NORTHEND

SOUTH CAROLINA AGENCY PATH INSIGHT

How to Choose the Right South Carolina Agency Path

South Carolina licenses nonmedical in-home care, skilled home health, and hospice under separate frameworks. The correct path depends on the services, location, payer, and whether the agency will provide personal or clinical care.

In-Home Care Provider

This is South Carolina's nonmedical personal-care pathway. It covers compensated care intended to help with personal needs or activities of daily living, such as walking, transfers, bathing, dressing, feeding, toileting, special-diet preparation, and supervision of self-administered medication.

The license can apply whether services are provided through employees, agents, contractors, or certain financially interested referral arrangements. A provider may not operate, advertise, or market as an in-home care provider before DPH issues the license.

Important office requirement

An applicant must maintain at least one in-state primary office where records are secured and accessible and administrative oversight occurs. The office must be in a commercially zoned or unzoned area, and the applicant must obtain the required zoning permit or an appropriate local letter. Additional locations require DPH registration and approval.

Home Health Agency (HHA)

Home health is the skilled clinical path. South Carolina defines it around part-time or intermittent skilled nursing plus at least one additional service, such as therapy, medical social services, home health aide services, or other therapeutic services. A DPH license is required before operating or representing the business as a home health agency.

South Carolina generally requires a Certificate of Need before HHA licensure. The agency must also pass an initial licensing inspection, identify the counties it will serve, and build clinical leadership, assessment, treatment-plan, patient-rights, emergency, infection-control, and quality systems. Medicare certification and Medicaid enrollment are separate steps.

Hospice Program or Facility

A hospice program provides an interdisciplinary continuum of medically supervised palliative and supportive care, including home and outpatient services. A hospice facility provides room, board, and 24-hour inpatient hospice services. Both require DPH licensure before operation.

The outpatient program and inpatient facility use different applications and operational models. Federal certification, accreditation, Medicaid enrollment, and payer contracting remain separate from the state license.

Questions to consider

- Will the agency provide nonmedical personal assistance, skilled care, hospice, or more than one service line?
- Will care be delivered by employees, contractors, agents, or a financially interested referral model?
- Does the office meet the in-state location, zoning, record-security, and accessibility rules?
- Will payment come from private pay, Medicaid, Medicare, managed care, or another payer?

Do not combine the categories

An In-Home Care Provider license does not authorize skilled nursing or therapy, and an HHA license is not the nonmedical license. When one owner operates multiple care types, separate licensing, public representations, caregiver records, and client records may be required.

Application readiness

Current In-Home Care Provider standards address a qualified administrator, insurance or bonding, workers' compensation, applicant screening, caregiver qualifications and training, policies, client records, incidents, infection control, and disaster planning.

Survey and inspection planning

Home health agencies are inspected before initial licensure. Providers may later be inspected without advance notice. The office, policies, personnel files, client systems, and operations should match the chosen license before readiness is declared.

Medicaid is another approval

A state license does not automatically enroll the agency with South Carolina Medicaid. SCDHHS separately verifies qualifications, screens applicants, may conduct site visits, and must approve enrollment.

Build the agency in the right order

Choose the services and payer first. Then confirm licensing, CON, office, staffing, certification, and enrollment requirements before marketing or admitting clients. The wrong category can create expensive rework.

Planning a South Carolina agency?

NorthEnd Consulting helps owners define their services, identify the appropriate pathway, and prepare the policies, documentation, and operational structure that match their agency plan.

Visit northendconsultants.com to discuss your agency plan

Current as of October 2026. Requirements, forms, fees, CON decisions, and program instructions may change. Licensing, certification, enrollment, accreditation, and payer contracting are separate decisions controlled by the applicable authorities. This is a general planning resource. NorthEnd Consulting does not guarantee approval.