agencies.

Proposed changes to the standards are posted on the accreditation website with the deadline to make comments. **GAACS** members and the general public are invited to make comments on or recommend standards during the Standards Review Period.

**Green Apple** submits an annual report to the applicable state agency including major changes in the agency's policies, procedure, or accreditation standards.

### Substantive Change

A program which is planning to undergo a substantive change (e.g. adding a grade level, location change, program or service change, ownership change, merger, name change, loss of principal/director, etc.) must submit a Substantive Change Report and notify **Green Apple** in writing thirty (30) days prior to the substantive change.

A program that undergoes a sudden, emergency, or unexpected substantive change must self-report the change to Green Apple in writing within seventy-two (72) hours of the change.

The substantive change may require a follow-up onsite visit and further documentation if necessary, to verify continual compliance with accreditation standards. In most cases, ownership change will automatically prompt an onsite visit to verify continual compliance with accreditation standards.

[ - revised October 2019 - ]